

The ASEAN



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Creative Economy

Culture, Identity and
the Business of Creativity



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THE INSIDE VIEW
Mapping ASEAN's
Creative Industries

INTERVIEW
Dr. Phoeurng Sackona
Cambodia Minister of
Culture and Fine Arts

CONVERSATIONS
Making a Living
from the Arts



Senior Officials' Committee for ASC Council
Supports ASCC Council and facilitates collaboration of efforts among ASCC sectoral bodies

Ministerial Bodies

*) takes guidance from and reports to both AMCA and AMRI

AMRI-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information

AMCA-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts

AMMY-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth

ASED-ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting

AMMS-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports

AMRDPE-ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

AMMSWD-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

AMMW-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women

ALMM-ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting

ACCSM-The Heads of Civil Service Meeting for ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

AHMM-ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting

AMMDM-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management

COP-AADMER-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response

AMME-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment

COP to AATHP-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

SOMCA-Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts

COCI-The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information

SOMRI-Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information

SOMY-Senior Officials Meeting on Youth

SOMED-Senior Officials Meeting on Education

SOMS-Senior Officials Meeting on Sports

SOMRDPE-Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

SOMSWD-Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

ACWC-ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children

ACW-ASEAN Committee on Women

SLOM-Senior Labour Officials Meeting

SOM-ACCSM-Senior Officials Meeting on ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

SOMHD-Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development

ASOEN-ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment

COM to AATHP-Committee under the Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution



"Ceker Geger" by the EKI Dance Company

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Culture, Identity and the Business of Creativity

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The ASEAN

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by **Erin Dwi Azmi**

Composed by **Kramakata**

Message from the Deputy Secretary-General



Cultural and creative content kept many of us grounded and in good spirits during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Yet, ironically, the creators, producers and distributors of this content are among the worst hit by the pandemic-driven recession.

This double issue on the “Creative Economy” examines the cultural and creative sector’s prospects for recovery and how the industry can be mobilised to put ASEAN economies back on track.

A supportive environment is crucial to the growth of the creative economy. Cambodian Minister of Culture and Fine Arts and ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA) Chair, Dr. Phoeurng Sackona, shares her country’s policies, investment priorities, and strategic partnerships to create a vibrant business climate for the cultural and creative industries. Our contributors from Singapore and Thailand talk about the importance of a cohesive arts and culture masterplan, collaborative governance, and investment in people and technology in unlocking the sector’s full potential.

Partnerships and linkages are also necessary to bridge the gap in resources and help groups that may have fallen through the cracks. For example, ASEAN Access, a digital business support and matchmaking platform that caters to micro, small and medium enterprises, was launched with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. A creative youth programme, *Kita Muda Kreatif*, was initiated by UNESCO Jakarta to mentor and develop the business skills of young entrepreneurs living around heritage sites. Creative hubs, such as those supported by the British Council, benefit the creative enterprises and workers and the entire community.

For the cultural and creative industries in the region to rebound stronger from the crisis, key issues must be addressed. There is a need to establish a regional consensus on the definition and scope of the creative economy, close gaps in financing, and address the unequal levels of digital readiness within countries and the region. Conversations with artists and creative professionals across ASEAN also remind us that we must continue to support them in this ongoing crisis, protect their intellectual and labour rights, and open more opportunities to create and innovate.

The culture and creative industries add value to the economy and at the same time, help solidify our ASEAN identity, notes Minister Phoeurng Sackona. Moreover, they heighten people’s awareness of and appetite for ASEAN’s rich history, culture, and heritage.

As I begin my new role with the ASEAN Secretariat, I am delighted to see the strong collaboration between the magazine’s editorial team, the Culture and Information Division of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, and its partners that made this edition possible.

I wish to express my appreciation to the government of Germany, through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), for partnering with us on this issue. My sincerest thanks also go to our contributors for bringing their knowledge and experience into the articles.

Finally, I convey my profound gratitude to the government of India for its unwavering support for *The ASEAN* magazine. ■

Ekkaphab Phanthavong
Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN
for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

Message from the German Ambassador to ASEAN

It is with great pleasure that Germany works together with ASEAN on this double issue of *The ASEAN*. This publication makes a significant contribution to increasing the outreach of the ASEAN Secretariat to the people of ASEAN and informing the public about recent trends and the important work ASEAN does on a variety of topics.

This issue on the "Creative Economy" takes on a topic that is close to the hearts of many ASEAN citizens. In such a diverse and heterogeneous region as Southeast Asia, establishing a genuine community is a challenge for governments and peoples alike. Creative industries can bridge the gap between different cultural traditions in the ASEAN Member States and contribute to a common ASEAN identity that still reflects the Community's rich diversity. Creative industries in the fields of arts, media, digital content, and technology play a crucial role in further strengthening the ASEAN community as a whole.

In this regard, it is a particular pleasure for us to work closely together with the ASEAN Secretariat on our cooperation project, ASEC2025, to implement the ASEAN Communication Master Plan 2018-2025 (ACMP II) with the vision to realise a people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN Community, where the people of ASEAN enjoy the benefits of community-building, reinforcing a sense of togetherness.

ASEAN has tremendous potential when it comes to the creative industries and more generally the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). To this end, Germany is also pleased to be part of ASEAN's efforts to internationalise its MSMEs power beyond borders through the launch of ASEAN Access; a regional digital platform that connects ASEAN MSMEs with the global markets.

I wish to thank and congratulate the editorial team and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department for the trustful and productive cooperation and I hope that this issue of *The ASEAN* will inspire and encourage readers especially in the field of creative economy. ■

Ina Lepel
Ambassador Designate of the Federal Republic of Germany to Indonesia, ASEAN, and Timor Leste



“ ASEAN has tremendous potential when it comes to the creative industries and more generally the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Dr. Phoeurng Sackona

Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, Kingdom of Cambodia

Chair, ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA)

Minister Phoeurng discusses Cambodia's key policies and programmes to develop and support its creative industries, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role that the creative industries play in the country's post-pandemic recovery plan. She also shares her views on how ASEAN can position itself collectively as an important driver in advancing the creative economy.

Can you describe Cambodia's strategy for promoting and fostering its creative economy? What are the policies and institutions that are in place that support the creative economy in Cambodia? What are the challenges in promoting and supporting the creative economy in Cambodia?

Minister Phoeurng: In recent years, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), through the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MCFA), has set forth policies and strategies to safeguard and preserve the Kingdom's rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage, while harnessing the country's cultural resources for economic development, especially through the travel and tourism industries (travel and tourism contributed 21 per cent to Cambodia's GDP in 2019).

One of the Kingdom's main culture policies is to promote and foster a culture-based creative economy. Cultural and creative industries, the core of the creative economy, have started to thrive and contribute quite significantly to the people's economic development and livelihood—made possible with Cambodia's newly-won political and economic stability and peace. An enabling environment for the growth of the industries has been created by adopting a number of national and international legal frameworks and enhancing



inter-ministerial collaboration and public-private partnerships. The *National Policy on Culture*, a significant cultural policy document, was approved by the RGC in 2014. This important document serves as a culture and development roadmap, articulating the links between culture and development by integrating aspects such as education, environment, science, media, and health.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, remarkable investments were made in the growth of Cambodia's cultural and creative industries, resulting in the creation of more jobs. At the same time, there was a growing need for skilled labour in the country, a necessary condition for increasing production to satisfy market demand, drive exports, and broaden consumption habits. It is, however, difficult for the cultural and creative industries to grow without a comparable expansion of vocational education and training opportunities. To this end, MCFA has worked in close collaboration with both public and private sectors to develop more skilled professionals to meet the demand. Moreover, significant investments on provision of sufficient and appropriate cultural infrastructure and measures that encourage consumption and guarantee wider access to cultural goods and services were made.

Promoting and fostering a creative economy requires inter-ministerial efforts as well as public-private partnerships. MCFA has worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Tourism; Ministry of Commerce; Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology, and Innovation; Ministry of Economy and Finance; Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, among others.

Although Cambodia has achieved significant steps in promoting and fostering the creative economy, especially the culture-based creative industries, a number of key areas need to be addressed or reinforced. These include primarily the following: (i) access to technological infrastructure in provinces or places outside of the urban area, (ii) inclusion of youth through innovation and arts education, (iii) information sharing about the creative economy, especially for local enterprises, (iv) cultural funding from the governance system to support creativity and the export of cultural products, (v) social protection scheme for independent artists, freelancers and creative entrepreneurs, (vi) tax incentives for economic recovery in the culture sector, as frequently offered in other sectors like agriculture, tourism, or export industries, (vii) technological skill to allow secure and reliable development of the Cambodian cultural and creative industries, and (viii) market creation for both local and international, to name a few.

How do we build an enabling environment for the creative economy to flourish and to ensure that no one is left behind? What are the best practices at the national level in promoting creative industries that could be co-opted and elevated for regional cooperation?

Minister Phoeurng: For an enabling creative economy to flourish, the key challenges mentioned above must be addressed. A responsive legal framework, infrastructure, and information and communication technology should be provided and monitored for the growth of the creative economy. Public spaces where artists can display their work must be made available to them at low or no cost. Likewise, the development of exhibitions, fairs and festivals must be encouraged and supported. Connectivity and network for exports, market facilitation, business workshops/training, and equitable access to affordable finance are a must. In the new information technology era, the creative industries must also apply responsible and ethical technologies.

To ensure that no one is left behind, the government has been putting more effort into building a stable social protection scheme and a creative economy ecosystem where artists and creative workers can thrive and survive. In promoting creative industries, one of Cambodia's best practices is the collaboration between the public and private sectors. As a public sector entity, MCFA has adopted the guiding principle, "the public sector should facilitate/help the private sector in implementing their work." An enabling environment is created through the development of these public-private partnerships. In addition, the current socio-economic stability in Cambodia provides a favourable environment for various stakeholders in the creative economy to form mutually beneficial alliances.

With the prevailing pivot toward digital adoption, what should the creative industries do to better adapt to the 4th Industrial Revolution?

Minister Phoeurng: COVID-19 has disrupted the lives and livelihoods of people around the world and among those hardest hit are the cultural and creative workers. The need for social distancing has resulted in the closure of heritage sites, museums, theatres, festivals, and workplaces, and at its worst, a complete lockdown of cities and countries around the world. The crisis made people crave for connectivity, which resulted in an unprecedented reliance on information and communication technology as a way to stay connected. The pandemic also accelerated digitisation in the arts and culture to meet the massive demand for cultural and creative goods and services, such as music, performing arts, film, and virtual museums.

The 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) is creating a new frontier for human technological advancement and along with it comes the positive and negative aspects. New technology will push the creative industries into a new phase of innovation and originality. Technological advancement will produce new tools to capacitate artists to make new kinds of arts, creating new fields in the creative sector. We already see the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the world of visual arts, and its role will continue to expand into other creative fields.

On the other hand, new AI can also be a threat to artists as it also has the ability to produce cheap imitations on a large scale, becoming competitors to human creatives. Also, because new technology such as AI is not covered in most Intellectual Property laws and regulations, legal remedies may not be available to protect artists.

Therefore, while embracing the immense potential for innovation in the creative industry, we at the same time must update policies and legal framework to tackle negative issues such as imitation to protect the livelihood of artists in the 4IR era.

How do you think ASEAN can position itself collectively as a regional destination for promoting and developing the creative industries? How do you think ASEAN can leverage its creative industries to foster ASEAN identity and awareness?

Minister Phoeurng: The people of ASEAN share a rich and diverse culture. Our identity and cultural and life experiences inspire our ideas and the limitless creativity drives us to produce creative goods and services or processes that have commercial and cultural value. To promote its creative industries, ASEAN needs to tap into its identity to build its own unique brand and in turn, this brand identity can be used to foster ASEAN identity and awareness.

Each ASEAN Member State is at different stages of development and this is reflected in the diverse situation of the creative industries in ASEAN region. There are efforts among ASEAN Member States to promote the creative industries through

“ The people of ASEAN share a rich and diverse culture. Our identity and cultural and life experiences inspire our ideas and the limitless creativity drives us to produce creative goods and services or processes that have commercial and cultural value.

various projects including business forums. Prior to the pandemic, these events usually take place annually. However, this is not yet enough to enable ASEAN to position itself collectively as a regional destination for the promotion and development of the creative industries. To achieve this, more collaborative effort is needed among the Member States and their partners in areas such as data collection relating to cultural and creative industries in ASEAN and around the world, information sharing, network creation, entrepreneur training, and equitable access to information infrastructure and financing.

Cambodia, the current ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA) chair, notes that although much has been done, there is a lot more to do regarding the cultural and creative industries. Thus, as the current AMCA chair, Cambodia has taken the initiative to propose the creation of the ASEAN Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries (ACCCI). The objectives of this proposed centre are as follows:

- i. Promote research and innovation to enhance the cultural and creative industries across all ASEAN Member States and to highlight the significant contribution that culture-based creative industries make to ASEAN sustainable socio-economic development;
- ii. Establish a regional database hub for cultural and creative industries;
- iii. Stimulate cooperation within the cultural and creative sectors among ASEAN Member States and our Dialogue Partners;
- iv. Support and share innovative policies and best practices undertaken in the cultural and creative industries among the ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners;
- v. Build capacities and skills including business planning, marketing, and knowledge on financing options that can improve the outcomes of cultural and creative industries;
- vi. Create network/alliance among ASEAN's cultural and creative industries; and
- vii. Strengthen ASEAN Identity awareness.

Discussions among ASEAN Member States are currently underway to look at the feasibility of this dedicated ASEAN Centre.

How has Cambodia helped the creative industries and their workers during the pandemic, and what forms of assistance are available to facilitate their recovery? What role do creative industries play in the overall post-pandemic recovery plan of Cambodia?

Minister Phoeurng: The pandemic has severely impacted every sector worldwide. During the pandemic, many craftspersons as well as other creative workers have sadly lost their jobs or had to supplement their incomes with other temporary jobs. The Royal Government of Cambodia, which has a register

of artists (albeit not a complete list nationwide), released various forms of immediate assistance, both financial or in-kind, to those most in need (from low-income families). Various training projects were also administered for workers, including training for reskilling, on digitalisation and social media, and on entrepreneurial and business management, among others. The rollout of this assistance was done in a timely manner under the direct guidance of our Prime Minister, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen.

Other notable incentives to help facilitate recovery also include the Khmer Enterprise programme, where cheap small and medium enterprise (SME) loans were granted to local small and medium creative enterprises to ensure survival during the pandemic.

On the part of MCFA, we have been collaborating with partners and private stakeholders in developing exhibitions, festivals and fairs, whether physically or virtually. We also ensured that the arts and creatives training activities continue through virtual training programmes. We have also established “new normal” post-COVID standard operating procedures for cultural venues to enable venue operators to safely reopen their facilities.

Pre-pandemic, the main sectors of the Cambodian economy are tourism, garment manufacturing, and agriculture. During the pandemic, income from the tourism industry dropped by more than 90 per cent. The life-altering event of COVID-19 has clearly shown the value of arts, culture, and creativity.

Before the crisis, similar to the situation of the creative economy of our ASEAN neighbours, the predominantly culture-based creative economy of Cambodia was growing rapidly but was nowhere near its expected potential. Our rich tradition and culture, both tangible and intangible, could provide limitless resources for the creation of creative goods and services. The MCFA is currently reviewing the National Policy on Culture to enhance mechanisms for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and strengthen cultural and creative practitioners. Working in conjunction with various other ministries, we aim to support local entrepreneurs, especially women and youth, in the creative industries to optimise their innovation potential and turn the misfortune of COVID-19 into an opportunity to diversify production and exports, develop our competitive advantage, and attract investments. This would no doubt aid in the recovery and growth of Cambodia. ■

ASEAN at a Creative Turn



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DEPARTMENT

What is the creative economy? The term invariably evokes multiple meanings, often seen as the nexus of various creative fields, including the arts and culture, science and technology, business and trade. At its root, the creative economy deals in ideas and money (Howkins, 2001).



The twin effects of the pandemic and the pivot towards digital adoption are disrupting the norms of the creative economy, where lives and livelihoods have been significantly impacted.

According to the report on *Cultural and Creative Industries in the Face of COVID-19: An Economic Impact Outlook* (UNESCO, 2021), the creative economy, composed of the cultural and

creative industries (CCI), contracted by 750 billion US dollars in gross value added (GVA). This is equivalent to around 1 per cent of global nominal gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 and 10 million job losses globally, affecting many cultural and creative gig workers in the informal sector.

However, the creative economy remains a potential bright spot.

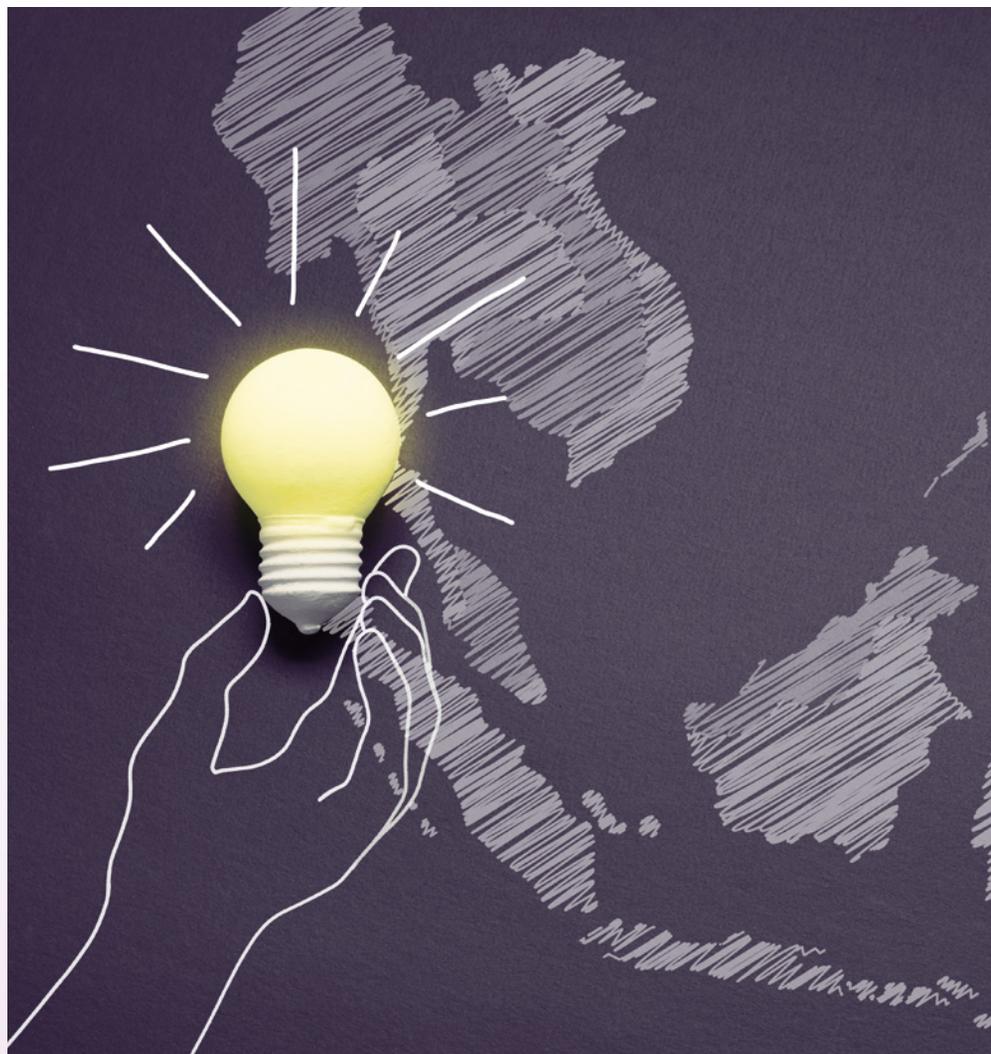
While it is a sector that requires assistance for recovery, it is also a resilient and robust one that can help economies build back better if we take the cue from past crises. For example, following the global financial crisis in 2008 where international trade contracted by 12 per cent, world trade of creative goods and services grew at a rate of 14 per cent yearly between 2002 and 2008, reaching 592 billion US dollars, outperforming traditional manufacturing industries (UNCTAD, 2010).

In Southeast Asia, data from UNCTAD (2021) provides encouraging signs for ASEAN's "creative turn" with the region's trade values in creative goods recording an average annual growth rate of 11 per cent between 2003 and 2015. Further, demonstrating its potential for shared regional growth, ASEAN's intraregional trade has grown from 11 per cent in 2002 to 16 per cent in 2014.

While the prospect of the CCI sector is promising, the pandemic has magnified a number of issues that must be addressed before we can reap its benefits. These pertinent issues include challenges and opportunities arising from the digital pivot of the CCI sector, fragmented ecosystem and uneven industry developments, and creative human capital and sustainable developments.

Accelerated Digital Adoption

The pandemic has accelerated digital adoption, where 40 million new users went online for the first time in Southeast Asia in 2020, outpacing the average increase of 25 million yearly in the past four years (Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company, 2020). The onset of the pandemic has led to transformative effects on lives and livelihoods where activities shifted online. For example, e-commerce continued to post new growths. In 2020, more than 33 per cent of online commerce was generated by new shoppers, of which eight in 10 users expressed intent to continue buying online in future. The e-commerce revenue in ASEAN is now projected to reach



more than 80 billion US dollars by 2024 (Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company, 2020).

This trajectory presents opportunities and challenges for the CCI, especially the small and medium creative enterprises (SMCEs). On the one hand, e-commerce can reduce starting capital to establish a business and cut production costs (Coppel, 2000). E-commerce can be easily adopted through market-ready or customisable templates found online. This digital accessibility can allow SMCEs to quickly establish an online presence with limited capital to reach out to a wider market. However, given the nature of the products and services produced by CCI are

knowledge-intensive and creativity-based, they run the risk of being pirated and replicated quickly by others, especially if their intellectual property rights are not safeguarded.

Fragmented Discussions, Uneven Developments

The creative economy is generally understood as encompassing core industries within the culture, arts and media sectors, such as arts and handicrafts, fashion, publishing, design, music, and film. Also included are newer industries like gaming, streaming services, knowledge, and innovation-based industries. However, the lack of consensus on the definition of the creative sector has led to fragmented



discussions, which could be undermining the development of cohesive and coordinated policies for the sector.

The absence of a definitive term for the creative economy presents opportunities and challenges for the sector. The expansive conversations on what makes a creative economy allow safe spaces for a broad swathe of creatives to gather, re-imagine and shape visions without preconceived notions of what it is and what comprises it, freeing them to understand it within their contexts. Doing so can build ownership and ensure that efforts to support the sector's developments are self-sustaining.

“ The lack of consensus on the definition of the creative sector has led to fragmented discussions, which could be undermining the development of cohesive and coordinated policies for the sector.

However, it remains essential that these fragmented discussions and efforts are harnessed so as to contribute to effective regional policy coordination. A prevailing consensus on the definition of creative economy can lead to greater clarity and coherence in collating and building databases that capture and track the contributions of the creative economy in terms of trade, employment, and consumption. Doing so can lead to better informed and evidenced-based policymaking that identify the trends and gaps, and the needs of CCI.

Towards an Effective Regional Policymaking for a Creative Economy in ASEAN

Given the fast moving CCI landscape, it is important that policymaking for the promotion and development of the creative economy stays ahead of the curve and through targeted implementation, catalyse changes and growth for the sector. Governments have a role to encourage and foster the CCI across the creative economy value chain (Rosenweig et al., 2018).

On the supply side, governments can foster the growth of talents and capabilities. People-centred policies must take centre stage by opening opportunities for the development of education, science and technology, and upskilling cultural and creative workers through a culture of lifelong learning. On the demand side, governments can drive demand through branding, supporting market access and development, and protecting intellectual property. To ensure market efficiency, governments have a role to play especially in developing the ecosystem, including digital and physical infrastructures, and facilitating cultural and creative industries' access to capital and financing. Equally important is to future-proof efforts by building

carbon neutral infrastructures and providing green solutions for the sustainable development of the CCI in the face of climate adversity.

At our regional level, ASEAN has put in place the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework that identifies the creative economy as a sector needing support to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and as a high potential sector for post-pandemic recovery. In addition, the ASEAN's Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts (2016-2025) further underscores the importance of the CCI as an impetus for regional cooperation.

Alongside these policy pronouncements, regional discussions on the promotion and development of the creative economy are afoot with a pipeline of concrete initiatives led by the ASEAN senior officials responsible for culture and the arts in coordination with the various sectors of the ASEAN Economic Community Pillar and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Pillar.

A thriving ASEAN creative economy, where citizens can enjoy the curative and creative benefits, requires ASEAN to put in place adaptive and innovative approaches involving stakeholders across the value chain, including policymakers, administrators, thought leaders, academics, cultural and creative makers, and entrepreneurs. ■

References:

The complete list of references is available at the following link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-ZoOrILLtguR6lkCC7adkUIT2vbEHRg/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=108687542188381018676&rtoref=true&sd=true>



Globalisation of Music

The Road to Cultural Diversity and Understanding?



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The Creative Economy Programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, n.d.-a) describes the creative economy as “the knowledge-based economic activities upon which the ‘creative industries’ are based.”

According to UNCTAD (2018), “the size of the global market expanded substantially, more than doubling in size from 208 billion US dollars in 2002 to 509 billion US dollars in 2015.” The trend continues and “[i]n 2019 at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly, 2021 was declared the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development” (UNCTAD, n.d.-b).

Notably, Indonesia, one of the ASEAN countries, was the main sponsor of the proposed declaration. This corroborates the increasing importance of creative economy in the ASEAN region. As the UNCTAD programme notes, a creative economy increases the volume of trade and development and leads to improvements in people’s quality of life and the realisation of sustainable development, which includes an understanding of and respect for the value of cultural diversity. In other words, creative economy “can foster income generation, job creation and export earnings while promoting *social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development*” (UNCTAD, 2010, emphasis added).

This article will introduce the interaction between the Indonesian and Japanese worlds of popular music and show how it could lead to economic development and cultural dialogue and understanding among various societies.

Indonesian Singer Rainych Ran and Japanese Music: A Cross-border Encounter

Rainych Ran, a singer and a YouTuber from a small town in the Province of Riau, Indonesia, became an online celebrity when one of her YouTube videos suddenly went viral. According to *The Japan Times*:

Singer Rainych Ran began uploading her covers of J-pop and anime songs to YouTube about five years ago, and while she received some attention over the years, nothing has prepared her for the frenzy she experienced in 2020 after she tackled American singer Doja Cat’s chart-topping “Say So” in Japanese. Ran’s take became a viral hit, racking up millions of views on her YouTube channel and getting Doja Cat herself to geek out over the rendition on Instagram. (St. Michel, 2021)

The Japanese music industry quickly noticed the success. On 2 October 2020, “Say So–Japanese version–tofu beats Remix” was released by Sony Music of Japan, with Tofu beats—one of Japan’s leading track makers—as the producer and remixer, and Hina Kagei—a popular Japanese TikTokker—as the performer in its music video (Sony Music, 2020a).

Rainych’s interest in Japanese popular culture goes back to her early childhood. While she is from a small town, she “had one place that would lend out manga” (St. Michel, 2021). She particularly enjoyed such manga works as *Detective Conan* and anime works of Studio Ghibli (Konishi, 2020). Then she serendipitously found a community of *utaite*—which literally means “singer” but often refers to singers who cover and sing songs from J-pop, anime and Vocaloid works, and share their renditions on various social media platforms—and began singing covers and uploading videos on YouTube (Michel, 2021). As she works together and collaborates with other more experienced *utaite*, her videos began to be noticed and finally led to the surge in popularity with her “Say So” cover.

Rainych’s covers of the so-called “city pop” music reflect her global musical influences. City pop is a genre of Japanese popular music that was popular in the late 1970s and the 1980s. It combines Western and Japanese rock and folk music elements and has urban city vibes. The genre has seen a revival in popularity in the past decade, in part strengthened by video-sharing sites, such as YouTube, where people can upload their old favorite songs. This makes it discoverable by a wide range of audiences from different generations. In October 2020, Rainych covered and released “Mayonaka no Door: Stay with Me,” originally sung by Miki Matsubara in 1979 (Sony Music, 2020b). Although the resurgent popularity of the song is not solely the result of Rainych’s cover, it certainly cast a spotlight on the song and, more generally, on the genre of city pop.

I focus on the case of Rainych from Indonesia, but similar interactions between ASEAN and Japan seem to be increasing. For example, in March 2021, the Warner Music Vietnam announced that “2 phút hơn (Kaiz Remix)” became the most played Vietnamese music in Spotify (Nishizaki, 2021). The music’s popularity came after it was used to score a user-created video mixing characters from Japanese anime and Chinese game contents (Nishizaki, 2021). Partly due to the rise of social media, cultural interactions between ASEAN and other East Asian societies including Japan and China seem to be strengthening.

Emerging Trends in Music Production and Consumption and their Potential Socio-Cultural Benefits

Several points can be highlighted from the case of Rainych Ran. First, the rapid rise in popularity of Rainych was made possible by the emergence of new Internet-based media technologies and the prevalence of the use of social media by the younger generation throughout the world. Rainych, who confessed she had never learned to sing professionally and lives in a small town in Indonesia, was able to connect to the world through the platform of YouTube. The sudden rise in popularity was also made possible by the cross-platform interaction between YouTube and Instagram, which drew the attention of the original singer, Doja Cat.

Second, the rise of new technologies has blurred the boundaries between professional producers of music and other popular cultural products, on the one hand, and the consumers/audiences of the products, on the other. Scholars call the blurring of the distinction between artistic producers and consumers “prosumption,” a portmanteau word of production and consumption (Nakajima, 2012). Many creative works are coming out from “prosumers.” The production of cover songs on YouTube is a case in point. Like Rainych, many do-it-yourself users of the new media technologies are crossing into the sphere of production by uploading their own creative works.

Third, the globalisation of creative goods seems to be changing course in the age of the Internet and social media. In the past, globalisation was mainly unidirectional—for example, Japanese anime flows from Japan to other parts of the world like Indonesia. However, the case of Rainych defies this global flow of creative industrial products. The initial impetus for Rainych’s interest in Japanese popular culture may have come from the unidirectional flow of manga and anime works from Japan to Indonesia, but the song that made her viral was a cover of an American song sung in Japanese. The Instagram live broadcast by the American singer Doja Cat pushed up Rainych’s popularity. In other words, the mediation of American popular culture adds another global dimension to the interaction between Japanese and Indonesian creative sectors. Rainych singing Japanese city pop songs out of Indonesia has made this genre even more popular in Indonesia, Japan, and other parts of the world. In sum, the model of globalisation that has manifested in the case of Rainych is much more interactional and multidirectional—a network form of globalisation.

Fourth, when we examine international relations through the lens of culture, the concept of “soft power”—which Nye (2004) defines as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments”—often comes to the fore. Notwithstanding the utility of the concept in some cases, the case of Rainych seems to suggest the value and power of culture different from those manifested as soft power. In the case of Rainych, the cultural products were not designed to enhance the soft power of Japan or Indonesia or the United States, but seem to lead to the recognition of cultural diversity. For example, many Japanese people who watched Rainych’s videos came to be interested in knowing more about the culture she is from, including the relatively lesser-known (to the Japanese) Riau Province and Sumatra Island and the religion of Islam as Rainych wears a hijab when singing songs on YouTube. In sum, the case of Rainych points to the creative economy’s potential contribution to cultural interaction and understanding.

Fifth, it is important to remember that Rainych’s popularity surge happened in March 2020, amid the global COVID-19 crisis. In 2020, Rainych signed a deal with Sony Music and released several songs that became popular hits in Japan and beyond. The case of Rainych points to the increasing resilience of creative industries such as the music industry in the face of global crises like pandemics in part due to digital technologies. When people cannot go out and need to stay home, they tend to turn to cultural activities and products, including listening to music and watching videos and movies at home. The resilience of a society may depend on the existence of music and other creative products for enjoyment, and hence strengthening the creative economy is one of the crucial elements as we move toward sustainable development.

It is crucial, however, to note that not all types of creative economy and creative industries are conducive to digitalization and hence resilient to public health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, even in the case of the music industry, live performances have been disrupted and many of the theatres and music halls—especially the ones operated as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or under individual operation—have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis. We need to be aware of the potential “digital divide” in creative economy and creative industries.

To conclude, a creative economy brings economic potential, as the commercial success of Rainych illustrates, and at the same time, provides socio-cultural benefits, that is, recognition and understanding of various cultures in the world. ■

References:

The complete list of references is available at the following link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-ZoOrILLtguR6lkCC7adkUIT2vbEHRg/edjt?usp=sharing&ouid=108687542188381018676&rtoref=true&sd=true>



Supporting the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia



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The creative economy has the potential to not only strengthen the expansion of global value chains, increase digital adoption among creative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), fuel the export of cultural goods and creative services, and foster ownership through local engagement, but also contribute to the overarching goal of sustainable development. The global market for creative goods increased considerably from 436 billion US dollars in 2002 to 964 billion US dollars in 2015 (UNCTAD, 2021).

Southeast Asian countries are among those that have extended support to their creative industries to boost the creative economy, realising that knowledge-based economic activities can foster income generation, job creation, and export earnings while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity, and human development (UNCTAD, 2010).

Following the global trend, creative trade in Southeast Asia has also risen in the past decade. Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand have been increasingly promoting trade in creative goods and services. Singapore, for example, is currently the world's 10th largest exporter of creative goods, generating 743 billion US dollars in profits (UNCTAD, 2018) and creating 12.7 million jobs (UNESCO, 2015). Meanwhile, Indonesia reached a growth rate of almost 30 per cent for its exports of creative goods during 2012–2015. Indonesia also contributed to changing the landscape for the creative economy in Southeast Asia as a strong advocate and the main sponsor of the proposal to declare 2021 as the UN International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. To strengthen creative industries, Thailand re-established the Creative Economy Agency (CEA) in 2018 to foster collaboration and lead the direction of the creative industries. In the Philippines, the Philippine Creative Industries Development Act filed at the House of Representatives proposes the establishment of a Creative Industries Council to drive the development plan for recovery and growth of the creative industries in the country.

While the creative economy has offered a large potential for socioeconomic growth, the COVID-19 pandemic has hindered the industry's progress and resulted in loss of livelihoods and income. Comprehensive policy responses for the creative economy need to be in place to assist its recovery and assure its resilience and sustainability, both in normal and unprecedented circumstances.

Overview of the Creative Economy in Southeast Asia

The value of creative trade in ASEAN, for both exports and imports, has been increasing since 2003. However, the growth of creative trade declined during 2012–2015. A decrease in exports was evident in Malaysia and Thailand, while a decline in imports was evident in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

According to UNCTAD's statistical breakdowns, the export of creative goods in Southeast Asia has depended mainly on the design sector. Singapore has contributed the largest proportion, which has caused an unbalanced development of the region's creative industries (Sioson and Korwatanasakul, 2021). To understand Southeast Asia's creative economy landscape in more detail, we describe the best practices of selected ASEAN countries (namely Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines) to extract policy recommendations in addressing the challenges in the region.

Entrepreneurs in Indonesia have been progressively engaged in creative economy initiatives for sustainable development in

recent years by adopting digital platforms and other digital tools to connect their culture with broader audiences. For example, videos of the famous Indonesian singer and YouTuber Rainych Ran, became viral in Japan and elsewhere, showing that the “directional flow of the cultural goods has diversified from source to consumer countries all around the ASEAN region” (Nakajima, 2021). The younger generation can harness the new digital landscape, such as Internet media technologies and social media and networking sites, to facilitate the delivery of their creative products. Such multidirectional flows can help promote the soft power of a country and heighten cultural diversity (Nakajima, 2021).

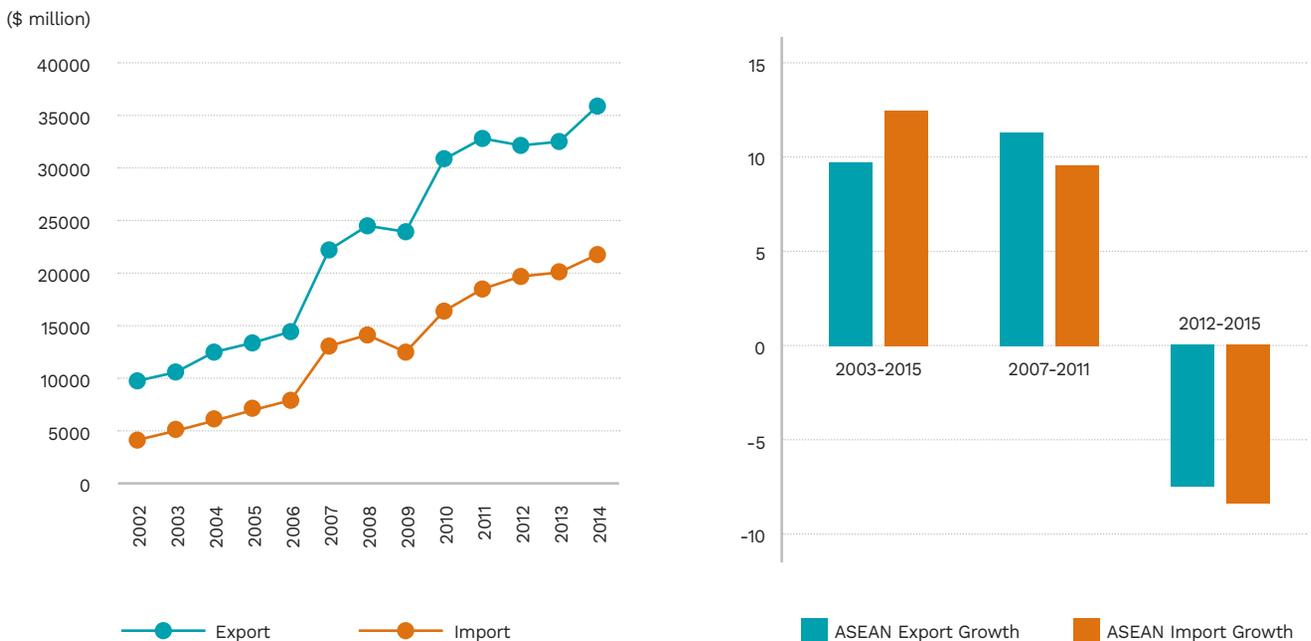
Singapore, as a leader in advancing the creative economy in the region, has developed a robust climate for creative businesses and entrepreneurship. To foster an environment where creative industries can flourish, Singapore has focused its efforts on creating “a cohesive and welcoming multi-cultural society; strong intellectual property laws to protect ideas” (Wee, 2021). Strong collaboration among networks of creative agencies has created multiple events, such as the Design Week, Writers’ Festival, and International Festival of Arts. Singapore also nurtures creative talents by opening opportunities to expose students of all levels to arts, design, digital, and media in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (Wee, 2021).

To drive the growth of the creative economy in Thailand, the CEA has established the Thailand Creative District Network to connect the public and private sectors with civil society to promote creative environments for the industry. The CEA also facilitates the application of UNESCO Creative Cities for Bangkok and Sukhothai, has organised Bangkok’s Design Week since 2018, and established the CEA Online Academy, which offers online creative courses for capacity building and the CEA Vaccine for SME consultation (CEA, 2021).

The Philippines’ creative economy has continued to grow. The creative industries, mostly from the copyright-based formal sector, comprise 6.52 per cent of the country’s GDP in 2012. The creative economy generated 3.2 billion US dollars in 2018, mainly from creative services such as software and IT services, animation, game development, digital marketing, and design services, making the country number one in the ASEAN region. Despite this success, there is no creative economy center or government agency in the Philippines in charge of the sector

“ Comprehensive policy responses for the creative economy need to be in place to assist its recovery and assure its resilience and sustainability, both in normal and unprecedented circumstances.

Figure 1: Value and Growth of Creative Goods Exports and Imports in ASEAN



Note: Data are not available for some countries in 2015; Source: UNCTADStat

“ Additionally, immediate attention should be paid to the post-COVID-19 strategies for the recovery of creative industries and the economy. Due to the lockdowns and social-distancing restrictions, the adoption of digitalisation is necessary to continue economic transactions.

to date. A huge segment of the industry relies on freelancers, who are estimated to number around 2–4 times as many as those in the formal sector but are unaccounted for in official statistics, making it more difficult to assist them during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mercado, 2021).

Although the creative economy has much potential, challenges remain, especially due to the lack of appropriate policies to support the industries. Insufficient financing and financial sustainability and a lack of standard valuation of creative work could stagnate its growth (Sioson and Korwatanasakul, 2021). For example, Thailand faces the challenges of a lack of common understanding on the meaning of creative industries and the rapid changes in the digital landscape (Punpeng, 2021), while the Philippines needs a centralised government agency to create a policy roadmap for creative industries (Mercado, 2021).

Amid these challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected creative industries worldwide. Although there are no data available on its impact on the industries in Southeast Asia yet, UNESCO (2021) has estimated an overall contraction of 750 billion US dollars in gross value added by cultural and creative industries worldwide in 2020. Losses in revenue in these industries in 2020 could be in the range of 20 to 40 per cent across different economies, possibly resulting in 10 million job losses for creative workers globally, especially freelancers. The Philippines' creative industries, for example, were likely affected severely due to the country's heavy reliance on creative freelancers. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a comprehensive policy framework for the creative economy must be

developed to support the people and the economy to thrive and recover in the post-pandemic era.

Rebuilding After the Pandemic— Some Policy Recommendations

Fostering the creative economy in the Fourth Industrial Revolution amid the COVID-19 pandemic is a true challenge for countries around the world, not just those in Southeast Asia. We suggest the following three major socioeconomic factors for consideration when designing comprehensive policy frameworks or a roadmap for the development of the creative economy.

First, digitalisation can be adopted by (i) supporting technological innovation via financial support and the facilitation of R&D investment, (ii) strengthening ICT infrastructure for digital readiness, and (iii) facilitating digital transformation in all related sectors, areas, and groups of people. For example, creative entrepreneurs could tap on the proliferation of electronic-commerce (e-commerce) and mobile-commerce (m-commerce) sites in Southeast Asia to reach their markets and keep the economy alive despite the COVID-19 restrictions (Sioson and Korwatanasakul, 2021). When disruptions affect creative market demand and the market capacity to supply this demand, such as in the case of the Philippines, digital platforms can help to improve the demand for services and their delivery mechanism and find alternative markets, models, and revenue sources (Mercado, 2021).

Second, although technology is being maximised, it is important to nurture creative talents, which cannot be replaced by automation, to avoid extreme job losses. This can be achieved through (i) educational reforms to equip people



with digital technologies and to upgrade the skills necessary in these changing times, (ii) capacity building initiatives for SMEs to support them in niche markets and national branding, and (iii) the establishment of mechanisms to protect intellectual property rights. Taking Singapore as an example, Wee (2021) noted that modernised technology is not enough, and cited “building a strong talent pipeline in new skills... creating platforms for rapid prototyping and experimentation amongst creatives, technologists and business” should intersect with technological advancement. The development and enforcement of international property rights laws and regulations will encourage more ideas for creative products and services.

Third, partnerships and networks for knowledge creation and cultural



exchanges are essential for boosting creative industries and the production of cultural goods and creative services. These partnerships promote the recognition of cultural diversity and national branding networks, thus leading to an increase in demand for creative products. The partnerships and networks can be established at the international level (among countries) and the domestic level (e.g., city partnerships). Clustering or fostering city partnerships could assist in the technological shift to digitalisation, nurturing creative talents, and establishing an environment where creative workers in both the formal and informal sectors can thrive to reach the goal of sustainable development.

Additionally, immediate attention should be paid to the post-COVID-19 strategies for the recovery of creative industries and the economy. Due to

the lockdowns and social-distancing restrictions, the adoption of digitalisation is necessary to continue economic transactions. The use of digital platforms and e-commerce can facilitate market expansion and reinforce connections for creative industries. Besides bridging people and markets, digitalisation is an essential part of developing creative products and services and executing innovative ideas and the approaches for delivering them. Moreover, financial support, e.g., subsidy campaigns and long-term loan programmes with preferable interest rates, must be offered to SMEs and creative entrepreneurs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain business liquidity.

The creative industries have increasingly played an important role in boosting economic growth for sustainable development. To support and promote

economic activities in these industries, Southeast Asian countries will need to develop and design comprehensive and inclusive policy frameworks, taking into account cultural diversity and digital advancement. ■

The original version of this article was previously published in the Asian Development Bank Institute's Asia Pathways blog. The original version, including the references list, may be downloaded from: <https://www.asiapathways-adbi.org/2021/09/supporting-creative-economy-sustainable-development-southeast-asia/>



From Local to Global A New Portal Taking Small and Medium Enterprises Across Borders



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ASEAN businesses need support to internationalise and engage in trade across borders and have a positive impact on economic growth. It is a well-known that businesses that engage internationally can grow faster, experience higher turnover, adopt technological capabilities, and increase wages. In turn, their competitiveness improves in global value chains as well as in domestic markets.



But having suppliers and buyers on the other side of the world means disruptive events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can interrupt the flow of trade. The gridlock is reversing the globalisation trend, with businesses leaning towards localisation or regionalisation once again. Many businesses are now re-evaluating their supply chains and bringing production closer to home. To future-proof their business, however, companies need to look at the bigger picture and adapt to emerging trends that other industries have embraced. Digitalisation, automation of industries and the rise of knowledge-intensive industries, “smart” and predictive technologies, growth of cross-border services, and the ever-blurring line between goods and services, are all impacting industries and trade, and shaping the future requirements of businesses.

However, companies, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), often struggle to find information about the “how to’s” of international trade, including how to enter new markets,

build new business connections and networks, adapt their business to change, and access new technologies, knowledge, and expertise. This is often because of the lack of finances and/or capacity, a common problem of SMEs across the world. To help strengthen SMEs’ participation and integration in the ASEAN business community and enable them to take advantage of opportunities at their doorstep and keep up with global trends, the 10 ASEAN Member States launched a joint digital SME support and matchmaking platform—**ASEAN Access**.

ASEAN Access is a virtual international business support portal, offering SMEs, including micro enterprises and other businesses in all sectors, information on trade and proactive market entry support through events and business matchmaking in ASEAN and beyond. As trade between ASEAN Member States becomes much easier, information on the trade of goods and services in the region and how to access new markets must also be more available to

businesses. As a first-mover, ASEAN Access offers country profiles on each Member State and sector briefs in agriculture, food and beverages, cleantech, manufacturing, and digitalisation and IT. These provide an in-depth view of the ins and outs of specific industries, pointing out opportunities for export and import and trade in services, all with the aim of helping companies make informed decisions about their next venture.

While the portal is free to visit and use, there are benefits to registering as a member on ASEAN Access. First, registered users can download country profiles and sector briefs. Second, the portal features a databank of service providers, such as importers and agents, logistics and shipping

companies, translators, export consultants and market researchers, legal and regulatory experts, all of whom can offer foreign SMEs practical cross-border support to enter local markets. All visitors can browse a list of service providers either by country or type of service, but only registered members get their direct contact details.

For SMEs, these services help cross-market entry barriers and make the process easier and faster. At the same time, for service providers, being registered on ASEAN Access is a way to increase their brand visibility to attract new international clients.

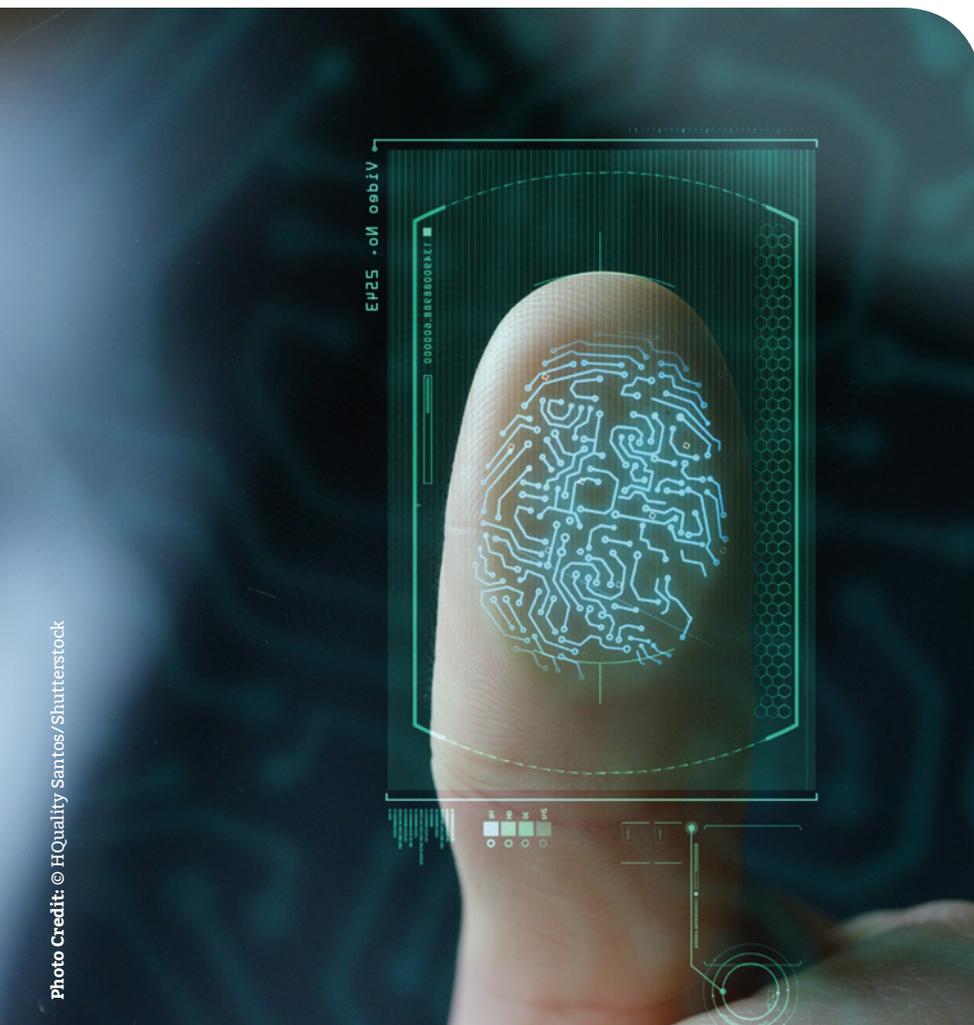
Registered members of ASEAN Access can also join the **ASEAN Access MATCH** community. MATCH is the official business

matchmaking and event platform in ASEAN, offering companies the chance to participate in virtual cross-border business matchmaking, knowledge and skills-building workshops, and market and sector information events. Businesses can also showcase their products, technologies, or services, free of charge, in MATCH, or describe the products, technologies and services they are looking for. MATCH events are all delivered through the extensive network of business support organisations behind ASEAN Access in the region, and Europe and China.

Business support networks are key to helping SMEs overcome market access barriers, thanks to their connectedness, cross-border reach and understanding of international trade and market entry. ASEAN Access is the official business information gateway of ASEAN and the first-ever network of this kind in Southeast Asia, connecting business support organisations to businesses. In fact, in the second half of 2021, ASEAN Access successfully co-organised three matchmaking events, on food and beverages, creating value from biomass, and sustainable packaging topics, with the Enterprise Europe Network, the European Union's flagship business support network.

Online business matchmaking is a new concept for many ASEAN SMEs. The traditional way to make international connections is to participate in a trade fair, rent a booth, and lay out a display of products or technologies. So, what exactly are business matchmaking events? Business matchmaking events are pre-scheduled one-on-one private meetings between two companies or organisations to discuss concrete business, technology, or research cooperation, booked and scheduled on a special online platform. Matchmaking allows companies to meet quickly with other companies during a trade fair or event and can be much more cost-effective than exhibiting at a trade fair.

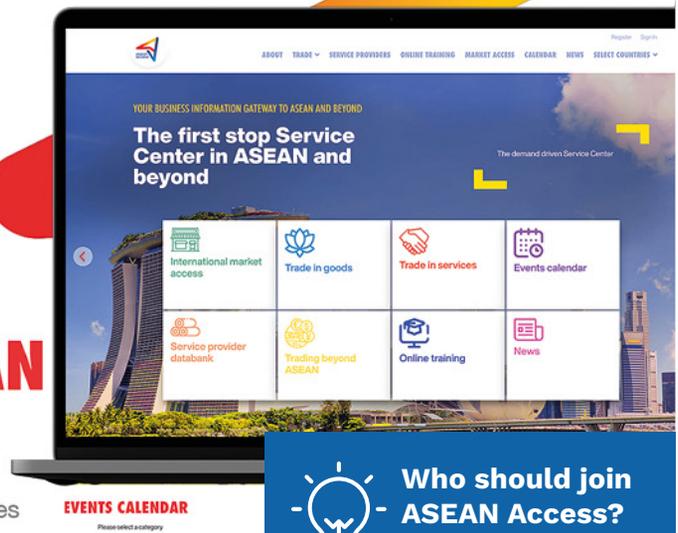
ASEAN Access is taking this concept a step further and is focusing only on virtual events and matchmaking. By mid-2020, due to the COVID-19





YOUR BUSINESS INFORMATION GATEWAY TO ASEAN AND BEYOND

Enhancing market access for ASEAN businesses



Who should join ASEAN Access?

ASEAN Access is open to SMEs and other companies and organisations from all

industries and sectors interested in increasing their international trade activities and finding additional contacts, or just starting on their internationalisation journey. All companies and organisations can browse the website. Still, if they register as members, they can enjoy member benefits, have access to ASEAN Access MATCH, and meet new business partners from around the world. All companies qualifying as service providers are invited to register for free and to list their service on the databank to increase their business visibility and find new business opportunities. Public and private business support organisations are also welcome to join as Network Partners of ASEAN Access.

pandemic, many business events went virtual including matchmaking events. While the world is slowly returning to the new normal, and physical events are once again starting to take place worldwide, there are considerable benefits to online events, even once travel and flying get easier. Online events are cheaper to run, saving up to 75 per cent in costs, and take less time to organise. Participants no longer have to travel to a trade fair, consuming time and money, but can participate online. Virtual meetings also offer a much wider participant pool from around the world, giving a more varied list of potential business partners. Virtual events are also much better for the environment, saving on materials and fuel and minimising CO2 emissions.

In January 2022, ASEAN Access will launch the first set of targeted matchmaking events, covering the industries featured in the sector briefs and other key sectors in ASEAN. These events will employ a cross-sectoral approach, i.e. even if an event focuses on the food and beverages industry, ASEAN Access will invite not only food and beverages manufacturers, but also companies from other sectors, such as digital, agricultural and environmental technology companies, to tackle overarching social and

industrial issues within the industry. This way, companies benefit from new partnerships, and the partnerships also have the potential to bring positive impacts to the industry and society.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Veerapong Malai, Director General of the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion, the managing organisation of the portal, said, “The world and its industries are changing, and we need to adapt, to offer SMEs more opportunities and support that reflect the struggles and opportunities of the future. Through ASEAN Access, we are excited to bring companies not just trade and business information, but also to introduce the benefits of virtual events and matchmaking and embrace digitalisation as a whole.”

ASEAN Access is one of the many steps taken by the ASEAN Member States to support the growth and development of SMEs, helping accelerate the region's post-COVID-19 development and focusing increasingly on resilience and sustainability.

Developed with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), ASEAN Access is implemented under the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

(ACCMSME) and is steered by the ASEAN Task Force on SME Service Centre Web Portal. With the Office of SMEs Promotion, Thailand managing the portal, national focal points and network partners of the 10 ASEAN Member States actively support the delivery of the services. ■

More information about ASEAN Access can be found on www.aseanaccess.com



Mapping the Readiness of ASEAN's Creative Ecosystem



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There is a growing interest in the socio-economic contribution of the creative economy. It is spurred by the technological and digital transformation happening worldwide at an unprecedented rate and the increasing shift from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy where creativity and innovation are becoming critical.

The commercial and cultural values of creative industries have become instrumental in driving entrepreneurship and innovation. They offer new economic opportunities and generate income through trade and intellectual property rights. Supported by a dynamic value chain composed of small and independent enterprises, non-profits, and professionals, the creative industry can empower local communities and foster ownership which is critical to inclusive and sustainable growth.

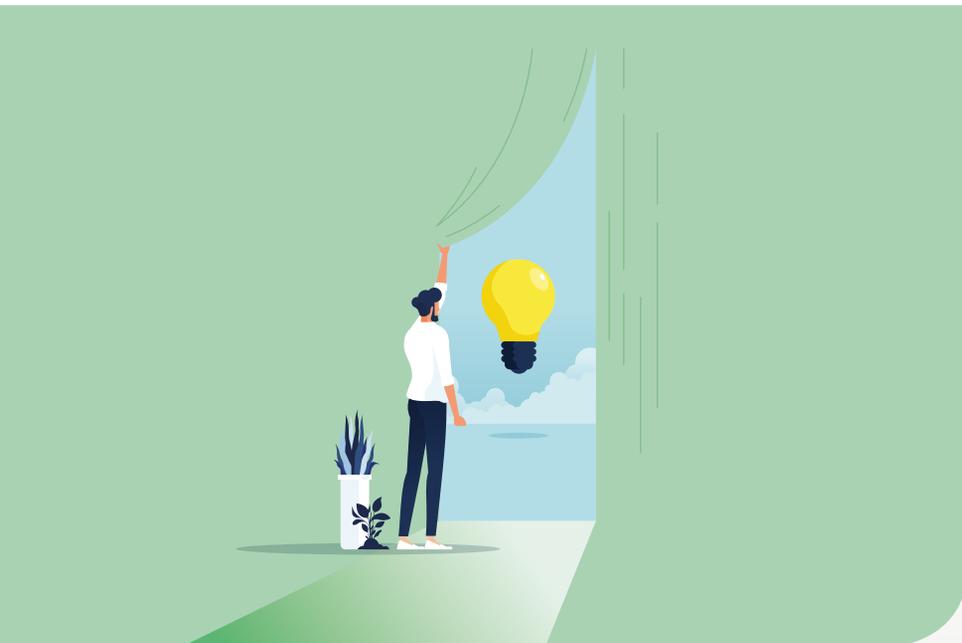
According to the global database of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2021), world trade in creative goods reached 964 billion US dollars in 2015, more than double the value in 2002 (436 billion US dollars). ASEAN is becoming an important player in the export and import of creative goods. (Figures 2 and 3)

For the past decade, digital technology has played a significant role in the economy and affected the trade structure, including the creative industries. ASEAN's export structure of creative goods has relied significantly on the design sector, constituting three quarters of the total creative goods exports.



Despite its strong dominance, the design sector's export share has been diminishing over time. The publishing sector's contribution also showed a similar drop. In contrast, the export share of the audiovisual and new media sectors has been rising steadily. (Figure 3)

A closer look at these figures reveals a more complicated story. In the region, the development of the creative industries is uneven, with the largest share of the ASEAN trade in creative



goods coming from Singapore. Thailand, Malaysia, Viet Nam, and Indonesia to a certain extent are supporting the ASEAN trade in creative goods, particularly in terms of exports, while the rest of the countries' contributions are constant albeit modest. Apart from Singapore, a majority of ASEAN members "still belong to the factor- and efficiency-driven categories of development where creativity and innovation play a minor role in their development" (Puutio 2016; World Economic Forum 2013).

A combination of factors can hinder the growth of the creative sector, such as the lack of policies that support the ecosystem, access to financing and financial sustainability, the nature of creative work, and the valuation of creativity, among others. The increase in the digital adoption in many sectors has created new forms of social and economic opportunities, especially for small and medium-sized cultural and creative enterprises. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has resulted in the loss of income and livelihoods for several key industries within the creative economy.

Drawing from the framework of government interventions across the creative economy value chain

by the Boston Consulting Group, we look at four factors that are necessary to address to boost the creative economy in the region: policy building, sustainable financing, digital readiness, and clustering.

Policy Building

Most, if not all, ASEAN countries have included the creative economy in their national development strategies. As a result, they have agencies and institutions dedicated to fostering and promoting creative industries. These agencies can act as one-stop shops for small, medium creative enterprises (SMCEs), providing them information on finance, opportunities, incentives, among others. For example, in Brunei Darussalam, according to Brunei Economic Development Board (BEDB) (2020), the government sets five priority business clusters, namely *halal* food, business services, tourism, downstream oil and gas, and technology and creative industry, while emphasising the importance of the financial services sector that will help achieve its long-term national development plan.

In Cambodia, while the cultural industry has constantly been growing over time since the first adoption of its national cultural policy in 2014,

the advancement of the creative industry still lags because of inconsistent government support.

Indonesia had recognised the significance of the creative economy since 2008 when it outlined the 2009–2015 Creative Economic Development Plan. It aimed to build a creative industry investment environment, develop human capital, and promote innovation (Simatupang, Rustiadi, and Situmorang, 2012).

The creative industries in Lao PDR and Myanmar are still at the initial stages, with no specific government policies in place.

Malaysia has advocated for the creative industries through policies and programmes that prompt infrastructure and market-based improvements, e.g. streamlining intellectual property, enhancing human capital development, and penetrating international markets. These initiatives are based on the country's National Creative Industry Policy or *Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara* (DIKN) issued in 2009.

The Philippines is a latecomer in promoting the creative industries among the ASEAN-5. However, the Creative Economy Council of the Philippines (CECP) has set an ambitious goal of making the Philippines' creative industries number one in ASEAN and among the top five creative economies in the Asia Pacific by 2030, in size and competitiveness.

Singapore's creative industries have been taking the lead in the ASEAN region. As early as the 1980s, the government's forward-looking policies recognised the importance of the industries as part of the tourism sector. The creative sector has since established its own space and value through well-crafted policies, and strategies such as the National Arts Council (NAC)'s "A Global City for the Arts" in 1995, and the Ministry of Information, Communications, and the Arts (MICA)'s "Creative Industries Development Strategy (CIDS)" that was in accordance with the Economic Review Committee's vision in 2001.

Figure 1: Trends in World Trade of Creative Goods



Source: UNTADStat

Figure 2 : Trends in Trade of Creative Goods in ASEAN



Source: UNCTADStat

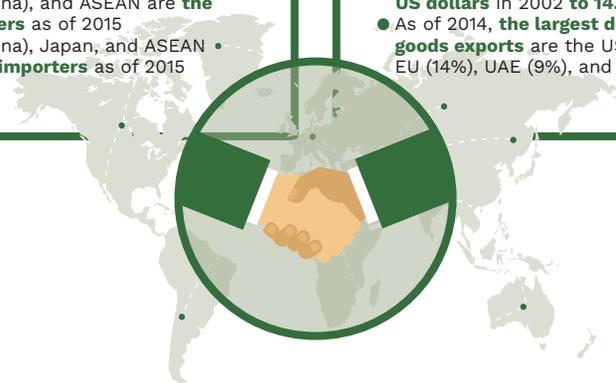


Figure 3: Export Share

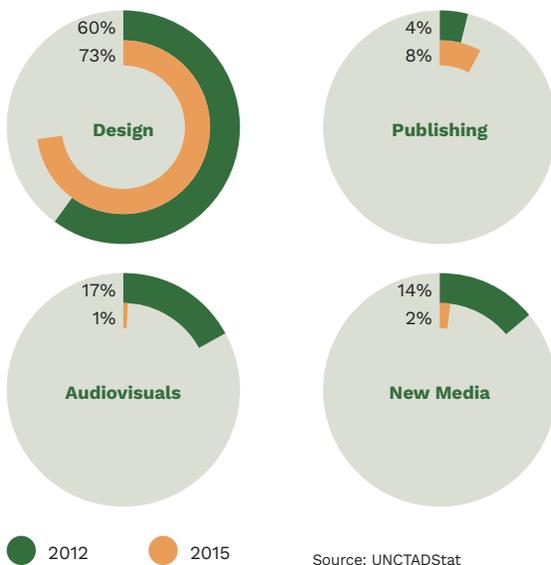
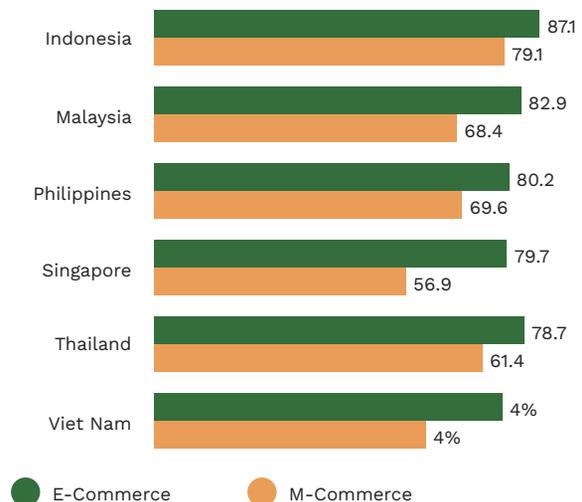


Figure 4: E-commerce and M-commerce Penetration, 2021



The development of creative, cultural, and high value services (part of the creative industry) is one of the technological and industrial goals described in the “Thailand 4.0” strategy (Korwatanasakul, 2019). The government established the Thailand Creative Economy Agency (TCEA) in 2011 which aims to combine creativity, innovation, and cultural assets to deliver higher value products and services and upgrade the industry into a creative hub of ASEAN. The Creative Economy Plan coupled with the Creative Economy Fund was set up to meet these goals.

Viet Nam considers creative industries as part of the cultural industries. In 2016, it adopted National Strategy for the Development of Cultural Industries and set a conservative target for the contribution of the cultural industries to the national GDP at 7 per cent by 2030 (Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Viet Nam, 2016).

Sustainable Financing

Financing for SMCEs historically has been fraught with challenges. It is well documented that in general, lending

to SMEs poses higher risks compared to large corporations (Dietsch and Petey, 2004; Altman and Sabato, 2007). There is compounded risk aversion among lenders when it comes to SMCEs. Borin, Donato, and Sinapi (2018) note that access to finance has been considered a major hindrance to entrepreneurship development in the cultural and creative fields.

When it comes to sustainable financing, SMCEs in ASEAN continue to rely on a mix of private and public financing. This is

because of two things; first the general perception of SMEs being high-risk for many private financing institutions, and second, SMCEs specifically in culture and arts often rely on personal financing and donations. SMCEs in the culture and arts sector, therefore are more likely to self-exclude financially. In these instances, governments can give support by bridging the gap between SMCEs and the private sector. We also found that States with coherent and consolidated national strategies are able to provide more funding opportunities, whether it be purely public, or mixed financing.

For example, in Indonesia the defunct BEKRAF launched the Government Incentive Assistance (BIP) programme to improve the financial access of firms investing in the digital application, game development, and culinary sub-sectors (Wreksono, 2017). Creative economy businesses in Indonesia also have Nexticorn, a platform launched by the government and private sector to fund start-ups.

In Malaysia, the government subsidises the country's cartoon and animation industry funding offers worth 2.7 million Malaysian ringgit (equivalent to 649,000 US dollars), through the Malaysian National Film Development Corporation (Finas), for purchasing content from animation companies (*The Sun Daily*, 2018). Malaysia also has a number of grants under the Cradle Investment programme.

Singapore, on the other hand, provides grants to artists through the National Arts Council. While there are no specific measures towards SMEs in the creative industry, the government has committed 2 billion Singapore dollars for SME loans. Moreover, various local and international financial sources are available for SMEs.

Digital Readiness

ASEAN's level of digital connectivity, such as internet use, mobile cellular subscriptions, and electronic and mobile commerce (e-commerce and m-commerce) penetration is considerably high, comparable

to developed economies. In 2019, ASEAN's average rate of individuals using the Internet is approximately 58 per cent of population, while, on average, there are 134 mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people in the region (World Bank, 2021). Figure 4 shows the high penetration of e-commerce and m-commerce among ASEAN countries, with the annual growth of 40 per cent (ASEAN Secretariat, 2019).

The region hosts the fastest growing digital startups, including e-commerce platforms such as Lazada, Shopee, Grab, and Gojek. Such platforms allow entrepreneurs to reach a wider market. The use of digital financial services in the region is on the rise, making it easier for creative entrepreneurs to sell and receive payments for their goods and services. Nevertheless digital readiness remains uneven across the region, even as digital connectivity continues to improve. Digital readiness refers not just to infrastructure but to skills and adoption.

Clustering

Considerable research has been conducted on the geographic clustering of creative industries to drive innovation and growth. For example, in Western Europe, North America, and Australia where much of the research has been done, "clustering" has shown to contribute to the revitalisation of inner-city neighbourhoods and rural areas (Fleischmann et al, 2017). Establishing strong networks of creative industries can increase visibility and attractiveness to investors. Moreover, creative industry networks can provide the necessary assurances for financial institutions, increase SMCEs' credibility and potential access to markets, and subvert funders' perceptions that investing in SMCEs is uncertain and risky. Networks can give birth to collaborations that assure the spread of risk and cost-sharing. In addition, the literature points to "knowledge spillovers," where knowledge flow between and among enterprises through collaboration and observation (Fleischmann et al, 2017).



In the ASEAN region, clustering is also seemingly lopsided, States with consolidated national strategies are supporting the development of creative hubs. Data are not consolidated, however, as in some cases, creative hubs are still closely linked with the sprouting of coworking spaces. Support is still seen to be coming from external entities rather than from within. For example, through its Hubs for Good programme, the British Council works with creative hubs in the region (British Council, 2019).

Creative hubs are finding more support from the private sector, philanthropic networks, and venture capitalists. Impact investing is also a source of funding for creative hubs



because of the inherent nature of creative industries, seeking both for-profit and social impact. More and more, creative makers, creative hubs, and spaces are utilising social media platforms to network, promote, and market their activities. The popularity of social media platforms and increased digital connectivity in the region have allowed creative entrepreneurs access a broader group of audiences and potential markets.

Future Growth Prospects

The developments in the creative economy in the region remain uneven. The countries considered to be ahead have adopted one of two strategies: they included the creative economy in national development strategies,

or formulated specific strategies towards developing the creative economy. On the other hand, countries that are considered lagging are in the early stages of developing a creative economy, and in some cases still have a limited discussion on what constitutes a creative economy.

The lack of consensus on the definitions of the creative economy may be a hurdle for many countries, even beyond the ASEAN region, to craft policies to support the creative ecosystem. Strong policies act as frameworks from which developments in the creative economy can proceed. Policies that support the creative ecosystem are necessary for entrepreneurs and actors to thrive and grow.

“Fostering the creative economy requires creativity. It demands the exploration of “fresh set of institutional questions and responses, not just the straightforward application of models that have worked at other times and in other places” (Holden, 2007).

While policies and the digital and technological infrastructure have already been set in some countries, another consideration involves the processes through which policy responds. Governments need to be able to engage with organisations that are “micro, fluid, disaggregated—in many senses ‘dis-organised’” (Holden, 2007).

Technological and digital innovations, while providing resources, can cause challenges to governments gearing up to foster the creative economy. Issues of widening the digital divide notwithstanding, capacity building tailored to the needs of SMCEs to improve their readiness and awareness of the various schemes, funding sources, and resources that they can tap.

Fostering the creative economy requires creativity. It demands the exploration of “fresh set of institutional questions and responses, not just the straightforward application of models that have worked at other times and in other places” (Holden, 2007). ■

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<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-ZoOriLL1guR6lkCC7adkUIT2vbEHRg/edjt?usp=sharing&ouid=108687542188381018676&rtfpof=true&sd=true>





Erin Dwi Azmi

Digital Illustrator

Digital technology has been transforming the world of art since the 1960s. Artists are leveraging the power of technological innovations to explore new forms of artistic expression and create engaging digital art experiences. Digital transformation in the art field became more evident during the pandemic, as artists were pushed to expand their work into the digital realm.

Digital paintings, 3D sculpting, digital photography, digital installations through virtual and augmented reality, and mixed media are some of the digital art forms that have emerged and are now common to see and experience in creative spaces and public places.

Erin Dwi Azmi, our featured cover artist for this issue, is one of these talented, up and coming digital artists. She is an Indonesian illustrator who creates through digital mediums and showcases her illustrations in social media. Erin is fast becoming known for her style of bright, bold colours and sharp geometric lines, and her artworks have appeared in the cover of several publications and campaigns of prominent organisations and brands. Erin graduated from Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI) in Yogyakarta at the beginning of the pandemic and currently works in a freelance capacity.

“I have liked drawing since I was a kid, and there’s nothing else I wanted except to continue mastering my skill in illustration. American illustrator Abbey Lossing and French artist Malika Favre are my favourite illustrators because of their unique approaches.

“I have tried a lot of styles in my drawing, from realistic to cartoons, and these practices contribute a lot to my style



development. I began to understand my style when I worked on my thesis and it goes on until now, with more alignments towards precision and visual considerations.

“My drawings have also been influenced by the city I live in—Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta is a very special region as it is called the city of arts and culture, and an education city. It’s really amazing to live here, the environment really pushes the creative vibes to the next level. So many exhibitions and arts performances are also organised here.

“I graduated from college, in the beginning of the pandemic. During that time, everyone struggled with their lives to survive. I tried to draw consistently everyday as I had no projects yet. And then, something good happened to me. People started to recognise my work and I managed to secure several collaboration projects. Some of the most memorable collaborations were when I worked with China’s mobile and online payment platform Alipay for their campaign, the C40 Cities global mayors network for their annual report cover, and with Netflix Indonesia to make digital murals with 10 other illustrators.

“I like being a freelancer. Being a freelancer doesn’t mean that you only wait for projects to come, it also involves handling a lot of projects with a tight deadline. Time management is the key for everything to work out well in freelancing. I once decided not to take on a project because my schedule was full, and I’m afraid I will not be able to do my best if I take it.

“The pandemic situation in Indonesia is getting better, and it’s also easier for me to get projects this year. Last year, most of my clients were from outside Indonesia, but now I have many clients from Indonesia. I will have new collaboration and commercial projects soon. I think it’s important for us to stay resilient and consistent.

“I hope ASEAN can give more support to the creative industry; it can be by creating more art, design and cultural events, livening up the community, encouraging people to support artists by buying their real and original artworks only, and supporting art movements.” ■

Interviewed by Novia D. Rulistia. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.

The NFT Art Craze Reaches Southeast Asia



NOVIA D. RULISTIA
STAFF WRITER, *THE ASEAN*

NFTs or non-fungible tokens are creating a buzz in the art world and creatives in Southeast Asia are buying in. They are latching on to the craze, experimenting with their digital work, and gearing up to take the NFT scene by storm.

But what is an NFT? Christie's auction house defines an NFT as a unique, digital certificate that is stored on a blockchain (distributed ledger of transactions that is not controlled by a central authority) and provides ownership rights of digital assets. In a digital world where it is easy to replicate things, NFT can imprint ownership rights in all kinds of digital assets.

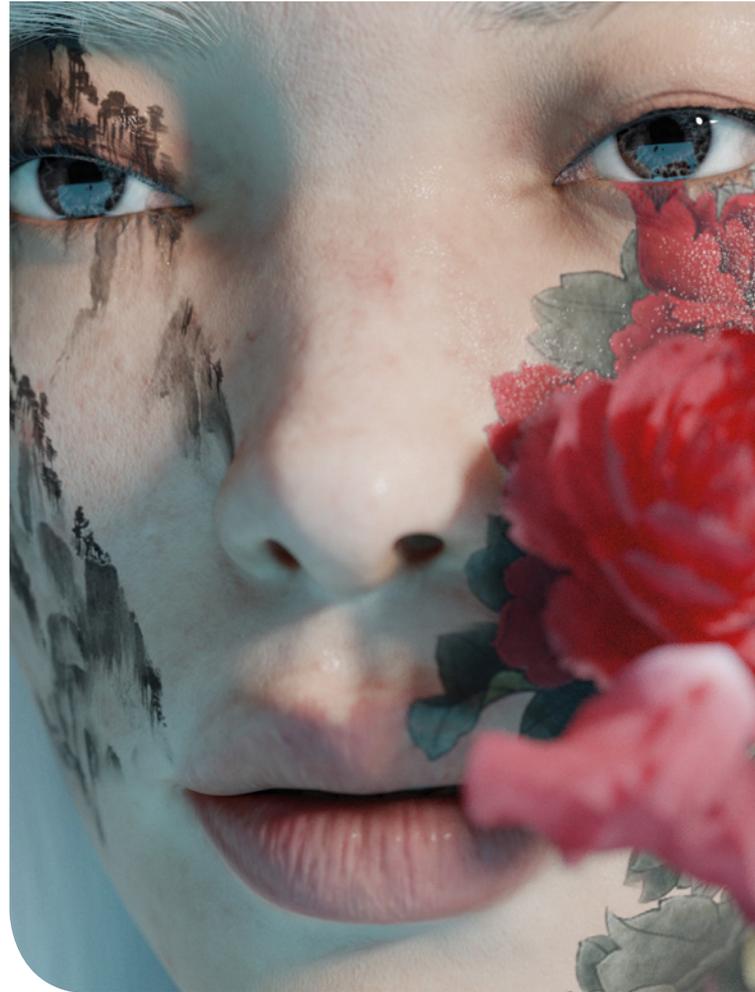
The NFT craze began to explode earlier this year when American artist Mike Winkelmann, known as Beeple, sold an NFT digital artwork at a whopping 69.3 million US dollars through Christie's auction house. This record sale has sparked huge interest in NFT worldwide.

Photographer-turned-NFT artist Shavonne Wong from Singapore and the Philippine's first NFT artist Luis Buenaventura share their personal stories in the NFT art scene with *The ASEAN*.

Shavonne Wong

Shavonne has been a fashion and advertising photographer for 11 years and appeared as a guest photographer at Asia's Next Top Model TV programme. Her photographs have been featured in top fashion magazine covers and cosmetic brands, such as *Vogue* Germany and Lancôme. She is also part of the 2020 Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list in 2020.

When the pandemic hit, she put her photography activities on hold. Not wanting to keep her creative mind going dull, she started thinking of ways to be productive—making virtual models that juxtapose realism and surrealism. After so many hours of YouTube tutorials and months of experimentation, she started to see progress with her virtual model project.



“When I started doing realistic models, it was with the intention to go to commercial clients, asking them if they wanted to use my virtual models for their campaigns. But I found that it was slightly difficult because it's new and it's hard for them to wrap their heads around it,” says Shavonne, whose work was recently featured on the first-ever NFT *Vogue* cover.

Lunah Moon III is part of an Asian-themed series with Shavonne's virtual model, Lunah



After she learned about NFT from her husband, she decided to give it a shot and found out how exciting the NFT scene is as it provides room for everyone to explore creative freedom.

“It’s all about my own art in NFT; I get to do everything that I want to, literally all that I want to try and experiment with. A space for digital artists is limited in the traditional art scene, and it’s interesting to see how NFT allows a real space for digital artists, a space to earn money from digital art,” she says.

A seasoned photographer, Shavonne has transferred her photography skills in the making of NFT artworks. All her virtual models are women, and she brings her photography composition and lighting angle into her 3D project. “The way I like in real life is basically the kind of way I would like in 3D.”

Almost all her NFT artworks have been sold, ranging from 1.25 Ether (around 5,400 US dollars) to 7 Ether (around 25,500 US dollars). She will get a cut of the cake if the buyer of her artwork resells it at a higher price.

For now, Shavonne wants to focus on improving her skill in minting an art on NFT. As a new kid on the block, she wants to make her name in the NFT art scene, to stand out and be known “because in every new space you don’t have to be best you just have to be available, and I want to be the best and available.”

“A space for digital artists is limited in the traditional art scene, and it’s interesting to see how NFT allows a real space for digital artists, a space to earn money from digital art.”

Luis Buenaventura

Luis is the first NFT artist from the Philippines. He has been working in cryptocurrencies since 2014 but only learned about NFT in 2017 when he joined Curio Cards project—a set of 30 collectible digital cards created by seven artists, including three cards by Luis.

None of the cards were sold back then, but when Curio Cards was discovered in March 2021 as one of the first digital arts minted on NFT, crypto enthusiasts started to buy, sell, and resell every single copy. “It was originally sold for like 2 US dollars, but now some are selling for 12,000 US dollars a copy. Seven of us continued to make 1 per cent of royalties from those sales,” says Luis, who studied Fine Arts at the University of Philippines.

In October, a collector sold a set of the card for 1.2 million US dollars through Christie’s in New York. The total sales volume of CurioCards as of October has reached over 30,000 Ether, or around 120 million US dollars.

“It’s very interesting to watch how the NFT smart contract can still exist even when the business layer has disappeared, meaning your rights as an artist continue to be protected even if the business entity is no longer around.”

Luis redirects his royalties and proceeds from his other digital art sales to set up an initiative, called Cryptopop Art Guild, to help young Filipino artists from underprivileged communities create a sustainable income as they learn to become better artist. His decision to establish the guild came after he received a piece of art from a girl who drew it with her fingers on her mobile phone.

“I thought about these talented kids in the Philippines who don’t have the opportunity to move

further because they are coming from a marginalised community. And with the guild, these kids might have a shot,” he says.

The guild, built only in September, organises artistic, business, and technology mentorship sessions for its 195 young artists. Luis plans to hold an exhibition in December to showcase the works of the guild members.

Future of NFT Art

The benefits that NFT offers seem to have promised a bright path for NFT art. But artists may find challenges as they jump on the NFT bandwagon.

Luis points out how some barriers of entry, like learning about crypto currency, blockchain, and secret phrases in crypto may turn people off when they set their foot in NFT. “These barriers have existed in the crypto world since it was invented, but it’s a little bit more pronounced now,” says Luis, who penned two books on cryptocurrencies titled *The Little Bitcoin Book* (2019) and *Reinventing Remittance with Bitcoin* (2017).





NFT 101

What is cryptocurrency?

It's a digital or virtual currency that is secured by cryptography, making it nearly impossible to counterfeit or double-spend. Many cryptocurrencies are decentralised networks based on blockchain technology. The largest and most well-known cryptocurrency is Bitcoin, followed by Ethereum and Dogecoin.

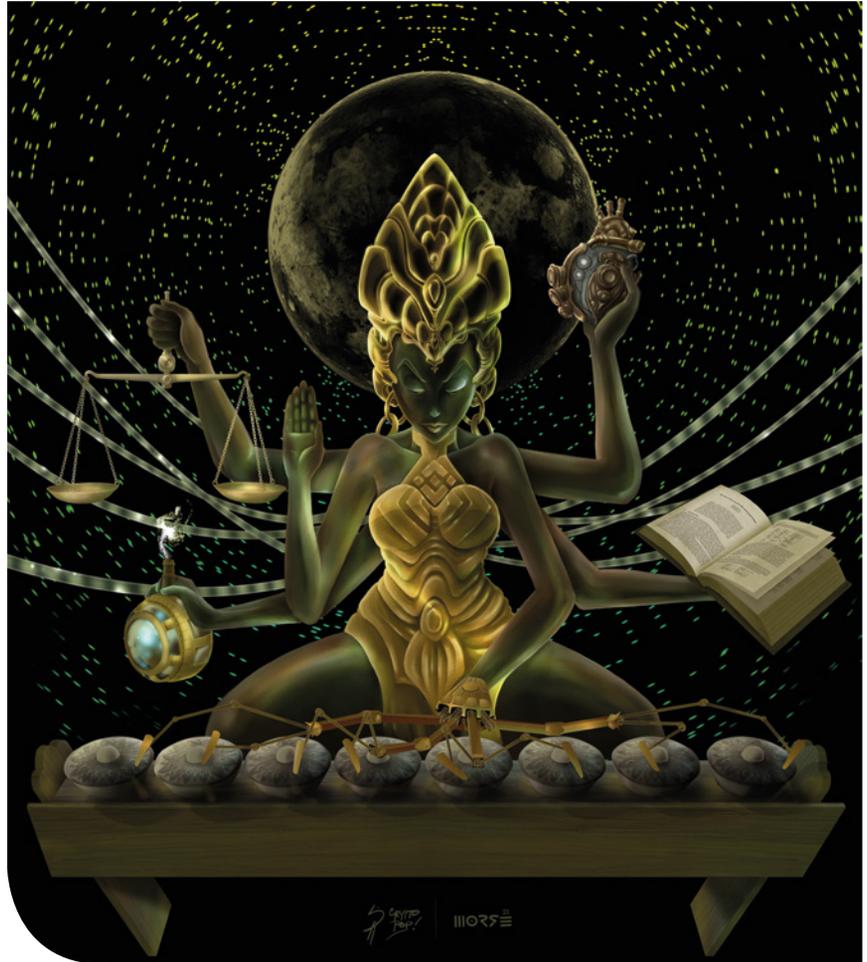
counterfeit or double-spend. Many cryptocurrencies are decentralised networks based on blockchain technology. The largest and most well-known cryptocurrency is Bitcoin, followed by Ethereum and Dogecoin.

What is blockchain? It refers to the collective record (called a ledger) that stores cryptocurrency transactions, like a communal Excel spreadsheet. The same infrastructure documents both things, showing the close link between non-fungible tokens as a concept and cryptocurrency.

Is NFT only for digital art? NFT can be used for all digital items, such as gaming, album release, digital memorabilia, and even film distribution.

What does NFT minting mean? It refers to the creation of an NFT and its recordation on a blockchain for the first time.

Luis' latest work, titled T4N6, is the cyber-goddess audiovisual piece that produces a musical score of kulintang



Shavonne agrees, saying that no matter how confusing the crypto world may be, those who want to join the NFT scene must learn about it. She warns of the expensive gas fee that artists pay when doing transactions on NFT. The amount can even reach a whole month of salary in some countries.

“Would you put a month’s salary on a bet that your works are going to sell? I’ve seen lots of artists where it increases their lives by doing NFT, but there’s still a bit of gamble involved,” she says.

Luis adds that the art guild he established was a way to help artists in dealing with such fees.

Regardless of the challenges, Luis and Shavonne are optimistic about the future of NFT in the region.

“NFT art scene is such a game changer because for many artists in Southeast Asia, it puts the artworks in front of an audience who does not care about where you are from, unlike in traditional art. Another nice thing about NFT art is that you don’t have to get boxed into styles, and you can do the thing you want to grow,” Luis says.

Shavonne highlights the growing discourse of NFT almost everywhere, with a good number of creators from Southeast Asia starting to join the NFT movement.

“The boom is just less than a year, but people are starting to know more about it. There are more mentions in the media, more platforms to exhibit the works, and more people are talking about it. It’s slightly more mainstream, but not mainstream yet,” says Shavonne. ■

Easy Steps to Create an NFT

- Prepare the digital assets.
- Purchase Ether, the cryptocurrency of the Ethereum blockchain. It can be bought on various platforms, such as Coinbase and Kraken. There are many blockchain platforms to make NFTs, but popular NFT marketplaces currently use Ethereum.
- Set up a digital wallet and transfer Ether to it.
- Pick an NFT marketplace, connect the wallet, and create an account.
- Create the NFT. Users need to upload the digital assets and the minting process will start. Once minted, users can sell the NFT with a fixed price or a bidding.

Source: <https://101blockchains.com/>; <https://www.domusweb.it/en/news/2021/05/13/how-to-mint-your-own-nft-in-5-simple-steps.html>; <https://intercom.help/foundation-529b3c2d3a16/en/articles/4731452-a-complete-guide-to-getting-eth-and-a-wallet-with-metamask>; artfairphilippines.com; PopularMechanics.com; Investopedia.com; Christie's Auction House

Singapore by Design

A Look at the City-State's Thriving Creative Economy



MARK WEE
DESIGNSINGAPORE COUNCIL



GENINE LOO
DESIGNSINGAPORE COUNCIL



Creativity is part of Singapore's DNA and has always been intertwined with our national development. In a 2018 speech, our Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, noted: "Singapore is a nation by design. Nothing we have today is natural or happened by itself." In a speech to university students, he called for a collective effort at reimagining and rebuilding to take the country from SG50 (50 years of independence) to SG100 (Seow, 2021).

Given the far-reaching economic and social disruptions caused by the pandemic, as well as the pre-pandemic changes and challenges it accelerated in the past year, the drive to reimagine and rebuild is even more timely. So we have to ask ourselves: What is Singapore's differentiating factor? How do we move from value-adding to value creation? What role will we play, and what relevance will our small nation-state have in the post-pandemic world?

We believe these answers could be found by harnessing the human imagination and unlocking our creative potential towards developing innovative solutions for a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving economy and society. In other words, we believe in the creative economy as the key to our future. Our creative industries will be the driver for generating sustainable economic wealth and social capital.

(Re)Shaping and (Re)defining Singapore's Creative Economy

In Singapore's goal to be a global-Asia node for innovation, technology, and enterprise, the creative industries play the role of being an innovation driver. They enable a vibrant cultural

Part of Singapore Design Week 2019, "Street of Clans" was a vibrant creative festival that brought together heritage and creative communities

“ The design sector is promoted and developed by the DesignSingapore Council, which sits under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and drives Singapore’s vision to be an innovation-driven economy and lovable city by design.

economy, and are an increasingly significant economic contributor for Singapore.

The growth of global creative industries has amplified this, especially given our location in the Asia-Pacific region. According to UNCTAD (2018), Singapore is amongst the world’s 10 largest exporters of creative goods. The Asia-Pacific region, meantime, is the world’s biggest Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) market, generating 743 billion US dollars in revenues (33 per cent of global CCI sales) and 12.7 million jobs (43 per cent of CCI jobs worldwide), according to UNESCO, CISAC, and EY (2015).

In recent years, the Singapore government has taken more steps to grow our creative economy, in recognition that this unique interface between creativity, culture, economics, and technology has the potential to generate income and jobs while at the same time promoting social inclusion, diversity, and human development. Much of Singapore’s efforts in cultivating the right environment for

the creative industries lie in nurturing the following key ingredients: a cohesive and welcoming multi-cultural society; strong intellectual property laws to protect ideas; and a robust climate for creative businesses and entrepreneurship.

Different public agencies collectively drive these efforts. The National Arts Council champions our performing, visual, and literary arts. Our national museums, heritage institutions, sites, and monuments come under the custodianship of the National Heritage Board. These agencies work closely with the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth that funds major cultural institutions like the Esplanade for performing arts and the National Gallery for visual arts. Our digital, media, and film industries are developed by the Infocomm Media Development Authority under the Ministry of Communications and Information. The design sector is promoted and developed by the DesignSingapore Council, which sits under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and drives Singapore’s

vision to be an innovation-driven economy and lovable city by design.

Singapore to become the Asia HQ of choice through concerted efforts aimed at making the country a sweet spot for creative canvases. We have become home to regional headquarters or launchpads for global brands and players in the creative industry, and multinational corporations like LVMH group, Lucasfilm, and Ubisoft have made Singapore home.

Hand-in-hand with our economic approach, we also recognise the importance of the cultural sector in contributing to the resilience and lovability of Singapore, building social capital for the country, and strengthening ties among fellow citizens.

In culture and place-making, we have developed keystone arts and heritage plans such as our first ever heritage masterplan which was co-created with the community to infuse heritage into our everyday spaces, and support more ground-up initiatives. Our Singapore Arts Plan, a five-year blueprint (2018 to 2022), takes a whole ecosystem approach to boosting the arts sectors and investing in public cultural institutions alongside commercial arts spaces.

The creative agencies also work closely with each other and the Singapore Tourism Board to build a vibrant creative calendar throughout the year: Singapore Art Week, Singapore Design Week, Singapore Writers’ Festival, Singapore International Festival of Arts, performing arts festivals by Esplanade and the Night Fest, to name a few. These events are aimed at ensuring everyone experiences the arts in a positive way and to bring together a diverse and multidisciplinary line-up of local and international programmes. They have



Designed by the Singapore University of Technology and Design for "Night Fest 2018," the installation combines paper planes and music to form a unique multi-sensory experience



been very well-received: the annual Night Fest, for example, drew up to half a million visitors (pre-pandemic), many of who were returning audiences (Jenie, 2017).

Building our talent pipeline to support the future development of our creative industries is crucial, and our creative agencies work closely with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to do that. One landmark milestone was recently reached: MOE announced Singapore’s first university of the arts, recognising that our two arts colleges, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and LASALLE College of the Arts, have grown in admissions, quality of programmes, and academic standards, and can “contribute more to cultural life in Singapore and the region,” as noted by the Education Minister (Ng, 2021). Mid-career reskilling and developmental opportunities are also being built for creatives and those looking to switch to a creative career. For example, DesignSingapore Council launched the Skills Framework for Design for both designers and professionals from other sectors to support the creation of a design-empowered workforce (DesignSingapore Council, 2019).

The Way Forward

But we are aware that the world has changed, and a new post-pandemic landscape lies before us. So what lies ahead for the future of Singapore’s creative economy? The answer will be built upon overcoming our current challenges and identifying and capitalising on new opportunities. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, global developments like geopolitical tensions and digitalisation

have started to present new challenges to our creative sector, which tends to be comprised of small independent players. In the design sector, for example, more than 90 per cent of our design firms are SMEs with less than 1 million US dollars in yearly revenue.

In a poll on the impact of COVID-19, conducted by DesignSingapore Council in June 2020, designers told us that besides cancelled or stalled contracts, reduced market demand, and challenges in business development, the next biggest impact was accelerated innovation. Design firms shared with us that the pandemic has prompted new ways of engaging clients, new business models, new organisational structures, and new value offerings. Of course, one of the most significant areas of this innovation lies in accelerated digitalisation, which the creative sectors have a big role to play in shaping.

The The Cultural and Creative Industries are a significant driver for the digital economy, with digital cultural goods being the biggest revenue source for the digital economy (Aziz, 2020). Despite the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the creative industries, we anticipate that the sector will rebound with Singapore’s economic recovery, and form a key supporting factor to the growth of Singapore’s digital economy. The pandemic has accelerated deep shifts in consumer behaviour, from the rise of digital consumption to the impact of remote work and virtual communication. These changes reveal areas of opportunity for the creative sectors to complement other high growth sectors. For example,



online learning platforms can benefit from digital tools that build on gaming technologies and new forms of cultural content. Digital health platforms can benefit from human-centred design and User Experience Design concepts.

Uncovering the upside in the intersection of the creative sector and technology has to be done in two key ways: building a strong talent pipeline in new skills, especially leveraging technology; and creating platforms for rapid prototyping and experimentation amongst creatives, technologists, and business.

Agencies like the National Arts Council have already started by setting up experimental opportunities through platforms like the Arts x Tech Lab, which will allow arts practitioners to work closely with technologists on new projects and programmes that reimagines the intersection of art and technology. Similarly, our council runs



(Left) ART-ZOO is a playground that creates an immersive world of plants, animals and whole ecosystems

(Below) Forest & Whale creates sustainable, reusable, and user-friendly takeaway products as an alternative to the disposable food packaging engendered by Singapore's takeaway culture



the Good Design Research programme, which empowers designers to investigate new product and service innovations through design research for sustainability and impact, developing new knowledge along the three pillars of culture and identity, processes and systems, and new technology adoption.

Going forward, it will also be crucial to push for deeper collaborations across disciplines as well as with the sectors outside the creative industries—for example, the visual arts with new technologies, design and the food sector, or new media with the performing arts; for more interdisciplinary partnership-oriented models, and borderless thinking.

Our Future is Together

The success of our ASEAN ecosystem is critical to all our individual successes. We need to enable greater collaboration opportunities for our creatives to work across cities, with one another, or even

with wider industry partners, to nurture the creative leaders of the future, and develop creators who can work seamlessly across the diversity of Southeast Asia.

It is our desire to collaborate with the region on the creation of new creative products, services, or experiences, whilst leverage on our connectivity to the rest of the world.

Over the next years, we hope to optimise our strengths and build upon our close relationships through our ASEAN and UNESCO networks, as well as welcome new opportunities and partnerships. We look forward to working together on developing the region's creative economy, and are excited about exploring how we can collectively unlock virtually limitless possibilities with our fellow ASEAN and UNESCO counterparts. ■



DesignSingapore Council's (Dsg) vision is for Singapore to be an innovation-driven economy and a loveable city through design by 2025. As the national agency that promotes design, our mission is to develop the design sector, help Singapore use design for innovation and growth, and make life better in this UNESCO Creative City of Design. The Dsg is a subsidiary of the Singapore Economic Development Board. Please visit www.designsingapore.org

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Elaine Chan

Crafts Enthusiast. TENUN Fashion Week Co-organiser.

Southeast Asia's enduring tradition of handwoven textiles took centre stage at the recently held *TENUN Fashion Week*. This inaugural event was held online in the trend of digital fashion weeks as a response to COVID-19 restrictions. It was organised by the ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (AHPADA) and Tanoti—a Malaysian accredited social enterprise dedicated to heritage craft preservation, women empowerment, and rural community building. The event was supported through the Maybank Foundation's Women Eco-Weavers programme and also by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Sarawak, Malaysia.

Elaine Chan, honorary secretary-general of AHPADA and co-organiser for TENUN Fashion Week 2021, shares her experience with The ASEAN.

“This is the first time a fashion week has focused solely on Southeast Asian handwoven textiles. We very much wanted to focus on weaving communities. A lot of times, you go to a fashion week and see the names of designers, but you don't know where the textiles are from. As our focus was on handwoven textiles, it was important to us that weaving communities were the highlight of the fashion week. We did this by listing participants in the programme according to weaving communities rather than designers.

“This event brought together forty-five communities across ASEAN countries. We were really happy with

the number of weaving communities that responded. Designers were also happy to take the back seat and let the communities shine.

“I appreciated the great sense of camaraderie of all these organisations coming aboard. It was nice to see young participants in their twenties getting really involved and bringing a new, fresh perspective. We also had some seasoned participants who have been in the field in the past 30 to 40 years. Some communities presented internationally for the first time, and I hope that they felt encouraged and empowered.

“The fashion week included panel discussions featuring issues faced by weaving communities. Among these issues was finding the balance between conservation and innovation. The fashion week is supportive of innovation and focused on getting participants to reimagine their old textiles and make them relevant to today's world. It also looked at innovative yarns, such as Tencel, a manufactured fibre. Tencel is seen as being more sustainable than cotton as it does not take up as much water, nor does it compete with farmland.

“This is a new initiative, and it is not over yet. It is going to culminate in the live runway show in Kuching, Sarawak to be held on 3 December 2021 that will be live-streamed as well. I hope we continue to build on this community that we gathered.



*(Left) An outfit by TORAJAMELO Indonesia
(Below) Weavers of Rumah Gare, Malaysia
preparing their threads before weaving*



“ A sub-goal is to enable women to remain in their villages by providing a source of income. They approach weaving as a way to sustain this tradition which is being threatened by rural to urban and international migration.

“I also hope that this event opened up people’s eyes to our traditions and culture, and for them to consider where our garments come from. This ties into the UN SDG goal of responsible consumption. There is a need to change people’s perspective from fast fashion into appreciating something that is of quality and has cultural resonance of where we come from in Southeast Asia.

“Traveling through Indonesia, you see a lot of folk weaving which is an income generator for rural communities. This is something that has come through in TENUN Fashion Week, with many participants from Indonesia being NGOs or social enterprises. The main goal for many of these organizations is poverty alleviation, with the craft being seen as a potential economic generator for women, in particular. A sub-goal is to enable women to remain in their villages by providing a source of income. They approach weaving as a way to sustain this tradition which is being threatened by rural to urban and international migration.

“Growing up in Sarawak, Malaysia, I was exposed to Iban textiles. I appreciated how exquisite these textiles were, but it was only later during my master’s programme, when I researched Iban textiles, that a whole new world opened up to me. I became aware of dream weavers, of weaving being the woman’s war path. Weaving was so much more than producing a piece of cloth. A cloth is never just a piece of cloth.

“I would like to see more of such events with an ASEAN focus, highlighting what brings us together. It will be good to have events where we celebrate what we have in common and our connections, as culture does not stop at national boundaries.” ■

Interviewed by Kiran Sagoo. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.



Viengkham Nanthavongdouangsy

Master Weaver. Fashion Designer.

Born into a family of weavers, Viengkham Nanthavongdouangsy learned the craft at an early age. Through her passion for weaving and dedication to maintain the family legacy, she became a master weaver and a leading fashion designer in Lao PDR. She has also published several books on Laotian textiles and weaving culture.

Vientiane-based Viengkham established her own house of Lao textile and fashion named KHANG in 2015, through which she employs and empowers more than 30 women weavers while promoting Laotian textiles to the global market. She has received international recognition for her designs.

Viengkham has been working closely with weaving communities across ASEAN, participating in events such as TENUN Fashion Week and ASEAN-Korea Fashion Week. Her work is currently on display in the Lao Pavilion at the ongoing World Expo 2020 in Dubai.

“Weaving has been passed on in my family from generation to generation. My mother taught me how to weave when I was six years old and since then, I have never stopped weaving. Weaving is part of my identity and it is also my family’s tradition and culture. In Lao, women used to be taught to weave to prepare themselves for adulthood. However, as a woman living in the city, I may say that I am the last generation that has been taught like this.

“Traditional woven textiles used to be used only in traditional clothing and most of the orders were for tailor-made pieces. Through opening KHANG, I have been trying to innovate with contemporary designs and colors that are more suitable to be worn daily. I had to modernize and improve the quality control to ensure high standards for all my products as we are expanding to the global market. This was quite a challenge for me in the beginning.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation and I needed to shift to online platforms for marketing and selling my products. In the beginning, our business was struggling, especially since most of my



“ Our work is sustainable as we have the techniques that we preserve. It is environmentally friendly due to the use of natural and organic ingredients for our textiles. It also promotes diversity and empowers women weavers.



products are for export and tourists. We didn't have a lot of domestic customers, so we tried to reach the domestic market and also started using Facebook to sell our products. I think in the future, businesses can be done in a hybrid way because we still need human interaction. I enjoy being in my gallery to chat with the customers and hear the feedback that they have for my products.

“I believe that education and life-long learning is very important. If I had stopped learning after I started earning money, I would not be able to be where I am now. That's why I always encouraged young women to finish their education. At one time, we had more than 100 weavers with us and most of them were still young. I asked them to go to school and finish university while weaving with us in their spare time. Now, they have graduated from universities and continue to pursue their chosen career.

“Fashion trends move very fast but I choose to concentrate on slow fashion, valuable pieces that can last. Our work is sustainable as we have the techniques that we preserve. It is environmentally friendly due to the use of natural and organic ingredients for our textiles. It also promotes diversity and empowers women weavers.

“ASEAN is like a big family as we come from similar roots and have a similar culture. We have a close-knit weaving community in ASEAN. Before the pandemic, we used to take turns to go to different countries and learn about our respective weaving cultures. Networking is very important for us because together, we can grow faster.” ■

Interviewed by Pricilia Putri Nirmala Sari. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.



(Clockwise from top left) KHANG uses woven textiles and combines them with a modern twist. As a master weaver, Viengkham conducts many workshops to help her weavers improve their skills, including in methods of natural dyeing.

Thai Creative Industries In Flux



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The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2010), which has been instrumental in promoting and analysing creative economies all over the world through its Creative Economy Program, described the creative economy (CE) as “an evolving concept based on creative assets potentially generating economic growth and development.”

In Thailand, this concept has been proposed since the early 2000s as an engine of growth that could strengthen its international competitiveness. Almost two decades have passed, and Thailand still struggles to contextualise this concept in the Thai setting, manage the tension between economic and cultural values, and develop policies that recognise all stakeholders and allow them to contribute to sustainable development. For a country rich in culture and creative assets but stuck in the middle-income trap, there is no question that CE would bring a host of benefits to Thailand and its people. There have been many attempts to boost the economy through activities based on creativity and innovation, but the successful implementation of CE theories and practices is far from being realised.

Government Initiatives and Policies Related to the Creative Economy and Creative Industries

In Thailand, the concept of creative economy was first discussed when Thaksin Shinawatra was the Prime Minister of Thailand and developed during the premierships of Abhisit Vejjajiva and Yingluck Shinawatra. In 2009, the Thai government’s “Creative Thailand Policy” was initiated with an aim to make Thailand the creative industrial hub of ASEAN. Several government agencies, such as the Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA) (which became the Digital Economy Promotion Agency or DEPA in 2017), the Office of Knowledge Management



and Development (OKMD), and Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC), were the key actors in advancing the idea of the CE in Thailand at the time. However, when a military coup took place in May 2014, all projects related to the creative economy were subsequently suspended. The focus of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), the military junta which governed Thailand until July 2019, has been on the promotion of a digital economy, which could be seen as a way for the new government to distinguish itself from the policies created by earlier governments.

The focus on creative industries reappeared when the Creative Economy Agency (CEA) was reestablished in August 2018 by the Office of the Prime Minister, under the leadership of Prayuth Chan-O-Cha. The CEA aims to drive the creative economy policy forward through collaboration with public and private sectors. The first CEA Forum was held one year later to serve as a platform for knowledge and experience exchange regarding the development of the creative economy, including the creative economy policymaking, the formation of creative spaces for businesses and communities, and the utilisation of creativity as a means to gain a competitive advantage (CEA, 2019). In the past two and a half years, CEA has successfully initiated the Thailand Creative District Network (TCDN), which connects public authorities, the private sector, and civil society to develop creative spaces in municipalities all over Thailand.

The CEA was also active in providing research and information to the city authorities of Bangkok and Sukhothai in the application of UNESCO Creative Cities. In 2019, the two cities were designated “Creative City of Design” and “Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art,” respectively. CEA’s Bangkok Design Week, considered a growth engine for the creative industries, has been organised annually since 2018 and draws approximately 400,000 visitors each time. Moreover, there are a variety of smaller projects throughout the year, such as “CEA Online Academy,” an open online learning platform with creative skills courses, and “CEA Vaccine,” in which CEA commissioned over 300 artists and provided consultation and assistance to small and medium businesses in the creative industries (CEA, 2021).

Key Actors in Thailand’s Creative Economy

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) is

responsible for policy development and is one of the key actors at a strategic level in the development of the creative economy and the creative industries. Figure 1 below shows all of the major players and their roles in the current landscape of the creative economy and the creative industries in Thailand. This list is not exhaustive and only includes some of the most prominent agencies whose work is directly related to the creative economy and the creative industries.

Challenges Faced by Thailand’s Creative Industries

In the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016), NESDC identified four major groups and 15 industries within the creative economy, following UNCTAD’s classification. The groups were renamed, and their industries reshuffled in 2020 as follows:

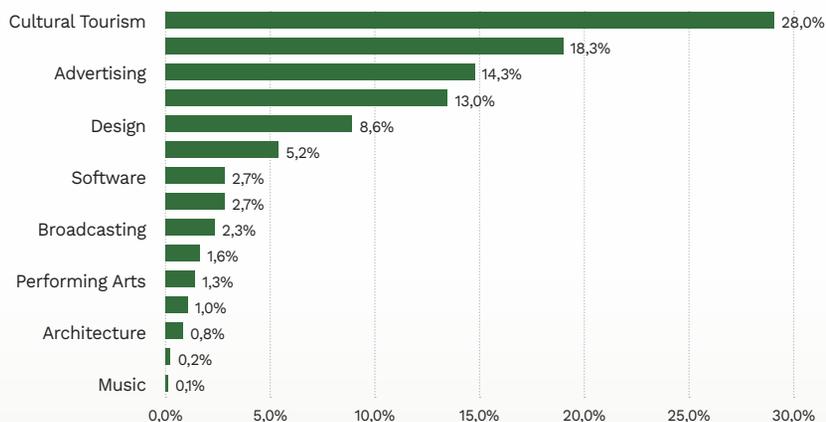
i. Creative originals: Thai crafts, music, performing arts, and visual arts

ii. Creative content/media: Film and video, broadcasting, publishing, and software
 iii. Creative services: Advertising, design, and architecture
 iv. Creative goods/products: The fashion industry
 v. Related industries: Thai food, traditional medicine, and cultural tourism (CEA, 2021)

According to CEA, the creative industries contributed 8.93 per cent to Thailand’s GDP in 2018 (0.8 per cent less than in 2015 at 9.1 per cent of GDP and 3.07 per cent less than in 2009 at 12 per cent of GDP). This contribution is valued at 46.4 billion US dollars. Figure 2 indicates the economic contribution of specific industries. In terms of growth, the only industry with an increase in its contribution to the country’s economy between 2016 and 2018 is visual arts (CEA Creative Economy Review, 2021).

Figure 1: Major Players and their Roles in the Current landscape of the Creative Economy and the Creative Industries in Thailand

Agency	Role (Creative Economy and Creative Industries-related)	Level of Involvement
Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC)	Policy formulation	Strategic level
Ministry of Culture	Policy formulation, grant/subsidy provision	
Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD)	Policy formulation and implementation (creativity and innovation learning)	Operational level
Creative Economy Agency (CEA)	Focal point for public-private partnerships, funding support, training and consultation provider	
Thailand Creative and Design Centre (TCDC)	Policy implementation, resource and consultation provider	
Department of Intellectual Property (DIP)	Training and consultation provider	
Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA)	Creative labour support and development	Strategic level
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	The creative economy and the creative industries Framework provider, economic information and statistics provider	
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	Framework provider, research and development support	Strategic, operational level (providing platform for knowledge exchange)
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	International collaborative policy formulation, funding support	Strategic, operational level (providing platform for knowledge exchange)
British Council	Funding support, research and development	Operational level
Japan Foundation	Creativity and culture project partnership	Operational level
Goethe-Institut Thailand	Creativity and culture project partnership	Operational level

Figure 2: Share of Thailand's CI in 2018

Source: CEA, <<https://www.cea.or.th/single-statistic/creative-industry-gdp>>

The value of creative goods exports has been decreasing since 2018, and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend. As a result, in the first half of 2020, exports of creative goods were down to 3.28 billion US dollars, 1.16 billion USD less than an equivalent period in 2019 (CEA Creative Economy Review, 2021).

In 2017, 826,026 individuals were classified as creative workers in Thailand, representing around 1.5 per cent of the total labour force. Of the total, 300,829 or 36 per cent are in the craft industry. The creative workforce has been shrinking since 2016, particularly in the Thai crafts and design sectors. This is due to a decrease in interest among younger generations, changing demand for craft commodities produced for global markets, and increasing costs of production compared to other countries in the world market (CEA Creative Economy Review, 2021; Chudasri, Walker, and Evans, 2012). The number of craftspeople represented in the surveys may not fully reflect the reality of the craft sector, however. In a paper presented at the 18th International Conference on Cultural Economics, Simon Ellis (2014) asserts that due to the nature of craft production, the creativity of local artisans in rural communities is often overlooked in models derived from Europe and other fully-developed economies that focus on employment or entrepreneurship (when these artisans fit the definition of an entrepreneur).

The decline of the creative industries' contribution to Thailand's economy is caused by a combination of these factors:

- i. *Political instability and discontinuity in policy implementation:* While creative economy and creative industries-related policies have been discussed since 2009, military coups and ongoing political turmoil have prevented effective implementation. Both the 20-year National Strategy and the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan currently in effect emphasise the digital economy rather than the creative economy, which was the focus of 11th Plan, disrupting policy implementation. The establishment of the CEA in 2018 led to concrete outcomes, generating public-private partnerships in support of the creative economy in Thailand in recent years. The political climate is still unpredictable, however, and any shift in the government's strategy could affect the continuity of ongoing funding and projects.
- ii. *The lack of understanding of the cultural and the creative industries:* In Thailand, culture is commonly thought of as being connected to national identity and tradition, collectively seen as "the past." Creativity, on the other hand, is associated with new ideas that can drive society into the future. High-ranking officials view culture as something to be preserved and protected, not needing "creativity".

This could be why the creative industries group title "cultural heritage" adopted from UNCTAD's classification was later changed to "creative originals."

Cultural tourism, however, is still present in the latest classification. But this is problematic. Cultural tourism refers to "travel concerned with experiencing cultural environments, including landscapes, the visual and performing arts, and special (local) lifestyles, values, traditions, events as well as other ways of creative and inter-cultural exchange processes" (UNESCO, 2004). Based on this definition, all types of tourism present in Thailand can be regarded as cultural tourism. It is important to point out that cultural tourism and Thai food account for 46 per cent of the creative industries (in 2018) even though they are both considered "related industries." Therefore, including their economic value in the analysis can give a false impression of the economic contribution of the creative industries to Thailand's GDP. A recent study by UNESCO shows that the contribution of cultural and creative industry sectors to national GDP in Thailand cannot be accurately measured due to a lack of reliable data (UNESCO, 2021).

- iii. *New media and the changing digital landscape:* The revolution in digital technology is changing the way Thai people live. It was reported that over 75 per cent of Thailand's population use the internet, 16 per cent more than the global average. Thais' average daily internet usage is nine hours, ranking fifth globally; the world average is six hours and 43 minutes (Nation, 2020). This phenomenon has opened up more opportunities for the creative industries, especially in the software industry. The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital platforms and ways of working, but not all industries have seen the benefits of the increased reach. The entertainment industry, for example, has been forced to find alternative income streams and production has

been heavily impacted. Independent studios and smaller productions have found paths to distribution via new or established streaming services in place of full-scale theatre releases. With any disruption of this magnitude, there are opportunities, but also risks and challenges; creative workers and organisations in the fields of performing arts, film, and broadcasting must adapt to the changing landscape (Ramasoota and Kitikamdorn, 2021).

Paths Forward

To encourage creative industries to grow, strengthen Thailand's creative economy, and achieve sustainable development in the long term, steps must be taken to address the challenges.

First, we need to strengthen long-term strategy and provide consistent funding opportunities for creative workers and organisations. The decline of the creative industries' contribution to Thailand's GDP correlates with the focus shift from the creative economy to the digital economy. The digital economy is favoured for the belief that it could lead to more concrete products and services in the short term. It is crucial to remember that the creative economy may take longer to implement and see visible results, but its impacts extend beyond the creative industries and their economic value. The creative economy, once it reaches its maturity, will keep

cultural significance alive. It will connect people of diverse backgrounds and brings about unity in society.

Moreover, the creative economy is closely related to the digital economy as well. Innovative technology can enhance and add value to the creative industries, and the digital industries can greatly benefit from the creativity embedded in culture and tradition. Only when the creative economy's potential is fully recognised in government strategy and policies, and funding is provided for the creative industries to improve the processes of cultural and creative productions will we begin to see its sustainable economic and social impacts.

Second, we must develop reliable methods of measuring the true contribution of the creative industries to GDP. Because the creative economy is based on creativity, culture, and knowledge, it is unique to each location. The classifications and models provided by international organisations like UNCTAD need to be adapted to fit the conditions of Thailand. As mentioned earlier, the method of data collection and the criteria used to determine the contributions that are derived from other developed countries are not necessarily suitable for Thailand. In addition, there has to be agreement on what activities should be included in the creative industries. We cannot deny the immense contribution of cultural tourism to Thailand's economy, but it is difficult to classify tourism in Thailand as "cultural" or not. The same thinking can be applied to Thai food and traditional medicine, which are considered related industries. Related industries have always been included in national statistics, skewing the contribution of the creative economy to appear much larger in scale than if they were excluded. In order for creative industries to be adequately developed and to reach their potential, this distinction is important. An understanding of their real contribution needs to be reached to make the right strategic decisions and offer the right support.

Third, we must facilitate the development of skills to allow artists and creative/culture workers to keep up with the

global advancement of technology. Even with the high growth rate of the software industry in recent years, there is still a lack of specialists and skilled labour available (DEPA, 2021). Without the knowledge and tools necessary, creative workers cannot keep up with digital disruption and transformation. Just as the nature of the creative economy is different in each country, skill-development programmes should be contextual and in consonance with the existing environment. Collaboration is key to creativity and learning; thus, knowledge and experience sharing is encouraged. For the creative economy to be sustainable, a creative education needs to be implemented nationwide. This will allow children to express their creativity and develop their creative potential to benefit society at large.

Finally, we must strengthen local governance and community participation in the creative industries programmes. Jane Jacobs (1961, 238), an American social activist and urban planning pioneer, observes "cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody." The long-standing success of the Creative Chiangmai Initiative can be attributed to its development committee that consists of a wide range of stakeholders, including those from education, government agencies, companies, and local communities (Creative Chiangmai, 2020). The development of the creative economy cannot be sustainable if it is led by government policy alone. Everyone's opinion in each community has to be heard and considered. All of the projects implemented should welcome people from all sectors and all generations to participate and benefit from. It is only when everyone feels included that a creative economy can grow organically. ■



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References:

The complete list of references is available at the following link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-ZoOrILLtguR6lkCC7adkUIt2vbEHRg/edjt?usp=sharing&ouid=108687542188381018676&rtoref=true&sd=true>





Thao Vu

Designer. Artist. Eco-entrepreneur.

In 2012, Thao Vu started her sustainable fashion brand, Kilomet109, a local label that prides itself on applying traditional methods into contemporary design and localising its supply chain. She aimed to set an example for other companies to follow.

Kilomet109 is the only label to grow its own textiles in collaboration with local artisans from various ethnic minority groups across Viet Nam. The company is involved in the whole production process from beginning to end.

Thao has been collaborating with other designers and researchers around the globe to promote sustainable methods of natural dyeing and textile production. She has received two British Council Connecting Through Culture grants, which has allowed her and her local artisans to engage in cultural exchange and capacity-building activities.

“Growing up as a child in the 80s and 90s in the rural area of Viet Nam, I became very thoughtful and economical about everything that we use in life. I grew up with artisans around me. My grandma used to weave fishnets and baskets, while my mom knitted our sweaters and hand-sewed our

clothes. Everything was very self-sufficient. It cultivated my appreciation for traditional crafts, my understanding of how things work, and my appreciation of their beauty.

“After working with the Nung An ethnic minority group, I realised that the idea of building a label that works with local artisans is not enough. There are so many things that I did not initially envision when creating my label. It brings me to another level of creativity and responsibility—the responsibility to preserve their tradition and culture, financially empower the women in the community, as well as raise awareness about the environmental impact that fashion could cause.

“To be able to protect the tradition, we must change, update, and evolve it to make it relatable and relevant to our time. By doing that, we can also encourage the new generation of designers and creators to go back and learn about their ancestors, culture, and tradition, and to apply a more modern approach to traditional ways. This would add more value to the tradition that we already have, allowing each generation to add their own layer.



(Clockwise from top left) Kilomet109 uses natural dyes in its products; The process of making ebony fruit dyeing; Artisans from Nung An community working to make indigo dye



“It brings me to another level of creativity and responsibility—the responsibility to preserve their tradition and culture, financially empower the women in the community, as well as raise awareness about the environmental impact that fashion could cause.”

“I want to demonstrate a new perspective on fashion sustainability. I want to bring a new way of looking into tradition and show that creativity, contemporary fashion, and traditional fashion can coexist. The work that I have been building is very local-focused, produced by women artisans from the local communities, engaged in an artistic collaboration where we inspire each other. This is what shapes the design philosophy of Kilomet109.

“The past two years have been very hard for us. Our shop shut down and people can’t travel. My business was badly hurt but we still have online sales and support from our loyal customers who reach out to us and buy new pieces. Due to the pandemic, people are thinking twice about everything, including when consuming and buying new things. They support labels that have more values and we are part of that spectrum. It’s a good sign for us to believe in what we are doing. Physical business is bad but for digital business, it is growing.

“I want to design fashion that has stories. We want the people wearing our clothes to know how the garment was made and who were involved in the production process. This creates a bridge for people to learn about their tradition and culture.

“I really wish to have a stronger connection with the creative community in Southeast Asia. It would be great if ASEAN

could provide us with more platforms to connect and collaborate. Having more symposiums and networking opportunities, not only in textiles but also in design and other topics related to sustainability, would allow us to stay connected and to work together, not only among designers but also among artisans in Southeast Asian countries.” ■

Interviewed by Priscilia Putri Nirmala Sari. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.



Indonesia: When Creative and Informal Economies Intersect



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Agus is a design student in one of the oldest design schools in Indonesia, located in Bandung City, West Java province. Like other design students and professional designers in this city, Agus came looking for a small metal workshop to complete an assignment: a set of home decor products. He hired a metal craftsman to build a prototype. The prototype, built through a simple process, was finished in less than a week.

Udin, a graphic designer, urgently needed to print his work. He contacted a printing shop owner, Andi, to provide this service and then sent the file through *WhatsApp*. Since Udin was a long-time customer, Andi knew what needed to be done and completed the task in two short hours. Once the printout was produced, Andi sent it to Udin right away through *GoSend goods delivery service*. The transaction was quick, efficient, and all done online.

Agus and Udin's stories are commonplace in Bandung, a city well-known as a thriving hub for designers, musicians, videographers, and various professions in the creative economy sector.

In an initiative called *JalanJajan.bdg* by the Bandung Creative City Forum (BCCF), which started in 2016, creative communities collaborate with several food business owners, from small *warongs* (food kiosks) to groups of street vendors. They create urban game activities and invite the participants to experience the city by exploring multiple food kiosks and street vendors. In *JalanJajan.bdg*, participants must walk, guided by a printed map, to complete 20 challenges.



These include trying out different kinds of food in the city's must-visit places indicated on the map. To create the game and run this event, the organisers conduct research on the history of the kiosk establishments, the cultures that influenced the food varieties. They also connect and collaborate with the owners to structure the game. For the business owners, participating in this activity is also beneficial and profitable because the participants become returning customers.

Udin, Agus, and the BCCF share a similar story: they are constantly in close contact with the various actors working in the informal economy sector, such as a printing shop owners, blacksmiths, and also several *warong* owners, stalls, and street vendors. These relationships were built not only based on their economic value, but also on the values of friendship, family, brotherhood, and mutual help, which



underpin the relationship of actors in the “informal economy” and “creative economy” sectors.

The Relationship Between Informal and Creative Economies

How do the informal and creative economies intersect? There are recent studies showing similar characteristics in both sectors that make the relationship between the two practicable.

The informal sector is defined as a group of not officially registered businesses that typically generate low income and do not pay taxes (La Porta and Shleifer, 2008). However, an informal business generally has a strong family network, and a strong sense of helping communities to form a social infrastructure that can support their daily income (Simone, 2004; Malasan, 2019).

For instance, the digital start-up ecosystem in Thailand flourished rapidly because start-up entrepreneurs receive significant support and assistance from their families and friends for their creative processes (Leung and Cessu, 2020). The “Nollywood” film industry in Nigeria has grown successfully due to the strong social network among the actors and their families, which provides a solid procurement system for the film production process, as well as the distribution channel of their works. The industry’s success has a significant impact on economic growth and employment in the region (Lobato, 2010). The development of the design ecosystem in Istanbul, Turkey, has also been influenced by the presence of actors in the informal sector, who have a vital role in supporting the work of designers, such as goldsmiths, stone setters, neon sign makers, inlayers,

coppersmiths, and welders who are spread out in urban and sub-urban areas (Kaya and Yagiz, 2011).

Certainly, the relationship between players in the two sectors cannot be separated from the fact that more than 60 per cent of global economic activity takes place in the context of the informal sector. In the Asia-Pacific region, almost 68 per cent of workers are generally categorised in the informal sector. On the other hand, the contribution of the creative economy in several countries in Southeast Asia continues to grow rapidly, for instance, creative products for export needs have increased by 30 per cent in Indonesia between 2012 and 2015 (Sirivunnabood and Alegre, 2021). In the Philippines, the contribution of the creative economy sector to its national GDP reached up to 6.5-7 per cent in 2021. Certainly, the growth of

the creative economy in several countries in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, can be supported by the active collaboration between makers, creators, or any creative players in the informal and creative economy sectors.

If we explore further, the two sectors have similar characteristics. For instance, working situations in the creative sector are essentially supported by casual, playful, and flexible conditions as well as strong family ties between actors (Alacovska and Gill, 2019). In a study conducted on artist communities in Yogyakarta, Central Java, “hanging-out” is an activity that is perceived to be non-productive. It is in fact, essential for these individuals to socialise with various communities that have a direct impact on their productivity (Dahl, 2016). Similar to the local conditions in Yogyakarta, the “hangout culture” also provides ample opportunities for the music communities in Bandung to exchange knowledge. It has allowed for the emergence of various genres in the local music scene, such as death metal, hip hop, indie rock, indie pop, to electronic music (Resmadi, 2016).

At the same time, the actors in the informal economy sector, like owners of sewing shops, screen printing businesses, and woodworks shops, as well as food stalls owners and street food vendors, have similar characteristics.

From the previous studies conducted on the characteristics of the players’ in both the informal and creative sector, we can see similarities in their daily existence, where they get support from their strong social and familial networks, and create casual, flexible, and even playful conditions. These common factors can perhaps be catalysts for individuals and

“ The contribution of the creative economy in several countries in Southeast Asia continues to grow rapidly.

communities from the two sectors to communicate, collaborate and synergise their creative and business endeavours.

The stories of designers Agus and Udin, and the JalanJajan.bdg programme illustrate how similar social and cultural conditions can forge collaborative and economically viable activities between the two sectors.

The Future of Informal and Creative Economy

From the story of Agus who produced home decor products in a small metal workshop, the experience of Udin using the printing service of Andi, to the success story of JalanJajan.bdg urban game programme based on the trust between the event organisers and food vendors, we have three points of reflection to conclude this article.

First, the flexibility and casual working condition of the two sectors count among the dominant factors that form the

nature of work in both sectors, which may ease the communication process between them. Second, a great sense of responsibility towards the community beyond the individual aspect, friendship, and family ties are common values that can be found between the two actors. Finally, each actor from these two sectors consciously builds a solid social relationship based on trust, especially in the creative process that is carried out together. Looking at the intense interaction between the actors from two sectors in their everyday life, further research on the intersection of these two sectors would be crucial, economically, socially, and culturally, to explore potential collaboration between these two sectors. ■

References:

The complete list of references is available at the following link: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-ZoOrILtguR6ikCC7adkUIT2vbEHRg/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=108687542188381018676&rtpof=true&sd=true>





Joshua Irwandi

Documentary Photographer

Freelance documentary photographer Joshua Irwandi became the talk of the town when his photograph of a solitary plastic-wrapped corpse of a suspected COVID-19 victim in an Indonesian hospital was published by the *National Geographic* in 2020. “The Human Cost of COVID-19” photo quickly went viral and sparked a controversy in Indonesia. For this image, Joshua was nominated as a finalist of The 2021 Pulitzer Prize in Breaking News Photography.

Joshua pursued his graduate studies in photojournalism and documentary photography at London College of Communication. He was the recipient of the National Geographic Society COVID-19 Emergency Fund for Journalists and Forhanna Foundation Grant for Young Talent in 2020. This year, Joshua received numerous recognitions, including the 2021 World Press Photo Award, Grand Prize of Lucie Foundation Open Call, and Best Single Photo in Citizen Journalist category of the Anugerah Pewarta Foto Indonesia. Joshua was recently selected as a mentee in the VII Photo Agency Mentor Program 2021-23 Cohort.

Can you tell us about your journey to become a documentary photographer?

Joshua: My inspiration to pursue a career in photography comes from a need to create memories of every given moment. I believe that we create new perspectives as we create memories. These new perspectives create an endless cycle of opportunities to look at and therefore reconsider our human condition and the state of the world we live in. They provide us with reasons for initiating change in a very much injured world. I believe in this power of photography that made me decide to become a documentary photographer.

I began like most photographers would. I practiced photography throughout my university years, making all kinds of images ranging from theatre productions to contributing to the university newspaper. But it was only during my internships at *Kompas* and *The Times of London* newspapers that I felt documentary photography serves a certain purpose—to inform others, to galvanise the public. Up to that point, my photography was only serving my interest, not others’.

You spent some time in Asmat, West Papua—what led you there and was it your first documentary photography project?

Joshua: I was initially invited by *Kompas* photojournalist Wisnu Widiatoro to come and see the situation in Asmat and Korowai for about three weeks. I was fascinated by the culture and the struggles of the Asmat people. The situation there was not at the top of anyone's agenda. I continued with this line of work when I was embedded as museum staff in Asmat Museum in Agats, West Papua up until 2016.

You presented various angles of the COVID-19 pandemic pictures to the public—The Human Cost of COVID-19, pandemic pets, the Delta variant story. Can you talk more about this project?

Joshua: The COVID-19 work started shortly after the outbreak of the pandemic in Indonesia. It was complete chaos at the beginning. Through this work, I wanted to honour the work of the medical staff by showing the nature of their work, how they risk their lives each day to protect us.

The project was a way to inform the public of the dangers of coronavirus. The public has the right to know how threatening coronavirus is. As we know, at the beginning, the pandemic was not taken seriously and it was well-reflected on the never-ending first wave, and that our number of cases and death rates went higher and higher. For "The Human Cost of COVID-19", it was not something I purposely came to photograph. I never went into the ward with the intention of taking images of victims being wrapped. It was something I only encountered when I was embedded with the doctors and nurses in the COVID-19 ward. I simply wanted to show what the reality was.

What kind of challenges did you face when you took these pictures and how did you overcome them?

Joshua: One of the challenges was to stay composed as I was photographing the image, but the bigger challenge came after the image was released and received by the public. It was the most heartbreaking photograph I have ever made. To see the denial and the attacks some people made over an image that was supposed to wake us up was difficult. I quickly learned that it was not necessarily the denial we are battling with. We are fighting a losing battle with social media algorithms where the reality that people believe in is one they choose for themselves. If you like, comment, or support certain posts on social media, the algorithm feeds you back with similar content. An echo chamber. On that basis, you cannot take anything people write on social media personally. At the

“ We are only documenting a slice of history in the continuum of time, reminding us of our insignificance in the universe. Recording memories for history is my only job. We have so much—too much—to learn and understand, and we must do that as much as we can.

same time, it begs the question: how much does social media alter people's perspectives about the danger of the virus?

You won numerous awards in photography and were selected as a finalist of The Pulitzer Prize. What do these awards mean to you, and how have these awards changed you?

Joshua: It's an honour to receive these recognitions. It is a heartbreaking photograph, and this image *still* serves a reminder of the constant threat that COVID-19 poses to us. Yet, after seeing how it was received positively or negatively by the public, at a time where our work was in constant jeopardy with all the disinformation out there, the awards mean that we are breaking down barriers towards freedom of the press, not only in Indonesia, but anywhere where journalists are silenced.

While I am humbled to receive the awards, they won't change how I would photograph and tell stories, nor would it change me as a person. Like any other documentary photographer, I am still going to figure out how to visually present my next story. The awards only spur me on to become more rigorous and balanced with my work and to be more supportive of my colleagues if they ever need help.

What lessons have you learned from your job as a photographer? Looking at yourself now, do you think you have achieved the goals you set when you decided to become a photographer?

Joshua: Humility is the biggest lesson I have learned from my work as a photojournalist. We are only documenting a slice of history in the continuum of time, reminding us of our insignificance in the universe. Recording memories for history is my only job. We have so much—too much—to learn and understand, and we must do that as much as we can. The goal for me as a documentary photographer has always been to engage others with the world we live in. Each time I could direct someone to a certain story that needs attention, that's a goal achieved. Each time there is action that people take based on the stories I publish, that's a goal achieved. This is one of the ways I feel that I could be useful within my lifespan.

Can you share about your next photography project?

Joshua: I am returning to Asmat, West Papua to continue my long-term project with the support of the National Geographic Society.

What do you think about the creative industry, particularly in the photography field, in Indonesia and Southeast Asia? From your point of view, what should ASEAN do to improve the creative industry in the region?

Joshua: There are so many untold stories in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, while there are equally as many excellent and aspiring storytellers out here. In my view, ASEAN should make it its top priority to support artists and art practitioners through grants, open calls, or exhibitions. There is so much potential for collaboration and it will be an investment that will pay itself off. ■

Interviewed by Novia D. Rulistia. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.



Mike Alcazaren

Director. Ideator.

Miguel “Mike” Alcazaren wears many artistic hats— animator, filmmaker, screenwriter, and comic book series creator. He began his career as an animator, co-founding a stop motion animation company with his brothers in 1989. The company is the first of its kind in the Philippines and produced experimental films, ads, and title sequences for TV shows, many of which earned national and international recognition, including the prestigious New York Festival Award.

Mike branched out into the world of live-action commercial directing in 1995, working mostly in a freelance capacity. He has since built an impressive portfolio of popular and award-winning television ads. In 2013, he wrote, directed, and produced his first feature film, “Puti” [White]. The film was screened at a national film festival and was also an entry at the 32nd Brussels International Film Festival.

Mike’s first foray into screenwriting, which focused on the incarceration and trial of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr. during the Ferdinand Marcos regime, won him the country’s prestigious Carlos Palanca Memorial Literary Awards. He recently wrapped up a popular, self-published Filipino zombie comic book series, “Patay Kung Patay” [Death be Damned].

“I fell in love with movies at a very young age. Movies were very accessible because my doctor-father had a patient who owned a chain of cinemas and we would get to see the latest Hollywood films before their regular run. My father also was a company doctor of Meralco, which used to screen free movies every weekend for the families of employees. I fell in love with the magic of movies, especially those with special effects and I wanted to know how these were made. In the 70s, also, my older brothers had huge comic book collections (Marvel and DC) and so there was that influence too. Summer art classes were also mandatory for our family of six boys and two girls, mainly to keep us out of my mother’s hair. My father was also a great storyteller, mostly about how his family survived World War 2. I wasn’t very good academically but discovered some talent in the arts (drawing, animation and ideating).

“In college, I had the extreme luck of being able to apprentice under director Mike de Leon, one of the Philippines’ most acclaimed directors. It was an informal apprenticeship which led me to a deeper interest in film and an introduction to documentary filmmaking. He was a great influence and before advertising, I did want to get into movies and documentary filmmaking. I was also doing animated shorts (stop-motion) with my brothers and sister.



“My first regular job was in PTV 4 (television station) as a researcher for an aborted documentary series on the Marcos years by Mike de Leon. I moved on to stay as a unit producer for a tele-magazine show, ‘Foursight,’ directed by Maria Ressa who is now a Nobel Laureate. I eventually left PTV 4 and freelanced for a while, producing segments for Probe (a documentary television programme) until I decided to get into advertising. First as a copywriter, then establishing our stop-motion company, and finally shifting to directing live-action commercials. I would still get involved in documentary projects from time to time. My dream though was still to get involved in movies. It was only in 2013 that I realised this ambition.

“I have been in advertising for the last 32 years and still love the process but am looking to work outside my industry where I could stretch and challenge my creativity more. This is the reason why I write screenplays, get involved in documentaries and am still trying to get into filmmaking in whatever shape or form.

“The digital age, particularly the internet, has certainly democratised filmmaking or content creation which has been both good and bad. Good in the sense that there are more opportunities for filmmakers and storytellers to put out stories but in the end, success (whether financial or creative) still hinges on who curates and distributes your work. Globalisation has certainly made such a huge creative market but we are still in the infancy of the digital age, and the world wide web is still more like the ‘wild wild web.’ People are still making the rules as the digital platform is being developed.

“My advocacy or what I think is the lynchpin for a creative industry’s success is in the protection of the artist as an individual. This relates to issues of intellectual property rights to fair labour practices and creating the proper ecosystem by which an artist can properly develop and grow.

Mike while filming a mini-documentary, ‘Massacre of Manila: Untold Stories of the Battle of Manila 1945’

“My advocacy or what I think is the lynchpin for a creative industry’s success is in the protection of the artist as an individual. This relates to issues of intellectual property rights to fair labour practices and creating the proper ecosystem by which an artist can properly develop and grow. So there is the intellectual and material aspect. Getting an idea realised involves a lot of moving parts from creation to distribution. The early drafts of the Philippine Creative Industry Bill I have read seems to have too much concentration on the bureaucracy of creating a ‘creative council’ instead of addressing the very basic needs for artists: the disadvantageous ‘exploitation’ of the artist’s works and even the access to the materials the artist needs for their work. The industry’s success is measured in the way it treats the individual artist.

“As far as the advertising/production industry is concerned, the recovery is hinged on turning COVID-19 into an endemic. We cannot go back to normal unless the workplace is safe. Production, despite digital advances, is still mainly physical, on-the-ground and face-to-face interactions, and the virus has hit the industry hard. We have had to navigate a very high-risk environment to produce materials. The only positive outcome of this is that the industry has had to mandate ‘humane’ working conditions and safety protocols which in reality should have been implemented pre-pandemic. These include mandatory restricted working hours, turn-around times (the time allotted for rest in-between shoot days), and streamlining of personnel. Health and safety on the set should be pushed to the forefront in order to create a more sustainable working environment.

“I think we need a stronger ASEAN alliance that opens the market for supporting each country’s creative projects, not only in sourcing funds but in creating regional strategies to protect creative labour rights. Everyone is looking to the South Korean cultural juggernaut and its success and the take-away is always that it seems that they have found some magic formula to appeal to the global market. The mistake I feel is that we (particularly in the early discussion of the Philippine Creative Industry Bill) are focusing too much on the business model and not the development of the intrinsic cultural identities of each ASEAN Member State. In the end, it is about the story and how it is told, whether from a piece of art, music, architecture, a comic book, or film; its unique execution; and exquisite craftsmanship. These are possible only if the focus is on creating the best possible creative environment for the artist. This can only begin by supporting local development. The extended family would be ASEAN as we are more regionally interlocked by culture and history.” ■

Interviewed by Joanne B. Agbisit. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.

A Virtual Expo

to Revitalise the Creative Sector



ASANTI ASTARI
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The government of the Republic of Indonesia successfully organised a virtual exhibition entitled the “Creative Economy for Sustainable Development: Let’s Connect!” from 6 to 15 July 2021. The exhibition is one of the side events of the United Nations Economic and Social Council’s 2021 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.

Thirty exhibitors participated in the virtual exhibition, representing the government; community; academe; micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and the media. Commonly referred to as the *penta-helix*, each of these sectors promoted projects that use creativity as leverage to spur economic growth, social empowerment, and environmental conservation.

The virtual exhibition set these objectives: i) to bolster economic growth and accelerate post-pandemic global recovery by tapping into the underutilised power of creative economy, ii) to serve as a multi-stakeholder platform of the creative economy sector to connect and share best practices, enhance cooperation, and collaborate for a more resilient creative economy sector, and iii) to increase multi-stakeholders’ active participation in the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development 2021 as declared by the United Nations.

At the virtual exhibition, visitors could explore three virtual halls, namely, the Aspiration Hall, Reach Out Hall, and Exhibition Hall, each of which focused on a different theme and purpose.

The Aspiration Hall was intended to connect the voices of the penta-helix and related international organisations by displaying the exhibitors’ videos that convey several key messages, such as the impact of COVID-19 on the creative economy, initiatives taken to rejuvenate the creative industry, and policy recommendations for a thriving creative economy.

The Reach Out Hall, on the other hand, was set up for government, international organisations, and selected MSMEs involved in the creative economy. The intent was to promote the latter’s business as well as present potential areas of collaboration and partnership opportunities.

Consisting of 30 booths, the Exhibition Hall provided a platform for the penta-helix and related international organisations to showcase their work in the creative economy through various types of media, including videos, posters, and e-catalogue. Demonstrating a typical physical exhibition, visitors could visit all three halls to watch promotional videos and stopover at the booths of the Exhibition Hall to interact with the exhibitors through the interactive chat feature for more active participation.




The ASEAN Small and Medium-Sized
Cultural Enterprises Project 2018
28-29 May 2018 • Manila, Philippines



ASEAN SMCEs CARAVAN 2018

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

THE ASEAN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CULTURAL ENTERPRISES CARAVAN PROJECT

A week-long project consisting of lectures, workshops, exhibition, and performances focusing on the best practices and the current trends in the SMCEs sector of the ASEAN region.

“ The creative economy is increasingly seen as an important sector that can contribute to socio-economic growth and sustainable development. The government of Indonesia is particularly keen on establishing itself as one of the global creative economy players by successfully proposing the observance of 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development to the United Nations.



In the middle of the exhibition week, the government of Indonesia also organised a webinar with the theme “Inclusive and Resilient Creative Economy for Sustainable Development” on 8 July 2021. The Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia, Sandiaga Uno, and the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Colombia, Angelica Mayolo, served as the keynote speakers. Five high-level panelists and two discussants enlightened the discussion that lasted for more than an hour.

The ASEAN Secretariat, represented by the Culture and Information Division, participated as one of the exhibitors in the virtual exhibition. In line with the theme of “Creative Economy,” the ASEAN Secretariat set up a booth in

the Exhibition Hall to showcase past and existing initiatives on promoting creative industries such as the Small and Medium-size Cultural Enterprises (SMCEs) Caravan project in 2018, the ASEAN-Asian Development Bank Institute call for policy papers on Creative Economy, and the communication products of the ASEAN Communication Master Plan II (ACMP II), among others. The ASEAN Secretariat also displayed a three-minute video in the Aspiration Hall, presenting a brief overview of the creative economy scene in the ASEAN region. Despite the online format, the ASEAN Secretariat’s booth managed to attract 96 visitors who showed interest in the work of the Secretariat related to the promotion of creative economy. The virtual exhibition has also led to potential collaborations

between the ASEAN Secretariat and other organisations, such as the British Council.

The creative economy is increasingly seen as an important sector that can contribute to socio-economic growth and sustainable development. The government of Indonesia is particularly keen on establishing itself as one of the global creative economy players by successfully proposing the observance of 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development to the United Nations. The commemoration aimed to amplify the power of human creativity to boost economic prosperity, promote social development, and contribute to the environment’s conservation, especially in light of the need to build back better after the pandemic. Having more players in the creative economy sector will hopefully trigger a chain of impacts, including expanding job opportunities and thus driving economic progress, fostering innovation, promoting social cohesion among societies, empowering women and youth, reducing dependency on extractive economy, and minimising inequality within and among countries. These, in turn, contribute to the attainment of targets under the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition to the virtual exhibition at the UN Economic and Social Council’s 2021 HLPF, the Indonesian government has planned several activities aimed at stimulating the development of the creative economy sector in Indonesia as well as in the ASEAN region. The *ASEAN Creative Economy Business Forum (ACEBF)* and *2nd ASEAN Regional Workshop on Creative Economy (ARWCE)*, held in November 2021, provided platforms for further dialogue. ■

Are Traditional Museums and Galleries on the Brink of Extinction?



JOANNE B. AGBISIT
ASSOCIATE EDITOR, *THE ASEAN*

Photo Credit: © Museum MACAN

For many of us who have yet to see Picasso's *Guernica*, Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Mirror Rooms*, or any of the other celebrated masterpieces up close, they are now within our reach. More art museums and galleries are migrating their collection into the digital realm, the shift primarily driven by the ubiquity of digital technology and accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Google has partnered with at least 2,000 museums, galleries, and archives to produce high-resolution images of artworks and cultural artefacts. These are currently showcased in virtual galleries hosted by the Google Arts and Culture platform.

Other museums and galleries, including the likes of Louvre Museum and The Met, have independently developed virtual tours that allow viewers to simulate the experience of strolling through an actual exhibit area, complete with a 360-degree view of the space and close-up view of the art exhibits.

In 2020, another technological milestone was reached with the launch of the Virtual Online Museum of Art, the world's first digitally built museum. The stunning architecture, interiors, and waterfront view of the museum were developed using CGI and virtual reality gaming technology, creating a lifelike environment for the viewers. The artworks that adorn the museum's virtual walls are 3D reproductions of art pieces that can be examined at close range and different angles through the site's interactive features.

With all these developments, are traditional museums and galleries quickly becoming a thing of the past? Is the future of museums and galleries digital?

The ASEAN sat down with Aaron Seeto, director of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Arts in Nusantara (Museum MACAN), and Osveanne Osman, manager and curator of Creative Space Brunei to get their take on the value of traditional "physical" museums and galleries in the face of the ongoing digital transformation and the role that new technology plays in their institution's mission and operations.

Spaces for Learning and Interaction

Museum MACAN's Aaron Seeto believes that museums are here to stay because people have an inherent need to come



Museum MACAN opened in Jakarta in 2017; One of its early exhibits featured Yayoi Kusama's famed artworks (*Yayoi Kusama: Life is the Heart of a Rainbow*, 2018)

“It took us a while longer to create hybrid exhibitions because to be honest, it’s not easy and it’s not inexpensive to shift digitally. It requires rethinking in terms of process; curators often think in exhibition terms.

–Aaron Seeto,
Museum MACAN



Photo Credit: © Muhammad Fadli

together to share an experience and have meaningful conversations about art. “You have to dig deep into your own psychology right now. You probably really want to be in a space that’s not your office because we are social animals,” he says.

Moreover, he reminds us that museums are no longer the cold and dusty places of old, but have evolved to become spaces of learning for people of all ages and backgrounds—the very idea that fomented the rise of modern museums in the 20th century.

“One (of Museum MACAN’s missions) is to have an international-standard museum facility in Indonesia for the Indonesian public to engage with and contemplate art, (but) the second part of our mission is about supporting art education and art appreciation,” he says.

A physical structure helps the museum achieve these goals. “We sponsor kids to come into the museum. We also run teacher workshops a couple of times a year,” he says. One of the museum’s flagship projects, Aaron notes, is “Children’s Art Space,” which commissions artists to create thought-provoking art installations that are not just meant to be looked at, but are also designed for children, parents and teachers to explore, play with, and learn from.

Osveanne Osman of Creative Space Brunei agrees that art galleries provide a multi-sensorial experience that cannot be fully replicated by an augmented or virtual reality. “I think the physical is worth more than the metaverse no matter what endless possibilities it offers,” she says.

She says that the gallery harbors a similar aspiration of educating the public about the value of art, noting that the reception of art in Brunei Darussalam is not as strong as other places in the world. Osveanne says the gallery seeks to help Bruneians understand how art can enrich their life and teach them about the basics of art. “Our formal education does not cover those basics. Many of our artists are actually self-taught,” she says.



Hub for Artists, Art Professionals

Osveanne sees the gallery as a springboard to launch and nurture the careers of promising artists. She says Creative Space Brunei's "Emerge" project features the works of these talented artists to give them exposure and networking opportunities. "We saw an influx of students who were graduating with art degrees but didn't have a platform to be able to showcase or develop their practice and eventually make it into a career. I realised that they needed space to be able to do all of that," she says.

Creative Space Brunei also throws a spotlight on never-before-seen works of veteran and expat artists through its "Rewind" project. Ultimately, the gallery aims to become the main stomping ground of the art community, where different generations of artists and their audiences can interact and form connections, Osveanne says.

Mit Jai Inn's "Color in Cave," commissioned by UOB-Museum MACAN for the Children's Art Space programme, allowed children to paint and color the cave installation

But the gallery is not just a haven for artists. Creative Space Brunei is also a place where individuals can get practical, hands-on experience towards a career in museum or gallery management. Osveanne notes, "Throughout the year, we have an internship programme that lasts three to six months. They basically learn how to organise and produce these exhibitions. The internship programme is really about being able to train our workforce to understand that you don't have to be an artist to work in the art world."

Repositories of Shared Heritage and History

Traditional museums and galleries also house, protect, and preserve tangible artistic creations—which chronicle a nation's history, cultural identity, and collective human experiences.

For Osveanne, researching, documenting, and preserving lost Bruneian artworks are an important part of Creative Space Brunei's mission, to help shed light on Brunei Darussalam's development as a nation. She notes, "One of our problems is that we have a poor recording system

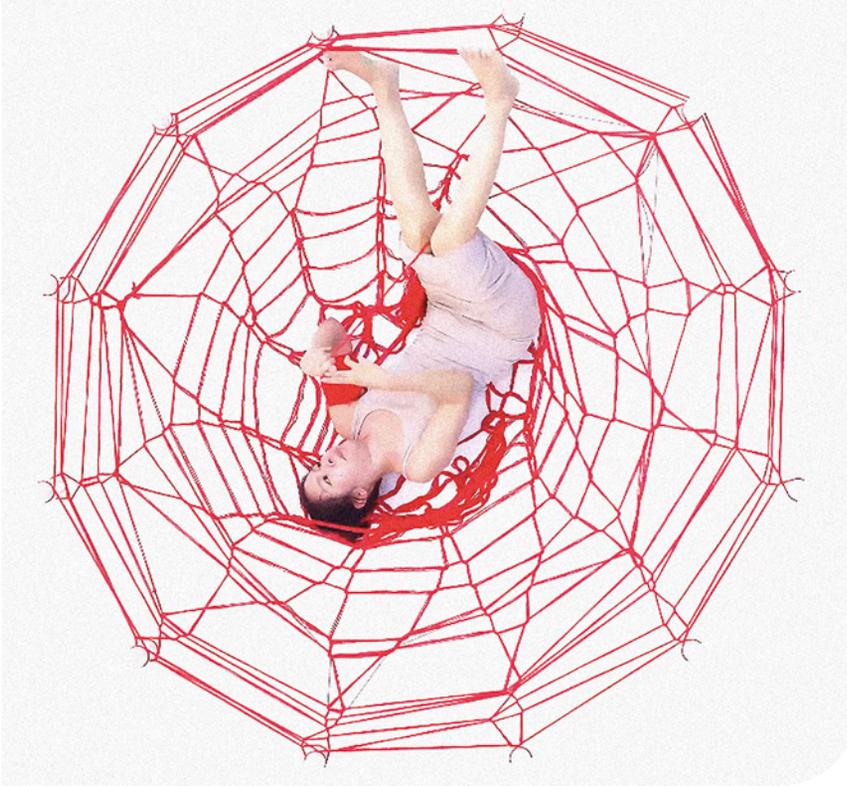
when it comes to Bruneian art. We have large gaps (to fill) to be able to understand what happened in different decades and centuries."

Maintaining a Digital Footprint

While a traditional museum is necessary to give visitors an authentic experience, Aaron believes that museums also need to embrace the new communication platforms to draw a broader spectrum of audiences. He says the use of these platforms has been embedded into the strategy of Museum MACAN since it opened in 2017, in recognition of the young, diverse, and tech-savvy population of Indonesia. The museum currently maintains a website and has Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter accounts followed by thousands.

Museum MACAN's digital activities only escalated during the pandemic. "Our strategy was to look at the programmes we had offered in the preceding years, make sure that they are available online, and let the teachers and students know that they are available," he says.





Some art forms and practices are better experienced in physical spaces; Kawita Vatanajyankur performed "Knit" live at Museum MACAN in 2018

But not all activities are easy to replicate online. Aaron notes, "It took us a while longer to create hybrid exhibitions because to be honest, it's not easy and it's not inexpensive to shift digitally. It requires rethinking in terms of process; curators often think in exhibition terms. We think about audiences as physical, so we've really had to do a lot of internal thinking."

Aaron says the digital platforms did not only keep the museum's activities and services going, they were also useful in mobilising public support for artists who were struggling during the long pandemic lockdown. The museum's online initiative, "Arisan Karya," successfully raised funds to provide care packages for artists and develop online tutorials and resources.

The use of digital platforms was also part of Creative Space Brunei's strategy from the beginning since they could bring so much mileage at little to no cost. Osveanne says, "Since we started in 2016, we've remained on digital platforms entirely to be able to reach out to our

market. Instagram was our first platform. We also have other platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp." Through these platforms, she says, the gallery was able to build its following so that when people think of Brunei art, it has become one of the first sites that people think of.

Brunei Darussalam's relatively short pandemic lockdowns meant that Creative Space Brunei did not have to reconfigure its training packages into an online format, deferring them instead until the gallery could resume in-person classes. But, like Museum MACAN, the gallery used its online platform to sell merchandise and use the proceeds for charity and other gallery activities.

Bracing for a Hybrid Future

Investing in technology is one of the priorities of Creative Space Brunei going forward, says Osveanne. For example, the gallery plans to automate its booking and payment systems to facilitate transactions. It also plans to improve the interface of its online platforms for better user experience and interaction.

Aaron also expects Museum MACAN to expand and maximise its digital presence in the future. He says that hybrid offerings will likely occur, with the physical and online activities and events going hand-in-hand. He notes that while some practices (and artists) are suited to finite spaces, others only exist in the digital environment. "One thing that is going to happen or may already be happening is that there is much more experimentation in (art) form and content," he says. "There may be a kind of transition in what we think a museum is."

Osveanne and Aaron believe that ASEAN and national governments can help shape the future of art museums and galleries, physical and virtual alike.

Osveanne says that supporting the establishment of a national art award in Brunei Darussalam will elevate the stature of the arts and artists in the country. "We need to have that sort of standard and gravitas for our artists to be able to put in their bio and for our international market to see that our artists are nationally recognised. That builds our artists' credibility," she explains.

She also says that more culture and arts exchanges are needed to benefit the arts sector in the region. "There is so much similarity that can help us rediscover how we used to do art, (and) provide better insights into our history and designs," Osveanne says.

For his part, Aaron says museums stand to benefit from partnerships with organisations like ASEAN, which has a broader geographic reach and perspective. He cites a previous collaboration with KONNECT ASEAN, "Stories Across Rising Lands," as an example. ASEAN can bring together a community of creative people, he notes. ■

Beyond Global Reports and Statistics

How Should We Support Local Creative Industries?

MOE CHIBA

CHIEF OF CULTURE UNIT, UNESCO JAKARTA
ON BEHALF OF THE KITA MUDA KREATIF PROJECT TEAM

The power of the creative industry has been much talked about globally over the last few decades with a show of promising statistics. Its capacity to generate high GDP and jobs has been underscored to encourage government investment in the sector.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, its devastating impact on the creative sector is the hot subject of policy debate and analysis. However, many of these papers with macro-analysis do not always provide useful guidance for action. And yet, behind the abstract debate are the lives of many micro-small businesses and self-employed people struggling for better opportunities.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy (<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/198>), acknowledging the importance of supporting mass entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, to create new momentum for inclusive economic growth. Compared to three decades earlier when the Global North primarily debated the topic, today, more and more countries from the Global South have embraced the concept and led the discussion, exploring their creative economy model. So naturally, nurturing competent human resources to lead the cultural industry is one of the key tasks therein. The question, however, is how.

The creative sector has its peculiar challenges that a standard approach for formal education and vocational training would probably be not conducive. Besides, the stakeholders' profile also differs from one country to another. The existing pieces of literature and theories, largely based on the experience of the Global North, have not been of practical use in Southeast Asia. This article presents the UNESCO Jakarta Office's experience and approach in nurturing creative youth hubs around the heritage sites in Indonesia since late 2017.

What is the characteristic of the creative industry in Southeast Asia? It is first and foremost a vast arena with all types of sub-sector and communities in rural and urban settings. They include heritage-based goods and services, such as hand weaving, batik-making and shadow puppets, as much as non-traditional activities such as rock-band, tourism, fashion, graphic design, to name a few. In Southeast Asia, food-related service often accounts for a large percentage of the creative industry. While some are big players (such as media houses, movie production companies, etc.), most are typically family-based cottage industries or sole proprietor enterprises, often in the informal economy. The educational background of the actors also varies. In the cities, some have a university degree. However, in rural areas or smaller towns, very few have higher education. How can we address human resource capacity-building in such a diverse, complex sector? A straightjacketed one-size-fits-all training curriculum is certainly not the answer.

In response, the UNESCO Jakarta Office began an experimental *Kita Muda Kreatif* (KMK—We, the Creative Youth) programme to support young creative entrepreneurs living around famous heritage destinations to develop their business skills. The target beneficiaries are unregistered small businesses, typically unaccounted for in macro statistics. Our target would be to groom them to become registered businesses, thus recognisable and eligible for government support schemes, including grants, scholarships, and invitations to trade fairs.

The KMK programme offers various training topics, including basic financial literacy, business planning, market assessment,

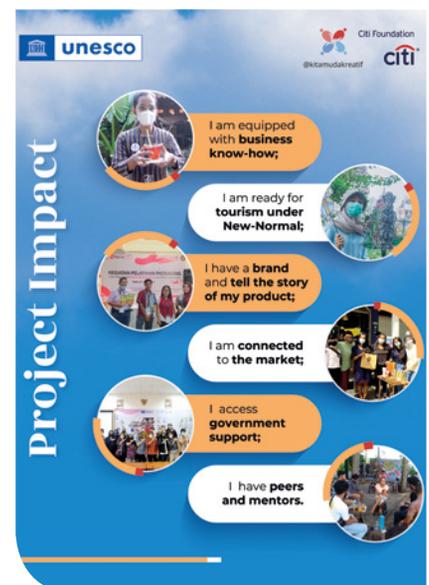


brand image development, and use of social media for marketing, just like any other business training programme. Sessions on local heritage are also on the menu to inspire their products and enhance their story-telling skills while raising the sense of social responsibility for heritage protection. The programme also provides opportunities for matchmaking between the youth and industrial players for possible collaboration.

However, our approach would be unique because the KMK programme does not use any pre-designed curriculum or textbook, as would be the case of government-driven vocational training. After all, it is simply not possible to develop fixed modules for a group with such a wide variety of backgrounds. Instead, the programme has strived to pool a wide range of experts and resource persons with their practical experience. They include, amongst others, master craftspersons, anthropologists, historians, fashion designers, marketing firms, business advisors, videographers, and social media specialists, ready to be deployed based on the needs of the beneficiaries.

The project at each site begins with the mapping of the target beneficiaries and their training needs assessment. Then, the consultation process is repeated at the beginning of each project cycle to determine the training plan based on the learning progress of the beneficiaries. While the project currently operates in six different sites, each site has an individual training plan specifically catered to the local need.

This bottom-up and flexible planning has allowed us to remain relevant while quickly responding to emerging needs, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, as soon as the public lockdown was announced in Indonesia in March 2020, the UNESCO project team immediately organised training on business crisis management. The team also introduced practical training on making fashionable face masks and organising virtual market sales for the youth in the craft and fashion sectors to survive this difficult period. In addition, training on developing virtual tours and guiding visitors under the new health protocol was also devised for those working in the tourism sector, along with technical support on making a



promotional video for those working in the performance sector to ensure their online presence.

Another specific feature of the KMK programme is continuous mentorship and dialogues between the experts and the beneficiaries and peer-to-peer exchanges amongst the beneficiaries.



“ The creative economy is not an abstract concept but it is individual people striving to meet their ends through ideas and skills.



The KMK programme did not stop at just organising a series of training. Much effort was spent advising individual youth entrepreneurs in-between to track their progress and motivate them. A series of online courses and the *WhatsApp* dialogue platform prevented the youth entrepreneurs from feeling isolated during the lockdown.

While it is premature to assess the project impact in just a few years, the UNESCO project team rejoices that out of our 400 youth beneficiaries, about 50 per cent of them developed their branding material and company portfolio, ready for government business registration. About 30 per cent of them developed new products or services. Twenty-four per cent of them even reported having increased their business turnover compared to previous years, and about 12 per cent even hired new staff because their business expanded even during the pandemic. These encouraging figures support the premise that KMK programme probably has the right approach for uplifting the micro-scale cultural industries, with bottom-up, flexible and continuous as the keywords.

Notwithstanding the importance of global debate and macro-analysis, the KMK project team hopes for more tangible experience sharing amongst the field practitioners than generalised debates on the sector. The creative economy is not an abstract concept but it is individual people striving to meet their ends through ideas and skills. Therefore, the response from international development agencies cannot merely be a global report and statistics. It is imperative to offer concrete support and solutions, even more so now. ■

Kita Muda Kreatif is a UNESCO-Citi programme supported by the Citi Foundation to nurture entrepreneurial capacity-building of youth working in the creative industry living around famous heritage destinations. The programme currently targets more than 400 youth in six sites, including Central Java, Yogyakarta, Kota Tua Jakarta, Toba, Bali, and Lombok. In 2022, the programme will further expand to more areas in Central Java, including Solo, Sangiran, and Semarang.



EKI Dance Company Soaring to New Heights: Tradition Meets Modernity



MARY KATHLEEN QUIAÑO-CASTRO
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, *THE ASEAN*

In 1996, Rusdy Rukmarata and his wife Aiko Senoesenoto founded Eksotika Karmawibangga Indonesia or EKI to nurture young dancers and enable them to earn a decent living.

EKI built a dance studio and dormitory for its students and offered courses in traditional dances, modern ballet, jazz, hip-hop, and even vocal and English language training. It was the country's first professionally managed dance company that paid fees, allowances and insurance to its members. Several of its original dancers, now in their 50s, are still actively performing.

For over 20 years, EKI has produced musicals and shows that are modern but distinctly Indonesian. Rusdy, EKI's Artistic Director, says most of Indonesia's traditional dances and performances are rooted in local stories and communities, with themes revolving around people's everyday concerns.

"There are Indonesian musicals called *Blantek* or "blank text." It means there is no script so that the duration can be one hour, but it can be four hours. It's really fun to watch, but for modern audiences, they can't sit through it."

EKI adapts traditional themes and creates scripted performances that appeal to a wider and younger

(Above) The "Bala Turangga" is inspired by the legend of Majapahit Kingdom's elite cavalries. The dance is rooted in dynamic but mystical Javanese movements. Make up and costumes are inspired by Indonesia's rich culture but presented with a modern twist.

“After the pandemic, performances will be more like gatherings. It will not merely be a show, but more like an event that people attend. So, we see that as a new opportunity.

audience. One of its most popular productions, EKI Update, is a series of variety shows that combine dance numbers with quizzes and interactive games and is now viewable online.

“It is more people-based and young and based more on the appreciation of people, not the artist. First, when we started EKI, I just came back from the London Contemporary Dance school, so the vision was more like from the view of the artist and how to communicate using the language of the art of dance and theatre but now because we go back to the roots of the Indonesian traditional arts, it was more communicative.”

“Along with the times, EKI’s stage musicals also use various special effects that produce works such as shadow dance, interactive dance video, LED dance and others. During the pandemic, because it could not be performed on stage, EKI’s musical works entered the realm of film, using various cinematographic effects as well as digital effects using green screens and also game applications,” explains Rusdy.

EKI now has 26 dancers and 55 full-time and part-time staff who provide services from stage and broadcast production to set design, and event management.

The pandemic led to many event cancellations, but business is slowly coming back as Indonesia eases restrictions. The upside, Rusdy says, is that the crisis accelerated the company’s digital adoption.

EKI has streamed some its content in apps like GoPlay. Soon, its online dance courses will be available on several e-commerce platforms like Tokopedia, one of Indonesia’s largest. The online courses are in support of the government’s assistance programme for cultural workers affected by the pandemic.

“We see the traditional dancers, who usually dance for weddings and other ceremonies, and have lost their jobs. So, if they can learn modern dance, maybe there will be more job opportunities for them, and upgrade their skills.”

Rusdy appreciates Indonesia’s push to support creative industries but he believes much more can be done.

“The arts are still under the Ministry of Arts and Culture, but the Ministry of Industry has to be involved. The Ministry of Creative Industries is a new step. Actually, what we need is to make an industry out of the performing arts. Music recording is already there. Movies are already there. Performing arts is not an industry yet. There are no producers. They don’t have a vision yet of maybe creating something like (London’s) West End.”



“Kecak Fantasi” brings together the classic Ramayana tale and the Balinese Kecak dance in a mixture of art and fantasy

“Maybe funding from banks should be available so people will invest in the performing arts. But, it’s not regulated yet. Once, we tried getting insurance for our dancers because they had to do an acrobatic performance, the insurance company needed to create a special package for it.”

Rusdy says Indonesia can learn much from the South Korean model. “K-pop did that; now they have money to put into traditional arts. To survive, you have to put modern dance first, and then generate money and use it to preserve the traditional arts. The government is investing too much on traditional arts, but there are no audiences for that in Indonesia. The audience in Indonesia is modern, especially the youth,” Rusdy points out.

“The government needs to modernise the art institutions, the academies. The art academies in Indonesia are either too traditional or too contemporary, or experimental in style.”

“The young people who are spearheading these new musicals graduated from abroad. They come back so that they are not too Indonesian anymore. But in a sense, that’s what the government needs to do, bring in western teachers here so that we can combine our styles. Teachers from Broadway, West End can help build an academy here. That’s actually our dream in EKI, to create a performing arts academy.”

For its 25th anniversary, EKI launched an online short film about its earlier productions and a sneak peek of a new musical, “Ken Dedes.” Plans are also underway to build EKI’s digital assets and adapt to audiences’ shifting demands.

“After the pandemic, performances will be more like gatherings. It will not merely be a show, but more like an event that people attend. So, we see that as a new opportunity.” ■



Glenn Sevilla Mas

Actor. Playwright. Theatre Arts Programme Coordinator.

Glenn Sevilla Mas has been with the theatre arts programme of the Ateneo de Manila University and its theatre company, Tanghalang Ateneo (TA), for more than 15 years. He was TA's artistic director for four years and now serves as coordinator of the programme.

He is an award-winning playwright whose works often have gritty plotlines and tend to draw inspiration from his hometown of Antique. He wrote "Rite of Passage," a coming-of-age play, while completing his master's degree in playwriting at the Catholic University of America, and presented it in a staged reading at the Kennedy Center, Washington D.C.

Glenn, who started his career as a stage actor, has appeared in numerous television dramas and an acclaimed indie film, "John Denver Trending." He continues to mentor theatre students at the Ateneo and budding playwrights under the Cultural Center of the Philippines' (CCP) Virgin LabFest Writing Program, a three-week mentorship programme that attracts the most promising playwrights all over the Philippines.

The Philippine Congress recently passed the Creative Industries bill that aims to incentivise businesses in the creative sector. Glenn talks to The ASEAN about the challenges faced by performing artists and freelancers, particularly during the pandemic. He muses why people need to find meaning in the arts and support the artists who create them.

"I am the theatre arts programme coordinator of Ateneo de Manila. I do that full-time, but on the side, or during the weekends, I also get to do the things I like to do, aside from mentoring students. Before the pandemic, I would go around the country to give workshops or sometimes travel for tapings and shooting (for television and film). Things were looking good.

"There were many events at the CCP, such as the Cinemalaya (Philippine Independent Film Festival) and Virgin Labfest, that were attracting more audiences. From humble beginnings some 16 to 17 years ago, when people had to be convinced to watch events, we got to the point where tickets were getting sold out. The world was becoming rosier as far as engaging in the arts is concerned, but all that have been affected by the pandemic. So, all these government organisations, the CCP, migrated online.

"The classes I teach are playwriting, which can be truly taught online, and theatre history. Dr. Ricardo Abad, our professor emeritus in Ateneo, started this group of programme coordinators of all universities that offer theater programmes in the Philippines. We became more supportive of each other during the pandemic, where before we would compete and not have anything to do with one another. In our online meetings, sometimes we would ask ourselves, 'is this still theatre? Or is this some form of a hybrid film?' For example, in theatre classes, what a director does is block a scene and position



the actors on the stage, either left, right, front, back. Now, you have to do blocking in Zoom. Actors also become their own set designers, their own lighting directors. We have learned to just live in the now, focus on what needs to be done.

“Professional theatre companies have more restrictions as far as material is concerned. So, I enjoy the university theatre scene because it does not exist primarily to earn but it is for students to get exposed. The material is more diverse, more experimental.

“Before the Delta variant surge, I got invitations to act in television dramas again. We would be required to do a 14-day quarantine and film in a bubble, where you’re not allowed to interact with other people; you’re not allowed to go out of the bubble. It resulted in strong bonding among the actors, but after a while, I said no because the number of COVID cases increased significantly in the country and it became too risky. I think it’s a choice because some people have to work. Most of the people I work with have families to feed and they really do it full-time. I’m a teacher full-time. We don’t have to go out of the house, teaching is done online, so it’s safe.

Glenn’s contributions to Philippine theatre earned him a spot in the Cultural Center of the Philippines’ Encyclopedia of Philippine Art

“As artists, we need support and protection. What happens to us when we reach a certain age? What happens to us when we retire? When we talk about retirement, who will shoulder hospitalisation when we’re no longer employed? Right now, there is the Artists’ Welfare Project, Inc., a voluntary organisation that provides its members with assistance like life and health insurance because they realise that there are cultural leaders who are ageing but have mostly done freelance work in film, television etc., and will need help at some point in their lives.

“A Creative Industries Act has been pushed in Congress, but there is more to be done for artists. I do it myself—save up for the future—since I have a steady job. Many of us in the theatre talk about making sure that we have financial security. Because of the pandemic, life for some of our older mentors became increasingly difficult. There was a time during the lockdown when senior citizens weren’t allowed to go out, much less work on film and television sets (for health and safety reasons). I hope this all ends so there can be more opportunities to work again.

“Our priorities in life are basic needs like food and putting a roof over our heads, but equally important, for me, is food for the soul. It’s part of who we are—our stories. We need to revisit them to understand why we are the way we are. And we all have our roles. Doctors and nurses take care of you when you get sick. Government workers reach out to help you during disasters and calamities. People in the military, people in the private sector, people who work in industries that are vital for the economy, they are there to take care of you. The artist has a role too, not just to entertain, but to make you think or make you rethink what is important to you. Some plays unsettle audiences and I like those types of plays.

“The artist is like the conscience of the nation, right? Or the writer is like the conscience of the nation. Do we have time to examine our conscience as we go through our daily lives? That’s why we view art. Time stops when you stare at it. It’s the same with plays. When a playwright writes a play and I am privileged to watch and experience it, it can resonate with me. If not, then it may resonate with other people. So, it plays a role, a cathartic one because it unsettles you and makes you think.

“It may sound frivolous, but our goal as a people is to understand who we are, where we’re coming from, so we know where we’re headed. The arts are a wonderful way of getting educated, in that way, on the quest to understand ourselves better.” ■

Interviewed by Mary Kathleen Quiñón-Castro. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.



Muhammad Rasyid

Content Creator. Gaming Enthusiast.

Muhammad Rasyid or also known as “Pokopow” started his YouTube gaming channel in 2015 and has since garnered more than 900,000 subscribers. Rasyid joins a growing number of Indonesian casual gamers turned YouTube stars.

Southeast Asia is home to more than 200 million gamers and it has become a lucrative market for the gaming industry, with a market size of \$4.4 billion in 2019. Indonesia’s Tourism and Creative Economy Ministry says among the country’s 17 creative economy sub-sectors, apps and games are the 7th largest contributors to the creative economy GDP.

The rising popularity of eSports and mobile games, improved internet infrastructure, and the region’s robust economy have boosted the gaming industry’s growth. Some indie game developers from Southeast Asia have also been gaining international recognition through the popularity of games such as Dreadout and Gigabash.

“I have always been a gaming enthusiast. Initially, I created my YouTube channel ‘Pokopow’ just for fun because I love to share about the games that I play and it turns out that many people love the contents that I shared. I still had a business on the side when I started and decided to become a full-time content creator one year later in 2016.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, the hardest thing for me as a content creator is to maintain my mental health and avoid being burned out. For someone whose work and leisure activities are combined into one, it is difficult to separate between my work and private life. Before the pandemic, I could go on holiday to relax or go out to have a change of scenery and refresh my mind, but now my activities are mostly confined at home and in front of the computer.

“I want to be honest with my content because for me playing games is supposed to be enjoyable instead of only for chasing fame or money. You need to know why you want to start a career as a content creator and have a strong determination to thrive as a content creator. Being able to create good content strategies and staying true to your purpose are the keys to maintaining your platform’s productivity.

“Working as a content creator has allowed me to expand my network and connect with people from all over the world. I enjoy interacting with my viewers and creating content together with other content creators.

“It also gives me opportunities that I would not even expect to have if I’m not working in this field. As a gamer, I have always dreamed of working with big gaming companies, and being a content creator has made my dream come true as I got to work with the companies whose games I used to play, such as Playstation, Ubisoft, and Square Enix.

“I believe that Southeast Asians are very creative people. We already have the talent and potential, but many of these game developers do not have enough capital or support to grow their businesses. They are mostly indie game companies and are lacking the capital to invest in game production like other big companies. I hope that ASEAN can support the game developers in the region to grow, expand, and produce more high-quality games in the future. ■

Interviewed by Pricilia Putri Nirmala Sari. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.

- Indonesian independent game developer, Toge Production, created the Toge Game Fund Initiative to help game developers from Southeast Asia turning their visions into reality with grants up to USD 10,000.
- eSports describes the world of competitive and organised video gaming. According to Statista, eSports exploded in recent years as more viewers tune in to watch the world’s best gamers play their favorite video games. In 2019, there were 397.8 million eSports viewers worldwide. By 2024, that number is projected to reach 577.2 million.
- During the 2022 Asian Games in Jakarta, eSports was featured as a demonstration sport for the first time, which means that the medals won would not be counted in the medal tally. eSports will make its debut in the 2022 Asian Games with medals being awarded in eight games.



Gareth Richards

Writer. Editor. Creative Arts Space
Co-owner and Bookshop Owner.

Penang Island, Malaysia is a treasure trove of creative enterprises. Nestled in the UNESCO historic city of George Town is a creative arts space called Hikayat, which houses an independent bookshop specialising in books on the ASEAN region. It also houses a café and features film screenings, talks, and workshops. Also onsite is a podcast recording studio and residency apartment for long-term stay creatives. Appropriately enough, Hikayat is the Malay word for “story” or “narrative.”

Co-owner Gareth Richards shares his passion for the written and spoken word with The ASEAN.

“After I stopped teaching at Universiti Malaya and then being a senior research fellow at the Attorney General’s Chambers of Malaysia, I set up an editorial and creative talent agency. I provide high-level professional editing, especially for non-fiction with a focus on Southeast Asia. We have put nearly 90 books to bed, and we edit for publishers like NUS Press, Springer, Routledge, Wiley-Blackwell, Anthem, and so on. Our work involves everything from manuscript appraisal and structural editing to liaison with print production teams. I am especially proud of the fact that I have trained three of the best young editors in Malaysia and Southeast Asia.

“We also represent creative talents—as an agency—and our clients include writers, photographers, performing artists,

painters, and musicians—and this involves anything to promote their work, pitching manuscripts to publishers, organising exhibitions, producing performances, making funding applications. Just recently we sold the manuscript of a novel to a major international publisher and signed an agreement for screen rights. So this aspect of our work is really about creating sustainable livelihoods for creatives.

“While I had been an academic for quite some time, my first love has always been the arts, across the board: literature, film, music, theatre, dance, and so on. I believe very strongly in the value of culture and the arts in society—that they have an *intrinsic* value, that they can illuminate people’s lives, aesthetically, emotionally. At the same time, culture and the arts are essential for our local economy, health and wellbeing, and education.

“Each of the things I’m involved with come from those core beliefs. I realised there was a dearth of good-quality editorial services in Malaysia while, at the same time, even major academic publishers have cut back on in-house editing, so there was a very obvious opening in the market. As for the bookshops, it astonished me that a storied place like George Town did not have a dedicated indie bookshop despite its UNESCO inscription as a World Heritage Site. So the idea was to fill that gap and to enhance a reading culture and a love of books. The founding of Hikayat

in 2018 drew many of these strands together – because it provides an ecosystem that showcases a range of arts as well as a space where people can meet and share and make their own stories.

“I’ve been privileged to have been involved in so many wonderful collaborations. Perhaps the best experience has been as the producer for a series of mixed-media performances focusing on the theme of *padi* (rice). I worked alongside artistic director and choreographer Aida Redza, and with dancers, musicians and installation artists to create on-site performances which have been through several iterations since 2016 to 2021, in Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea. That’s been pretty special.

“Hikayat established an imprint to publish bespoke books. And our most important series is the annual Hikayat Lecture on Literary Translation, which originated as part of the award-winning George Town Literary Festival, but which now has its own autonomous identity. The lecture is presented by one of the world’s leading practitioners of the art and craft of translation—such as Arshia Sattar, the doyenne of translation from Sanskrit to English—and we publish the lecture as a beautifully designed chapbook. In my view, translators are the unseen messengers across literature’s thresholds, silently navigating the passages between structure and style, content and context, meaning and metaphor. Yet the art and craft of translation are not only undervalued but often misunderstood, even in our own region. Translators need to be a close reader in one language and an accomplished writer in another. They need cultural sensitivity and a writer’s instincts. They strive to create something that is literary but not literal, identical and yet set apart. So the Hikayat Lecture contributes to this conversation on the principles and practices of literary translation in our times. And given Southeast Asia’s polyglot identity then a commitment to good-quality translation is a necessity if we are to know our neighbours better.

“Both the bookshops and Hikayat have suffered horribly during the course of the pandemic—closed for perhaps 40 per cent of the time and squeezed by the ban on interstate travel, since Penang’s creative economy relies a lot on out-of-state visitors (from the rest of Malaysia, Southeast Asia and globally). But with the easing of some restrictions as the public health situation slowly improves we are seeing the green shoots of recovery. We are under no illusions. We have to be flexible, innovative, fleet of foot. But there is at the same time a sense that people are hungry to experience the arts and culture again—and especially in live performances, for which the virtual world is no substitute. So we are cautiously optimistic that a better world awaits us in 2022 and beyond.

“Given the size of its population and the longevity of ASEAN as a regional bloc it’s imperative that the member states create sustainable infrastructures to help support the cultural community and creative industries. There are precedents

“ In my view, translators are the unseen messengers across literature’s thresholds, silently navigating the passages between structure and style, content and context, meaning and metaphor.

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HIKAYAT

*I create wind that makes sounds, then put them together
– Haruki Murakami*

Image credit: freepik.com

in the academic world such as the Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program and ASEAN University Network. I’d like to see the equivalent for the arts. As I’ve already suggested, support for translation technologies across the region is a good starting point—and translation between the languages of Southeast Asia. In addition, funding for arts residencies, collaborative exchanges, scholarships in fields such as arts management would help a lot. We already have the institutional framework in the ASEAN Socio Cultural Community, and I think its remit should have a higher profile as a key means of forging genuine understanding and creativity between the peoples of the region” ■

Interviewed by Kiran Sagoo. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.



Chairman’s Statement of the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits

We, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), gathered for the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits on 26 October 2021 under the Chairmanship of Brunei Darussalam. The Summits were chaired by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam and convened in accordance with the ASEAN Charter.

We reiterated our support for Brunei Darussalam’s ASEAN Chairmanship under the theme “We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper”, which focuses on harnessing the caring nature of ASEAN to build a harmonious and resilient Community with

the people at its centre; ensuring that ASEAN remains relevant through preparing and adapting for the future where its peoples can seize new opportunities, as well as overcoming existing and future challenges; and creating opportunities for people to benefit through initiatives that enhance the sustainable prosperity of the region. We highlighted the importance of maintaining the momentum in cooperating within and beyond ASEAN for the pursuit of these goals. ■

The full statement is available at <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FINAL-Chairmans-Statement-of-the-38th-and-39th-ASEAN-Summits-26-Oct....pdf>



Building Resiliency over the Long Haul



KIRAN SAGOO, PHD
SENIOR OFFICER,
ASCC ANALYSIS DIVISION

Building long-term resiliency is crucial for an inclusive, dynamic, and people-centred ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Various ministerial meetings within the ASCC pillar held over the past few months addressed this issue.

In his welcome remarks at the **Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women**, ASEAN Leader Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia, emphasised the need for ASEAN to continue promoting women's equal access to digital platforms. The meeting noted that an essential component of economic recovery is to ensure women's financial inclusion through the use of technology.

At the **First ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Accelerating Actions to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, ministers and senior officials from the national development planning and coordinating agencies on the SDGs exchanged views on potential collective action to achieve the SDGs in the region despite the COVID-19 pandemic. In his opening remarks, Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dato Lim Jock Hoi, called for stronger partnership and cooperation among ASEAN Member States to ensure that people in the region benefit from the attainment of the SDGs.

At the open session held in conjunction with the dialogue, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, underscored the importance of regional cooperation and collective action to enable ASEAN to have a collective voice in the international arena on sustainable development. He encouraged ASEAN to invest more in health and education, clean energy, sustainable land use, sustainable cities, and comprehensive digital inclusion, and possibly pursue a regional green deal on climate change.

Matters relating to the environment were discussed in further detail at the **Sixteenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME)** and **Sixteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution**. The meetings endorsed Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN 2021 chairmanship initiatives of establishing the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change in Brunei Darussalam and the ASEAN Youth Climate Action (ASEANYouCAN). The AMME also noted the launch of the ASEAN State of Climate Change Report.

Declarations and high-level documents endorsed at the ASCC Council meeting reflect the importance placed on building long-term resiliency.

The family unit is at the heart of a community and has been under considerable stress due to the pandemic. The meeting endorsed the **Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration on the Importance of the Family for Community Development and Nation-Building**, which focuses on strengthening the well-being, resilience and solidarity of families in adapting to challenges. It also proposes an "ASEAN Family Day" to be celebrated in May every year.

Children thrive in a safe environment. Unfortunately, bullying is on the rise, prompting the need to provide for stronger protection and also a need to address the root causes of bullying. The meeting endorsed the **Declaration on the Elimination of Bullying of Children in ASEAN**.

Further commitment to boost workers resiliency, agility and competitiveness was provided by endorsing the **ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Competitiveness, Resilience and Agility of Workers for the Future of Work**. The meeting also noted the **ASEAN Declaration on Fostering the Civil Service's Adaptability to the New Challenges**.

A healthy population is crucial to the well-being and resiliency of the region. A healthy diet is a necessary element for a healthy population. Unfortunately, urbanisation and economic development have resulted in dietary changes, with there being an increase in unhealthy consumption. The meeting endorsed the **ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the Reformulation and Production of Healthier Food and Beverage Options** to enhance regional capacity through integrated approaches to promote reformulation and production of healthier food and beverages.

The pandemic has also brought to the forefront the need to develop ASEAN's care economy, to respond to emerging challenges. The **ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy** as endorsed by the meeting aims to identify priorities, map out the relevant initiatives and establish mechanisms for the realisation of an ASEAN Care Economy.

With the aim of continuing ASEAN's efforts to build a peaceful and harmonious community, the meeting endorsed the **ASEAN Strategic Policy Framework on Promoting an Adaptive ASEAN Community of Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a Sense of Regional Agendas Among the Peoples of ASEAN**. This policy framework is envisaged to lend greater coherence to ASCC efforts to foster regional solidarity. The meeting encouraged relevant ASCC Sectoral Bodies to promote cultural and creative peacebuilding through the inter-sectoral lenses of youth, education, health, information, and media.

The **Sixth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports** affirmed their commitment to an active ASEAN Community where sports serve as an essential means in advancing socio-cultural development and promoting peace. Ministers also supported the inclusion of more Asian and Olympic Games Sports in the Southeast Asia (SEA) Games with the eventual aim of aligning the SEA Games sports selection closely with that of the Asian Games and Olympic Games. ■

Bringing ASEAN Closer to the People



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How can the ASEAN Community effectively communicate stories about our region's heritage, values, goals, initiatives, and accomplishments to 650 million ASEAN citizens and the rest of the world?

Our strategy lies in the **ASEAN Communication Master Plan 2018-2025 (ACMP II)**, which the regional bloc adopted in 2018. With the overarching message, "ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All," the plan aims to reinforce Southeast Asians' sense of identity and belonging by demonstrating and showcasing what ASEAN Community does and the range of opportunities and benefits that it offers.

In the first phase of implementation of the ACMP II, the ASEAN Secretariat, with support from the German Government through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), developed a podcast series called "ASEAN Champions" and published *In Conversations with ASEAN Citizens*. These products, launched in 2020, featured stories from ASEAN people who are positively impacting their respective fields or communities. Examples are a student project to promote an eco-friendly lifestyle, a doctor's mission to provide accessible healthcare for all, an athlete's social enterprise to help youth achieve their dreams, and a campaign to protect endangered species in the region.

Understanding that people engage with media differently, the project's second phase focused on developing a more varied range of communication products. This phase, launched in October 2021, extends the ASEAN Champions podcast series to another five episodes. Each episode features a "champion" whose inspiring work addresses pressing issues of our time, such as environmental sustainability, women empowerment, sustainable and community-based tourism, digital start-up ecosystems, and waste management. In addition, this podcast series seeks to muster ASEAN citizens' support on worthwhile initiatives and advocacies.

The second phase also includes the production of ASEAN Presents videos given the increasing popularity of online video content. The first is an animated video on the practical application of the ASEAN Culture of Prevention concept. It illustrates simple activities that ASEAN citizens can do in their daily life to inculcate a preventive mindset to address regional and global challenges.

The second ASEAN Presents video focuses on the creative economy following the UN declaration of 2021 as the Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. The video outlines the role of the creative industry in ASEAN as a key

driver of socio-economic development. It also highlights ASEAN's efforts to develop a creative community, create more opportunities for all, and use digital platforms to promote the region's creative goods and services.

The third ASEAN Presents video is on the topic community outreach. It features a number of activities engaging the people of ASEAN, from local institutions to the citizens, such as students, academics, professional workers, and many others.

The ASEAN Secretariat also created comic strips for those who enjoy reading comics. It is a simple yet effective storytelling tool for introducing the work of ASEAN. The first comic strip illustrates the sixth thrust of the ASEAN Culture of Prevention which focuses on addressing fake news and misinformation. The message emphasises the principles of Responsibility, Empathy, Authenticity, Discernment, Integrity or R.E.A.D.I. to combat hoaxes.

The second comic strip is about fostering greater understanding, tolerance, and a sense of regional agenda among the people of ASEAN, a key deliverable of Brunei Darussalam's 2021 ASEAN Chairmanship. The comic strip presents this concept in simple terms for people to see can see its relevance in their daily lives. It seeks to encourage ASEAN citizens to embrace the diversity within the region, strengthen regional solidarity, and foster a sense of community.

The third comic strip focuses on the creative economy and how we can support ASEAN's small and medium-sized cultural enterprises, especially during the pandemic.

The ASEAN 101 video and podcast series completes the second phase of the ACMP II products. The ASEAN 101 series serves as an educational resource for the public, especially those interested to learn more about the vision and mission of and developments within ASEAN's three Community pillars, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The ASEAN 101 series also debunks myths about ASEAN, providing audiences with accurate and in-depth information on what the ASEAN Community stands for and how it works.

Through these various ACMP II communication products, leaders hope to bridge the information gap and bring ASEAN closer to the people.

The ACMP II products may be viewed or downloaded from the following links: <https://asean.org/asean-communication-master-plan-ii-acmp-ii-2018-2025-2/>. ■



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ASEAN

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