

Partner South East Asia

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# Creative economy: How networks shape creative ecosystems

Report: March 2022

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# Highlights

- This session was part of the of the British Council's *Partner South East Asia Arts and Culture Matters* event.<sup>1</sup> It highlighted the significance of networks in building stronger and more inclusive creative economies.
- Creative networks are city-, town- or region-wide networks that have been operating for at least a year. They cover multiple creative sectors and are deeply rooted in place.
- Networks and community-led support are important because creative industries are mostly small and micro businesses, and freelancers.
- The quadruple helix model groups four actors: government, academia, civil society and industry, who are brought together by four main value flows within the creative network.
- Creative work needs a dedicated physical space to flourish, where people can network and produce work.
- Networks need to think about who is not in the room or part of the conversation as collaboration and innovation thrives on diversity.
- A sustainable ecosystem is built on creative enterprises with good impacts that can give back to the ecosystem and society.
- Cebu's designation as UNESCO City of Design provides access to a global network of design and creative cities.

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<sup>1</sup> Partner South East Asia: Arts and Culture Matters, is series of online forums by the British Council to strengthen cultural ties between South East Asia and the UK. It ran from 22 to 25 November 2021 and involved arts and cultural practitioners from the UK, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

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## Overview

This session focused on the creative economy, with conversations on the impact of creative networks, shared from the points of view of creative hubs, creative entrepreneurs and cities.

[Dani Go](#), an illustrator and cartoonist from the Philippines made a visual summary based on the participants' descriptions of themselves.



Dani Go's completed illustration of the gathering she imagined. Credit: Dani Go

## Presentations

The session was moderated by [Clare Reddington](#), CEO of [Watershed](#) in Bristol, the UK, and a trustee of the British Council.

## Narrowing the gap between policymakers and creative industries: Marlen Komorowski

[Marlen](#) is Impact Analysis at Cardiff University's Creative Economy, as well as Senior Researcher and Guest Professor at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She shared the [Joining the Dots](#) report that analysed 22 creative networks in the UK to better understand creative networks and their impact on the creative ecosystem.

The authors of the reports are:

- **Dr Marlen Komorowski**, Impact Analyst at Clwstwr, Creative Economy Unit at Cardiff University & Senior Researcher / Guest Professor at imec-SMIT-VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
- **Sara Pepper**, Director of Creative Economy, Cardiff University
- **Prof Justin Lewis**, Professor of Communication and Creative Industries, Cardiff University



Image taken from Marlen Komorowski's presentation showing creative networks in the UK.

The quadruple helix model groups four actors within the creative network: government, academia, civil society and industry. They're brought together by four main value flows:

- Monetary
- Service and knowledge
- Collaboration and co-operation flows
- Other intangible value flows (socio-cultural impact, place-making, knowledge exchange and spill overs)

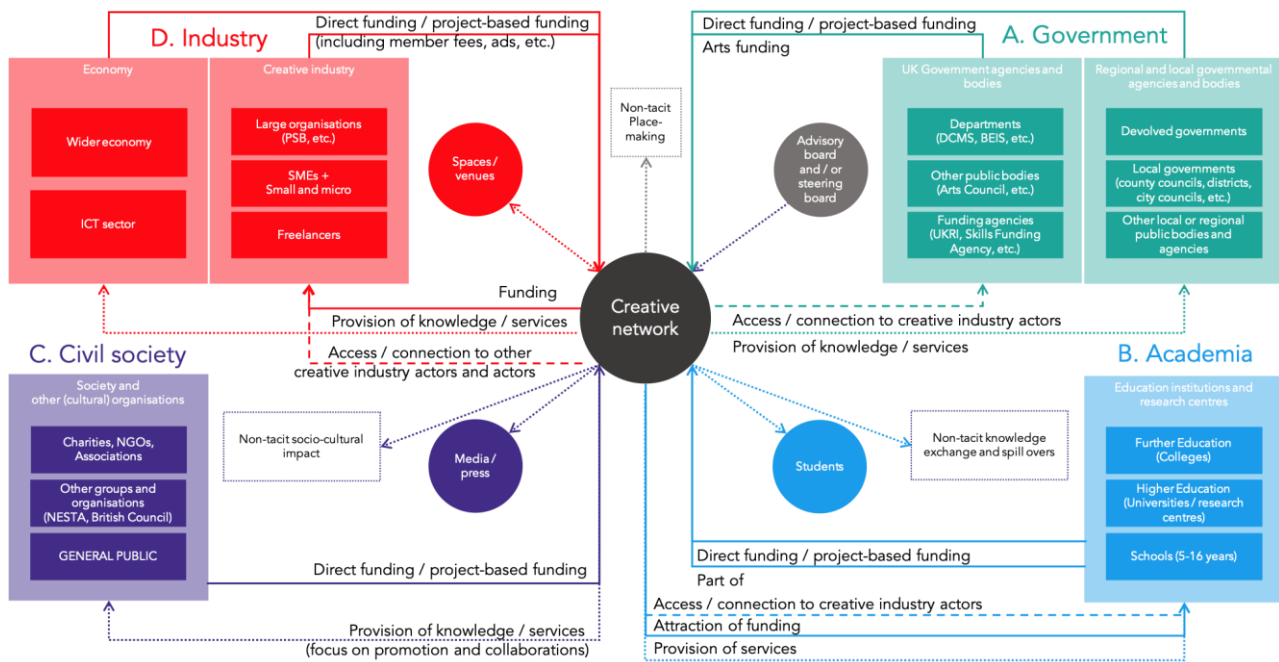


Image taken from Marlen Komorowski's presentation showing the quadruple helix model taken from the [Joining the Dots](#) report.

Creative industries are mostly small and micro businesses, and freelancers, hence the importance of networks. The *Joining the Dots* report tries to create a common knowledge base to narrow this gap, especially among policymakers, who are needed to support these networks.

Read the *Joining the Dots* report [here](#).



Clockwise: Tom Fleming, Dina Dellyana, Butch Carungay, Clare Reddington, Marlen Komorowski, Duangrit Bunnag

## Harnessing networks for a sustainable city: Butch Carungay

Butch is a creative entrepreneur, design advocate and community crusader. In 2019, he led Cebu's successful bid to be designated [UNESCO City of Design](#). He spoke about his work in the creative sectors in Cebu.

Cebu's diverse creative ecosystem covers functional design, creative services, visual arts and new media. The UNESCO recognition gives Cebu access to an even wider resource network of more than 40 cities of design and almost 400 creative cities worldwide.

A week before the first Covid-19 lockdown, British Council Philippines and Plymouth College of Art held the [Making Futures Philippines](#) conference in Cebu. Participants from 20 countries discussed how crafts communities could reinvent their roles in the context of global challenges.

Butch is a national consultant with the [United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs](#) for a series of reports assessing pandemic impacts on Cebu's creative sector and sub-sectors. They've produced a business recovery toolkit for micro, small and medium creative enterprises.

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To revitalise the local economy, Cebu will increase tourism investments and the production of creative goods and services for the local, national and international markets. These efforts will prioritise higher revenue, lower-effort projects based on predefined metrics such as revenue potential, maximum reach and the least resources required.

A few of the projects in the pipeline are:

- Cebu's first [national museum](#), housed in the old customs house. This new use of a heritage building supports the rebranding of the city's heritage quarter to gain a UNESCO World Heritage inscription.
- The Carbon Market transformation into a world-class public market, lifestyle destination and transport hub.
- [NEWseum of Design \(NEWD\)](#), a physical converging point and repository for past, present and future initiatives. It will also be a space to help designers realise and commercialise their ideas.
- The Design Cebu Gateway, an online portal that'll serve as a virtual converging point, marketplace, networking tool and resource database for Cebu creatives.
- [Cebu Design Week 2021](#), which would return to an in-person event with the Visayas Art Fair as its main feature.
- Introduction of the Philippine Creative Industries Development Bill<sup>2</sup>
- The Philippine Creative Cities Network (PCCN) – a support group, incubator and accelerator for cities that want to achieve UNESCO Creative Cities designation.

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<sup>2</sup> The bill seeks to establish the Philippine Creative Industry Development Council under the Department of Trade and Industry. It will be responsible for promoting the development of creative content and protecting creators from intellectual property rights encroachment.

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Butch concluded his presentation by saying that respecting the past, celebrating the present and inspiring the will energise Cebu's creative practitioners and harness networks to help build a sustainable city that is liveable and lovable.

## **Creative work starts with a blank page: Duangrit Bunnag**

Duangrit is an architect with his own firm, [Duangrit Bunnag Architect Limited](#). He shared his journey as a creative entrepreneur making impact in Bangkok.

In 2014, he renovated an old factory to use as his office. It then became [The Jam Factory](#), a riverside arts and retail centre, born out of his vision of endowing a person into the creative industry as fast as possible. The Jam Factory is a discovery space for the community to produce creative work.

The Jam Factory has hosted events such as:

- [Knack Market](#), an open-air flea market with music performances
- Art Ground, an annual art fair for young creatives to sell, work on and see art in the domain of the new generation



Image taken from Duangrit Bunnag's presentation showing the Jam Factory, a space that brings creative networks together.



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Duangrit stated that creativity is a possibility within a certain context. In the case of the creative space or city, space is the possibility, a blank sheet for people to create. Without that space, there is no creative network, community or event.

He also touched on silent knowledge, which is contradictory to articulated knowledge, that can be written and transferred. And once it is transferred, it can be digitalised and copied, thereby reducing its value. Silent knowledge on the other hand, can only be transferred by being together and going through the passage of time.

## Reflections

### Networks mobilise and energise the creative sector: Tom Fleming

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

Reflecting on the perspectives of Marlen, Butch and Duangrit, he raised the question 'why do we network' and how it can mobilise and energise the creative sector.

*"A community built on dialogue and inter-disciplinary transactions is greater than the sum of its parts. They can do much more together than individually".*

Tom stressed that they need to think about who's not in the room or part of the conversation. Networks provide pathways for engaging people of different backgrounds. The combination of voices drives collaborations and innovation.

Differences are a positive thing when developing and driving networks for the creative economy. Networks that start to look and feel alike would be challenging. He also pointed out that network is not just about conversations, but also about impact.

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Tom also touched on the quadruple helix, with networks bringing together policymakers, practitioners, civil society and institutions. This connects creative activities that are essential for arts and culture development. Additionally, the sector's success depends on both top-down and bottom-up approaches, and a meeting point in between.

Creative industries flourish when networks share an impact agenda. Festivals are catalysts or anchors for creative industries. Festivals and their networks are like a social technology or devices that can transform sector, civic and social developments.

Cities with different kinds of networks have the capacity to grow and go to the next level. Cebu has informal and emergent networks, and a shared mission to develop the city and keep challenging partners to aim higher.

Covid-19 has exposed the structural inequalities in creative industries and the fragility of networks. While some flourished, like Cebu and Bangkok, there was also a lot of fallout. As the sector rebuilds for the post-Covid reality, it needs to attend to those who aren't in the conversation. Networks must work collectively with a shared purpose to reboot and reframe the creative industries.

## **The creative ecosystem needs the right champion to become sustainable: Dina Dellyana**

Dina is a Lecturer and Business Incubation Director of the School of Business and Management at the Institute of Technology Bandung. She is also Programme Director at the [Global Center of Excellence and International Cooperation for Creative Economy \(G-CINC\)](#). Dina is actively involved in start-ups and creative industries development in Indonesia.

Dina said that creative enterprises need the creative ecosystem to develop. However, it's not easy to organise creative networks organisations. Good engagement and collective actions within the networks, and the right champion are also necessary to keep them growing and producing good impact.

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Creative networks need the support of a good ecosystem of education, physical space, events, marketplaces, etc. Incubators and facilitators can connect these infrastructures and activate the ecosystem.

A sustainable ecosystem will produce many creative enterprises with good impacts, which can then give back to ecosystem and society. Dina wrapped up her reflections by calling attention to the human factor, which roots creative industries.

Watch the recording of the conversations [here](#).