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FORCES OF ART

Perspectives
from a Changing World

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Amid growing interests in the arts and their possible societal impact in the twenty-first century, notions of empowerment, community building, and reinvigoration of villages and urban neighbourhoods are acknowledged across cultural policies, art studies, and redevelopment plans. Such growing attention to the arts and their life-changing potentiality has led to further instrumentalization of artistic practices. This may cause interdependences with financial agencies, and adds urgency to questions of the societal role, autonomy, inclusiveness, and sustainability of arts. A discussion of arts, cultural, and creative ecosystems has also recently emerged in Indonesia to address these challenges. *Koalisi Seni Indonesia* and *ruangrupa* are two recognized initiators for public acknowledgement of multidisciplinary art(s) ecosystem(s). By positioning the two actors in a broader socio-political and cultural context, the aim of this chapter is to delineate the main concerns, aspirations, and contingencies related to art(s) ecosystem(s). Through a comparative approach including not only insights by local representatives but also emerging discourses in the region and beyond, I seek to facilitate lateral thinking and further envisionings of more nuanced understandings of 'balanced art(s) ecosystem(s)' and how this can contribute towards the regeneration of 'cultural resilience.' The major objective of this paper is to enable innovative perceptions and help the planning of future theoretical and practical approaches.

Keywords

- Balanced Art(s) Ecosystem(s)
- Ecosystem Analysis
- Multidisciplinarity
- Sustainability
- Societal Role of Arts

INTRODUCTION

'I wish there was no more hierarchy in the arts.'
Rahmadiyah Tria Gayathri¹

The intricate socio-political environment in Indonesia has meant shifting realities for artists and citizens alike throughout the twentieth century. In the nineteen-seventies, *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* (GSRB, New Art Movement) emerged to question the aesthetic and artistic modalities of the predominant notions of 'modern art.' Debates are ongoing about the interconnectedness of the movement and contemporary art in the

nineteen-nineties, but the GSRB can nevertheless be regarded as the nascent breakthrough of a strong alignment with socio-political criticism, societal transformation, and community-based works in Indonesian art.² Yet the lack of adequate government support and institutional acknowledgement for what has gradually come to be understood as 'contemporary arts' has made some artists reconfigure their own infrastructures, alliances, and spaces. This has happened especially in the nineties within and by local communities but also because of the support and interest of regional and international foundations and art markets.³ While this unparalleled internationalization and commercialization further reshaped the contemporary art scene in the nineties, it also raised pertinent questions about the role and identity of Indonesian arts. In particular, after the change of regime in 1998, the socio-political and economic transformations led to an unprecedented presence of both Indonesian and international NGOs, which was not always unproblematic.⁴

In the twenty-first century, the particular social, political, and cultural circumstances embedded in the postcolonial and multicultural context of Indonesia continue to build towards contestations of representation and power relations between different ethnicities, institutions, religions, and ideological frameworks. Societal instabilities, growing communal anxieties, and conflicts that in the post-Suharto era shaped the evolving arts scenes across Indonesia, have now embraced new manifestations and ideological departures. This increasingly transnational cultural environment has been shaped by unseen societal transitions, which add new dimensions to the precarious situation of arts. Novel forms of artistic experimentation by artists and (art) collectives continue to meet with parallel forms of cultural production in the fields of urbanization, civil society formation, environmentalism, critical pedagogy, and activism. In this recent wave of interest in the arts and their possible societal impact, notions of empowerment, community building, and reinvigoration of villages and cities have turned to catchphrases commonly employed in cultural policies, art studies, and redevelopment plans. Such growing

1.....Rahmadiyah Tria Gayathri (Koalisi Seni member in Palu, Sulawesi), interview by Dara Hanafi, 10 January 2020.

2.....Elizabeth Morrell, 'Ethnicity, Art, and Politics away from the Indonesian Centre,' *Sajourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 15, no. 2 (2000); Grace Sambon, 'Becoming: In Search of the Social Artists, Locating Their Environments, Reorienting the Planet,' in *Making Another World Possible: 10 Creative Time Summits, 10 Global Issues, 100 Art Projects*, ed. Corina L. Apostol and Nato Thompson (London: Routledge, 2019); Yvonne Spielmann, *Contemporary Indonesian Art: Artists, Art Spaces, and Collectors*, expanded and updated English ed. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017); Helen Spanjaard, *Artists and Their Inspiration: A Guide through Indonesian Art History (1930-2015)* (Volendam: LM Publishers, 2016); Jim Supangkat, *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond* (Jakarta: Indonesia Fine Arts Foundation, 1997); Jim Supangkat, 'Arts and Politics in Indonesia,' in *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline Turner (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005); Jim Supangkat, 'Indonesian and Javanese,' *Southeast of*

Now 2, no. 2 (2018); H.D. Halim, 'Arts Networks and the Struggle for Democratisation,' in *Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia*, ed. Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley, and Damien Kingsbury (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999); Patrick D. Flores, *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Museum, 2009), pp. 37-42; Caroline Turner, 'Indonesia: Art, Freedom, Human Rights and Engagement with the West,' in *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline Turner (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005).

3.....Such developments are also mentioned in, e.g., Spielmann, *Contemporary Indonesian Art*, pp. 9-15 and in Flores, *Past Peripheral*, pp. 101-2 and pp. 180-81.

4.....Philip Eldridge, 'NGOs and the State in Indonesia,' in *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, ed. Arief Budiman (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990); Bob S. Hadiwinata, *The Politics of NGOs in Indonesia: Developing Democracy and Managing a Movement* (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003); Verena Beittinger-Lee, *(Un)civil Society and Political Change in Indonesia: A Contested Arena* (London: Routledge, 2009).

attention to the arts and their life-changing potentiality has led to further instrumentalization and NGO-ization of artistic practices.⁵ This, in turn, may cause programming dependencies to meet financiers' needs, and adds urgency to the questions on the autonomy, independence, role, and sustainability of arts.

Even though the post-reform era for Indonesian arts is defined by informal collaborations and solidarity, it is not free from intrinsic and international hierarchies premised, for instance, on unequal access to resources and networks, generational differences, Java-centrism, and the growing impact of Islamic traditionalists in certain cities and regions. In addition, a 'localist' cultural policy, focusing on protectionism and the preservation of authentic Indonesian culture, has caused tensions in the circulation and consumption of culture in relation to international markets.⁶ As evidenced during this study, such tendencies continue to create tensions on acceptable adaptations of traditions today, in particular for younger-generation artists.

To address these challenges faced by both central and local governments and to reformulate an inclusive cultural policy, the new Law No. 5/2017 on the Advancement of Culture was ratified in May 2017. Detailed discussion on the content of the law, related strategies, policies, programmes, the mapping of regional cultural infrastructure by the local governments in 2018, and the Cultural Endowment Fund is beyond the scope of this study, which discusses the evolving visions on the role of arts and art(s) ecosystem(s) (*ekosistem seni*). Yet, because of an inherent interrelatedness both in practice and in discourse of arts and culture, it is important to acknowledge that the focus of the Law is on culture as 'anything pertaining to human creation, sensibility, motivation, and the work of the community.' It is an 'effort to improve cultural resilience (*ketahanan budaya*) and Indonesian cultural contribution to the development of world civilizations through Cultural Protection, Development, Utilization, and Capacity Building/Empowerment.' Among the central developmental aims is the vitalization of the cultural ecosystems (*ekosistem Kebudayaan*),⁷ of which contemporary arts and artists are only one part, as the Director General of Culture, Hilmar Farid, elucidates.⁸

While the analytical research on the implementation and outcomes of the Law with some temporal distance deserves a paper of its own, this art sociological study strives to identify key forms of agency and interpretations regarding the emerging conceptual approach of 'ecosystem' (*ekosistem*). Not only is the concept included in the Law, but initial conversations on arts, cultural, and creative ecosystems have gained written

5.....NGO-ization of arts is mentioned, for example, in Raminder Kaur and Parul Dave-Mukherji, 'Introduction,' in *Art and Aesthetics in a Globalizing World*, ed. Raminder Kaur and Parul Dave-Mukherji (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 15.

6.....Tod Jones, *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State: Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 278.

7.....Law No. 5/2017 on Advancement of Culture (Undang-undang Republic Indonesia Nomor 5 Tahun

2017, *Tentang Pemajuan Kebudayaan*). Available in Indonesian on the Ministry of Education and Culture website <https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/uu-no-5-tahun-2017-tentang-pemajuan-kebudayaan/> (accessed 15 March 2020). See also Koalisi Seni's website focusing on Development of Culture (Pemajuan Kebudayaan), <http://pemajuankebudayaan.id/>. An official English translation made by the Ministry is made available by Koalisi Seni (accessed 5 April 2020).

8.....Hilmar Farid, interview by author, 18 September 2019.

attention in Indonesia at least since 2015.⁹ As two recognized initiators for the public acknowledgement of multidisciplinary art(s) ecosystem(s), ruangrupa and Koalisi Seni Indonesia (hereafter Koalisi Seni) are placed in a broader socio-political and cultural context to help investigate the current aspirations, possibilities, and challenges for enhancing the inter-related roles of arts, culture, and creativity in Indonesia.

By delineating the main concerns and aims related to the emerging discussions on 'art(s) ecosystem(s)' in Indonesia, and by mirroring them against existing discourses in the region and beyond, I seek to facilitate further envisionings on these pragmatic and conceptual processes through multi-layered ecosystem analysis. This comparative approach is employed not to enhance any epistemological hierarchy but rather to encourage lateral thinking, which can open up innovative perceptions of and for future practical and theoretical approaches. In order to directly include local voices and perceptions, and to avoid misrepresentations, diagrams created by local representatives of the arts, culture, and creativity illuminate evolving novel perceptions and hence complement the information derived from interviews. The information gathered throughout this study clearly reveals the significance of more nuanced understandings of 'balanced art(s) ecosystem(s),' which may, in turn, contribute towards the regeneration of 'cultural resilience.'

METHODOLOGY

Koalisi Seni and ruangrupa represent two originally rather disparate yet closely interrelated positions and roles across the Jakartan, national, and regional arts scenes. Hence, they are chosen as the two key examples to clarify the major transformations in arts in the twenty-first century. In the initial stages of the fieldwork, the concept of 'ecosystem' and the aspirations to further improve the situation of arts as 'an ecosystem(s)' emerged as pertinent issues among different stakeholders. My attention was thus drawn to the role of Koalisi Seni and ruangrupa in these evolving discourses, which provided an apt point of departure for this paper.

In 2000, the young artists' initiative ruangrupa started to work from the perspective of urban youth culture and in the urban context of Jakarta. Over two decades, ruangrupa has gradually grown from an informal collective into an internationally acknowledged non profit organization with around eighty hired staff members along with numerous programmes, platforms, and collaborative components. Changes in focus, aims, and concepts have closely correlated with the spatial changes from a private house to the rented warehouse known as the 'Gudang Sarinah ecosystem' and to the currently owned compound in Jagakarsa in South Jakarta.¹⁰

9.....Djuli Djatiprambudi, 'Saat Menulis Sejarah Seni Rupa Sendiri' ['When Writing Your Own Fine Art History'], in *Biennale Jatim 6: 'Arts Ecosystem: Now!'* (Surabaya: Department of Culture and Tourism, East Java, 2015).

Such remarkable growth and transformation from programmes to audience along with generational changes require new organizational practices, and even though the aim is still to maintain a horizontal structure, ruangrupa's management has inevitably become somewhat hierarchic.¹¹

In 2009, Amna Kusumo, founder of Kelola, raised the idea of collaborative advocacy for arts.¹² In the initial meeting in Bogor, West Java, on 5–6 April 2010, twenty-one art practitioners, organizations, and collectives agreed to proceed towards the creation of a new umbrella organization. The need to work together through a particular association to advance the position of arts in general was further endorsed among professionals from all spheres of arts and culture, and resulted in the official establishment of Koalisi Seni Indonesia on 3 May 2012. What used to be forty-one founding members is now a nationally representative organization with 251 members (individuals and organizations) in nineteen provinces.¹³ Koalisi Seni defines itself as 'an association which aims to encourage the creation of a healthier arts ecosystem in Indonesia.'¹⁴ Understandably, aspirations for Koalisi Seni's practical efforts and programmes vary among the members, but the clear majority of interviewees (including non-members) acknowledge the significance of its persistence in the development of the Law on the Advancement of Culture and commend the inclusion of people from various geographical and professional positions in the discussions throughout the process.¹⁵

To situate these two key actors into current arts and cultural scenes, I conducted five fieldwork periods between December 2018 and October 2019 in Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Bandung, Surabaya and Magelang in Java, and in Denpasar in Bali. During these ten intensive weeks, I visited around fifty-five art and/or cultural organizations, institutions, archives, museums, galleries, alternative (art) spaces, art collectives, private art studios, events, and exhibitions. The work and connections of Dara Hanafi, my Indonesian research assistant, were indispensable throughout the study, but I also made many site visits and conducted interviews independently. Besides artists, I reached out to scholars, collectors, curators, art historians, and

10.....Information primarily based on seven site visits (including previous locations); informal discussions with members of ruangrupa, Gudskul, Serrum, and Grafis Huru Hara; Ade Darmawan interview by author, 6 December 2018; Ade Darmawan, Reza Afisina, Farid Rakun, and Leonard Barto, interview by author, 6 May 2019; Julia Sarisetiati, interview by author 23 September 2019. For more information, see ruangrupa's website, ruru.ruangrupa.org (accessed 2 February 2020). For a detailed history of ruangrupa, see especially Reinaart Vanhoe, *Also-Space: How Indonesian Art Initiatives Have Reinvented Networking* (Eindhoven: Onomatopee, 2016); ruangrupa, *Expanding the Space and Public: ruangrupa's 10th Anniversary* (Jakarta: Indonesian National Gallery, 2010), and Mirwan Andan, 'All for Jakarta: A Note on the Tenth Anniversary of Ruangrupa: Decompression #10, Expanding the Space and Public,' *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011), pp. 591–602.

11.....Darmawan, Afisina, Rakun, and Barto, interview. Cf. with earlier situation discussed in Nuraini Juliatuti, 'Ruangrupa: A Conversation on Horizontal Organisation,' *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 30, no. 1 (2012), pp. 118–25.

12.....Amna Kusumo, interview by author, 23 September 2019.

13.....Membership as of 30 April 2020. Koalisi Seni secretariat, email message to author, 30 April 2020.

14.....Information based on two site visits at the secretariat in Jakarta, with individual and group interviews of board members and the administrative team; participation in a planning meeting and workshop in Yogyakarta on 13–14 December 2018, and informal discussions with participants; complemented with interviews, and informal discussions with board members and members. For more detailed information, see <https://koalisiseni.or.id/> (accessed 25 March 2020). 'Koalisi seni adalah perhimpunan yang bertujuan mendorong terwujudnya ekosistem seni yang lebih sehat di Indonesia.' On Koalisi Seni's website, in FAQ section.

15.....Already in 2013, Koalisi Seni took an active and public role with an article in a national newspaper about the urgency of revised cultural policies and law corresponding to the contemporary realities and diversity in cultural practices. Linda Hoemar Abidin, Mirwan Andan, and Abduh Aziz, 'Menanggapi RUU Kebudayaan' ['A Respond to the Draft of Cultural Law'], *Kompas*, 26 May 2013.

local and national government officials. The interviewees represent a large spectrum of contemporary and traditional arts, professional backgrounds, and demographics (ages ranging from twenty to eighty, and including six non-Indonesians immersed in Indonesian arts).

Koalisi Seni is a major promoter for the change in legislation and official (national) support for arts and culture, and as such, it is at the frontline of shaping the current discourse. It provides a significant platform for like-minded protagonists with shared interests to improve the current role of arts and culture. Many of the study participants were found among Koalisi Seni's members, but it was essential to also include insights from and site visits to non-members (representing approximately twenty-five per cent of the research data).

Given that Jakarta, Jogjakarta, and Bandung are historically known as the epicentre of Indonesian arts, I visited each of them two to four times. Yet, to build a more comprehensive understanding it was necessary to reach beyond this main triangle. Hence, for instance, my research was extended to Denpasar in Bali, which has gained international acknowledgement for its rich culture since the early twentieth century and is an important centre for arts outside of Java. Because of Indonesia's geographic extensiveness, it was not feasible to include as many visits to outer islands as I originally intended. Instead, Dara Hanafi made six telephone interviews to gather further insights from representatives from Riau in West Sumatra, Kupang in East Nusa Tenggara, Palu and Makassar in Sulawesi, Pontianak in Kalimantan, and from Denpasar in Bali. Altogether fifty-one semi-structured, individual, and group interviews were conducted based on voluntary participation and protection of anonymity with questions provided in advance. Along with my position as an 'outsider,' this approach ensured that people were more comfortable to share critical perceptions and comments that would have not necessarily been told to a person involved in the Indonesian arts scenes. To add to the triangulation of data, around thirty-five to forty informal discussions were held both with the interviewees and people (some of whom were based in Singapore) engaged in Indonesian arts and culture. Notes, transcriptions, and summaries have been cross-checked in personal communication, and permission to publish has been requested from the interviewees for any quotations in this paper.

To further exemplify the differences in perceptions of 'ecosystem(s)' and to demonstrate the potentiality of varied approaches, ten to twelve interested representatives from different cities and positions in arts, culture, and creativity were asked to visualize their current understanding of an 'ecosystem,' or its ideal form. Mainly because of schedules, not all could finalize their contributions, but the six illustrations included here provide a starting point to facilitate more in-depth discussions on existing envisionings.

FROM NATURE TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ECOSYSTEM DISCOURSE

In an effort to inspire lateral thinking and to enhance emerging comparative discussions about arts, culture, creativity, and ecosystems, a short review of the existing approaches can be beneficial, although the scope of this chapter does not permit a detailed assessment of the many usages of 'ecosystems.' It is important to acknowledge that while the concept originates from biology, it has since the nineteen-nineties become an abundant but vaguely defined metaphor not only across academic disciplines but also in varied societal sectors. As Audretsch and colleagues validate, the comprehension of interrelated dynamics and factors of favourable socio-economic conditions has inspired extensive studies on entrepreneurial ecosystems, business ecosystems, and innovative ecosystems in the twenty-first century. They also note that much of the existing literature (in)directly resonates with the understanding of natural ecosystems consistent of living organisms and their environment.¹⁶

In the fields of contemporary art, interest in ecosystems has gradually expanded from a direct focus on the environment through arts to acknowledging more multiperspective interrelations in and beyond arts. Artists from varied cultural contexts have been keen to develop an 'ecological approach' in their art practices since the nineteen-sixties. In Indonesia, art embedded with and examining aspects of environment and ecology emerged in the nineteen-seventies and eighties.¹⁷ While more in-depth art historical research is still needed for mapping out environmental art forms and their conceptual understandings in Asia, it seems—based on currently available information—that one of the earliest publications concerning the interrelations of art and ecosystem is a Japanese exhibition catalogue published in 1998 on artists examining people's interconnectedness with nature and, in particular, the forest.¹⁸

Such interest in biological ecosystems in art practices has continued to gain further ground. The different focuses have all contributed to a more elaborate understanding of relationships between people, nature, nonhuman agency, and socio-economic and cultural conditions through interdisciplinary collaborations not limited to the realms of 'art.' One of the most recent examples is the Taipei Biennial 2018, 'Post-Nature—A Museum as an Ecosystem,' and its request for unconventional ecological solutions advocated by people from various professional backgrounds and extending beyond the museum space to interrelate with different social and environmental ecosystems. In their curatorial statement, Mali Wu and Francesco Manacorda emphasize that

[W]ith this movement away from anthropocentrism, comes an

16.....David B. Audretsch et al., 'Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Economic, Technological, and Societal Impacts,' *The Journal of Technology Transfer* 44, no. 2 (2019).

17.....See, e.g., Samboh, 'Becoming,' pp. 106–22.

18.....*Āto, seitaikai: bijutsu hyōgen no 'shizen' to 'setsaku.'* *Art Ecosystem: The Contemporary Japanese Art Scene* (Utsunomiya: Utsunomiya Museum of Art, 1998). 'Ecosystem' is 生態系 (*seitaikai*) in Japanese.

acceptance of more universal and all-encompassing approaches such as systems thinking, which understands the planet as a collection of inter-dependent ecosystems, populated by diverse and mutually reliant beings.¹⁹

Another line of adaptation of 'ecosystem' in arts worldwide examines what constitutes 'an art ecosystem' and how it is made sustainable. Ian David Moss's perceptions on 'ecosystem-based arts research' arose from a practical aim to map out and categorize actors and relationships premised on basic questions of where, how, by and to whom art is made. Such charting of roles, possibilities, and interrelations provides one possible starting point to investigate what Moss understands as a kaleidoscopic complexity of arts.²⁰ The different approaches and outcomes of what constitutes the arts ecosystems can be further illuminated by two studies available online: the first conducted in the United States in 2005²¹ and the other in 2016 in Singapore.²² While the former focuses on a more holistic understanding of the dynamics built by roles and interrelations through the systems thinking approach, the latter provides detailed quantitative statistics about, for example, art workers' education, motivation, and employment.

Similar aspirations to improve a common understanding of arts and their sustainability are expressed through, among others, arts professionals providing practical guidelines. Mostly emphasizing the importance of a holistic evaluation of the situation, they suggest how to nurture a vivid local art ecosystem premised upon horizontal connections and relationships, and acknowledging the importance of involving the general public.²³ A step further is provided by Moss and his team at Createquity: they shifted the focus from (art) institutions to people and to the collective good shared in equitable ways. In this, several core principles contribute to a healthy arts ecosystem, including the maximizing of 'the arts' capacity to improve the lives of human beings in concrete and meaningful ways.²⁴

Quite different yet illuminating perspectives on the sustainability of arts can be gained by focusing on a specific area, such as the art market as an ecosystem of its own and how 'a process of endorsement by taste-makers within that ecosystem'²⁵ shapes the dynamics of (economic) value

19.....Mali Wu and Francesco Manacorda, 'Post-Nature: A Museum as an Ecosystem,' curatorial statement online, www.taipeibiennial.org/2018/?lang=en (accessed 10 March 2020). 'Ecosystem' is 生態系統, (*shengtaixitong*) in Chinese.
20.....Ian David Moss, 'An Ecosystem-Based Approach to Arts Research,' *Fractured Atlas Blog*, 17 October 2011, www.fracturedatlas.org/site/blog/an-ecosystem-based-approach-to-arts-research.
21.....'The Cultural Dynamics Map: Exploring the Arts Ecosystem in the United States,' Version 1.0, March 2005, posted on 1 March 2007, www.artstrategies.org/downloads/CulturalMap_v1.pdf.
22.....'The Arts and Culture Employment Study 2016' by the National Art Council of Singapore. The main findings as illuminating statistics and the full study are available online, www.nac.gov.sg/whatwedo/

support/research/Research-Main-Page/Arts-Statistics-and-Studies/Arts-Ecosystem/Arts-and-Culture-Employment-Study-.html (accessed 17 November 2019).

23.....Lawrence McCullough, 'Grow Your Own Local Artists: How Any Community Can Cultivate a Robust Arts Ecosystem,' *Public Management* 100, no. 4 (2018), pp. 14-16; Jacqueline O'Neil, 'How to Serve All Parts of the Art Ecosystem, from Artist to Institution,' *Blockchain Art Collective*, 30 October 2018, <https://medium.com/blockchain-art-collective/how-to-serve-all-parts-of-the-art-ecosystem-from-artist-to-institution-79e9c532b0b1>.

24.....Createquity, 'A Healthy Arts Ecosystem,' <https://createquity.com/about/a-healthy-arts-ecosystem/> (accessed 25 October 2019).

creation and risks. Along similar lines, Can-Seng Ooi and Roberta Comunian examine the characteristics of the 'artrepreneurial ecosystem' in Singapore as a part of the creative economy strategy. Through the four main pillars (education; values and social norms; policy and democracy; and markets and competition), 'the often divided perspective of a global city that aims to move forward supporting new creative educational opportunities and new markets, ... is still anchored in established social norms and a narrow definition of freedom of expression.'²⁶ Adjusted to local specificities, according to them, a similar approach may also be informative in relation to other Asian creative ecosystems.

ARTS, CULTURAL, AND CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS IN INDONESIA

In Indonesia, the term 'ecosystem' (*ekosistem*) has gained emerging attention in its relation to arts, culture, and creativity—and their sustainability. It is a recent loanword in this context, and a profound analytical discourse of its adaptation in Indonesia is missing. It is partly because of this that the concept lacks the (post)colonial baggage and tensions carried by, for example, fine arts and/or modern arts.²⁷ The growing interest in 'ecosystem' can, however, be read in conjunction with the discourses of cultural heritage, creative city policies, and decolonization of arts through practices, representations, and institutional settings. As concepts travel and transform first through oral discussions and practices, and subjective memories may be indecisive, it is quite a challenge to locate empirical evidence for the initial conceptual stages of 'ecosystem' in the Indonesian art world. It is perhaps more important to consider which concepts 'ecosystem' co-exists with and/or replaces and what kind of novel perceptions it may hence bring about.

'Ecosystem,' as denoting arts and their socio-cultural environment, started to emerge in art discussions in Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore from 2008 to 2011.²⁸ Taking into consideration the internationality of Indonesian arts, it is likely that 'ecosystem' commenced to orally circulate around the same time or slightly later.

In light of currently available information, the earliest written point

25.....Anders Petterson, 'Value, Risk and the Contemporary Art Ecosystem,' in *Risk and Uncertainty in the Art World*, ed. Anna M. Dempster (London: Bloomsbury Information Ltd, 2014), p. 67. See also Juliet den Oudenammer, 'The Art Ecosystem, and Why Some Artists Are More Successful than Others,' *Art Represent*, 7 December 2015, www.artrepresent.com/blog/the-art-ecosystem.

26.....Can-Seng Ooi and Roberta Comunian, 'The Artrepreneurial Ecosystem in Singapore: Enable and Inhibit the Creative Economy,' in *Routledge Handbook of Cultural and Creative Industries in Asia*, ed. Lorraine Lim and Hye-Kyung Lee (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 68.
27.....It is commonly accepted in global art history studies that the meaning of 'arts' is inevitably a constructed idea and varies remarkably between different languages, cultural contexts, time periods, forms, and movements, among others. For illuminating

discussions on the conceptual transformations on and for arts, see especially Supangkat, 'Indonesian and Javanese'; Spanjaard, *Artists and Their Inspiration*, pp. 83-126.

28.....For instance, in Singapore, arts ecosystem is mentioned in relation to the Singapore Art Show 2009, organized by the National Art Council, www.nac.gov.sg/media-resources/press-releases/Singapore-Art-Show-2009.html (accessed 10 December 2019). In Hong Kong, the concept appears, for instance, in a discussion organized by Asian Art Archives in May 2010 and made available on their website, <https://aaa.org.hk/en/programmes/programmes/in-the-aftermath-of-the-white-cube-museums-and-other-spaces/> (accessed 10 December 2019). For Japan, it is mentioned in Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 33.

of departure for 'art(s) ecosystem(s)' in public discussion in Indonesia is the 6th East Java (Jatim) Biennale in 2015, 'Arts Ecosystem: Now!' held in Surabaya on 11–24 November 2015. Through a multi-perspective analysis of an 'arts ecosystem,' the aim was to call for a more nuanced understanding of art practices and how they resonate with and are dependent upon varied micro- and macrosystems of arts and their local historical, formal, and discursive specificities across East Java. As the curator Djuli Djatiprambudi elaborates, this approach indicates that the growth of the art world is not merely driven by artists. Artists are regarded not as autonomous subjects, but are rather positioned as one of the entities in a broader socio-cultural ensemble, yet actively engaged in the field of arts (*medan seni*).²⁹

When an arts ecosystem is perceived in the context of cultural capital, as Djatiprambudi further explains, it enables the acknowledgement of the multicultural reality of East Java with specific symbolism, techniques, and mediums along with aesthetic and socio-philosophical concepts. In the context of visual culture, an arts ecosystem reveals the diversity of artefacts (from a temple to tattoo and from batik to graffiti) that can all be understood as having strong, unique, and traditionally maintained local identities and meanings based on conceptual-philosophical relationships. At the level of current art practices, the arts ecosystem refers to new perspectives and methods of artistic creativity in multimedia, multi-aesthetic, multidimensional, and multicultural exploration. It also suggests interdisciplinary and even multidisciplinary investigations. As a result, an artwork or an artistic practice can be seen as a reinterpretation of the complexity of the technical field, style, cultural capital, and new currents in contemporary art discourse and practice.³⁰

The second, a transcultural point of origin for the written formulations of art(s) ecosystem(s) is the Arts Collaboratory (AC) and its Assemblies, the first of which took place in Indonesia in May 2014 and was hosted by ruangrupa in Jakarta and by KUNCI Cultural Studies Center in Yogyakarta.³¹ The assembly produced a collaborative drawing, which twice featured the words 'art ecology in Yogyakarta.'³² A posting after the event stated that participants particularly appreciated learning from 'the diverse art ecology of Jakarta and Yogyakarta.'³³ More insights were gathered from the second Assembly in Senegal in April 2015 to be further formulated by a working group in a future scenario meeting in Utrecht in June 2015. In an internal document of this meeting, ecosystem is mentioned as one of the keywords. Today, the AC defines itself as 'a translocal ecosystem of twenty-five organizations situated in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Netherlands that is focused on art practices, processes of social change, and working with communities beyond the field of art.'³⁴ They clarify this further:

29.....Djatiprambudi, 'Saat Menulis Sejarah,' pp. 8–9.
30.....Ibid.

31.....For more information on KUNCI, see their website, <http://kunci.or.id/> (accessed 25 February 2020).

32.....Arts Collaboratory, the drawing from Assembly Indonesia, <https://artscollaboratory-assembly.tumblr.com/post/90590903257/so-looking-back-to-indonesia-the-drawing> (accessed 5 January 2020).

33.....Arts Collaboratory, Assembly Indonesia 2014, www.artscollaboratory.org/meetings/assembly/assembly-2014/ (accessed 5 January 2020).

34.....Arts Collaboratory, www.artscollaboratory.org/ (accessed 5 January 2020).

35.....Arts Collaboratory, 'Common Language,' www.artscollaboratory.org/about/common-language-index-of-terms/ (accessed 5 January 2020).

The use of the word ecosystem suggests that like in nature, our relations are about life cycles, germination and maturation. The ecosystem is the system of connections, relationships and linkages between all the organisations that make up the commonwealth of the Arts Collaboratory.

In the context of the AC the word ecosystem is also understood as it relates to each organization's own context or local ecosystem and the resources that are related specifically to those ecosystems which, by means of the resource map, can also be used to nurture the commonwealth.³⁵

While the AC's perception of an ecosystem emphasizes the translocal and international aspects across cultural contexts, the third, a more locally acknowledged point of conceptual departure, and strongly embedded in practice, is represented by ruangrupa.

In their operational plans for 2008–2010, ruangrupa included a Commerce Unit in their organizational structure, which indicates an embryo stage of their current understanding of an ecosystem based on a tripartite structure: self-sustainability, knowledge, and artistic (see Figures 1 and 2 on p.144). Around 2010, ruangrupa began to develop ideas of 'a collective pot' to enhance sustainability not only for them but also their collaborators. They were initially attracted by the concept of *lumbung*, which refers to a traditional rice barn into which the harvest was collectively stored in a village.³⁶ Lumbung is also used to protect other valuables and embodies 'a number of indigenous, preventive conservation principles and techniques.' It has been a useful concept, for instance, in translating the Eurocentric model of a modern 'museum' into a less foreign concept more suited to the Indonesian cultural context already in the nineteen-nineties.³⁷

In 2011, ruangrupa set up RURU Corps as their internal business unit responsible for finding (non)commercial funding to maintain the growing group of members and activities. Lumbung has since become a key concept, which ruangrupa has continued to develop in their local, national, and international collaborations, and which has gained global awareness through the preparations of the forthcoming Documenta 15 in Kassel, Germany, in 2022. For ruangrupa, lumbung and the concerns of sustainability paved the way for a practical understanding of a multidisciplinary ecosystem in 2015;

34.....Arts Collaboratory, www.artscollaboratory.org/ (accessed 5 January 2020).

35.....Arts Collaboratory, 'Common Language,' www.artscollaboratory.org/about/common-language-index-of-terms/ (accessed 5 January 2020).

36.....Interviews with ruangrupa representatives, see footnote 9 for detailed information.

37.....Christina F. Kreps, *Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.130.

this was brought into public awareness by the establishment of the Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem in spring 2016. News about the ecosystem was posted on Instagram and Facebook in April 2016.³⁸

The fourth, and currently the most prominent local and national trajectory for the 'ecosystem' discourse in the multidisciplinary context of arts (*seni*), derives from the advocacy processes of Koalisi Seni through workshops, events, research, discussions, and publications. During the earliest meetings, the deliberations mainly focused on recognizing the key issues faced by Indonesian arts and on improving the material infrastructure of arts, education, and arts management. This also included the question of how to deal with the lack of government support. Gradually this unravelling of the scope of the current situation of arts spurred the acknowledgement of a multitude of inherent elements in an arts ecosystem. Koalisi Seni has investigated a more general, metalevel mapping of the arts ecosystem since 2019, and is now in the process of deciphering detailed ecosystem diagrams regarding, for instance, the music industry, based on the core elements of creation, reproduction, distribution, and consumption. The aim is to understand how government policies could support each core element so they would lead to a healthier music industry ecosystem.³⁹

Ecosystem analysis has also emerged in academic research aimed for an international readership. One of the most recent studies in deciphering an 'ecosystem' draws on the creative economy approach. In their detailed account of 'creative ecosystems' in Bandung, Santi Novani, Cici Cintyawati, and Lidia Mayangsari discuss the digital creative ecosystem as 'a place where all of stakeholders are involved in enhancing the digital creative industry development.' They identify at least seven stakeholders: 'digital start-ups, university, government, association/community, customer, industry, and incubator.'⁴⁰

This short review suggests that even though 'ecosystem' can be criticized as a vague and recent catchword compared with some other prevailing concepts (such as *gotong royong*,⁴¹ lumbung, infrastructure, and collectivity), it nonetheless calls for a more nuanced and analytical comprehension reaching beyond existing actors, mutual collaboration, and solidarity. Conceptual approaches through a multi-layered ecosystem analysis carry the possibility of recognizing the importance of intangible elements such as interrelations, their quality and fluidity between actors, along with the socio-political and cultural conditions that inevitably have both a positive and a negative impact on the continuously changing, local, national, regional, and international ecosystems.

38.....An email message about 'ecosystem' on 17 May 2016 and an image of the flyer is included in Vanhoe, *Also-Space*, pp. 67-68.

39.....Information based on interviews and personal communication with the representatives of Koalisi Seni; for detailed information see footnote 12.

40.....Santi Novani, Cici Cintyawati, and Lidia Mayangsari, 'Back to the Future: A Revelation of Conventional Platform Preference of Digital Creative Ecosystem Entities in Bandung,' in *Collaborative Value Co-creation in the Platform Economy*, ed. Anssi Smedlund, Arto Lindblom, and Lasse Mitrönen

(Singapore: Springer; 2018), pp. 247-48.

41.....*Gotong royong* is an Indonesian concept with slightly varying connotations and usages but indicating mutual collaboration and communal self-help. For an illuminating discussion on the concept and its current relevance through new adaptations among kampung activists and their efforts of cultural commoning, see Melani Budianta, 'Smart Kampung: Doing Cultural Studies in the Global South,' *Communication and Critical Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2019), pp. 250-51.

ASPIRATIONS AND ENVISIONINGS FOR THE REFORMULATION OF ECOSYSTEM(S)

Indonesian contemporary arts involve innumerable artists, art collectives, and art spaces across an extensive geographic area. Innovative art practices are often inseparable from varied prevailing forms of arts and culture, as they rely on multimethod approaches and collaborations across fields. This practical interrelatedness reflects the terminological approach in the Indonesian language: *seni* is commonly translated as 'art(s),' but as Jim Supangkat explains, *seni* primarily denotes a skill or a work that is made with great expertise and hence does not differentiate between arts and a craft. Roughly summarized, *seni* pertains to many artistic expressions such as visual arts (*seni rupa*), literature (*seni sastra*), dance art (*seni tari*), and installation art (*seni instalasi*), without implying hierarchical interpretations:

Visual art is not at all more meaningful in comparison with, for example, dance art, music or literature. This shows that the extraordinary value of artistic creation is not determined by the type of artwork produced, but rather by the artistic sensibility that appears in artistic creation.⁴²

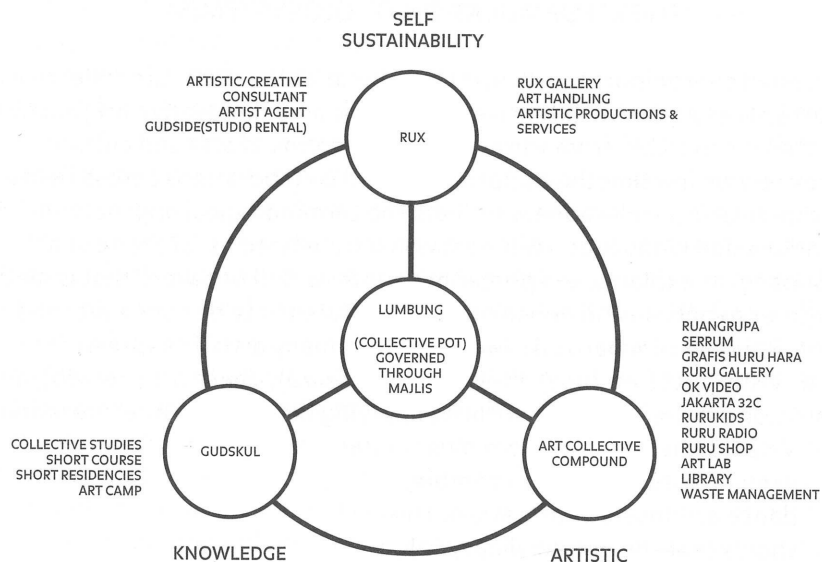
A multidisciplinary interrelatedness of arts and culture in relation to the 'ecosystem' discussions is already indicated by Djuli Djatiprambudi's insights above, and was also eminently present throughout my fieldwork. The current realities and richness of arts, culture, and creativity create a multitude of envisionings on what might constitute an ecosystem, or how it might be improved. It is the diversity of these manifold perceptions and departures that the diagrams here further illuminate.

To promote the current decolonialization of arts, and to strengthen emerging local discourses, this section incorporates insights and aspirations of people involved in the Indonesian arts scenes. I consider visualizations of 'an ecosystem' as an elucidating method to include more varied, even just budding, ideas. A useful starting point for many can be to depict their own existing ecosystem to demonstrate the most important aspects and interrelation.

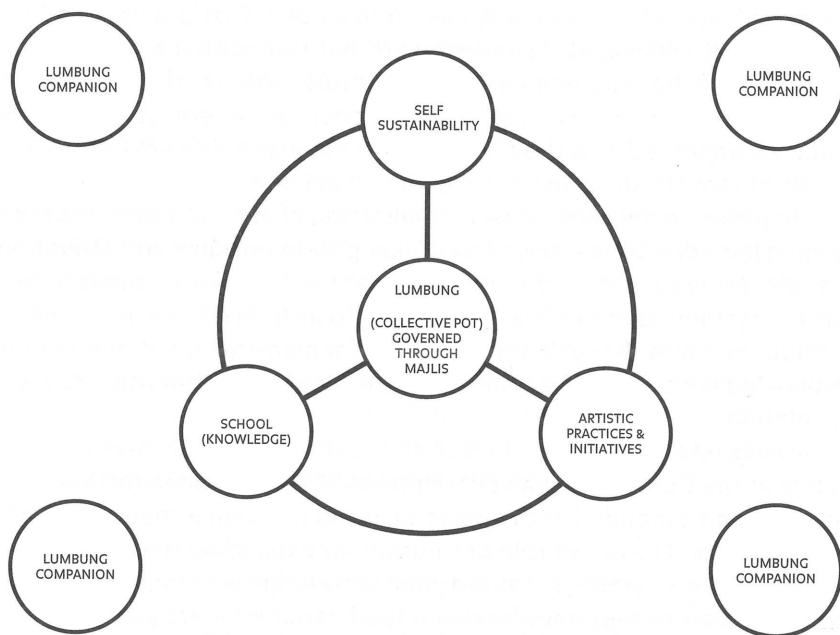
ruangrupa's original notions of an ecosystem, established in practice at the Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem in 2016, have been further developed and expanded with operational and positional changes in and beyond Jakarta. The active role of Gudskul for expanding the understanding of an ecosystem, premised upon knowledge exchange, cannot be overemphasized, as they have further added geographic scope to the previous programs (for example, as seen in the *OK video*), which already reached beyond Jakarta. ^{Fig. 1} Placing lumbung (the collective pot) in the middle to be governed by *majlis*⁴³ (roughly translated as a council),

42.....Supangkat, 'Indonesian and Javanese,' p. 191.

43.....Written as *majilis* in Indonesian.



△ 1 ruangrupa's ecosystem in relation to *lumbung*, © ruangrupa, 2020

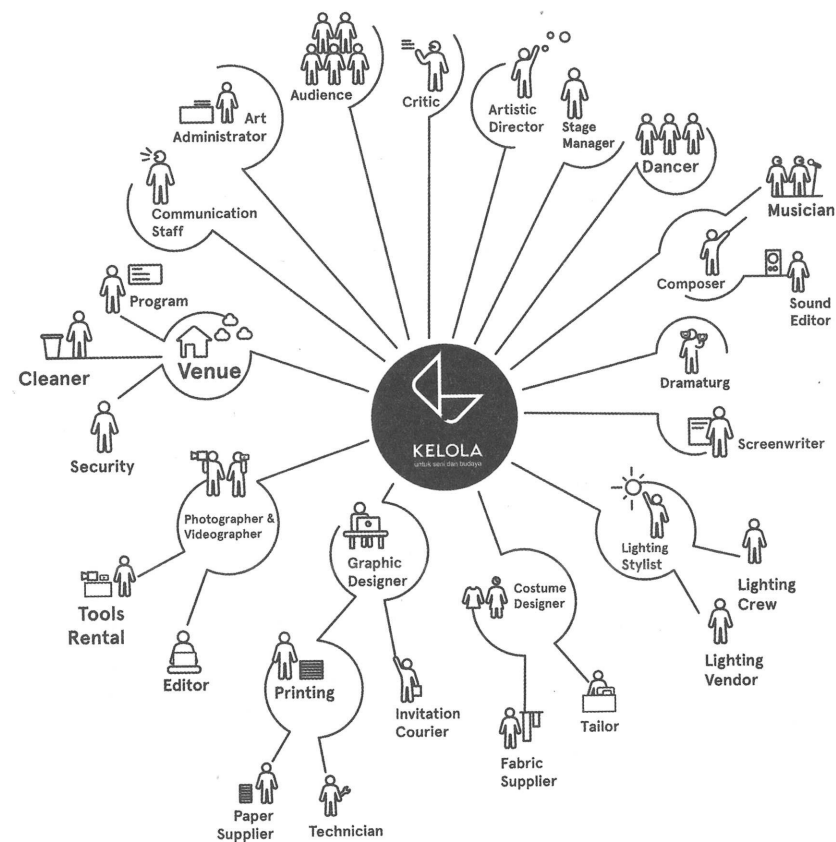


△ 2 ruangrupa's envisioning of a broader and an adaptable model of an ecosystem, © ruangrupa, 2020

ruangrupa emphasizes the idea of the different components and collaborators working together in order to build up and share im/material resources. This tripartite understanding of an ecosystem can be further modified to include other collaborators (*lumbung* companions), local or international, who are willing to share their resources with these local initiatives. ^{△Fig. 2} This model of an ecosystem is also meant to be adaptable by anyone.

While these discussions on 'ecosystem' are currently gaining attention across the Indonesian arts scenes, Kelola, a non profit art organization also based in Jakarta, has found it useful to delineate how its programmes activate and support an arts ecosystem. The original diagram was made for Kelola's Arts Grant archive exhibition in October 2019, and all the information was given by Gita Hastarika in an interview when she was still the acting director of Kelola.⁴⁴ Here below, a translated and slightly revised version of the diagram to include 'audience'. ^{△Fig. 3}

△ 3 Activation of the arts ecosystem by Kelola. ©Kelola, 2019.



44Gita Hastarika, interview by author, 23 September 2019. For more information, see

<http://kelola.or.id/> (accessed 27 November 2019).

In this diagram, Kelola is placed in the middle, surrounded by the varied professionals and aspects required for producing an art event. Hence, the diagram is to be understood as a multi-layered process, often launched by a grant (of usually IDR 25 million) given, for instance, to an artist, dancer, composer, or a performing group, who then works together with a venue, production, marketing, and practical setting, among others, all required to create the event. Besides demonstrating the intricate interrelations, the diagram makes evident Kelola's aspirations to encourage support for arts: 'By contributing to an Art Grant, you have made a living for the entire arts ecosystem.'⁴⁵ Even though not visualized in the diagram itself, it is relevant to acknowledge that the interrelations are not all identical: the audience and the art critic do not have a similar financially beneficial relation to the production as the other forms of agency, yet they too are an inherent part of the arts ecosystem.

In an interview, Gita Hastarika regarded herself and Kelola as cultural brokers. Echoing the common notions in the fields of art, she too was concerned about sustainability, not only for Kelola, but more broadly in these ecosystems of arts and culture. For her, one of the possible survival strategies was to rely on existing and establishing new relationships with transnational and global organizations in Asia and beyond.⁴⁶

Often in visualizations and mappings, what is placed in the centre marks what is considered a significant component or point of departure for the whole ecosystem, while the following layers indicate the supporting systems and their importance. Yet, de-centralized visualizations of an ecosystem can also provide illuminating perspectives, as shown by Arief 'Ayip' Budiman, one of the co-founders of the Rumah Sanur Creative Hub in Denpasar. Since 2014, stimulated by local Balinese knowledge emphasizing the interconnectedness of place (*desa*), time (*kala*) and context (*patra*), and reviving the spirit of the Sanur School, Rumah Sanur has built inclusive creativity mainly by nurturing a creative ecosystem and by fostering social innovation.⁴⁷ With a special focus on human-centric place-making, and using the space as 'a living lab,' Rumah Sanur and its programmes are defined by multidisciplinary collaboration, partnerships, and sustainability from music to design and from art to coffee and honey; this approach is also echoed in their understanding of a creative city ecosystem.^{△Fig. 4}

Partially inspired by the internationally known creative city discourses, for Arief Budiman all four stakeholders (academics, community, business, and government) are essential. The core functions of this creative city ecosystem—namely creation, production, conservation, marketing and distribution, consumption, and research and development—are not fractioned according to the stakeholders' roles but are depicted as a resulting reflection from all of them. Even though the 'sustainability' of the local

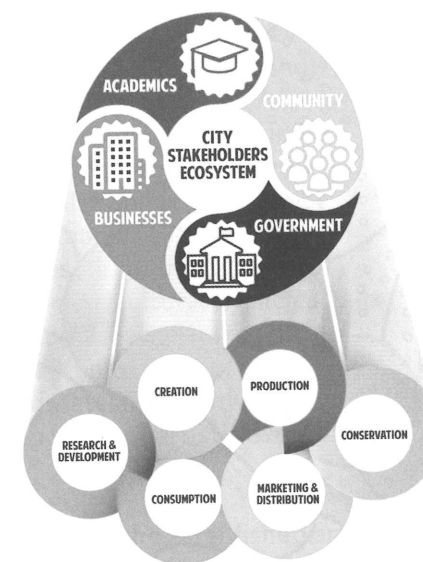
45.....A slogan included in an earlier version of the diagram.

46.....Ibid.

47.....The richness and depth of the philosophy behind Rumah Sanur's involvement with communities,

explained by Arief Budiman (in an interview by author, 11 September 2019) cannot be discussed here in detail. For more information, see Rumah Sanur's website, accessed 25 February 2020, <https://rumahsanur.com/>.

KEY PLAYERS AND ITS CORE ACTIVITIES AN ECOSYSTEM IN CREATIVE CITY



△ 4

A creative city ecosystem, © Arief 'Ayip' Budiman, 2019

communities, artists, producers, and brands is not explicitly mentioned in this diagram, it is the inherent key notion highlighting the interrelatedness of key players and activities as a basis of a vigorous ecosystem in Denpasar and beyond.

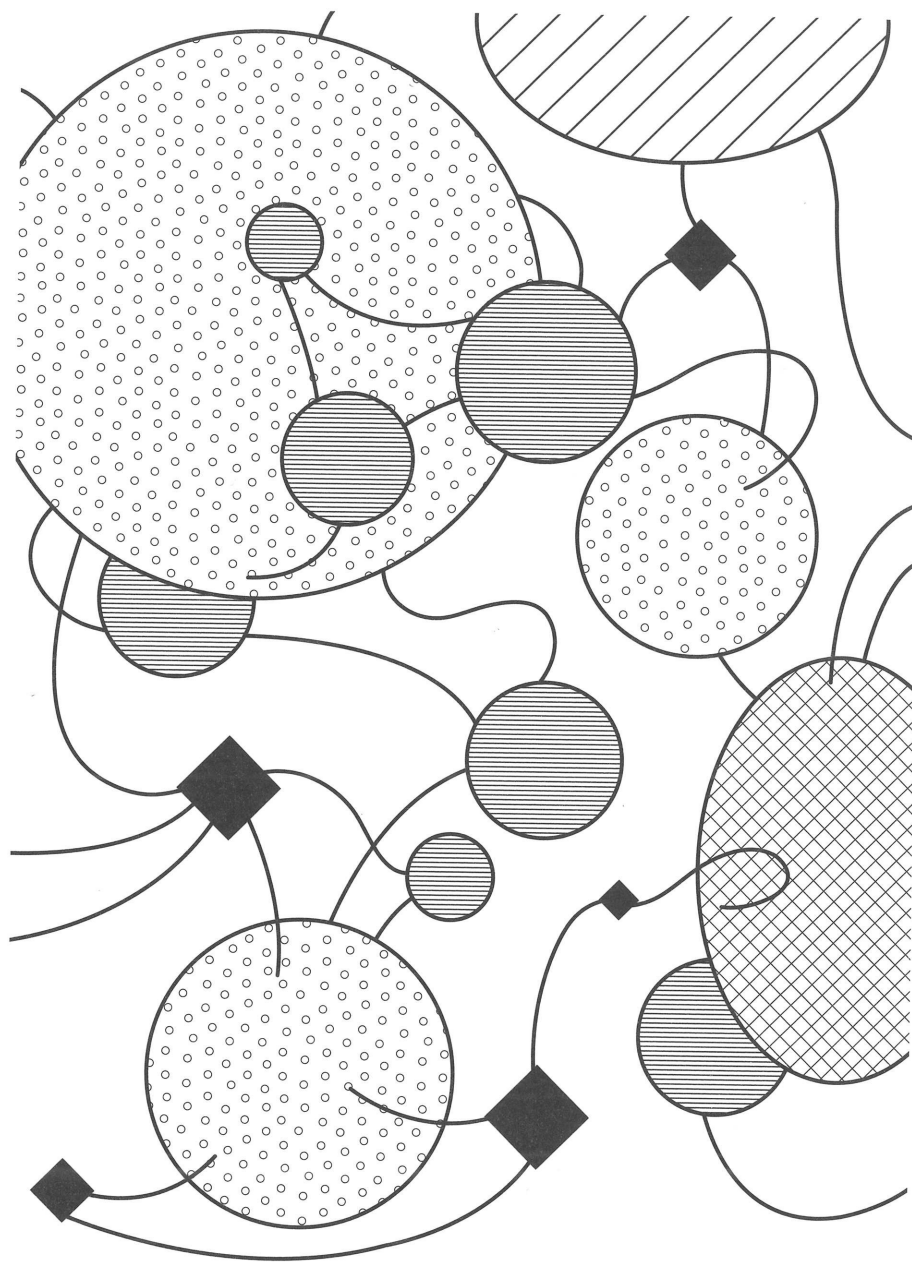
While this visualization also indicates flexibility of practices in an ecosystem, more emphasis on the inherent fluidity and informality of an art ecosystem is given in a diagram by Ayos Purwoaji, curator and co-founder of the C20 Library & Collabative, an independent library and coworking community space established in Surabaya in 2008.⁴⁸ With a specific focus on visual arts, Purwoaji seeks to demonstrate how the function, position, and interrelations of varied forms of agency may shift according to the circumstances. The connecting lines are also flexible, indicating mutual ongoing negotiations within Indonesia (the connected ones) and with international agency (partially unattached ones).^{△Fig. 5}

As Purwoaji explains,

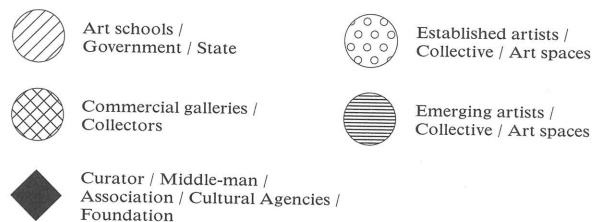
[U]sually, one circle is organically connected with another circle. Maybe this is one of the cultural patterns of Indonesian people who like to gather, help each other (*gotong royong*) and be

48.....Ayos Purwoaji, interview by author, 15 September 2019. For more about the prolific programs for and approach to a sustainable and emancipatory



future, see the C20 Library & Collabative's website, <https://c2o-library.net/> (accessed 26 February 2020).



△ 5
Art ecosystem in Indonesia,
© Ayos Purwoaji, 2020



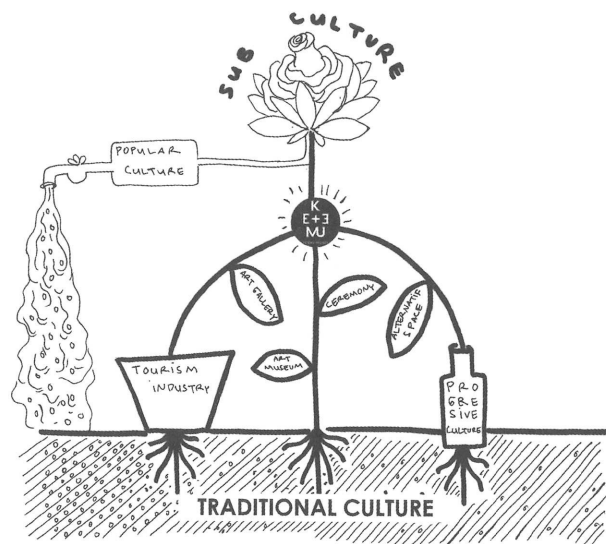
involved. The larger circles () represent an established artist, collective, or art space. In many cases, they become patrons for smaller (emerging) artists, collectives, or art spaces. Yet, the term patronage needs to be studied further because of its informal nature. These circles are also connected by black diamond shapes that spread around the ecosystem, representing the position of curator, middle-man, cultural agencies (Japan Foundation, Goethe-Institute, IFI), association (Koalisi Seni) or foundation which is a great liaison between actors and supporters of artistic events that occur.⁴⁹

Purwoaji's diagram displays the established artists, spaces, and collectives in a different form, pattern and size from those in the process of emerging and is therefore also an initiative to investigate the existing power relations in the art ecosystem. He however emphasizes how both the emerging and the established ones together are the most important component for the growth of the art ecosystem. The two other stakeholders, art schools, government and state (), and commercial galleries and collectors () are somewhat partially depicted because he does not see them as major players in the current arts ecosystem. Due to new forms of knowledge available (the internet for example) and somewhat out-dated curricula, the role of art schools is diminishing. Regardless of numerous new events since the beginning of the twenty-first century and emerging young collectors, the art market still bears elite tones 'and has not yet become a decisive voice for the development of the art ecosystem in the broadest sense.' Yet, for Purwoaji, the crucial question remains, 'Where is the general people in the development of the art ecosystem in Indonesia?'⁵⁰

One possible approach to this question can be envisioned through a more metaphoric comprehension of an ecosystem, as depicted by artist Budi Agung Kuswara from the Ketemu Project. This transnational art collective and social enterprise, which he and Samantha Tio established in 2011, has a keen interest in creating art with people who are socially marginalized because of their disabilities.⁵¹ Placing Ketemu as a node in an organically growing hybrid rose with three sets of roots, the image illustrates Ketemu's existing position in the contemporary cultural ecosystem of Bali. [△]Fig. 6 For Ketemu, 'contemporary' emphasizes the importance of innovation and sets their aspirations apart from the heritage ecosystem, where one of the key objectives is preservation.

49 Ayos Purwoaji, email message to author,
10 January 2020.
50 Ibid.

51 For more information, see Ketemu's website,
<http://ketemu.org/> (accessed 15 February 2020).



△ 6
Ketemu's existing position in the contemporary cultural ecosystem of Bali. © Budi Agung Kuswara, 2020

Although in this envisioning Ketemu is positioned in the context of Bali (where the project has its main project space), transnationality is one of the defining characteristics of their programmes and of their understanding of 'ecosystem.' Working in particular between Singapore and Bali, but also in close collaboration with other non profit organizations in the region, especially in smaller cities, Ketemu relies on international intellectual, and financial support. The societal position of disabled people in Indonesia has not yet gained enough official attention, and art made by them is not perceived to be a part of the 'contemporary art' discourse. Hence, Ketemu prefers reducing the social stigma through a change in language and by advocating the acceptance of the 'differently-abled' as a part of the communities.⁵²

As these visualizations demonstrate, the understanding of an 'ecosystem' and its key characteristics depends upon a multitude of factors: from professional and institutional background to geographic location, from form of art to age, and from current position (marginality/centrality) to future aspirations. Furthermore, the envisioning of an ecosystem rests on the chosen perspective and emphasis on im/material aspects: a physical space (such as an art collective) or an operational mode (for instance, a non profit foundation) may be taken as an ecosystem of its own and may be expanded to include a network of collaborators. The ecosystem approach can also have a broader geographical scope based on a city, a nation, and/or international relations; it may also shift the focus

52.....Information deriving from a write visit on the main project space in Denpasar and interviews of the staff members with the author on 9 September 2019;

Samantha Tio and Budi Agung Kuswara, interview by the author, 11 December 2019.

on immaterial modalities that have an impact on the varied ecosystem(s), such as laws and regulations, value structures, and interrelations between traditions and contemporary practices. Additionally, it may include aspects of these different approaches into a multi-layered envisioning.

These diagrams already provide an illuminating summary of the shifting multidimensionalities of an 'ecosystem' and include various facets also mentioned by many other professionals engaged with this study. Still, some key aspects, which are not depicted in these diagrams, deserve to be discussed in more detail—in particular in terms of future developments as seen in the next section. Furthermore, a vital part of the current ecosystem(s) and its/their evolvement, insightfully identified by Abdi Karya, an artist from Makassar, needs to be acknowledged: the increasingly advanced technology that creates unforeseen possibilities for more inclusive and open ecosystems both locally and nationally (for example, for Koalisi Seni) and in particular, regarding distribution and exchange of information.⁵³ Even though technology and/or (social) media are not explicitly included in these visualizations, they could be understood not only as inherent facilitators for many strengthening processes of ecosystems but also as related elements of power structures which may be employed for multiple purposes.

TOWARDS ADVANCEMENT IN ECOSYSTEM(S)

During the interviews and informal discussions, it became evident that in addition to the great variety of perceptions on the current conditions of 'ecosystem(s)', there is a concomitant diversity of ideas for how these often-precarious positions could be improved. Even in regards of 'a local art ecosystem,' the insights vary according to regional, professional, and disciplinary lines and hence, bring forward the need for reconciliation of value structures and priorities. Aspirations for further advancement of arts span a range of practical suggestions, from enhancing material infrastructure (for example, spaces and financial support) to developing art education and appreciation (including broader audiences), to advocacy for and about arts (in particular, hopes for and trust in the Koalisi Seni), to ideological aspects (such as rights of artists, freedom of expression).

The majority of the interviewees underlined the role of Koalisi Seni for developing the national art(s) ecosystem(s) through advocacy; in particular, Koalisi Seni's direct involvement in formulating the Law on the Advancement of Culture, and more recently, their efforts in relation to the new Cultural Endowment Fund (CEF, *Dana Abadi Kebudayaan*).⁵⁴ Currently, Koalisi Seni is working on a more general, metalevel analysis of

53.....Abdi Karya, interview by Dara Hanafi, 12 July 2019.

54.....For the latter, Koalisi Seni studied mainly arts practitioners' views on what should be prioritized by the CEF. They did this through a widely distributed

questionnaire (and received 1729 replies) and five group discussions in four cities (Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Payakumbuh, and Makassar) from November 2019 to January 2020. Koalisi Seni secretariat, email message to author, 6 February 2020.

arts ecosystem and hence emphasizes that 'a healthier arts ecosystem' is still a working definition that has not yet been tested in the Indonesian context. In an effort to do so, Koalisi Seni will continue to conduct further research. Still, the core characteristics of the ecosystem are to 'be generative and open. It is an organism, not a fixed mechanism, and it should be able to capture not just the economic, but also social and cultural relations between actors.'⁵⁵

Especially in relation to immaterial modalities, the complexities of these emerging understandings of 'ecosystem(s)' can be further investigated by identifying four key issues not yet explicitly illustrated above but raised throughout the site visits and discussions: quality of interrelations, gender, generational differences, and Java-centrism. All of these contribute to the intricate notion of 'balance' in an ecosystem(s). This more inclusive and equality-driven approach is called for by the majority of the participants in this study, and is crystallized in the words of Rahmadiyah Tria Gayathri, a Koalisi Seni member from Palu, Sulawesi, 'I wish there was no more hierarchy in the arts.'⁵⁶

Because 'ecosystem' remains vaguely defined and is often used quite metaphorically in current parlance, it often mirrors the notion of a local natural ecosystem built on a symbiosis between different 'species,' fertile ground, and reciprocal collaboration to maintain a balance. Yet, as Brigitta Isabella, a member of KUNCI insightfully explains, 'The idealistic view of ecosystem as everything works in harmony through "natural law" would sometimes fail to recognize the often exploitative patron-client or master-servant relationship in the art world.' Hence, the possibility of existing predatory relationships should be acknowledged 'because the "organisms" that interact in the "ecosystem" are not always equal in terms of their access and ownership of social and financial capital.' An example is 'gender imbalance and how it influences the quality of relationship in the "ecosystem."⁵⁷

The importance of gender in the evolving discussions on art(s) ecosystem(s) was similarly highlighted with other interviewed women. Some pointed out how the prevailing patriarchy not only in arts but also in the society at large hinders both female artists and women protagonists in all spheres of the arts scenes. Many women may be actively involved in arts and culture, and hold a great variety of professional positions in society, but they do not share equal visibility, possibilities, and access to resources as men in arts.⁵⁸ While the intricate cultural and historical challenges for a feminist approach in arts are far too extensive to be addressed here,⁵⁹ improving possibilities for women through parallel ecosystems created and maintained by women (only) can bring new contingencies but also risks in terms of further isolation and marginalization because of gender. One of

55.....Ibid.

56.....Gayathri, interview.

57.....Brigitta Isabella, in a group interview with three representatives of KUNCI by the author, 12 December 2018; email message to author, 14 February 2020.

58.....Ruth Onduko, interview by author, 12 September 2019; Naomi Srikandi, interview by author,

17 November 2019.

59.....For a detailed and illuminating analysis of the emergence of feminism(s), see Wulan Dirgantoro, *Feminisms and Contemporary Art in Indonesia: Defining Experiences* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

the most important practical questions raised by this study for further discussion is: How can women be included in these emerging multidisciplinary ecosystems of arts, culture, and creativity, and how can they achieve genuine equity?

Apart from gender aspects, notions of an unequal position in art(s) ecosystem(s) can also be based on one's geographical location and/or ethnic/religious identity. In Indonesia, multiple non profit organizations and official programmes on arts, culture, and creativity have aimed to deconstruct Java-centrism in the twenty-first century. And yet, regardless of growing collaborations and practical improvements for more equal appreciation and representation of arts from outer islands, Java-centrism is still widely acknowledged. The realities, such as lack of information, inefficient or non-accessible local government programmes, hierarchies (cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic, among others), and the resulting prejudices in, for instance, the valuation of 'arts from outer islands,' are felt among non-Javanese artists and cultural practitioners including those currently based on Java. The present situation partially stems from the existing mindset of practitioners on outer islands themselves and the tendency to keep art practices in Java in higher esteem.⁶⁰ As Rahmadiyah Tria Gayathri from Palu summarizes,

I think in a healthy arts ecosystem, every art community has the same access to information, both communities in the central and in other regions. This also applies to information from the central government on what kind of programmes they have especially for the arts and culture, and if there is a budget accessible for the local community to run a corresponding programme.⁶¹

Similarly, because of the internal hierarchies in arts and culture, both younger-generation unestablished artists and other junior protagonists voice their concerns about unequal positions in the existing ecosystems (see also Fig. 5). For example, representatives of the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) articulate that

A healthy art ecosystem gives space for the young generation to grow. Its dynamics are based on healthy competition, openness to criticism, and it has a balanced number of practitioners, critics, collectors, managers, etc., so that it enables us to grow in balance.⁶²

60.....Information based on six phone interviews of representatives from outer islands by Dara Hanafi.

61.....Gayathri, interview.

Similar aspirations of balanced and inclusive art(s) ecosystem(s) are voiced by many, highlighting the importance of having a broader understanding of arts and its audiences to encompass, among others, children, the elderly, villagers in rural areas, and residents of less-privileged urban settlements too. Some would even prefer the primary denominator for art(s) ecosystem(s) to be 'balanced' rather than 'healthy.'

Indeed, one of the aims and challenges in Indonesia is to create balanced circumstances in its abundant cultural environment that will allow the protection and development of arts, culture, and creativity, whilst supporting both the traditional and experimental forms of these to flourish. These intricate realities apply to individual practitioners, communities, local governments, and national cultural policies alike. These policies are a work in progress based on the Principles of Regional Cultural Thoughts (PPKD), gathered and provided by around 300 municipal regencies. One aim of such processes is to gradually contribute to the 'effort to improve cultural resilience (*ketahanan budaya*),' the meaning of which remains to be further discussed during the implementation of the Law. As Hilmar Farid emphasizes, *ketahanan* is about 'keeping the essence' of the cultural form in question (e.g., *wayang*, shadow puppetry), even if it is developed to be more experimental, 'absorbing innovation and technologies without losing the core value.'⁶³ While such an approach is invaluable, it may come with difficult negotiation processes. For instance, as Melani Budianta insightfully reminds us, Indonesian culture is so rich and diverse that the essential question is not about the concept and its definition, but rather from whose perspective cultural resilience is talked about—resilience against what and whom?⁶⁴

CONCLUSIONS

The absence of adequate official and national infrastructure supporting arts, culture, and creativity together with the contingencies brought about by transnational collaborations highlight the precarious position of artists and arts in Indonesia. Embedded with socio-political and cultural transitions, the questions of impartial integration and equal opportunities for artists and other cultural professionals alike have become ever more topical along with the emergent discussions on how to develop multidisciplinary and multi-layered ecosystems of arts, culture, and creativity.

The forthcoming move of the capital to East Kalimantan opens up new possibilities and uncertainties to these pertinent questions of the future ecosystems of arts, culture, and creativity and their transitions, emphasizing the potential to further deconstruct Java-centrism—at least to some extent. As Nursalim Yadi Anugerah, musician/composer from Pontianak

62.....Representatives of IVAA, email message to author, 23 January 2020. For more information about IVAA and its programs, see their website, <http://ivaa-online.org/> (accessed 25 January 2020).
63.....Farid, interview.

64.....Melani Budianta (professor of literature and cultural studies at the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia), interview by the author, 19 September 2020.
65.....Nursalim Yadi Anugerah, interview by Dara Hanafi, 11 February 2020.

asserts, what is crucial for building local and national arts and cultural ecosystems in the possible future capital is to avoid their simple importation and implementation, and rather to develop them in close collaboration with the already existing structures in Kalimantan.⁶⁵

For a majority of the representatives, the focus of the discourse understandably lies within Indonesia, but for some, sustainable art(s) ecosystem(s) also collaborate on a regional and global scale to ensure that issues not yet fully recognized in Indonesia gain support and acknowledgment. Based on the many insights gathered in this study, a sustainable form of an art(s) ecosystem(s) is most importantly inclusive, collaborative, balanced, equal, supportive, flexible, open and organic, and pays close attention to questions of gender, demographic indicators, geographical locations, and the opportunities of citizens (both in rural and urban areas) to engage with arts. Even though these denominators may appear self-evident, given the pertaining intricate socio-political, economic, and cultural conditions in Indonesia, creating such ecosystem(s) is bound with a multitude of practical and ideological challenges.

As these insights together with the visualizations above indicate, the first step is to delineate what kinds of understandings already exist in order to carry out a nuanced investigation of possible local, national, regional, and global ecosystems and their interrelations. Such a multiperspective and -disciplinary ecosystem analysis approach may then contribute towards improving the current position and role of arts, culture, and creativity. Central to any in-depth characterization of an ecosystem is deep-seated multidimensionality, which extends beyond the core creative process to include a multitude of facilitating forms of agency, production, and audience, but also media, collectors, educators, critics, patronage, and officials, among others. Yet, it is even more important to recognize that deciphering the present and tangible forms of agency and infrastructure is not enough. The intangible modalities that shape the ecosystem(s) (regulations, power relations, gender, cultural traditions, value structures, etc.) need to also be acknowledged and investigated. Only through these gradual multifaceted approaches including both qualitative and quantitative methods along with material and immaterial aspects can the most feasible indicators for further assessment be found.

What emerges in this study is a notion of an 'ecosystem' defined by complexities and fluidity that requires a nuanced combination of perceptions, aspirations, and value structures. Taking into consideration that 'arts,' 'culture,' and 'creativity' are defined by interdependences and continuous renegotiations today in Indonesia, any definite approach to an 'ecosystem' is likely to remain unfeasible. Comprehensions on 'art(s) ecosystem(s)' inevitably vary between geographic locations, institutions, and individual representatives of the related fields and are often seen as inherently part of other cultural and/or creative ecosystem(s). Hence, it is more illuminating for the current discourses and practices to admit that any ecosystem will be premised on continuous transformations and will therefore require repeated acts of translations and mediations between envisionings, partakers, and gatekeepers.

These varied points of departure on 'ecosystem(s)' are all invaluable and useful to anyone working with questions of the sustainability, role, and potential of arts, culture, and creativity—even beyond Indonesia. Acknowledging the great confluence of envisionings on what constitutes an ecosystem not only enriches the discussion but also fosters more nuanced understandings on what is, could, and should be taken into account in an analysis of the current state of ecosystem(s) and, even more importantly, in planning their reformulation. Understanding how the varied interests and power relations are negotiated, mediated, and achieved at local, national, and international levels in the processes of developing more balanced arts, cultural, and/or creative ecosystems can help us further comprehend the challenges in building towards a feasible regeneration of cultural resilience. 🌍

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