

Abstract—Creative industries are predominantly viewed within the frame of visual media or slick buzzwords, reduced to highly marketable, gleaming spectacular add-ons to certain lifestyles. Within popular discourses in Surabaya,

Ayorek! Building urban knowledge dynamics as a foundation for creative and collaborative participation

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theme itself proliferates in various national and international festivals, seminars, workshops, and conferences. In Asia, it has been heavily campaigned and promoted in various cities including Hong Kong

partly due to the dependence on large mainstream media, corporate and state outlets, local scenes are generally considered too unremarkable to merit public discourse, often disregarded for more international, exotic issues, talents and products. Yet without any contextual local knowledge of what actually takes place across many areas—particularly in terms of how local economies operate, how decisions get made, how available resources are put to work—the sense of what is possible is limited and often not related to the real interests and capacities of residents as either the producers, distributors or consumers. *Ayorek!* was initiated as a platform to balance the uneven knowledge production and distribution processes within the existing infrastructures of Surabaya. Set to kick-start within a period of one year (March 2012 to February 2013), *Ayorek!* aims to: (1) generate and circulate knowledge in and about Surabaya, (2) connect and facilitate dialogues between various disconnected circles within Surabaya and beyond, and (3) provide a platform where diverse media, popular cultures and critical research can intersect. While these aims are taking longer than the estimated period to realise, nonetheless some rewarding experiences and practical ends have been achieved through a monthly discussion called *cangkruk*, regional exchange programs, community history workshop, urban research and writing workshops, publications in multimedia formats (website, books, booklets), and directories of creative initiatives and spaces in Surabaya. *Ayorek!* is still at its early stage, and has yet to achieve all its intended aims, but by generating and building the access to local urban knowledge, interlinked with other cities, it has witnessed the slow emerging of more creative interactions and collaborations among different groups, and is working on subsequent stages of building, publishing and circulating the projects.

Index Terms—knowledge (co-)production, participation, collaboration, community media.

I. INTRODUCTION

For the last decade or so, the theme of creativity—the creative city, economy or industry—has attracted popular interests, while the discourses have penetrated deep into the center of urban and economic policies (Garnham 2005; Landry and Bianchini 1995; Landry 2000). The

2008; Kong 2009; Sasaki 2010), including Indonesia (Pangestu 2008).

However, several critical responses have also emerged about how the term “creative” is in danger of being rendered ambiguous and meaningless, hollowed out from its concept through overuse (Chatterton 2010; Landry 2005, 1). Even Landry, famous for conceptualising and popularising the term, has cautiously warned that “the creative city has become a catch all phrase in danger of losing its bite and obliterating the reasons why the idea emerged in the first place which are essentially about unleashing, harnessing, empowering potential from whatever source. [...] Overuse, hype and the tendency for cities to adopt the term without thinking through its real consequences could mean that the notion becomes hollowed out and thrown out until the next big slogan comes along.”¹ Richard Florida, regularly credited for popularising the fashionable “Creative Class” (2002; 2005), has also been widely criticised for his methods, categories and findings that privilege certain classes and economic development (Voragen 2012). Numerous (though unfortunately underrepresented) researches have found that the implementation of Florida’s Creative Class thesis into policies in fact exacerbate numerous social and economic inequalities and exclusion, with questionable efficacy in delivering equitable public benefit (see for example, McCann 2007; Lovink and Rossiter 2007; Peck 2005; Mayer 2013; Zimmerman 2008; Pratt 2008; Chatterton 2010).

The urgent need for contextual local knowledge, social inclusion, cooperation and collaboration has been repeatedly addressed, in academic, public debates and even everyday rhetoric. We have realised that without any contexts of what actually takes place across many areas—particularly in terms of how local economies operate, how

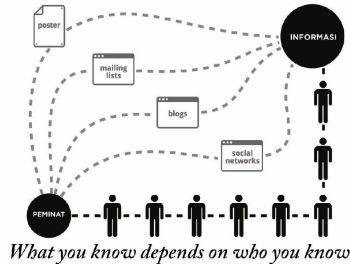
¹ We are already seeing the next lingo emerging—“smart”: smart cities, smart design, smart thinking—but discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. We are in no way suggesting to indiscriminately dismiss these terms, but we recommend critical adoption. For further information, please check: <http://www.smart-cities.eu/>

decisions get made, how available resources are put to work—the sense of what is possible is limited. There is also one concrete but often unaddressed issue in the discussion of creative industries: excessive supply (of “creative” labour, products) and lack of jobs and demand, often not related to the real interests, demands and capacities of residents as either the producers, distributors or consumers.

Yet, while we keep recapitulating the importance of contextual knowledge, cooperation and collaboration, we tend to skimp on the next critical questions and steps: where do we get the resources to develop our understanding of local contexts? How do we develop our local knowledge, or networks of cooperation and collaboration? How do we increase our understanding of the cultural depth and richness, our networking capacity, or our design awareness on how to use these local resources when the references we use are (pirated) English books, magazines, films and websites that hardly address local issues? In short, we lack the resources, and hardly identify, let alone implement, how to produce and develop the resources—the integrated protocols of communication to accommodate these needs.

Gae opo?

Pernah merasakan susahnya mencari informasi acara di Surabaya? Atau kebingungan mencari *filmmaker*, penulis, narasumber, fasilitator acara di Surabaya? Atau buku, film tentang Surabaya?



Begitulah, di Surabaya, meskipun berbagai komunitas giat membuat berbagai kegiatan menarik, dan ada individu-individu yang luar biasa, informasinya sering berputar-putar pada lingkaran sendiri, tidak tersebar di luar entitas masing-masing.

Figure 1. The dispersed, essentially people-dependent system of information in Surabaya circulated on Ayorek flyer. It is not *who you know* that matters, but how we can leverage *how you know who you know* to enable access and meaningful participation. Illustration by Jimmy Ofisia.

Hitherto, media and publication circulations about cultures in Surabaya have been dominated by mainstream mass media and bureaucratic organisations, which understandably have their own principles, structures, interests and entry barriers. As Peters (2013, 76–78, 200–202) has pointed out, a substantial proportion of the urban population and area, along with their (his)stories,

inevitably are excluded or rarely participate in the published accounts of the Surabaya city. This is largely due to the weak bureaucratic administration, uncoordinated planning, and widespread lack of trust—a phenomenon that we actually witness in various developing countries. We identify two fundamental gaps in these accounts: (1) Rich tacit knowledge and skills developed through everyday interactions and practices (Amin and Cohendet 2004) are hardly valued, let alone documented and codified. What people know heavily depend on whom they know. (2) Various forms of micro-publications—from paper-based or web-based zines, event portals, social media, to academic publications—exist independently, but they tend to be highly dispersed and short-lived. Many lie dormant inside cabinets, unnoticed websites, or within a social media page. There is hardly any structured accessibility outside the familiar, isolated circles.

We also detect a lack of both geographical and virtual “public spaces” (Orum and Neal 2010) or “third places” (Oldenburg 1999) in Surabaya. We realise how contested these terms are, but here we specifically point to the limited ways and ambiguous procedures in utilising the public spaces—galleries, museums, parks, etc.—for social activities and public gatherings. On the other hand, we are also seeing the emergence of small affinity spaces (Gee 2004, 70) informally initiated by individuals and collectives. The existence—as well as increased quality and accessibility—of these spaces, to promote convivial interactions and informal learning of people from diverse backgrounds, is essential to the workings and the social vitality of the people and the city.

Based on these conditions, we envision an accessible platform based on participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2009) that highlights and connects diverse individuals, groups, organisations, and businesses that seek to collaboratively and mutually engage with each other for a better, liveable Surabaya. Specifically, we want to (1) generate and circulate knowledge in and about Surabaya, (2) connect and facilitate dialogues between various disconnected circles within Surabaya and beyond, and (3) provide a platform where diverse media, popular cultures and critical research can intersect.

Only later do we realise how ambitious and naïve we were: these aims were far easier said than done, and definitely need longer than a few months to achieve. Nonetheless we think some rewarding experiences, knowledge and practical ends have been achieved. In this paper, we intend to share our methods, processes, limitations and future directions, in the hope of generating insights, further dialogues and collaborations.

II. METHODS

One of our main inspirations in developing *Ayorek!* was GOOD (<http://good.is>), a media platform that highlights and connects “people who give a damn” in

working towards individual and collective progress for what is sustainable, prosperous, productive, creative, equitable. We decided on the name *Ayorek!* since we aim for a catchy, locally-ground name that signifies a call for participation, and we prefer to not use the word “Surabaya” itself to avoid potential chauvinism. It was also heavily inspired and expanded from an idea about an accessible Surabaya event portal presented during DIY Ideas 2011 by Jimmy Ofisia.

While this idea percolated in our heads as we went through our day jobs and routines, Rujak Center for Urban Studies based in Jakarta, offered a series of supporting workshops and a 20,000USD grant to support an implementation of a 12-month-long Urban Knowledge Dynamics program in Surabaya. The program aims for the production and sharing of knowledge to become a simultaneous process, with the hope of strengthening urban citizenry with knowledge base to participate meaningfully in urban processes. The program is also being undertaken in two other cities: in Makassar as Makassar Nol Kilometer, and in Semarang as UGD Semarang, both managed by local communities, Tanah Indie and Hysteria respectively.

We thus designed *Ayorek!* as an online platform that aims to collect, organise, and disseminate the rich dynamics of urban experience and knowledge, specifically in the city of Surabaya, and present them in a variety of accessible formats. We intend to use the development of information and communication technology and services in the community in building the initial infrastructure to encourage the dissemination, interaction, collaboration between individuals and communities Surabaya, which recursively also encourages more diverse knowledge (re)creation of Surabaya.

We planned to achieve this through:

- (1) *Cangkruk*, an open and casual sharing sessions for people to present their works, to establish communication, interaction, and opportunities for greater collaboration and knowledge gathering of Surabaya
- (2) Community history workshop for three weeks facilitated by Antarksa from KUNCI Cultural Studies Center, Yogyakarta. We based our choice considering that they have developed empowering, non-bureaucratic, inter-disciplinary approach in oral and community history for more than 12 years.
- (3) “Treasure Hunting” research workshop from September to December 2012 to encourage participants to find and document “treasures” in their everyday life. Participants were to launch their own small-scale projects based on their interest or existing researches, and they were to seek their own sources of funding. *Ayorek!* supported these projects through research and

writing workshops, conducting regular meet-ups to discuss research methods, problems, writing and documentation. Several media were used: writing, photo essay, video, photo, comic, maps, etc.

- (4) Exchange programs with Makassar, Semarang, Yogyakarta and Jakarta to develop each other’s point of reference, particularly in knowledge production, archiving, management and networking methods.
- (5) Campus visits are conducted informally to encourage the lecturers, researchers and students to be involved in *Ayorek!* activities, or to use the information from *Ayorek!* and share their works in the platform.

These activities are documented and disseminated through our website, Facebook and photocopied bulletins. We designed a responsive, mobile-friendly website at ayorek.org that not only document our activities, but also systematically:

- (1) lists and highlights networks of individuals and groups who in their own ways generate their own knowledge (re)production of the city of Surabaya;
- (2) maps “*ruang berbagi*” or sharing spaces, that is, public, civic places located in Surabaya where individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds can gather and share knowledge for free or affordable rate;
- (3) list and schedule various social and cultural events in Surabaya

These three data were and are still continuously compiled using a combination of Google Docs and paper-based surveys.

All data were later compiled by a small team and later on processed and illustrated by the design team. We are also planning to release a book titled *Ayorek! Sub:versi*. While it functions as a report, we aim for the book to engage and be useful particularly for the participants, and the Surabaya residents at large. The book will consist of not only written bilingual research reports, but also illustrations, photos, and videos on DVD.

III. RESULTS

Cangkruk were conducted four times in four different locations: C₂O library, Orange House Studio, Strenkali’s community center and Granito Tile Studio. These activities were designed as informal, non-bureaucratic introductory sessions for different communities to become familiar with each other’s histories, current initiatives, hopes and possible collaborations. Different locations gave us different perspectives on different living conditions, spatial dynamics and their effects on our interactions. The sessions were also used to garner feedbacks and concerns for *Ayorek!*—we wanted to ensure our outputs were appropriate for the participants’ concerns. Some *Cangkruk* participants were Orange

House Studio, Manic Street Walkers (walking club of C2O library), SETARA and Gunawan Tanuwidjaja (urban research collaboration in Jalan Panggung), Surabayafood.com (food website in Surabaya), KINETIK (citizen journalism), Taman Nada (acoustic musician group), Paguyuban Warga Strenkali Surabaya/ PWSS (Surabaya riverside communities advocating for sustainable riverside villages for the marginal), Mantasa (non-profit organisation in research and campaign on the food safety and edible wild plants, and local food preservation), Heroes CT (toy collectors community working with recycled items), PUPUK (non-profit organisation focusing on small and micro scale entrepreneurs and industries), Kami-Arsitek-Jengki, Rodebrug Soerabaia (historic community), YPAB school.



Figure 2. The third Cangkruk at Strenkali

As the project progressed, we replaced *Cangkruk* sessions with workshops, exchange programs and “Treasure Hunting”. However, we have received expressed interests to continue *Cangkruk* sessions in future from various organisations, for example Surabaya Municipality (Planning Agency), SETARA urban-design-culture cooperative, and Sunday Market organisers at Surabaya Town Square among others.

For community history workshop facilitated by Antariksa from KUNCI, we worked with Strenkali residents to learn self-management in documenting their oral histories and archives. Loss of paper documents has long been one of the main bureaucratic instruments for forceful removal (Peters 2013). We also learn how removed the written history books are from our everyday lives. The history of Surabaya mostly covers the ancient, colonial, and independence period, and usually focusing on historical events, buildings, and heroic figures. While these are important histories, this project taught us the importance and ways of documenting everyday histories—from hairstyles, local recipes, games, etc. We learn that developing such projects is fundamentally founded on interactions and trust that cannot be built in just a few months, but through long-term engagement to develop understanding or knowledge which can be transformative though intangible. The emphasis is not so much on the outputs, but rather on the process.

Several workshops, deliberately titled “Treasure Hunting” to avoid the sombre academic connotation, were conducted to realise the mini-researches, facilitated by a mix of local and international researchers, academicians, and writers—some on informal, voluntary basis. We encouraged research topics that were highly relevant to their daily lives and identities, and participants proposed these titles: (1) the charm of of the Bratang Tangkis village, (2) the potential of the blind persons in Surabaya, (3) the legacy of trams in Surabaya, (4) the Gembong market story, (5) the Atom market story, (6) the walking maps of several short routes in Surabaya Old Town, (6) the fashion trends in Surabaya’s shopping centres, and (7) less well-known unique food of Surabaya. Methods used were various, from observations, writing, scrap books, video recording, photography, sketches, mapping, etc.

For inter-city exchanges and workshops, we found that participants developed alternative horizons, methods and richer perspectives of different urban conditions and dynamics in various cities in Indonesia. These participant-observations are also essential in building trust and relationships with similar groups in other cities, connecting actors in new, if ever-shifting, networks and ecologies. To reduce expenses and increase impact, we identified opportune events in our networks for our team to participate in: (1) regional meeting of community archiving initiatives in Yogyakarta (December 18-20, 2012), (2) community research workshop in Semarang (January 5-8, 2013), and (3) Pasar Terong workshop with traditional market sellers in Makassar (February 5-6, 2013). We also gained invaluable insights through the sharing sessions by practitioners from other cities, particularly the oral history projects done by KUNCI, the making of *Makassar Nol Kilometer* anthology of contemporary Makassar lives by Tanah Indie, and *Kata Fakta Jakarta* by Rujak. Workshops facilitated by Rujak also helped us to have comparative perspectives, learn to develop inter-referencing processes, and build stronger networks of trust that in turn produced further collaborations.

Campus visits were conducted to the Petra and Airlangga University, but participations have been limited due to academic workload and arduous administrative processes. However, a number of university-based academics have actively participated. Surabaya Memory (an organisation under the Petra University) has also committed itself to help digitise the *Ayorek!* content.

IV. DISCUSSION

As we have mentioned previously, we anticipated *Ayorek!* to be an accessible, participatory platform, highlighting and connecting diverse individuals, groups, organisations, and businesses that seek to collaboratively and mutually engage with each other for a better, liveable Surabaya. However, evaluating ourselves within Jenkins’ criteria for a participatory culture (2009) below, we

realise that we are far from achieving this goal.

Participatory culture criteria	Evaluations
Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement.	Participations in <i>Ayorek!</i> demand significant efforts, time and cost. These barriers might deter people with limited resources. At the same time, many participants strived to dedicate themselves in participating and producing discussions and researches. The efforts were very insightful according to the many members and organisers of <i>Ayorek!</i> .
Strong support for creating and sharing creations with others	Due to the limited number and day jobs, the pace is slow. Teams are not constantly available and only have limited resources and skills. Supportive psychological and emotional support emphasising on rapport help build long-term relationship
Some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices	Our team lacks professional expertise and connections in media and urban fields, while the pool of suitable talents is considerably limited in Surabaya. We need to actively identify and invite more suitable “mentors”.
Members who believe that their contributions matter	We focus on long-term goals, but neglect providing tangible short-term “wins” to increase participants’ motivation, sustain momentum, and avert boredom that might arise from the admittedly sedate pace of social change (Conner 2012, 4).
Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the very least, they care what other people think about what they have created).	<i>Ayorek!</i> helped built some connections from diverse communities which further produced collaboration afterwards, such as: Participatory Video Training, Cooking Collaboration in Tambak Bayan Villages, Architectural Workshop and Video Shooting in YPAB schools.

Table 1. Evaluating *Ayorek!* as a “participatory culture”

The management process of the collaborative or creative platform still needs to be significantly improved to accommodate these needs. We are also uncomfortably conscious of our bias and basis. Although our policy is to maintain a balance of materials and networks, our initial interactions started from C2O networks and have not yet fully extended to various different circles; further links will hopefully be extended in the future. We are aware that these inevitable bias and basis might dissuade people

from participation. Those that have been involved are mainly students (although of different institutional origins). How to transcend compartmentalization, challenge our cultural, social, economic norms, and link with the not-yet-connected parts of Surabaya—and perhaps other cities—are some of the objectives and considerations for the future.

While the network is still small, with different intensity of ties, we also realise that each one of us have different backgrounds. This requires a development of group understanding or knowledge as each has different histories, norms, and values. We learn to withhold our judgements and not to use fixed set of criteria, to learn to appreciate our strengths and weaknesses, to understand different, if often contesting, concerns, and to work within these limits and differences. We feel that we are at a stage of experimenting with alternative modes of knowledge (co-)productions.

Being a new initiative, we also encounter administrative or bureaucratic difficulties in collaborating with formal institutions, including schools and universities. Initially, we tried to distance ourselves from our C2O bias and basis, but this leads people to question our identity and legitimacy. We need to consider strategies and tactics to overcome these barriers. Past experiences have made us realised the importance of identifying agents and actors-networks (Latour 2005) to transcend these boundaries.

We witness more interactions and collaborations between more diverse circles in Surabaya, many initiated by participants connected through our events, but the speed is slow and intensity can be stronger. We understand that these interactions are yet impossible to measure, but we are working to find the most constructive and productive ways of interaction and collaborations.

From the discussion above, it should be clear that we are far from achieving our intended aims mentioned previously. Nevertheless, we regard our stumbling as invaluable process of growth and experimentations where we continuously develop trust, competencies and networks. We also have some measures of success.

In the past, it was difficult to locate different individuals and organisations interested in creative collaboration and civic engagement. One has to find them through face-to-face contact, which entails some degrees of network connections. Generally we find that compiling their profiles, applying systematic metadata and integrating them to Google search and Maps bring them greater access, exposure and collaboration opportunities. Having this data easily accessible has also helped us in printing booklets containing a list of creative industries in Surabaya for Pekan Produk Kreatif Indonesia 2012 in Jakarta. It has increased the level of awareness about the varieties of creative industries in Surabaya, and organisers have expressed their interests in allocating more booths for Surabaya participants for the next expo. University

students looking for internship and volunteering opportunities can now browse for ones that suit their interests and geographical locations. While the database is far from being exhaustive, gradually the database has made it possible to meet some practical needs and concrete demands. We envisage that in future visitors to the website can automatically submit their own data of network, event and sharing space, but more works need to be done to the interface to ensure smooth input process and engaging user experience.

Through our “Treasure Hunting” program, interesting materials about local knowledge have emerged and accumulated in various forms. We have not yet applied any rigorous editing system, but we have received enthusiastic translation help from expatriates that find these efforts worthwhile, the stories and data useful and interesting. We need to also devise ways of scheduling our publication time, and work in collaboration with local media.

Ayorek! has made a small amount of locally-based knowledge coming directly out of Surabaya available in both English and Indonesian for interested users, and accessible through our mobile devices. However, we are still far from achieving our aims, and there are a few recursive steps we need to apply more rigorously:

- (1) Identify, map and strengthen the links with more key actors—individuals and organisations—in Surabaya that are working and willing to collaborate for the social good
- (2) Refine our existing information systems and interface for more efficient, enjoyable collaboration. These include, among others, supportive environment and interface for collaboration, more systematic and integrated metadata, mapping and visualisation tools, social media integration and management.
- (3) Strengthen our capacities and skills in participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2009), particularly in local, micro history research and media literacies.
- (4) Widening up our outreach efforts by collaborating with other communities, media and institutions, from Surabaya and beyond

V. CONCLUSION

At the heart of a creative city is a creative citizen, one that can turn problems into potentials to pursue both individual and collective interest. This requires the understanding of the cultural depth and richness, as well as the ethical awareness on how to use these local resources to shape our knowledge, deeply embedded within everyday practices and networks of social relationships. These understanding, knowledge and relationships are built on tacit and overt communications.

Therefore, identifying communication protocols, cooperative mechanism and border-crossing networks are vital to enable interactivity, exchange and participation across different backgrounds. Participants learned that the urban knowledge production was not a solitary but a social process that requires recurring interactions, discussions and collaborations from diverse participants with equally diverse backgrounds. This socialising, habituating process may take a long time and efforts, but are necessary in transforming the problems of over-reliance on distanced, non-contextual knowledge, and enhance our understanding of the rich dynamics and contexts of our own local conditions. This research notes elaborate our methods, processes, limitations and future directions, in the hope of generating some insights, further dialogues and collaborations.

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