Author/s:
Beta, A;Sutopo, OR;Utomo, A;Kurnia, N;Wibawanto, GR;Sebastian, E;Brown, H

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PAIR RAPID RESEARCH PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Creative economy: How young creative workers in Yogyakarta are dealing with COVID-19

Australian Government

The Australia-Indonesia Centre

Authors:
Dr Annisa R. Beta, The University of Melbourne
Dr Oki Rahadianto Sutopo, Universitas Gadjah Mada
Dr Ariane Utomo, The University of Melbourne
Dr Novi Kurnia, Universitas Gadjah Mada
Gregorius Ragil Wibawanto, Universitas Gadjah Mada
Dr Eugene Sebastian, Executive Director, AIC
Helen Brown, Lead, Communications and Outreach, AIC

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I am delighted to share our findings from the Partnership for Australia-Indonesia Research (PAIR) *COVID-19 Rapid Research Series*.

As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, it continues to disrupt economies, jobs, education and health systems worldwide. To address the pressing challenges in Indonesia, we have brought together teams of interdisciplinary researchers from both countries to explore COVID's impact on people. We focus on three areas: health, connectivity and economic recovery.

The report provides the policy community with timely access to the best available evidence. It also responds to the Australian Government's *Partnership for Recovery strategy.* The strategy aims to understand and support Indonesia as it deals with and recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Warm regards,

Dr Eugene Sebastian
PAIR Program Director
The Australia-Indonesia Centre

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the impact of COVID-19 by focusing on a place considered to be Indonesia's cultural hub, a place where tradition, modernity, arts and history overlap. The province of Yogyakarta is home to 172,000 creative workers who collectively contribute US$230 million to the economy, and here we examine the disruption to their lives caused by COVID-19 and their responses and strategies for coping with it.

Indonesia's cultural and creative sectors are among those hardest hit by the pandemic. Events have been shut down, concerts postponed and film festivals moved online. Fashion and design entrepreneurs have had their customer base drop off due to social distancing measures.

The nation's creative economy is one of the biggest contributors to national income and generates 7 percent of Indonesia's economic activity (GDP). It spurs innovation and skills that have economic and social value, and creates work for 18 percent of young people, who are active in all sectors. Yet our report finds little has been done to support this struggling sector during the COVID-19 crisis despite a range of initiatives being made available for business enterprises. A recent survey showed that 42 percent of creative workers have had to rely on their savings and 22 percent have had to borrow money from friends to cover day-to-day needs.

We delve into the factors that threaten the development and sustainability of Yogyakarta's (Jogja's) creative economy during the pandemic, and propose ideas to help policymakers support creative workers in a time of crisis.

We analysed six subsectors: filmmaking, dance, theatre, music, photography and fashion design. Despite Yogyakarta's status as a cultural hub, the pandemic has amplified the precarious nature of work for those who are reliant on the region's creative sector.

The creative industry is highly connected within local, national and global networks that generate a flow of ideas, goods and services. The pandemic has forced a shift to more local networks and online tools that have provided solidarity and survival strategies, while also being a seedbed for co-ordinated action to push for government support. Our research uncovered three distinct responses by creative workers to the pandemic: shocked, shocked but adjusting, and 'staying cool'. The effect of the COVID-19 crisis on individual workers was also influenced by an artist's social background, class and economic status.

While such workers are active agents in steering their own course through the pandemic, the government plays an important role in supporting them to continue to produce creative works.

Ultimately, the research inspired six key recommendations to help government and policymakers better support young creative workers at three levels: individual, ecosystem and provincial/national.

At an individual level:

- **Provide creative workers with access to digital skills training** to help them innovate and find new ways to add economic value and attract customers.
- **Create diverse and sustainable forums/collectives as meeting points** for workers.

At an ecosystem level:

- **Create a digital ecosystem for creative workers** to bring creators and consumers together.
- **Facilitate subsidised digital gigs** that provide support while also building on new digital skills.

At a provincial/national level:

- **Build an institutional level analysis of the creative sectors** that could also form the basis of an association for member support.
- **Make available transparent and sustainable travel funding schemes** to allow for career progression and growth in other markets.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Studies on the economic impact of COVID-19 in Indonesia (Mas'udi and Winanti, 2020; Kustiningsih and Nurhadi, 2020; Suryahadi et al, 2020) have covered questions about the business sector, informal workers and similar areas, but not creative sectors. The Indonesian government has not yet come up with an adequate policy response to support young creative workers who are precariously placed in times of crisis, even though the sector contributes 7.44 percent of the national GDP (Bekraf & BPS, 2016). A survey on the plight of creative workers during the pandemic finds they have had to rely on their savings (41.6 percent) and borrowing money from friends (22.3 percent) to survive day by day (Sindikasi, 2020). Addressing the dearth of knowledge about the pandemic's effects on the creative sector, this research examines the impact of COVID-19 on young creative workers aged 16 to 35 in the Indonesian context and the responses and strategies they have used to cope. It focuses on the special province of Yogyakarta, where 172,000 creative workers live (Wicaksono, 2019) and the creative economy in 2016 generated US$238 million (Bekraf & BPS, 2016).

This research has three goals:

- Examine the contextual factors that threaten the sustainability and/or development of the creative economy in Yogyakarta during COVID-19.
- Identify the responses and strategies employed by young creative workers to navigate the socioeconomic shocks the pandemic has brought.
- Provide an evidence-based framework to help the policy community assess possible interventions to enhance creative workers' resilience in dealing with risk and crisis.

In 2016, young people comprised almost 18 percent of Indonesia's creative economy workers (Bekraf, 2016). About 70 percent of the population of Indonesia will be of working age (15-64 years old) by 2030. Therefore, there's an urgent need to examine the capital, resilience, and entrepreneurialism associated with young creative workers in Indonesia under the COVID-19 crisis, which is what this study intends to uncover. While a youthful labour force could increase productivity and innovation, the COVID-19 crisis reveals the precarious nature of the creative economy.

Yogyakarta was chosen as the site of this study because the province has been one of the biggest contributors to national income from the creative sector (Bekraf & BPS, 2016). The province has overcome natural disasters in the past as people worked together in solidarity to help each other. The concepts of social capital and solidarity are also evident in the creative economy, and these characteristics could provide an example at national level of how to help people cope with the impact of COVID-19.

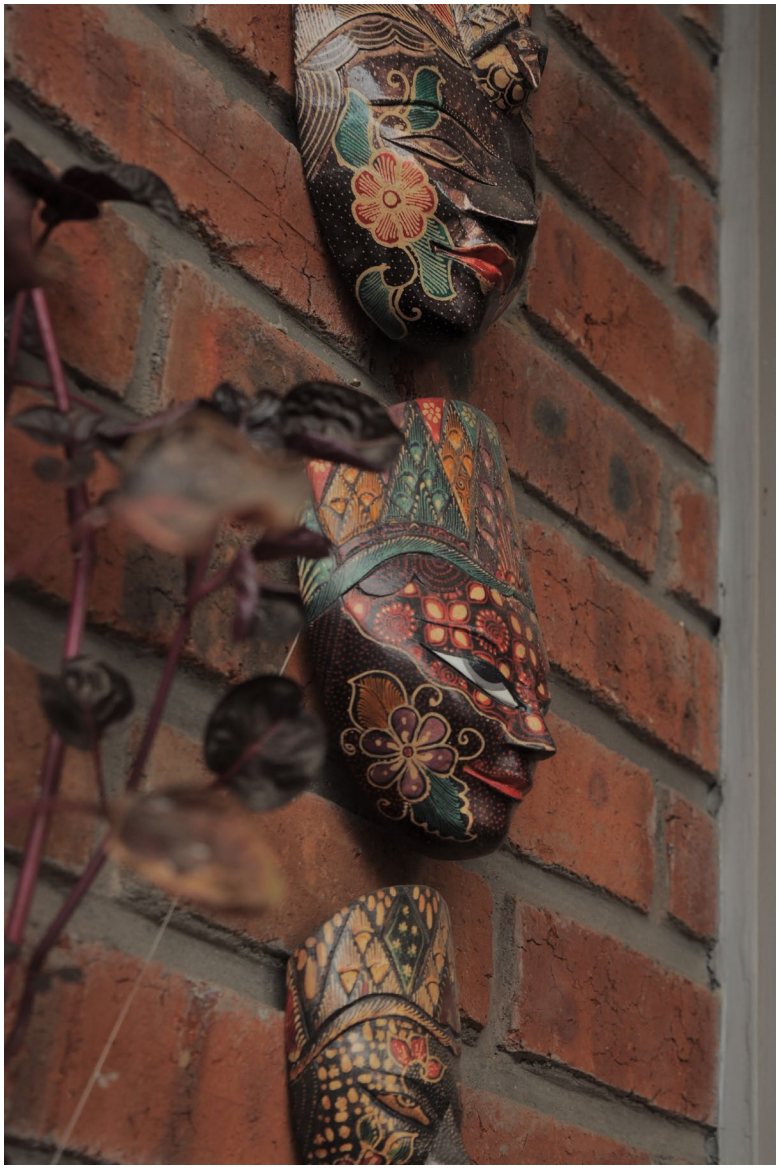

Photo by Adithyasmara on Unsplash.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The participants of this study represent six subsectors of the creative economy: local filmmakers, dancers, theatre workers, musicians, photographers, and fashion designers (Sindikasi, 2020; Bekraf, 2019). Their livelihoods have been hindered by COVID-19 social distancing measures because their creative work depends on physical and on-site activities (non-digital). We held two focus group discussions (FGDs) with 12 creative workers and conducted in-depth interviews with 18 creative workers (some of whom also participated in the focus groups).

We recruited them through the researchers' networks with the help of the Youth Studies Centre at Universitas Gadjah Mada. The recruitment itself was conducted in three major steps. First, we identified a diverse background of our potential informants. We considered equal gender distribution, different positions within the social hierarchy, and their position within the field of work. Second, we informed the listed names about the research project. Some of them were not available on the proposed date, and a few did not respond. We then asked for recommendations for some key people in Yogyakarta's creative scene as alternatives. Third, we visited their social media accounts to gather some basic information and recent updates that could be useful for the interview and FGDs. We took these steps for all six creative sectors.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we approached the informants through social media platforms, especially WhatsApp and Instagram. We provided detailed explanations and information about the context of the research, asked for informants' consent and time allocation, and tried to get a deeper understanding of their character through their social media accounts, both personal and institutional. This allowed us to develop interview questions and gather more information about the research topic.

Each creative sector has its own mode of production that we had to consider as background to the workers' disposition in a time of crisis. This understanding helped us ask meaningful questions without making them uncomfortable. We also took Yogyakarta's social code into consideration. Here, being formal might make the participants uncomfortable and hinder them in sharing valuable insights. Informality was also important because all the interviews and FGDs were done via online video conferencing platforms (Zoom and Google Hangouts).

Photo by Ivan Hermawan on Unsplash.

3.0 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In October 2020, we did two online focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with creative workers from six subsectors of the creative economy: filmmakers, dancers, photographers, fashion designers, musicians and theatre workers. Below, we detail the roles Yogyakarta and its local government play for the creative workers as well as the changing mobility of the workers in the city. We then discuss our findings on how the creative workers from each sector reacted, responded and deployed various strategies to navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

Typical responses

- **Shocked** – when the pandemic stopped all work, some workers reacted with shock, delaying their personal plans or developing anxieties.
- **Shocked but adjusting** – some individuals, though initially shocked by the pandemic and the resultant loss of work, adjusted by keeping busy and staying in touch with their community.
- **Staying cool** – the workers who stayed cool and calm were the ones that had enough financial savings to support themselves and even start projects or businesses with colleagues.

We also found three types of responses to the pandemic:

- **Wait** – this seemed to be a common immediate reaction, especially among the workers with savings.
- **Do something** – this second reaction involved taking up opportunities outside of the individual's creative field, a move that required a wide social network and friendships that could provide a source of alternative income.
- **Seek assistance** – some workers sought financial assistance from family, banks, and under certain conditions, the government.

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Photo by Ivan Hermawan on Unsplash.

Photo by Ivan Hermawan on Unsplash.

YOGYAKARTA

We chose Yogyakarta (Jogja), famously known as the city of culture in Indonesia, because of its diverse and dynamic creative works, both commercial and artistic. As a cosmopolitan city, Yogyakarta facilitates inclusive creative works and intergenerational communities and has secondary institutions that give artists the space to learn and accelerate their skills, and offers various community-based nodal points as well as resources to accumulate valuable capital. It could be argued that

"the city holds a special cultural position not only at the local and national level but also as a 'global hub'. It therefore nurtures cosmopolitan values in creative products such as music, theatre, fashion and dance."

This global hub role is shown at a formal level, for example in art universities, and informally in grassroots communities, so it also encourages productive dialogue between local and global values. Our informants often receive financial and moral support from local governments (including the provincial government and Yogyakarta Cultural Office or *Dinas Kebudayaan*, usually referred to as the 'Dinas'). One, Galuh, highlights this in comparison to her hometown in Palembang:

> "In Palembang, it was a bit difficult to hold arts and cultural events and activities. The people there are less enthusiastic, if for example there were dance performances. And there were no festivals. In Jogja there were so many festivals, all sorts of festivals, commemorating this and that, using this form of arts and so on. In Palembang, the emphasis was on Islam. For example, during the (Palembang city's) anniversary there were no large staged events which involved all elements of the arts. It was enough to celebrate by holding sholawatan (collective prayer in praise of Muhammad). So maybe the (difference) is the people. So, perhaps, it is because the people are not very artistic. If you are in Jogja, this is the place for art.
>
> "It could be because of the people, and because of the culture here. (In Jogja, Solo, Bali) there are still traditions that are like arts, which cannot be separated from the history of these places, So it's like art is the life here ... art has always had its space to exist.
>
> "Here they always make arts events, they (government agencies) are active in making activities like that. For example, yesterday, in Jogja there was a dance festival. It was a dance performance which involved districts in Jogja such as Jogja City, Kulon Progo and Sleman, Bantul, Gunung Kidul. So, there is an annual space for these artists to express themselves from their respective places, from their respective districts.
>
> "Then, there were also collaborations with students like the Silk Scarf (production), which is like working with Dinas Kebudayaan Jogja. There are also spaces (for performing artists) besides dance. There is also Ketoprak and so on ... There is also a regular theatre festival in Jogja. The support is always there. There is more support here (in Jogja) than there (Palembang).
>
> "The Dinas usually pay attention to, for example, events for classical dance studios ... events for folk dances ... (The support for the arts began from) college, from the start, from the time I entered college."

The excerpt above shows that local government agencies take an active role in supporting the art activities in the regions of Yogyakarta. Support exists in the city centre and the regions, for both modern and traditional arts, and encourages the merging of different styles. Furthermore, government support reaches diverse arts worlds and improves their sustainability via activities such as annual arts festivals.
For other informants, however, the Provincial Government of Yogyakarta is not supportive enough of creative workers and they say this is due to three main reasons. First, the government's support works in a rigid annual results-based form that can penalise projects that take more than a year to realise. Second, because government funds are limited, not all creative workers receive support. Third, although the government has been trying to support modern and traditional arts equally, only a few contemporary artists have benefited. These characteristics of government support push creative workers to find their own resources, which exacerbates uncertainty, leaving them in a precarious position.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the precarious nature of work in Yogyakarta's creative sector."

For the fashion designers, photographers and filmmakers, a reduced demand for their goods, creative works and services has depressed their earnings. For the musicians and performing artists, the abrupt cancellation of regular gigs, major events and festivals meant they were made effectively jobless. Eko, a pianist, says:

> "Prior to COVID-19, I was a session player. I was a session player at Paksi band until about a year ago. I was with them for about seven years. I played at weddings, gatherings, and I helped friends with their music and recordings. The term (for playing) here and there is like ngelacur (prostituting) … I was also a regular player at some restaurants and cafes. (As the pandemic took hold, they) began cutting my schedule off slowly. They first asked me to take a break for a few weeks, before cutting it off completely. The last time I played was in June."

The social distancing measures triggered by the pandemic did not only affect those who rely on local performing venues to stay open. Rather, these restrictions have underlined the hyper-connected nature of Jogja's creative sector. Though they live in Yogyakarta, many of our informants are deeply embedded in the vast national and global networks of artists and communities.

Before the pandemic, decades of transformations in mobility had allowed an exponential growth in the flow of people, ideas, goods and services to and from Yogyakarta's creative sector. These flows had been supported by the revolution in information and communications technology, cheaper and more frequent flights, and an improvement in other transport options. These channels of physical mobility were hit hard by the pandemic. Ette, a Javanese classical dancer, says:

> "The pandemic period in March was kind of chaotic. Everything was cancelled. I was meant to fly to Jakarta, to Bandung, to Kalimantan; they were all cancelled … But they still paid me half the costs … I had already spent money to buy some props, to make the costumes, the choreography had been done, and it was just a matter of execution. I told the organisers who gave me those jobs that if you wanted to cancel, you have to reimburse me for what I have spent."

Another informant – Adrian – is a professional percussionist who used to commute regularly between Yogyakarta and Jakarta. Although his family's main home is in Yogyakarta, most of his music gigs and orchestral networks were in Jakarta. All his scheduled shows were cancelled for the year. He was also finding it hard to operate his Jakarta-based side business of buying and selling cars. Being stuck in Yogyakarta, he had to find alternative ways to generate income through various entrepreneurial activities, including selling frozen food and batik masks.

Danastri works in film production. Before the pandemic, her work would take her to many places across Indonesia. Once the pandemic hit, it was hard for her to fly to jobs in other regions. Each trip would incur the additional costs of swab tests. Because the production crew would already be working under a much-reduced budget, hiring Danastri became less attractive than hiring a local. However, the uneven spread and intensity of the pandemic across the cities and regions of Indonesia also gave rise to an unexpected development. Danastri reported that a considerable number of advertisements and short-clip projects shifted their production locations to Yogyakarta, which has given the city a more favourable COVID-19 status relative to Jakarta. This has helped her secure Jogja-based work in recent months.

To some extent, the pandemic forced some of our informants to rely on their more localised networks and to use online tools. The information gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions supports our proposition that Yogyakarta is teeming with diverse and interconnected communities of creative workers. For most informants, these communities have played a key role in helping them through the pandemic.

The collective responses emerging from these informal and formal communities ranged from offering strategies and tips on staying afloat, to more coordinated action to plead for support from the local government. For example, Antin, a fashion designer, repeatedly cited the importance of the Jogja Muslimahpreneur (Muslim entrepreneur) community in helping her adjust her business strategies in response to the pandemic. Another informant – Agni, a filmmaker – had been leading a collective initiative through Paguyuban Filmmaker Jogja (Yogyakarta Filmmaker Community) to seek formal financial support from the local government. The group secured grants to help local filmmakers sustain their work. While the pandemic had reconfigured and constricted the spatial reach of collaborations and support networks for some informants, others had managed to carry out their plans for global collaborations digitally. Pambo, a puppeteer, said he plans to convene 'Pesta Boneka' – an international biennial puppet festival in Yogyakarta – in an online format this year.

The responses and strategies employed by our informants varied depending on their type of work and subsector in the creative industry. Socio-demographic characteristics such as sex and family status and, more important, the workers' relative standing and cultural and social capital in their respective fields were also significant. Below, we detail the reactions, responses and strategies of the creative workers from each sector.

3.1 FILMMAKERS

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the culture of filmmaking, which is greatly affecting filmmakers. Our research involved four young filmmakers in Yogyakarta from a variety of roles in the industry and different film community networks. Thus, they showed a range of reactions, responses and strategies as creative workers.

Danastri is a freelance data loader or digital technician who works in mainstream film production, mostly for film companies in Jakarta. She also produces company-profile videos and advertising videos for small companies and some communities in Yogyakarta. She usually splits her work between two cities, but during the pandemic she stayed in Yogyakarta. Agni has been a director of documentary and fiction films since 2012, and also has extensive experience as a film editor and crew member. He also directs music videos. Agni founded Belantara Film and leads Paguyuban Filmmaker Jogja (Yogyakarta Filmmaker Community). Wucha is a film producer, screenwriter and director of documentary films. Her film Muslimah (2018) won the Best Collaboration award at the ReelOzInd! Film Festival 2018. She founded Semaya Studio as a learning space for the creation of audiovisual productions. Vera is a director and screenwriter for documentary films. She also sometimes produces and writes scripts for company-profile videos. She is studying in a Master program for creative arts at ISI Yogyakarta under an Indonesian government scholarship (LPDP). During the pandemic, she has been staying in Pontianak, her hometown, and working as a documentary film researcher.

Among these four filmmakers, three categories of reactions to the pandemic have emerged: shocked, shocked but adjusting, and staying cool (meaning calm, apparently unworried).

"Danastri admitted she was shocked because she had no work during the pandemic."

Of her role as a freelancer working for a supporting crew in film production, she said:

> "I had to go back and forth Jakarta-Jogja, depending on the call from my clients. So basically, my job can be anywhere. The last job was in February for an advertising agency and making a movie. The first plan was just to visit Jogja in March (2020), but then COVID happened. So, now I am stuck here."

She also delayed her plans to invest in digital technology and establish her own small production house in Yogyakarta in 2020.

Vera was also shocked when the pandemic began because projects were cancelled. Returning to Pontianak, Vera said she had to deal with anxiety triggered by the consumption of too much COVID-19 related news. Similarly, Agni was also shocked because he lost a project, which "was cancelled due to the pandemic. I don't know when it will start again." Nevertheless, he has adjusted by keeping himself busy: taking images of the city and staying in touch with members of the filmmaker community. Wucha seems to be the only filmmaker we interviewed who stayed cool during the pandemic. She said: "Fortunately, I had my savings. So it was like a privilege, you know? I was relatively in a safe position (financially)." During this time, Wucha also started creating audiovisual projects with her colleagues in Semaya Studio.

Photo by Rendy Novantino on Unsplash.

All the filmmakers decided to stay in filmmaking or audiovisual production, but three (Agni, Danastri, and Vera) have been working on projects outside the film sector for short or indefinite periods to survive the crisis. Wucha is the only one who continued working exclusively in filmmaking or audiovisual production. She initiated the production of COVID: COoking VIDeo to invite youth to cook Nusantara food collaboratively, and then share it too. In contrast, Danastri lost her film job during the pandemic. For her it was too risky and expensive to stay in Jakarta because the film production could not pay for her COVID-19 test if she had to enter the capital. She said:

> "Jakarta-based production houses can no longer afford to get me on board because they have to provide me with a rapid or swab test. So, it has been quite difficult for me to reach back to my network in Jakarta. Even if I were there, I would have to deal with social restriction policies. Many crew members who already began production were forced back to take immediate cancellation, although some managed to finish the shoot. Jakarta's instability is terrifying. It would be dreadful to go back there."

However, Danastri has stayed afloat with limited small projects such as advertising and company-profile videos in Yogyakarta. But, she said, reduced budgets meant she received only 60 percent of her usual fee. Danastri decided to start a home food business to supplement her income.

Agni also worked on his side business, selling antiques, during the pandemic:

> "I did sell antiques in the first two months. But after that, a lot of activities had to be organised with film crew, production assistance, or supervising projects, so I didn't have time to do my side business and I would shoot rekam pandemi (government-funded film projects) in my spare time."

Although Agni's experience in the beginning of the pandemic was quite similar to Danastri's, he quickly returned to his filmmaking and audiovisual projects, and even managed to build a new office for Belantara film. His financial situation bounced back. Vera, on the other hand, lived outside Yogyakarta during this period, after losing some film and audiovisual projects. Building a new network in Pontianak, she found a job as a researcher for books and documentary film productions.

The four filmmakers had different strategies in dealing with COVID-19 that influenced their film production activities in Yogyakarta. Two of them relied only on themselves and their limited network, but the other two created breakthroughs by working collaboratively with their own communities and other stakeholders. Danastri chose to adapt to the changes in Yogyakarta's audiovisual production and advertising subsectors, while running a side business. "I got an offer from a film producer, and of course I accepted the job. But also I ran another small business, food catering," she said. It was a practical strategy that sustained her during the pandemic when there was less demand from big film companies in Jakarta for her services as a freelance data loader or digital technician.

In addition, because she had not been involved in a film community either in Jakarta or Yogyakarta, her network was limited and so were her choices. Vera had similarly limited networks. She told us about her hope for help from senior filmmakers: "Well, the senior filmmakers have more potential networks, they should share it with us ... Or maybe sharing jobs, too, right? So we can survive together."

While some of our informants were unaware of the existence of networks and collaborations among filmmakers in Yogyakarta, others were benefiting greatly from them. . Wucha saw that collaborative working and networking, especially making use of digital platforms, would be the best way to engage with others as the pandemic continued. She said: "Because of COVID, I think our networks are widening because of the webinars, right?" Wucha worked collaboratively with other filmmakers and audiovisual producers from various cities in Indonesia to make her COVID: COoking VIDeo.

For Agni, creative collaboration was a crucial and urgent strategy. His position as the leader of Paguyuban Filmmaker Yogyakarta enabled him to create several programs that have been important for him and other filmmakers. The first is a free online film workshop series discussing various filmmaking topics. The second saw Agni secure local government funding for the production of 10 films with pandemic themes. Agni believes film production during a pandemic should not only be the filmmakers' responsibility but also the state's: "I think the government needs to intervene, the state has to present to solve the problems ... if the private sector had given up, what are the other options then? We needed to form a team to handle this situation." All 10 filmmakers – including Agni – who received the government funding, committed to setting aside some of the funds to help other filmmakers because they believe that 'sengkuyung dan gotong royong' (collaboration and voluntarism) is an essential strategy for creative workers weathering the COVID-19 crisis.

Yogyakarta is teeming with diverse and interconnected communities of creative workers. For most informants, these communities have played a key role in helping them through the pandemic.

3.2 DANCERS

We interviewed four dancers/choreographers in varying career stages. Three were tertiary graduates, two majoring in performing arts/dance at the Indonesia Institute of the Arts of Yogyakarta, and one majoring in a performing arts teaching degree at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. Another senior dancer/choreographer we interviewed was a graduate of the Indonesia High School of Performing Arts (Sekolah Menengah Kesenian Indonesia), also in Yogyakarta. The training and career trajectories of these dancers are illustrative of the city's long-standing reputation as a thriving place for artists and performing artists alike. All the informants – Galuh, Putra, Kinanti and Ette – said the onset of COVID-19 brought significant reductions in public live events. Like other creative workers we interviewed, most of the dancers were dependent on such events not only as their primary source of income, but also as important creative outlets for individual and collaborative artistic expression.

With the introduction of restrictions, all the dancers had to abruptly transition their performances and teaching online – with varying success and consistency. Kinanti owns a dance studio (Sanggar). She found it difficult to shift to teaching online and decided to suspend her classes. Not all students and teachers in her studio had access to fast and reliable internet connections, which made it difficult to deliver an effective live online class. The second issue was most students and teachers would access the internet through a mobile device – usually a mobile phone. Using small screens meant it was difficult for both teachers and students to observe and adjust dance movements.

However, while smartphones were not effective as a teaching medium, they played a central role in sustaining and advancing the life of the Sanggar. Since most of the teaching and performing activities in her studio were cancelled or postponed, Kinanti had been spending much more time reflecting, choreographing a new dance piece that she could perform in the future, and being with her husband and children. With more time on her hands, Kinanti said she finally had the chance to work on her social media presence. She also organised a movement to help collect and distribute food and necessities to people in need through a WhatsApp group whose members included students, dancers, parents of students, and patrons of her dance studio.

All the dancers we interviewed said transitioning their performances online was made possible through various modes of collaboration. For example, a more casual collaboration could involve recording videos of oneself dancing at home and then combining individual clips from different dancers. The edited clip would then be uploaded and shared on social media platforms such as Instagram. These clips were primarily created to foster and maintain virtual connections among the dancers' communities amid COVID-19 restrictions. Other forms of collaboration included more finely choreographed online video content (distributed through YouTube) and streamed live performances. The latter were often sponsored by the local government through Dinas Kebudayaan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. Both the live and pre-recorded performances were targeted to a virtual public audience, and needed additional team members such as videographers, video editors and other technicians in the production crew. At times, this would impose additional costs on the already reduced COVID-19 production budget offered by the online events' patrons and sponsors.

"Because of the nature of their art form, adhering to social distancing rules and COVID-19 health measures was exceptionally difficult for the dancers interviewed."

Our informants tended to work and dance in groups rather than solo. Putra said it was a challenge to practise and perform with a mask on. Wearing a face shield during a public performance meant the glare of the stage lights obstructed his vision. To some extent, the online space has offered a welcome and safe alternative as a site of creative works during the pandemic. But all informants said they hoped they wouldn't have to predominantly work and collaborate online for much longer. Compared to the other art forms covered in this report, it seems harder to translate the art form of dance digitally as it requires a multisensory and spatial experience. Galuh lamented:

> "It's different if, for example, in a live performance I usually got energy from the audience, that's how it was, like sharing energy from the dancers to the audience, and from the audience to the dancers. Well, basically the atmosphere is different now, it's like a camera, all cameras. It feels like something is missing … It feels like what is shared between the dancer and the audience cannot be captured virtually … Now there are only cameras and the crew … it's just not right."

Photo by Rizky Rahmat Hidayat on Unsplash.

3.3 PHOTOGRAPHERS

During the early period of the COVID-19 outbreak, young Yogyakarta-based photographers who participated in this research faced three main challenges. First, they had to deal with significant loss of income due to project cancellations and restrictions that further depressed their sources of earnings. Second, they had to adapt to the digitalised market. This has been a challenge because shifting to a digital-based practice requires capital – including knowledge, technological devices, a social network, and investment – that only some of our informants are well-equipped with. Third, they had to adjust their creative process to conform with the 'new normal' mode of working.

"Like the other creative workers, the photographers have faced the pandemic with varying reactions, responses and strategies that reflect their diverse backgrounds."

Anton, who has been in the business for two years as a professional freelancer, endured the initial period by living off his savings. He said he had been "[...] lucky to have saved money from the project I did last year so I can survive the early pandemic without doing projects. In the early days of lockdown, I even bought myself a Playstation." His immediate reaction to purchase items reflects his background. He comes from an upper-middle-class family and lives with his parents, which allows him to save his earnings as a mid-range photographer. On the other hand, Haryo, who also comes from an upper-middle-class family, reported quite a different reaction. His savings were not enough to cover his daily needs and loan repayments. He: asked the bank for a new arrangement on his loan.

> "At the beginning, my savings literally saved me, but it could no longer keep my head above the water as the condition got more uncertain and no project offer showed up; so first, I asked my bank if it is possible to request a loan relaxation. They gave me [the] green light and I handed in the form including a proposal for a new instalment."

Unlike Anton and Haryo, Ulul – a freelance photographer, founder of a collective enterprise, and a junior officer for a creative unit in Universitas Gadjah Mada – did not want to withdraw his savings. He said:

> "In the first month, I did not feel like withdrawing my savings, so I and my friend in the collective sold rice and juice. The story behind this juice business was because of this guy I met when I attended British Council's workshop in Bandung. He himself got into the business due to the [pandemic] situation and offered me to become a B2B salesperson in Jogja. I worked with my phone, selling the juice through my social media account and broadcasting info to my contact list and never even had that thing in my hand. I did that for only one month and stopped when we found new ways to produce artworks in the photo and video business."

From the interviews and focus group discussions, at least three categories of reactions were reported by the Yogyakarta photographers. First, like the musicians (discussed below), 'waiting' seems to have been a common immediate reaction, particularly for those with savings. The second reaction represents a 'do something' attitude of taking up any opportunities outside of their creative field. This requires a wider social network and friendships that can provide an alternative source of income. The last category is 'seeking assistance' – a reaction that involves asking for financial support from family, a bank, or under certain conditions, the government. These three immediate reactions shifted into different forms as the photographers changed how they responded amid ongoing uncertainty.

After coming to terms with the initial shock, some informants set out to 'learn' more – studying business conditions more strategically. This included market re-mapping as a way to pinpoint new opportunities, as illustrated by Haryo:

> "As retailers and resellers have rapidly moved into online platforms because of physical distancing, the demand for digital product catalogue and virtual campaign material has also increased. I see this as a new opportunity. I propose to them [resellers, small e-commerce enterprises and informal businesses] my service at a reasonable price for the exposure that they might be able to provide me with. It is difficult to expect a significant margin for this kind of business, so I take this as a way to widen [my] network and exposure."

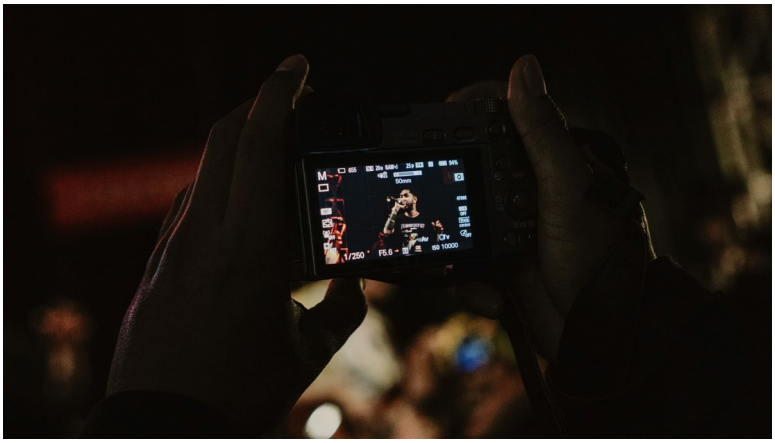

Photo by Fahmi Sudira on Unsplash.

Anton had the same response after taking a month off at the beginning of the pandemic until his bank account "looked worrying". He learnt that "[...] small and medium enterprises need people like us who can provide a proper display for their product. So, after a simple survey on the price, we offered them our service." Through the learning and mapping processes, Anton and Haryo saw digital campaigns as a new opportunity – something that was outside their regular project radar, although it remained in their creative scene. Research and observation led them to the precise location of the opportunity.

Apart from being individual freelancers, the photographers are members of a collective enterprise, which means they have additional responsibilities, especially Haryo and Ulul who sit as leaders. At the managerial level, they have to manage as efficiently as possible. Before the pandemic, every project was executed by a medium-sized team with one person in charge of one task. During the pandemic, however, they have had to deal with tight budgets and infrequent projects, as explained by Ulul:

> "Now, we have to work in a rapid phase with limited resources; one person will produce, shoot, edit, and everything. He/she must do the job from A to Z. For example, in the morning until evening, they would produce the footage and edit it straight away during the night. The next morning, they would do the same cycle. Repeat."

Haryo also chose a similar managerial approach, reporting that:

> "Usually, there would be eight to 10 persons in one project. Now, there would only be three to four people. I also split the team to distribute the earnings fairly. Those three or four persons who already executed one project would not be doing another one, until the next three or four got something to do in their hands."

This managerial arrangement is efficient and shows how creative workers can survive collectively. Such collective spirit is also seen in their long-term strategy.

The young photographers have employed three main strategies in response to the COVID-19 crisis. First, cultural capital investment. 'Learning' about and 'mapping' contextual developments has helped them decide the course of their businesses. Through their evaluations, they have been able to decipher the forms of capital required to access opportunities. The technological and digital arena seems set to dominate their future careers. As public events that require photography services – such as seminars, festivals and weddings – have rapidly shifted onto online platforms, photographers have had to adapt. Such a shift requires knowledge and economic investment, as illustrated by Ulul:

> "We have to change our model, the former one is outdated. No option. We have delved into all the elements required to move online: what kind of software best suits, which provider can guarantee the fastest connection. We also invest our time in digging into broadcasting tools: which one is the best for live streaming, which one has better quality for audio recording, etc."

Ulul also expresses a sense of community and togetherness that reflects the second strategy to deal with COVID-19. He said: "We decided to move into a bigger office. By doing this, we hope we can provide artists and academia space for online activity. We named this space Omah Kolektif (Collective House)." Ulul also said the spirit of gotong-royong (mutual cooperation), Yogyakarta's unique mode of working, has helped him face this pandemic. He said his social network had long provided him with great assistance, cooperation, solutions, a sense of togetherness and comfort. Haryo has also employed a similar network-driven strategy. He is a member of GAPPY, Gabungan Penyelenggara Pernikahan Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Association of Wedding Organisers). Along with other members, he urged local government to adopt a written COVID-19 safety protocol for wedding ceremonies so businesses could continue safely while adjusting to the pandemic.

While the first two strategies demonstrate a collective approach, the third strategy reflects the individual standpoint. One crucial challenge photographers have had to anticipate is their position within the field. The loss of resources could hamper their ability to produce creative products, further marginalising them. Therefore, they ought to keep working in their chosen arena, as explained by Haryo: "[...] while looking for opportunity, I also continued to produce art works to maintain my existence." This work is seldom expected to make money, but functions instead as a display of his position through art. The individualistic strategy, while used as a way of maintaining position, also represents the passion embodied in the photographers' creative process.

3.4 FASHION DESIGNERS

The fashion designers we interviewed had different backgrounds and scales of business. Mauly is a recent fashion studies graduate who just started her dress rental business in 2020 alongside her wedding photography business. Lian has long worked with the Museum Batik Yogyakarta and his clients range from hotels to elite fashion circles in Indonesia. Antin started her fashion business in 2018. She is a self-taught 'modest fashion' designer whose clothing items are popular with buyers from outside Yogyakarta.

"The start of the pandemic for the fashion designers, like many other creative workers, was shocking. They were hit with significant loss of income, up to almost half in some cases."

For Lian, it also meant losing regular orders from his business clients, such as hotels in Yogyakarta, as tourism was one of the hardest hit sectors. Mauly found she had to cut her dress rental prices. Although orders quickly dropped, Antin found that nearing Lebaran (Islamic celebration), sales of her dresses rose significantly for some time. When they declined again, Antin had to participate in the marketplace with other designers and deal with price competition: "I don't actually like the marketplace that much. We [as fashion designers] have to go through a number of creative processes that could take some time to do. We have a design process, and we have value. In the marketplace, sometimes, it's just about low prices."

Despite the difficult circumstances, the fashion designers were quick to respond to change. Lian decided to design face masks. Similarly, Antin, along with fellow modest Muslim designers in Yogyakarta, known as the Muslimahpreneur Community, designed a utility jacket that could protect the wearer from unwanted droplets. Mauly, whose business had started earlier in 2020, said her initial shock actually led her to be more creative with her offers to new clients as she could afford to lower her prices as a new business:

> "Weddings during the pandemic tend to be organised as simply, as budget-friendly, and as minimalist as possible. So, for new businesses like us, it is an opportunity to take in clients who 'ran away' from large wedding organisers. So the pandemic is a starting point for new creative workers who are still building their brands."

As the months have gone by, the fashion designers we interviewed took the opportunity to rethink the future of their businesses. For Lian, it has been a time for reflection. "Now it's the time to be patient, to do self-introspection, learn to create better products, and also a time to let the Earth breathe." Mauly learnt more strategies to develop her plans, which include expanding her dress rental and wedding photography business into a wedding organiser service.

During the pandemic, Mauly and Antin have found comfort among their peers. Antin's membership of Yogyakarta Muslimahpreneur Community has helped her make sense of the situation. Similarly, Mauly has found it useful to talk to others involved in the wedding industry to discover how they have navigated the crisis.

Photo by Farhan Abas on Unsplash.

3.5 MUSICIANS

The focus groups and in-depth interviews showed that young musicians pulled through the pandemic in various ways. Two important keywords – 'denial' and 'waiting' – illustrate the musicians' reactions to the dynamics of COVID-19 and the loss of work. Since our informants are not only 'pure' musicians, having 'no gigs' means no live gigs, no recording and mixing jobs and no composing jobs, all of which are a source of income.

The first reaction, denial, saw people denying the spread of COVID-19 and how destructive it was at the beginning. According to one interviewee Eko, some music venues did not limit their activities in the first two to three months. He said he kept doing gigs four times a week at different restaurants in the northern part of Yogyakarta until it all came to a stop in July.

However, not all musicians are session players like Eko. For Nisa, a female vocalist who mainly performed at 'event gigs', the loss of jobs came at the beginning of COVID-19 in Yogyakarta. Similarly, Jogja-born orchestral player Adrian previously lived in Jakarta but moved to Jogja because his patrons cancelled all of his 2020 schedule.

'Waiting' as a second reaction applies to all the musicians and can be described as the intersection of the feelings of worry, boredom and hope. Eko started waiting when he stopped doing gigs in July, which meant he was unemployed for several months. Unlike some fellow musicians, he did not make any musical content on social media. He was hoping the pandemic would be short-lived. For Nisa, waiting involved staying in her room doing nothing. Rizki, a sound engineer, lost his mixing jobs and preferred to spend his time in limbo in personal introspection. As he explained:

> "It was very quiet, everything was quiet. No more jobs in music. Even Metallica had no job! I did not know when it was going to be over. Well, maybe we can use it to make an introspection about what we can do beyond music, how we can earn money by doing different jobs. Actually, it is our opportunity to do something, you know, or to prove something that we had not achieved before."

In contrast, for Adrian, waiting was not an option because he had been actively doing something outside his activities as an orchestral player – selling second-hand cars. However, COVID-19 greatly affected the latter business, too, so he had to do something different to sustain himself. It took Eko a while to start his temporary business, selling goats during the Muslim holiday Idul Adha, but it was not enough, as he explained:

> "To keep myself busy I initiated [a] business with local friends. We raised livestock and sold it during the Idul Adha. We took advantage of the land in our village to breed the goats. I can earn money from it, but of course it is not as much as doing wedding gigs."

Eko's main response was temporary in nature. He was also able to play regularly at a restaurant and at weddings during the 'new normal' phase, albeit not as frequently as before. The pandemic made Adrian decide to move back to Jogja with his wife and two children. Having no orchestral player work, his first response was to create a temporary culinary business. He sold frozen foods and ran a small-scale food catering company with the help of his wife. In contrast, for Nisa, after spending months in her room, a friend offered her a job as a content creator at a music agency. It helped her greatly, as she explained:

> "Maybe it was God's way, hey? So I was offered a job as a content creator [...] I understand a bit about design and content like that, so I started in June. Then I moved to staff at the same agency, creating content for their social media, particularly Instagram."

"Relying on friends and partners as a source of social capital seems to have been a common survival strategy among the musicians during COVID-19."

After a period of inactivity, Rizki asked his girlfriend what they might do together to stay afloat economically, and they agreed to sell donuts online, but the business did not survive. As he said: "People did not eat donuts every day, right?" Rizki and his girlfriend had to rely on their savings.

Photo by Fahmi Sudira on Unsplash.

Our informants had varying long-term approaches for maintaining their careers through the pandemic and into the future. Eko, for example, had no strategy but to continue playing live gigs in restaurants and cafes in Jogja, and had no long-term view on his career. During the interview, Eko said he had started gigging again and had to follow the 'new normal' protocol declared by the national government. For Nisa, her permanent job as a content creator made her uncertain about her future in music. "I do not have any plans to build my music career in Jakarta. For now, all I want is to make music so I can compete with fellow vocalists from Jakarta [...] Well, now, I am in Jogja, so I do not know where God will lead me in the future."

In contrast, after moving to Jogja, one of Adrian's strategies was to create his own music production. He had studied music composition at the Arts Institute in Jogja, so making his own music was a reasonable strategy, but first he had to rebuild his networks in Yogyakarta. One idea was to compose music for children, he explained. "I had a plan to compose music for kids' songs [...] Like Indonesian kids' songs, such as Naik-Naik ke Puncak Gunung, Naik Kereta Api etc, so I want to recompose them and collaborate with other artists who can create the video animations." Adrian had to build as many social networks as possible, since he had just returned to Jogja from Jakarta, but, unlike other informants, he was able to convert his musical capital in many fields.

Photo by Uji Kanggo Gumilang on Unsplash.

3.6 THEATRE WORKERS

The main challenge faced by theatre workers during COVID-19 was the loss of their primary physical arena. In the early phase of the lockdown, it was difficult to imagine moving the stage onto the screen because theatre is meant to be 'attended', not 'watched'. The liveness of this creative product being suddenly unattainable was a shocking moment for those involved.

Meyda, a producer for the small puppet theatre group she runs with her husband (director) and also a member of a bigger puppet theatre company in Yogyakarta, told us they did "nothing" at the onset of the pandemic: "In the beginning, I was in shock. My team all went back to their home [not all were from Yogyakarta]. We could not meet each other." Meyda said many theatre workers went into a form of shock as they tried to comprehend what had happened to their arena. All the projects she and her husband had already arranged were postponed or cancelled, including an invitation to perform in Canada.

Agnes, a theatre director who usually works in a small team, took a different path. She decided to intensify the clothing business she had started before the pandemic. At the beginning, her sales dropped significantly, so she had to create a gimmick to boost orders. As she explained, the slowdown made her think "maybe I need something sweet to invite people to visit my Instagram account again [...] I put some gimmick following the idea of social fashion [...] slowly, customers started to order my product." Agnes' clothing business has provided more income than theatre. "My daily spending has for a couple of years been covered by this clothing business, way more promising than arts (kesenian)."

Meyda, too, found other work more profitable. While managing her theatre group, she also worked as a freelance translator, transcriber and web consultant. Her husband Rangga, who studied theatre at the Indonesian Institute of Art, has a side business of breeding geckos. Meyda said Rangga's hobby saved their little family during the pandemic. For both Agnes and Meyda, side businesses bolstered them when their primary arena vanished.

Meyda slowly got back on track. She started to do research for her next production. "I began to read again, recovered from the shock. Now, I am back to get into our production." She also had a new, adjusted way of working. Her already small group would be made even more efficient. A few months after the lockdown, she was working only with her husband and one musician:

> "So, now, there are only three of us [...] Apart from budget concerns, we haven't yet gotten used to the new media we'd like to explore. We had an opportunity to make a small project facilitated by Papermoon [a Yogyakarta puppet theatre company] through their Puppet Lab. It was only three of us making a short video, a medium we never thought about before. Now, we have to do it ourselves. Slowly, but we are trying."

Online platforms seemed to be the best alternative medium to bring back the stage, especially for small theatre groups. Agnes also sees similar opportunities. She said: "It is true that online is the answer, especially if we work by ourselves or in a small team. Through this platform, we can also reach out to a bigger audience." Pambo, a puppeteer with Papermoon, said:

> "[The group] has this repertoire that we performed in Japan last year. We then tried to perform it online using a camera. We realised that cameras have their own strong point. In a live performance, audiences don't always have chances to enjoy the details. With the help of a camera, we can guide audiences' eyes to small details."

Thus Pambo and his group found a technical way to enhance their 'presence' during online performances.

Presence appears to be a central issue for theatre workers, either in a physical way or with the challenge of working in different modes. Finding a way to be present while conforming to the current social restrictions is an essential part of their strategy.

Pambo revealed some interesting strategic planning. Previously, Papermoon's audiences had always been random and unmapped. So the group conducted a simple survey to identify the demography of their audience to help them understand their market. Pambo explained: "At least, we know who and how old they are, as well as gender distribution. It is important." Another strategy involves social media: "We have to maintain our relation with the audience by updating our activity and answering their questions on and through our social media account."

In terms of production costs, the theatre workers have quite different strategies. Agnes, who has been working independently, depends on ticket sales even when she does online shows. This approach is not effective in Yogyakarta because, as Meyda observes, "Yogyakarta is the place to produce and develop repertoire. If you want to get your market and money, find it in a big city like Jakarta." So the workers have to find other ways to fund their productions. Yogyakarta's government fund is one source of support, though it cannot aid all theatre workers in the city. The artists have to be resourceful to keep their theatre work going and to cover their daily spending: Agnes with her clothing venture, Meyda with her freelance projects, and Rangga with his gecko business.

The informants are active subjects who were able to survive and navigate the pandemic to continue their creative work. However, support from collectives and the government has also been important in facilitating and encouraging the continuation of their creative output.

4.1 CONCLUSION

Two key findings emerged from our interviews and focus group discussions with creative workers from six creative economy sectors. First, social inequality determined how intensely the pandemic impacted the creative workers. Social and class differences shaped the creative workers' reactions. Their class positions informed how they saw their financial security, as well as the viability of their creative works. Those with enough savings and sufficient support from their spouses or families could more calmly navigate the pandemic.

The second key finding is these differences also informed how the creative workers responded and developed their strategies. The workers with enough financial security could take the time to rethink their creative practices – they could even reconfigure how they produced or performed their work and change how people saw or consumed their creative products. Those with little to no savings had to earn money from entirely different businesses, such as selling food. Social differences also influenced the kind of social networks and collectives from which the workers could seek help during the pandemic. We discovered that those who had been involved in communities or associations were able to bounce back to their creative work more quickly.

Photo by Farhan Abas on Unsplash.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we formulate policy recommendations based on evidence from the focus groups and in-depth interviews. We suggest three levels of policy interventions: individual, ecosystem and provincial/national. We also consider the aspirations of creative workers, in particular for the sustainability of their careers in the COVID-19 era and beyond. As we explained in the previous section, the workers moved from 'waiting' mode to 'doing something' mode, which reflects the recent dynamic of COVID-19 in Yogyakarta and Indonesia more broadly, and known as 'the new normal'. The informants in our research are very adaptable and have been able to create many strategies relying on social and cultural capital to persist through the pandemic.

Creative workers have been trying to continue their work both in the online and offline spaces. Some of them see online platforms as a new opportunity, but we concluded that digitalisation is not the main answer to their career challenges. Thus, our policy recommendations aim to facilitate the diversity of the workers' aspirations. We are also aware of the contradictions at the national and local levels in terms of COVID-19 policy implementations.

At an individual level:

- **Provide creative workers with access to digital skills training** to help them innovate and find new ways to add economic value and attract customers. Digital skills are critical to Indonesia's growing digital economy. And collaboration between local government, creative workers and educational institutions (vocational education and training, and higher education) would be vital to this initiative.
- **Create diverse and sustainable forums/collectives as meeting points** for creative workers. Workers in this sector have relied on their social and cultural capital to navigate the pandemic. Building sustainable forums/collectives would help them connect to each other and to relevant business or government stakeholders. These forums could also be used to communicate and share information, especially about jobs and opportunities.

At an ecosystem level:

- **Establish a digital ecosystem for creative workers.** The ecosystem would bring together producers of creative works and consumers. It could also help increase collaboration and connections locally and overseas. Such an initiative could be piloted within Jogja's cultural industry.
- **Facilitate subsidised digita l gigs for creative workers.** Digital gigs have been an important way for these individuals to continue their creative work during the COVID-19 crisis and will continue to be essential in the 'new normal'. Local Dinas, for instance, could facilitate digital gigs to hel p creative workers get back on their feet or advance their careers. This type of scheme would complement the digital skills training and digital ecosystem initiatives.

At a provincial/national level:

- **Build an institutional level analysis of the creative sectors that could also form the basis of an association for member support.** At the moment there is minimal knowledge of how many people are working in the creative sectors, their expertise and level of experience. Collecting this data would provide a clearer picture of the value of the industry, while an umbrella grouping would build on an existing sense of solidarity and enable those who need help in a downturn or crisis to be identified and supported. It would also enable a stronger voice for advocacy to the government.
- **Make available transparent and sustainable travel funding schemes** for emerging and established creative workers. Despite the uncertainty brought by the pandemic, a proportion of the workers still imagine their future career progress in terms of performing abroad – not only across Asia but also in Australia, Europe and the United States. Thus, it is imperative that stakeholders consider establishing new post-pandemic schemes to support creative workers in realising their aspirations.

Photo by Aisyah Dhila on Unsplash.

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