Creative voices of the city

Articulating media, space and cultural identities by creative collectives in Southeast Asia
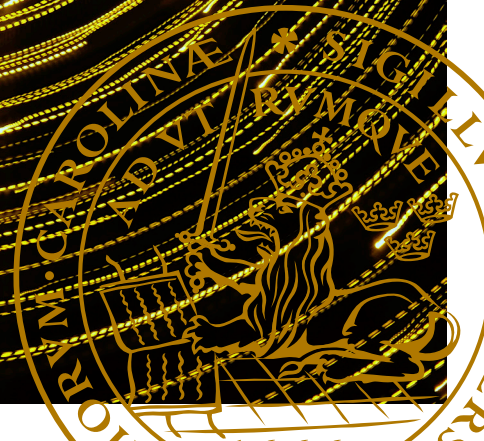
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Articulating media, space and cultural identities by creative collectives in Southeast Asia

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"We never want to join any kind of competition that uses a label such as social entrepreneur. That label and the competition have changed the very true sense of commonality. Our community is not commodity!"
(43-year-old female bookbinder and co-founder of a craft collective).

For cities around the globe the emergence of creative city branding offers new directions in planning, designing, managing and presenting the city. These are part of a larger discursive bandwagon within a networked global economy. But, what of the point of view of people who live, communicate and generate creative works in these cities?

This monograph thesis investigates the lived cultures of the individuals within collectives in two cities: the creative city of Bandung in Indonesia and the creative, heritage city of George Town in Malaysia. These creative collectives are all too often rendered silent and unnoticed within the official narratives of creative city branding. The research examines the tactics of individuals within the creative collectives who disrupt, or counteract, official narratives and the top-down strategies of these UNESCO-inscribed cities. This thesis gives priority to the voices of the city dwellers from a bottom-up approach, enriching academic discussions on everyday life, culture and creative cities within the field of urban media and communication. Methodologically, this research combines ethnography and visual methodology, providing a situated and nuanced context for street-level investigation, analysing how spatial and visual contexts are significant aspects of urban creative collectives.

The analysis illuminates the creative politics of space and placemaking in local settings, highlighting how the collectives form alternative spaces to live and work, developing an organic and dynamic interplay between the physical, social, and digitally mediated spaces of creative cities. A key argument concerns the articulation of alternative voices through the form of 'subtle resistance' by creative collectives, signposting small, micro level tactics as a cultural resistance to creative city branding and top down narratives in both cities. The ethnographic and visual research offers a lens within which to understand and value everyday creative practices such as inventiveness and resourcefulness. The articulation of various identities, as urban dwellers, artists, craftspeople and creative collectives, offers a powerful alternative understanding of what it means to live and make do in the local streets, creative hubs and residential neighbourhoods of Southeast Asian creative cities.

Zaki Habibi is a media studies and visual culture researcher with an interest in the interrelation between everyday life and cultural practice in creative cities. His research addresses media practice, media and memory studies, documentary photography and film, creative city branding and creativity in everyday life.

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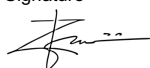
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Abstract
This thesis investigates the lived cultures of the individuals within collectives who are part of creative cities in Southeast Asia. Such individuals and their creative collectives are all too often rendered silent and unnoticed within the official narratives of creative city branding. This monograph thesis examines the articulation of creative collectives in two cities: the creative city of Bandung in Indonesia and the creative, heritage city of George Town in Malaysia. The research draws upon the intersections between media and cultural studies, everyday life studies and urban cultures, to understand how the tactics of individuals within the creative collectives disrupt, or counteract, official narratives and the top-down strategies of Bandung and George Town as UNESCO cities. This thesis gives priority to the voices of the city dwellers from a bottom-up approach, enriching academic discussions on everyday life, culture and creative cities within the field of urban media and communication. Methodologically, this research combines ethnography and visual methodology, providing a situated and nuanced context for street-level analysis of Bandung and George Town, in particular analysing how spatial and visual contexts are significant aspects of urban creative collectives.

The analysis illuminates the creative politics of space and placemaking in local settings, highlighting how the collectives in this study form alternative spaces to live and work, developing an organic and dynamic interplay between the physical, social and digitally mediated spaces of creative cities. A key argument concerns the articulation of alternative voices through the form of 'subtle resistance' by creative collectives, signposting small, micro level tactics as a form of cultural resistance to creative city branding and top down narratives of creative economies in Southeast Asia. Through an analysis of themes related to spatial practice in the city, cultural memory and cultural identity, the ethnographic and visual research offers a lens within which to understand and value everyday creative practices such as inventiveness and resourcefulness. The articulation of various identities, as urban dwellers, artists, craftspeople and creative collectives, offers a powerful alternative understanding of what it means to live and make do in the local streets, creative hubs and residential neighbourhoods of Southeast Asian creative cities.

Key words
Articulation; creativity; creative city; cultural identity; cultural memory; cultural resistance; media practice; space; visual method

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To Hayu, Hayya and Kajsa

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Acknowledgements

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Notes on Language, Translation and Orthography

The spoken languages in the interview and the participant observation of this study were varied. Interviews conducted in Malaysia were mainly in English, a few others in Malay (*Bahasa Melayu/Bahasa Malaysia*), and some conversation during the field research were also punctuated with Chinese local dialects especially Penang Hokkien and Cantonese as commonly used by Chinese Malaysians in the studied area. Meanwhile, the interviews with Indonesian informants were mostly in Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*) with various dialects and vernacular expressions of its spoken styles. These happened due to the different ethnic backgrounds among informants. Thus, in their spoken Indonesian there were many expressions – words and informal registers – borrowed from the ethnic or regional languages where they belong to, e.g. Betawi, Javanese (*Basa Jawa*) and Sundanese (*Basa Sunda*).

Unless indicated otherwise, most of the quoted interviews in this thesis are excerpts from the original transcription, or longer field notes, and presented here in its English translation made by the author. The […] sign indicates the shortened part, while words in [ ] or square bracket are additional notes by the author to clarify the statement or provide relevant contexts. Another sign, … (three dots without parentheses or bracket), is used to show a brief pause of the talk by the informant(s).

In a few parts where quotes and citations in their original language are presented – either in Malay, Indonesian, Penang Hokkien, Betawi, Javanese, or Sundanese – these are shown in *italics*. For Malay language, i.e. *Bahasa Kebangsaan, Bahasa Melayu,* or *Bahasa Malaysia* (the national language), the orthography complies with the *Sistem Ejaan Rumi Baru Bahasa Melayu* (New Roman Spelling System for Malay Language) that is the reformed type of Roman script officially used since 1972 and partly revised afterwards. Although a different script system than this Roman alphabet also coexist in the country at the time of writing in 2016-2020, including the Arabic script of Malay called *Jawi*, جاوي, or

Arab Melayu, any expressions in Malay presented here are consistently written in its Roman script. For Indonesian language, the orthography follows PUEBI (*Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia*/The General Guideline of Indonesian Spelling System) as the newest guideline of the national Indonesian spelling, punctuation and writing system. This revised spelling system, officially released in 2015, is a replacement of EYD (*Ejaan yang Disempurnakan*/Enhanced Indonesian Spelling System) that has been widely used since 1972.

All these orthographical guides are applied not only to interview quotes presented here, but also to any citations taken from Indonesian or Malaysian written references published both before and after 1972. However, any names of person, publication, or local place that use older spelling systems remain the same as in their original name (e.g. Soekarno, not Sukarno; *Mooi Bandoeng*, not *Moi Bandung*).

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AJI	*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen* (the Indonesian Association for Independent Journalists)
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
BCCF	Bandung Creative City Forum
BEKRAF	*Badan Ekonomi Kreatif* (the Indonesian Creative Economy Agency)
DIKN	*Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara* (the Malaysian National Creative Industry Policy)
Distro	Distribution store/distribution outlet
DIY	Do-It-Yourself
EEIC	English East India Company (in colonial Malaysia)
GTF	George Town Festival
Helarfest	Helar Festival (in Bandung)
IDR (Rp)	Indonesian Rupiah (*Rupiah*)
KTT-AA / KAA	*Konferensi Tingkat Tinggi Asia Afrika/Konferensi Asia Afrika* (The Bandung Conference, or the Asian-African Summit in Bandung)
MYR (RM)	Malaysian Ringgit (*Ringgit Malaysia*)
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
SACCN	Southeast Asian Creative Cities Network
UCCN	UNESCO Creative Cities Network
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHI	World Heritage Incorporated

| 1 | Introduction: Creative and Media Practice in the City

It is nine in the morning when Tarlen comes to the house, parking her motorcycle in the front yard and greeting people already early to work. Like any other morning, her routines begin when she takes off her backpack and puts it on the big table in the living room. She then looks at her smartphone screen, checking new messages and updates from the online platform she uses for her orders. Tarlen, a handmade bookbinder, starts her everyday routines in the house and online. The quiet house starts its rhythms, the sound of footsteps, songs playing from the computer, and water boiling on the stove. This is the place where a creative collective named Tobucil & Klabs houses its activities. Located 1.5 kilometres away from the city centre of Bandung, a city in West Java, Indonesia, this place looks like any other house in the neighbourhood. The exterior shows a painted white facade and gate of metal bars, typical for houses in the area. The interior is a place of creativity with people about to start their daily routines filled with craft-related activities.

The authenticity of the house, its location, and the family feeling of the collective are significant to Tarlen. "I was once offered to be an endorser of a sewing machine brand. But I never used that brand, so I politely said no to them," she told me while showing her Instagram page. The brand endorsement offer asked her to take a picture with their product and post it in her Instagram. She declined the offer, as she believes that her account's followers (more than 14 800 at the time of writing) follow her posts online because of her handmade products and the way she communicates her independent way of working. "It's about integrity. If I do that kind of endorsement, it feels to me that I 'sell' my followers to other parties. Our community is not a commodity," she added firmly before entering her studio room, getting ready to continue work from the previous night.

Tarlen mentioned the statement "our community is not a commodity" a few times on different occasions when I did my field research in Bandung, a city freshly branded as a 'creative city'. In recent years there is a dominant discourse

of creative cities that extends beyond the place itself, while the variety of 'doing creativity' in the city is rarely investigated. The way this dominant view is talked about, inscribed into the city's policies and programmes, and influencing creative practices in different domains, is explicit in the city's developments from day to day. However, for Tarlen and her fellow members in Tobucil & Klabs, such a dominant discourse and its practices are not the only way of 'doing creativity'. The members of this collective experience other ways of making creative products in the city, and sharing these more varied experiences with other collectives in Bandung and other cities in the region of Southeast Asia. These are the local actors, quietly engaging with alternative creative practices and dwelling in local communities in cities to which have been re-branded as creative cities – a policy and political economic drive that has pushed Bandung and other similar cities into what we can call the 'creative city bandwagon'.

On the 11th December 2015 Bandung, the capital city of West Java province in Indonesia, was officially listed in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Bandung is now one of the Cities of Design in this network (UNESCO, 2015). The government of Bandung eagerly celebrated this international recognition (Perdana, 2015; Ramdhani, 2015, Triastopo, 2015; Tempo, 2015), but others were more sceptical given that at the time the city lacked the basic infrastructure to support creative workers (Vltchek, 2016). There was also a perception from some quarters that 'creative city' was just another buzzword within a larger discursive bandwagon of creative economies (Mulyadi, 2018). Alongside this dichotomy between the strong supporters and critics, there are other individuals in the city that avoid this either-or polarisation. These individuals work together in a loose grouping, referred to here as creative collectives. This thesis examines the articulation of individuals within the creative collectives in two cities from Southeast Asia, the creative city of Bandung in Indonesia and the creative, heritage-inscribed city of George Town in Malaysia.

Such a city branding project – as creative or heritage city – is a form of place branding as part of a global trend. Many cities around the world draw on creativity, mainly following Richard Florida's (2002) formula on "creative class" and "global creativity index", building their cities using idealised place branding, with creativity as the main core of its brand, to boost the urban and national economy. Thus, the discourse of creative city becomes a global phenomenon whereby many city officials and urban planners design, plan and run their respective city to reach such a creative label within the interlinked global economy. Such city branding can also be found in relation to heritage cities, with dominant discourses arising from various global cultural agencies, e.g. UNESCO.

In this thesis, I trace the impacts of this global phenomenon in localised contexts of the two studied cities in Southeast Asia, critically examining alternative voices within creative collectives in these local urban contexts. This thesis contextualises the dominant discourses of creative city branding as shaping the urban space and the ways particular groups of city dwellers respond to such place branding to articulate their identities, their way of life. It is these individuals and their creative collectives who are rendered silent and often go unnoticed within the official narratives, which form the focus of this research. The articulations of these collectives are studied through examining their everyday lived practices in their respective city, especially in relation to their daily creative and media practices.

This thesis focuses on the articulation of media, space and cultural identities expressed by these creative collectives as the way in which they create their own alternative voices and places in the city, and thereby contest the top-down, official discourses and practices of place branding and the associated strategic creativities in both cities. These articulations cause a form of resistance. In a common pattern of resistance, the story is well known: global actors, phenomena, or discourses meet local resistance in the form of protest, demonstrations, or riots in the street. However, resistance is not homogenous. In this thesis, I explore the murmurs of everyday life and micro moves of resistance as articulated by these creative collectives. There are also variations on the way in which this kind of resistance is expressed and practiced within the studied collectives and across the two cities. These variations of resistance are seldom explored in academic studies in relation to global creative and heritage cities.

The research draws upon the intersections between media and cultural studies, urban media and communication, and everyday life studies, to understand how the tactics of individuals within the creative collectives disrupt, or counteract, official narratives and the top-down strategies of Bandung and George Town as global creative and heritage cities. The thesis explores the everyday lived experiences of individuals and their groups from different creative collectives in these two cities. The empirical work is based on the field research conducted from 2016 to 2017 and follow-up digital observations in 2018-2019. Methodologically, this research uses a combination of ethnographic observation and interviews, and visual methodology in the form of photo-documentation. The empirical and theoretical discussion highlights how creative collectives use disruptive tactics that form alternative voices against the backdrop of the official narratives in Bandung and George Town. Their alternative voices, bodies and material conditions articulate 'subtle resistance'. The disruptive tactics they

perform include inventiveness and resourcefulness through everyday creative and media practices, and the articulation of identities as artists, craftspeople and creative collectives organically formed from below rather than through the state's or global cultural agencies' initiatives. The analysis focuses on three themes: spatial practice in the city, cultural memory, and cultural identity to understand how their tactics signal a subtle resistance to the strategies of these two cities which form the backdrop of local city branding and global initiatives in Southeast Asia. Here we find people offering alternative cultural memories, cultural identities and creative practices in the cities where they live and work.

Aim and research questions

This thesis aims to understand the everyday media-related practices of individuals in creative collectives that are situated in emerging creative/heritage cities in contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia. The research enriches academic discussions on media practice, everyday life, culture and the city, within the field of urban media and communication studies. This thesis gives priority to the voices of the city dwellers from a bottom-up approach, looking at their material and embodied practices within the making of creative collectives. Their voices, bodies and material conditions, as city dwellers offer an alternative perspective than the top down, state-led and global strategic initiatives for the branding of Bandung and George Town as UNESCO cities.

The thesis has two objectives. First, the research uses ethnographic methods to identify creative collectives that are absent, or peripheral, from the official branding and strategic initiatives of UNESCO cities and yet are present and active within these urban environments. These collectives have been consistently working and networking within the creative scene in these cities, embedded in the histories and communities of these places, and yet their existence and work remains obscured, at times silenced and hidden, by the mainstream global and local discourses of creative hubs, cultural heritage, and political economy of creative industries. Thus, this research looks at and listens to their articulation of themselves as creative individuals within a collective, and their tactics for disrupting strategic policies and values in their cities.

The second objective is to use photo documentation to critically examine the cityscapes within which these creative collectives spatially inhabit and discursively form their articulation, and also to visually comment on the ways the everyday tactics are practiced by the creative collectives. This visual methodology provides

a more situated context in studying the subject matter from the street-level analysis and considering spatial and visual contexts as an important aspect of urban creative collectives. Overall, the thesis addresses the voices of creative collectives in urban settings, using articulation to understand the processes whereby space, memory, identity, as well as media, everyday life and culture are situated and constructed within Southeast Asia.

In order to achieve these aims and objectives this thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. How do the creative collectives and their members in George Town and Bandung articulate their creative selves in their everyday lives?
2. In what ways are their creative and media-related practices contesting the dominant discourses of heritage/creative cities in Malaysia and Indonesia?
3. In what ways are urban spaces shaped and reshaped by the practices of these creative collectives, and why does this matter to the contextualisation and conceptualisation of media, space and cultural identities in the city?

This thesis contributes to the current theoretical and methodological debates in the field of urban media and communication (Krajina and Stevenson eds., 2020) in particular on the intersection between practice theory, media and everyday life, non-Western media studies, urban culture, and cultural identity. The intersection is investigated through an empirical study that considers the importance of people's agency and visual method – i.e. photography – in urban contexts as an alternative to the foci on, for example, issues of representation through textual analyses and technology-centred analyses in researching media use, online community, or media infrastructure. Additionally, the focus of this thesis on two postcolonial cities in Southeast Asia enriches non-Western perspectives in discussing media, space and cultural identity. It is achieved by foregrounding the people's voices through my ethnographic and visual methodology approaches, making the cultures visible in these cities.

Scope of the research

Research on urban living in various geographical and cultural contexts is significant as global trends shows that "the world continues to urbanise" and 55 per cent of the world's population in 2018 live in urban areas; the figure is forecast to reach 68 per cent by 2050 (UN DESA, 2018). Beyond these general figures, communication becomes "a central dimension of modern and postmodern

urbanity" while, at the same time, "the material, spatial and historical articulation of media in cities" are also prominent elements to understand the city as a "meaningful space, poly-sectoral composite, contested terrain and practiced routine" (Krajina and Stevenson, 2020). Under the umbrella term of "urban media and communication", Krajina and Stevenson (2020) proposes a dynamic, ongoing and holistic field of study, consisting of variants of research within and across media and the city, mediated city, media city, communicative city, urban communication and urban media studies.

Research on media, culture and the city in particular has various theoretical and methodological standpoints, including cultural representations or symbolic images of the city in the media (Highmore, 2005; Georgiou, 2013), referring to representations of cities. Others focus on a related aspect of urban communication (Aiello and Tosoni, 2016) and mediated urbanism (Ridell and Zeller, 2013), referring to urban culture as dependent upon processes of mediation. On the aspects of technology and digital infrastructure, there are studies on techno-social infrastructures and materialities of the city (Caldwell, Smith and Clift eds., 2016), referring to material histories of networked cities, for example through urban media archaeology (Mattern, 2015). There is also research focusing on imagining the city through media and art (Hawley, Clift and O'Brien eds., 2016), referring to the interrelation between the imagined city and the artistic media practices. Much of these studies have a macro or meso perspective, whether focusing on institutional levels or on policy and political economics, rather than exploring the variety of cultural, material and symbolic aspects of people living in cities.

As the city is "always multidimensional: material, symbolic, affective" (Krajina and Stevenson, 2020: 5) – or, in another context it is formulated that the city is constituted of the materials, the imaginaries (or, the visions) and the lived cultures (or, the social interactions and the symbolic meanings) – looking at the everyday practices of micro actors in cities is also important. This is important because the practices of these 'micro actors' contribute to the lived, the imagined as well as the material city. In this thesis, this is done particularly by examining everyday creative practices of the collectives. Such everyday practices enable us to understand both the collectives and their experiences of the city, how they actively shape and reshape the city through their creative and media practices.

This study investigates the lived cultures of the individuals within particular groups, namely creative collectives, in Southeast Asian urban contexts. Geographically, the research focuses in the region of Southeast Asia and case studies of two cities in Malaysia and Indonesia. For cities around the globe, including contemporary Asian cities, the emerging creative city is a new direction

in planning, managing and presenting the city as an outward-looking model within a networked global economy (McGuigan, 2009; Knox, 2014; Löfgren, 2014). Thus, creative economy is a new lucrative framework in socio-economic development of several Southeast Asian cities; it is perceived by proposing the "inclusively creative strategy" to increase the regional and national economy through the agencies of new media, the city and designated creative hubs (Siregar and Sudrajat, 2017; BEKRAF, 2018; British Council Indonesia, n.d.; cf. Landry, 2008).

Each selected city in this study has been shaped by these global discourses. The conceptual scope of this research, however, departs from a different perspective. Rather than understanding this discursive notion from policy studies, political economy of urban studies, textual or media representations, this research focuses on everyday creative and media-related practices. In terms of the overall scope of this thesis, the work is inspired by discussion in cultural studies on poetics and politics of cultural practices (see Hall and Jefferson eds., 2006; Hall, Evans and Nixon eds., 2013). The research questions are addressed through the analyses in the poetics and politics of creative and media practices by individuals within the collectives in urban settings. When it comes to the way these analyses are presented, the poetics and politics becomes a framework for the conceptual findings explored within the thesis.

The core conceptual findings are subtle resistance, disruption of cultural memory, culture on display, alternative space and articulation of creative self. Subtle resistance here deals with the way in which the creative collectives show their alternative voices without any overt protest or confrontational resistance, but through their everyday creativities. Meanwhile, the top-down, official cultural memory and culture-on-display are key themes contested by the creative collectives. They demonstrate their disruptive tactics that can offer an alternative narrative on everyday creativities in the cities. The way these creative collectives maintain their spaces, either as physical, social, or digitally mediated spaces, is analysed as the formation of alternative spaces in their respective city, and the formation of their identities as collectives. The ethnographic writings and visual essays are the key ways to present and discuss these findings. The empirical and theoretical analysis signifies the creative and media-related practices by the researched subjects as the poetics of their everyday lives, and the voices, bodies and material aspects of the subjects are part of the politics of living and working in these urban environments.

The cultural details informed by the creative collectives – ranging from the material objects they use, the craftmanship, the everyday media-related practice,

the local friendship group, the feeling of commonality, to the community and familial mood – are specific to the studied collectives in each respective city. However, most of these cultural details also indicate universal values, things we can learn from. The subtle resistance performed through their resilience, values and ethics within these creative collectives can be traced in other local or even global contexts, also appeared as particular yet universal characteristics at the same time. Practiced against the backdrop of dominant discourse of creative cities and heritage cities, the subtle resistance by these creative collectives is the everyday tactics for them to find their own ways of making do – creating and sustaining organic spaces, for instance – through the flexibilities of work, networking, resourcefulness and survival kits living in cities. We can learn from such an articulation to understand, for example, studies on cultural resistance, also the interlinkage between everyday practices, visuality and articulation of identities in the specific field of urban media and communication, as well as generally in media and everyday life, visual methodology, and media and cultural studies.

There are areas outside the parameters of this thesis. For example, global discourses of the creative city and heritage city are used as contextual information rather than a key part of the research; my investigation is focused on local actors and how they are resistant to these top-down discourses. Policy orientated research on critical heritage studies also forms a backdrop to the thesis for similar reasons. For example, the role of UNESCO or state-initiated institutions, local city policies and criticism of cultural imperialism serve as context of the study. This thesis offers a perspective sensitive to everyday lives and diverse cultures in postcolonial contexts seen from the bottom-up experiences of the studied cities. On the aspects of media/communication studies, a few established areas are also not my focus here, such as mass media, journalism, media regulation, media institutions and digital media technology. Instead, as mentioned earlier, the thesis explores, through visual and ethnographic methods, the murmurs of everyday cultural practices, spatial formations and the articulation of cultural identities by the creative collectives in both cities.

Methodology

The way in which the empirical materials have been gathered and analysed are methodologically informed by cross-disciplinary perspectives coming from media and cultural studies, everyday life studies, visual studies, to urban media and communications studies. A mixture of methods is also employed, and these

methods are structured within two selected, combined methodologies, taking insights from ethnography and visual methodology. This study employs a mixture of methods in qualitative research ranging from participant field observation, remote digital observation, conversational or go-along interview, and photo-documentation. The analyses are based on the close reading, qualitative data and visual analysis, and interpretation of collected materials in various forms. These forms are observational notes, transcribed and annotated interview responses, curated visual materials (photographs), audio recording of soundscape experiences, and published materials in both cities as supporting relevant contextual materials.

The value of the cross-disciplinary research to the thesis enables an in depth, up close analysis of creative collectives who live and work in cities, i.e. cities which have been incorporated into the creative city branding discourses and policies. The combination of perspectives brings into sharp relief the media-related and cultural practices of people at the margins of these discourses, and it signals the significance of spatial and visual research in the field of urban media and communication.

Thesis outline

Chapter 2 critically examines previous studies and theoretical explanations on the intersection between media studies, everyday life studies and urban cultural studies. This literature review builds the theoretical framework of the research. This framework is based on five theoretical trajectories that structure the chapter. It begins with the literature discussion on (1) practice theory in everyday life in order to theoretically support the key concepts used in this research, i.e. media-related practice and everyday creativity. Media-related practice in cultural settings is the selected concept to studying practices. The discussion of its theoretical debates, mainly informed by media and cultural theorists, will be part of this section. The second section of this chapter is (2) the elaboration on articulation and cultural identity in contemporary cultures, in order to elaborate on the concept of articulation in media and cultural studies. Next, (3) the interrelation between media, space and the city is discussed in this section. How the production of social and cultural spaces within the city is theorised, and to what extent media is part of these processes are the focus of this section. Fourth, (4) the section focuses on the theoretical discussion of place branding and the city in order to provide the backdrop to the creative collectives and their tactics in relation to these

top-down branding strategies. Lastly, the elaboration on (5) memory and urban cultures, including debates on cultural memory in urban contexts, situates the articulation and identities of creative collectives in contested memories related to ethnicity and postcolonialism. Overall, the chapter argues for research on contemporary urban, visual and media cultures as sites of articulation by different social actors on spaces, memories and identities.

Chapter 3 addresses the literature and recent discussions within ethnographic and visual methodologies. The first is elaborated by considering the main principles in conducting multi-contextual ethnography for studying media-related practice. Digital ethnography as a recent approach, technique, or tool is also part of the elaboration within this section. The chapter then turns its attention to critical visual methodology, in particular the use of photography in documentary mode to collect visual information from the immersive fieldwork and to present the analysis. How these combined methodologies are applied in this research through selected set of methods is discussed in the third section of this chapter. Finally, the chapter offers reflective notes on being an ethnographer and visual researcher, and ethical aspects of the research.

The following six chapters form the analytical part of this thesis. This part of the thesis combines two different types of presentation: written analytical sections and analyses in visual essays. These types of presentation demonstrate the chosen methodologies and analytical findings of this thesis. Each chapter sheds light on a different analytical topic. Chapters 4 begins the analysis by contextualising the main narratives emerged in both cities, in particular on the contexts of becoming a heritage city and creative city. This chapter has its purpose to provide a clear context of the 'official narratives', narratives which are contested by the research informants. Chapter 5 and 6 investigate the key findings of the thesis in relation to ideas of subtle resistance (chapter 5) and disruption of cultural memory (chapter 6). The first idea is explored by examining the spatial practices in the city and the way the informants in George Town contest such spaces through their own spatial practices as an alternative voice. The analysis highlights the form of resistance these collectives articulate as a subtle resistance through their organic way of dealing with creativity and maintaining creative collectives. Disruption of cultural memory, as the key concept in chapter 6, is discussed by examining the entangled practices of heritage, memory and creativity in George Town. Additionally, this chapter also analyses the ways in which the informants perform their disruptive tactics in everyday life to address issues related to the top-down, official cultural memory and a politics of inclusion-exclusion. This chapter then

is concluded by elaborating the way the creative collectives form organic spaces as an alternative voice and way of doing creativity in the city.

Chapter 7 critically 'reads' the streets of the cities, the very spaces where practices of creativity are juxtaposed, materialised and contested. This chapter is presented as a visual analysis and offers a bridge between the research findings on subtle resistance and disruption of cultural memory in the two previous chapters (5 and 6) and other conceptual findings in the next chapters. In this visual essay, the analysis is presented in three themes, i.e. cultural memory on display, superficial visuality and spatial struggle.

The latter theme leads to a further discussion in the following chapter. Chapter 8 critically examines the emergence of spatial struggle beyond the city's streets. The focus here is on everyday practices by the informants in Bandung and the ways these individuals and their collectives narrate their identities as creative selves through the creative and media-related practices of making and networking, thus making sense of the meanings of creative spaces for them in both offline and online settings.

In chapter 9, reflexivity is the main aspect presented there. Under the title of connected practices, this chapter reflects on the theoretical framework, empirical data and methodological approaches the research has employed. Using visual evidence combined with field notes and interview quotes from both cities, this chapter is presented in a semi–photo-essay form, drawing on the visual materials shot from inside the creative collectives: the people, their spatial and social relations, their media-related practices and media content, their everyday expressions and material objects, which forms connected practices. By connecting their practices, including media, creative, material, spatial, visual practices, interwoven with identities, cultural memories, and resistance, I bring into focus the local resourcefulness and resilience by the creatives in their cities. Finally, the concluding part (chapter 10) summarises the research processes and the significant findings in relation to the research questions. It also provides further reflections on indicating the contribution of this thesis in the field of urban media and communication, specifically with the intersections of everyday life studies, visual and urban cultures.

| 2 | Approaching Practice in Everyday Urban Contexts

To situate the research on creative and media practice, spatial formation and urban cultures in everyday life in the city, it is important to combine different theoretical positions from cross-disciplinary fields. This chapter examines previous studies and theoretical developments at the intersection between media, cultural and everyday life studies, including cultural memory and identity, providing a framework for this research. This framework is formed and based on five theoretical trajectories that structure the chapter. It begins with the literature discussion on practice theory and everyday life studies in order to theoretically support the key concepts used in this research, i.e. media-related practice and everyday creativity. The second section of this chapter discusses the notion of articulation and its relations to understand the construction of cultural identity. Third, it registers contemporary debates on the interrelation between media, space and the city. Fourth, the section focuses on the notion of place branding, seeking possibility to understand several related concepts from branding, place marketing, to placemaking in urban contexts. Fifth, the way in which memory and urban cultures are conceptually and theoretically connected will be discussed in this section. The areas of research related to ethnography and visual methodology are addressed in detail in the next chapter, (3), as part of a discussion of the research design and process.

Everyday creativity: media-related practice in everyday life

One theoretical departure in understanding media and communication phenomena is centred on practices, situated within social structures, systems, individuals and interactions. In general, as Postill (2010: 1) explains, practices can

be understood as "the embodied sets of activities that humans perform with varying degrees of regularity, competence and flair." Thus, media practice derives from a question: what people actually *make of* and *do* with media? (Postill, 2010; Hobart, 2006). This perspective shifts the questions from focusing on media technology or media platform and media text to the people and the way in which they do with media. This perspective also challenges other established areas of focus, such as the centre of attention on media effects, political economy of media, interpretation of media text, and even the taken for granted of 'audiencing' in researching people's relations with media (Couldry, 2010; cf. Hobart, 2010). By employing a perspective of practice, the research de-centres the focus of analysis; it is no longer centred in the media per se, but provides a broader consideration. In doing so, the question in researching media phenomena from the perspective of practice does not lay on asking the aspect of media technology or media text (content), but begins with the related practices surrounding the people whom we focus on.

Hobart (2010: 61) argues, practice can turn into a site of contestation. When studying practice, then, one examines them as a detailed research and not in the tendency of analysing macro-processes. Practice, as Hobart further argues:

> [Practice] is not a natural object but a frame of reference that we use to interrogate a complex reality. [...] I prefer to think of practices as those recognised, complex forms of social activity and articulation through which agents set out to maintain or change themselves, others and the world about them under varying conditions. (Hobart, 2010: 62-63)

In relation to theorising practice on or of media, Hobart proposes an approach he calls *media-related practice*. I agree with Hobart's proposition since it is useful to study "situated practices" (Hobart, 2014a: 428), especially in understanding media as "assemblage of practices of production, distribution, engagement and use by different people in different situations" (Hobart, 2014b: 510). This approach "is intended simply to provide an initial circumscription out of the whole range of identifiable practices in society at any moment" (Hobart, 2010: 67). A media-related practice approach could potentially deal with an array of practices, for example, media preferences while at the same time the practice of neglecting or refusing particular media, e.g. the media absence as in digital media detox phenomena.

By incorporating practice theory into media theory, this does not necessarily mean eliminating all other existing strands of media theory. Postill (2010: 12) elaborates that "practice theory offers media studies new ways of addressing

questions that are central to the field, such as media in everyday life, media and the body, and media production". While practice theory, certainly, "cannot be a theoretical cure-all" (Postill: 2010: 18), media-related practice as theorised by Hobart could address specific research questions to understand multilayers processes, including questions on social relations, spatial formations, and articulation of identities. This research departs from the same standpoint with Hobart's aforementioned argument.

Media-related practice in this research is studied within selected creative collectives, living in urban environments. It is approached by decentring the focus of analysis from studying media per se to elaborating wider institutional, spatial and cultural processes. Specifically, it is translated as approaching media practices of the people within creative collectives in the city by studying their everyday creative practices in broader social networks (the institutional aspect), the space where they inhabit and the cityscape (the spatial), and their voices responding to particular issues of everyday living in the cities (the politics of culture).

Having said so, everyday life becomes an essential aspect to be considered in this research. Ben Highmore (2002) writes that everyday life can be characterised with routines, dullness, repeated events and even boredom, but beneath the mundane, the everydayness can also be seen as a problematic. Thus, the everyday media-related practice can be a significant element to be studied further. Everyday life in the city, in particular, can provide a set of contexts in understanding such practices.

Theoretically, studying everyday life focuses on understanding ways of operating or doing things as not only a background of social activity, but an effort to foregrounding the everyday practices into the centre of analysis (de Certeau, 1984). For de Certeau (1984), everyday practices deal with the way people make-do and this is a form of what he calls the *poetics of everyday life*. Highmore (2002: 169) further explains de Certeau's key ideas on everyday life studies; de Certeau takes into consideration for "listening to the murmurs of everyday life" as the important logics of action, i.e. to reveal people's *tactics* in dealing with the everyday as well as to understand the *strategy* overarched beneath the practices. This thesis explores the murmurs of everyday life within creative collectives in urban environments, in particular how their practices shine a light on their tactics for making do within the branding of their homes as creative cities; I focus on the 'murmurs' in their media-related practices.

In the context of practices in everyday life, tactics become a manifestation of resistance without a tendency to be oppositional, such as ways of operating mundane routines or activities (Highmore, 2002). For de Certeau, tactical aspects

of everyday practices possibly signal the stubbornness, the opaque, the poaching, or the surprise of daily life. Yet, as the very meaning of poetics actually relates to a sense of creating, inventing, or generating (Highmore, 2002: 154), the inventiveness is also another quality shown from this tactical aspect of everyday life. This research deals with studying practices by a group of people who are involved in the creation of such a tactical way of living in the city. Their decision to initiate or join in the creative collective and choose a particular way of daily routines that is considered as non-mainstream way of life in their respective city, demonstrate a form of inventiveness through everyday tactics. In de Certeau's (1984) words, tactics "escaped it, without leaving it [strategy]". Exploring the tactics performed by the research subjects could help "to trace the interlacing of a concrete sense of everyday life, to allow them to appear" (de Certeau, Giard and Mayol, 1998: 3). By understanding "the everyday as an ensemble of practices" (Highmore, 2002: 151) articulated by the people within particular groups in the city, then, the thesis explores a set of practices that grasp everyday *tactics*. This approach enables an exploration of what people do with media in their everyday lives, and most importantly, understand the various layers of articulation that are meaningful for them as they live and work in these urban spaces. These include their articulation through creativity or creative works.

To briefly turn to existing literature on creativity, this area has been dominated by the works that perceive creativity from psychological and managerial aspects. An edited volume entitled *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity* (Kaufman and Sternberg eds., 2010), for instance, has 24 chapters from 38 contributors who write about various dimensions of researching creativity. However, all these are mainly written within the limited fields, whether in cognitive and social psychology, organisational management, or entrepreneurship studies. The main proposition in all chapters mainly related to the shifting focus from researching "creative personality" only to the established framework of creativity as "attitudinal" within the major approach they label as "four-plus P's of creativity": person (personality), process, product, place, plus persuasion and potential (see Runco, 2007: 384; Kozbelt et al., 2010: 24; Runco and Albert, 2010; Sternberg and Kaufman, 2010).

The work by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) is one notable study to be mentioned here. In a five-year research project between 1990 and 1995, he led a research team to conduct a series of "videotaped interviews with ninety one exceptional individuals" from various "domains of culture (e.g. sciences, arts, business, government), who had to be still actively involved in that domain" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997: 12). The result of this research project pioneers the

sociological approach to studying creativity in which two important factors are more determined in understanding and perceiving creativity than the emphasis on the so-called creative genius. These two factors, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), are years of involvement and mastering a "particular domain", and the existence of encouraging environments continuously occur from supportive people, groups and institutions.

Both these "domains of creativity" and "supportive environments" are key factors to be emphasised in defining creativity. However, such claims are criticised by other scholars who study creativity further. David Gauntlett is one of those critics. Although he similarly argues that 'creative genius' is an irrelevant concept and might be misleading to fully grasp the notion of creativity, Gauntlett (2018) is sceptical with the emphasis on both factors. Because, the emphasis on the two social factors lead back to understand creativity as "identified by its outcomes" (Gauntlett, 2018: 24), creativity is simply seen as a product. Yet, to him:

> Creativity might be better understood as a process, and a feeling. In this way of looking at it, creativity is about breaking new ground, but internally: the sense of going somewhere, doing something that you've not done before. This might lead to fruits which others can appreciate, but those may be secondary to the process of creativity itself, which is best identified from within. (Gauntlett, 2018: 24)

Gauntlet (2018) grounds this proposition based on his studies and own practices on the way everyday creativities occur within work, leisure, or family settings and the interrelation to one another. In his critical studies or practice-led research he also considers the importance of contemporary cultural practices in which digital media proliferation in people's everyday lives has created possibilities of creative practices in a vast array of directions and dimensions.

Having said so, it is more relevant to understand creativity in my own research by relating it back to the essence of creativity as an articulated *practice* within the dynamics of *everyday life* of the people and groups I study. To be more specific, the concept of *everyday creativity* is useful for this research as both the departing point as well as the reflective notion of the analyses. While in general everyday creativity can be seen as a universal tool of human's survival as individuals and collective entity (Richards, 2010: 190), this notion is used here in a more contextualised way of the interrelation between creative practice and current patterns in contemporary media practice. Process becomes the emphasis in everyday creativity to which the "*originality* and *meaningfulness* at work or leisure" can be identified (Richards, 2010: 191, original emphasis). In observing, to some extent also participating, and analysing the practices I study, the concept of

everyday creativity is used to guide me in delving deeper into the lived cultures articulated by the research informants and their collectives. Drawing from Gauntlett's (2018) definition on everyday creativity, this thesis frames the interrelation between creative practice, media, and everyday life in such an understanding. As he argues:

> Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something which is novel in that context, and is a process which evokes a feeling of joy. (Gauntlett, 2018: 87)

This thesis shares a similar critical view to how creativity is understood as proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1997), among others. Therefore, Gauntlett's (2018) approach is more suitable for conducting and analysing my study. Since "the more everyday, emotion-oriented and process-based description of creativity" (Gauntlett, 2018: 89) offered by him is the very type of creativity I witnessed from my informants' practices, I rely on my interpretations of gathered empirical materials in accordance with the defining proposition of everyday creativity as quoted above. Additionally, the interpretations should be read within a particular context of urban living to which the studied creative collectives reside. The discussion on articulation and the way this notion could conceptually lead to understand identity construction will be presented in the following section.

Articulation and cultural identity

From a cultural studies perspective, identity is a crucial concept. However, theorising this notion has been a prolonged project across different periods of scholarly works both in the field of media studies and cultural studies. Stuart Hall (2019b, 2019c)[1] proposes the "theory of articulation" that is useful to equip me in approaching the meaning of identity in this thesis. Hall begins his explanation

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[1] These references are based on the re-publication of Stuart Hall's essays on cultural studies into two edited volumes, edited by David Morley and published in 2019. For these particular references on "articulation", the original publications are (1) Hall, S., 1980. Race, articulation, and societies structured in dominance. In: M. O'Callaghan, ed., *Sociological theories: race and colonialism*. Paris: UNESCO. pp.305-345 and (2) Grossberg, L. ed., 1986. On postmodernism and articulation: an interview with Stuart Hall. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2), pp.45-60. In this thesis, I consistently use the 2019 book version for all in-text and end-text references, including the page numbers, when necessary.

of this theory as a "response to the problem of analysing social formations" (Clarke, 2015: 276), arguing that overdetermination on formative structure – e.g. class, power – that leads to a unity of ideology and therefore positions socio-cultural (and also political) subjects in a fixed manner should be questioned. To him, social formations are not defined by a given ideology, but constructed by many elements that, interestingly, are not always connected in a fixed situation. In this thesis, Hall's ideas on articulation and cultural identity that I mainly focus on and draw insight from, rather than his wider explanations on the relations between articulation and critique on ideology. According to Hall (2019c):

> In England, the term [articulation] has a nice double meaning because 'articulate' means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an 'articulated' lorry [truck]: a lorry where the front [cab] and back [trailer] can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all the time. (Hall, 2019c: 234-235)

The use of articulation in this thesis precisely follows these two-meaning definitions. First, it means the way in which the informants "utter, to speak forth, to be articulate" to express their own 'voice' on various issues that matter to them, for example creative city branding, or inventiveness in creative collectives. Second, articulation refers to the processes and conceptualisation of connected practices these informants do in their everyday life under certain conditions, at particular periods in time, for example their creative collective and initiatives within creative city policies, marketing or events: these linkages are connected, loosened and sometimes broken, as we shall see in the analysis chapters.

Furthermore, articulation is a rich concept to approach identity in the making. As Gray (2003) explains:

> Articulation is a useful way of thinking about both the complexity of contemporary societies and cultures and what it is like to inhabit them as a social subject. Developed by Laclau and elaborated by Stuart Hall for cultural studies, it provides an anti-essentialist and anti-reductionist method of complicating the relationship between individual action (subjectivity) and the broader social (determining) structure. (Gray, 2003: 32)

From such an understanding of this concept, Hall continues that the *theory of articulation* is "both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects" (Hall, 2019c: 235). This approach is useful to examine the ways in which the studied creative collectives perform their resistance towards particular broader social structure, then poetically and politically express their voice in their respective city.

How do articulations – both in the meaning of articulating voice and articulation of connected practices – relate to the construction of these informants' cultural identities? The articulation processes in this research are interpreted through the ways the creative collectives and their members voice their subjective expressions, values and meaning-making productions in regard to media, spaces and memories. All these three aspects are the very site where identity – as part of social formations – can be traced as a site of analysis.

On a broader level, the concept of identity can be based on three considerations: Enlightenment subject, sociological subject and post-modern subject (Hall, 1992). The first conception of identity, the Enlightenment subject, perceives human "as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacity of reason, consciousness and action […] continuous or 'identical' throughout the individual's existence" (Hall, 1992: 275). In contrast, the post-modern subject is explained as a conceptualisation that sees humans "as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity […] it is historically, not biologically, defined. […] identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'" (Hall, 1992: 277). Whereas, the second conceptualisation – i.e. the sociological subject – is the one that this thesis departs from to approach the notion of cultural identity. When defining identity based on the consideration of sociological subject, we recognise subject as "not autonomous and self-sufficient", it is "formed in relation to 'significant others', who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols – the culture – of the world he/she inhabit" (Hall, 1992: 276). Cultural identity is understood as an outcome of the interaction between individuals and their social contexts. The main focus here is on the interplay between 'self' and 'society'; the subjects are "formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds 'outside' and the identities which they offer" (Hall, 1992: 276). In other words, cultural identity is formed by a network of tensions: between individual and collective, local and global, 'sameness' and 'difference'. Thus, cultural identity is a result of such tensions and is always context-based. The whole processes of these context-saturated conditions – either historical, temporal, or spatial contexts – in terms of

"de-centring the subject" (Hall, 1992) can be investigated to form an understanding of what can be identified as cultural identity. To make sense of these whole processes as the construction of cultural identity, then, the theory of articulation enables my analysis of creative collectives and their connected practices in the context of their cities. Thus, we now turn from articulation of cultural identity construction to the studies of media, space and the city.

Media, space and the city

Conceptualising the city is by no means an effort to formulate it into a single, or clear-cut definition. The city, drawing from Henri Lefebvre's (1991) explanation on the production of space in the city, should be understood in three simultaneous conceptualisations at the same time: the material, the imagined and the lived city (see also Stevenson, 2013). The material city is a view to perceive the city as a particular place, as in the understanding of a French term *cité* (Sennett, 2019). When the city transforms into a more abstract way, that is from a place to what Dicks (2003) refers to as an "exhibition of themselves", it leads to the understanding of the imagined city. The imagined city is a notion commonly used as a framework to explore, and critique, urban modernities in the city (Highmore, 2005). In another expression, the imagined city can also be understood as:

> By *city*, I understand a complex and interactive network which links together, often in an unintegrated and de facto way, a number of disparate social activities, and relations, with a number of imaginary and real, projected or actual architectural, geographic, civic, and public relations. (Grosz, 1998: 44)

The imagined city deals with the ideological or representational aspects conceived within an overall mentality of perceptions, behaviours and beliefs in the city, or city as *ville* in French as the alternative to *cité* (Sennett, 2019). In other words, the imagined city is "a space that is inhabited and appropriated through the attribution of personal and group meanings, feelings, sensory perceptions and understandings" (Low, 2017: 32). In such an understanding of the city, there would be a combination of subjectivities, inter-subjectivities and identities (Low, 2017).

Meanwhile, the lived city is a conceptualisation that explores the urban experience. By urban, it means "a *densely* experienced culture" (Highmore, 2005: 17, original emphasis) within any given city. Rather than exploring the perceived

(material) space of its built environment and the conceived (imagined) ideas of its spatial entity, the third conceptualisation, i.e. the lived city, focuses more on the experiences as articulated by the people who live in or visit the city. Sometimes the third aspect in this Lefebvre's theoretical model (the triadic dimension of the city) can also be added by a reflective aspect of the researchers' activities in experiencing the city on a particular subject matter.

By focusing on the experiential dimension of the city, this offers a perspective on the lived city that includes participatory practice within urban environments. McQuire (2016: 91) discusses this aspect through a concept he calls "participatory public space". However, he stresses that one has to be critical of claims of participation since it "has become a buzzword […] an early twenty-first-century *zeitgeist*: a value everyone seems to subscribe to without necessarily sharing a common sense of what might be involved" (McQuire, 2016: 91). Thus, in this research the experiential dimension of participation in the city is investigated from the everyday practices, in particular everyday creativities. These include understanding the everyday practices in relation to the way members of the creative collectives make do by living in the city and adopting tactics that relate to their creative and crafts/art work, and their digital and social media. This interplay, between social media and everyday creativities in the city especially in Asian contexts, is usually characterised by the pattern of resistance against the backdrop of, for example, the state's and other forms of hegemonic power either from the majority of ethnic/religious/class/political groups or market-driven public policy makers (Lim, 2002; Pang, Goh and Rohman, 2016). In many occasions of such resistance, these are also expressions of spatial struggles, exercises of power, and articulations of voices and identities in urban contexts (Lim, 2014; Kusno, 2000, 2011).

Place branding and the city

When the city is perceived as a place, it turns out that this kind of place can also be valued, commodified, marketed, branded and re-formed into a specific impression to gain particular benefits. As urban experiences have their very essence as sites of encounters with strangers and differences (Zerlang, 2007), the city as a place has its attractive attributes to potential visitors/dwellers/viewers or investors/customers. Placemaking and place-marketing are two common approaches in managing the city as a place that can create benefits – either economically, politically, or many other reasons – to those involved in the process

of designing and managing the impression of such a place. According to many urbanists, "traditional place-marketing takes its point of departure in an understanding of the demands of the customer" (Jensen, 2007: 102). In other words, place-marketing is simply a marketing effort – no difference with common marketing strategies in its basic economic sense – that tries to guess and address the need of customers. The different thing is the commodity, it is not goods or services, but a commodified place including the city. This commodified place can serve the demands of the customers in the form of both placed-based goods and services, as long as the economic logic occurs as the core of its activity.

A different approach than place-marketing begins to dominate in urban planning projects. This is the branding approach. In contrast with the first approach, "branding approach works the other way around; branding means starting out at the level of identities and values" (Jensen, 2007: 102). To many contemporary urbanists, the branding approach is seen more positively and they embrace it in a quite celebratory way. Seen as more contextual and with a wider orientation than simply an economic logic, a branding approach becomes a mainstream view practiced in many cities across the globe since the late 1990s. Many urbanists, city officials and scholars worked hand in hand to develop their view on city branding. However, some other scholars share their critical views on the mainstreaming of this city branding approach. One of them argues:

> In the years enveloping the new millennium, city branding drew heavily on the idea of the city as an experienscape. […] The Experience Economy was here defined as the production of economic value in terms of experiences, events, feelings and dreams. The metaphor of capital brought forward other concepts such as accumulation, investments, yields, growth, book-keeping, audits and value. (Löfgren, 2007: 75, 85).

Orvar Löfgren's critique on the practices of city branding, especially in the late 1990s and early 2000s, is based on the fact that many city officials and urban planners were drawn into the "experience economy" as the new turn of economic logic in the beginning of 21st century. Having said this, the ideal of city branding that initially focuses on foregrounding values and identities are overshadowed by the force to build economic capitals based on the 'performance' of their cities. A scholar-cum-urbanist, Charles Landry (2006), proposes his idea on "city-making" to re-position city branding into its ideal form again. His holistic approach in building a 'cityness' of urban living is attuned to, and at times replicates, the tensions between political logic of urban space (mainly from the point of view of the state) and economic logic of urban investment. More critical views on city

branding – no matter the terms they are used – can be found in other works by various scholars. Svensson's (2014) study on the heritage branding of Chinese megacities shows that city branding in contemporary China cannot be separated by the political influence of the national branding agenda. From "top-down affairs managed by municipal governments" to "beautification of the urban environment" approaching the Beijing Olympics 2008 (Svensson, 2014: 172), city branding becomes part of a bigger agenda on creating the official narrative on a 'civilized' and 'harmonious' nation.

Kaneva (2011) writes a comprehensive survey of scholarly writing on nation branding, involving 186 sources across disciplines. She argues that there are three different approaches to nation branding, namely technical economic, political and cultural approaches. Drawing insight from Kaneva's study, Bolin and Ståhlberg (2015) focus on the role of the media in branding campaigns. Based on the empirical case of Ukraine's nation branding, they argue that the media – especially in terms of the role of media technology and media organisation – can potentially be a significant agent in nation branding. As Bolin and Ståhlberg (2015) argue, this understanding of the role of the media in nation branding is often neglected in scholarly works.

Returning to branding of the city, Löfgren (2005) interestingly builds the metaphor of "catwalk" in a fashion show to explain the tendency of city branding within an experience economy approach. According to him, as "performance became an important catwalk economy" (Löfgren, 2007: 83), cities are branded "to communicate an appetizing image" (Löfgren, 2005: 64). However, such examples of "catwalk" city branding sometimes turns a city "into a beautifully designed, but lifeless cityscape" (Löfgren, 2007: 91). In this thesis, I share a similar position with Löfgren's critical view: since seeing "the city as a product is dangerous" (Löfgren, 2014: 202), to me it is also a problematic to elaborate the official campaign of cities – mostly initiated and designed by the state – without listening to other voices from city dwellers that perceive their city not as a product, but a living space for creativity, identities and memories. The following section will focus on the specific aspect of memory studies and its relevant aspect with urban cultures.

Memory and urban cultures

When it comes to understanding articulation of identity in urban contexts, there is another significant practice that is also relevant to be looked at. This is the

construction of memory, or precisely cultural memory as an articulation of the collected, shared memories within particular groups in the city. In the rapid changes of urban environments, city dwellers may have lost "connection to the past and their memories" (Madanipour, 2017: 86). In such a context, Madanipour observes:

> The multiple layers of time and the traces of the past are combined to resist the pressure for social fluidity and the loss of memory, even if they are also reinterpreted and remade according to the new circumstances. The city's unconscious survives in traces, which include objects, beliefs and practices. (Madanipour, 2017: 86-87)

Looking back to more theoretical debates on cultural memory itself, examples include classic texts by Halbwachs (1992) to contemporary thoughts proposed by Hoskins (2009), Reading (2009, 2011) and van Dijck (2007, 2009). Halbwachs (1992) introduced the notion of collective memory that provides an important foundation in terms of theoretical ideas for memory studies in general (cf. Wertsch, 2002). Whereas, Hoskins (2009), based on his sociological standpoint, argues that collective memories in late-modern society can be categorised into two stages: the broadcast era and the post-broadcast era. In the post-broadcast era, he argues, the analysis emphasises more on mediatisation of memory rather than the memory material conveyed within the media.

In discussing the relation between memory and digital media, Reading (2009, 2011) and van Dijck (2007, 2009) expand their understanding on this matter. Reading (2011) focuses her study on the variety of digital media forms. Consequently, for her, memory is determined by the form of media and the way in which it is used in connected society (cf. Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg, 2011). Additionally, van Dijck (2007) significantly contributes in both theoretical and empirical ideas on what she calls mediated memories. She urges researchers to move from the concept of mediation of memories, and proposes the concept of mediated memories. In focusing on mediated memories, she also pays attention on the debates between personal and collective memories, which for her, it is not easy to distinguish personal from collective memory because mediated memories refer to both. This thought is relevant for this thesis, especially considering the entanglement of voices of the creative collectives and their individual members. It is also useful to employ mediated memories framework, since the entanglement of both activities and objects within the creative collectives are also significant as the very site to examine the articulated memories. Mediated memories, as van Dijck further explains, is concerned with:

> [t]he activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present, and future of ourselves in relations to others. (van Dijck, 2007: 21)

By employing mediated memories rather than mediation of memory, her view leads us to see "memory that is not mediated by media, but media and memory transform each other … [lead to] a better understanding of the mutual shaping of memory and media" (van Dijck: 2007: 21). The coexistence of digital media as part of people's everyday life and cultural memories can be understood in relation to this way of thinking of media and memory studies.

It is also worth noting a theoretical view that sees memory as an *embodied* entity, whereas 'history' has more of an *embedded* sense (Budiawan, 2013: x, original emphasis). Within this embodied process, the politics of memory always has coexistence of two elements: remembering and forgetting (Budiawan, 2013: 150) and the "remembering is better seen as an active engagement with the past, as performative rather than as reproductive" (Erll and Rigney, 2009: 2). Thus, the construction of memories within the city – through everyday creativity as discussed earlier – can be understood as another way particular groups of people in the city articulate identities along with the way they perform creativity on many levels. The articulation of remembering and forgetting memories through the practice of 'cultural memory on display' (inspired from Dicks, 2003) in the city is one of the significant elements of the analysis in this study. It provides situated contexts to further analysis of how the members within creative collectives articulate their own voices in constructing cultural memories against the backdrop of the official memories imagined and materialised by the city's authorities.

Gaps and challenges

On the aspect of interrelations between practice and everyday creativity, most of the existing studies discussed in this chapter have more emphases on psychological, managerial, or sociological aspects of researching creativity. Whereas, the cultural aspects provide an opportunity for further analysis: when everyday creativity is understood as a process within the framework of practice theory and everyday life studies, it is important to consider the cultural aspects of this process and pay more attention on the articulation of voice. From here one can research cultural identity as an intermingling of everyday creativity and articulation of voice.

This articulation, as part of the everyday meaning-making processes by the studied subjects, can be interpreted as their cultural identities practiced within their respective cities, thus understanding the city as entangled within their everyday creativity. In this sense, the obvious gap in seeing the interrelation between media, space and the city is the emphasis on seeing the studied urban spaces through two elements of the triadic dimension of the city, i.e. the material and the imagined city. The third dimension, i.e. the lived city, is not studied as much as other perspectives. The majority of focused areas on the interrelation between media, space and the city are dedicated to study the mediated city or representation of urban space in media texts (see Georgiou, 2013; Mattern, 2015). When media is part of people's experiences living in the city, this shifts the research focus from looking at media representations of cities to media-related practices that are part of the poetics and politics of urban cultures. This includes the way in which the connected practices in the city are perceived as a result of city branding, or critically understood as bottom-up and rooted in the character of a city, a character which can enrich the 'brand' of the city.

Additionally, the research adds to an understanding of cultural memory as emerging within such everyday practices in the city. Memories tend to be approached as a product, or material aspect, delivered by and within media. Instead of perceiving memory in such a perspective, this thesis looks at cultural memory as a contested arena among different actors with various views in the city. The lived cultures as expressed through this contestation can be investigated by combining theoretical perspectives of everyday creativity, spatial formation of the lived city, and cultural memory; all these are articulated by and with alternative voices.

In the next chapter we shall see how the connected theoretical standpoints of this thesis also require combined methodologies of ethnography and critical visual methodologies. These methodological considerations, the selected methods, and the research processes are addressed in the next chapter.

| 3 | Experiencing Practice, Practicing Experience: A Methodological Review

The question of how I methodologically approach media and cultural practices in everyday urban environments is the focus of this chapter. Informed by Ann Gray's (2003) work on studying contemporary culture, it is important to clearly state here that this thesis is based on an empirical research of certain cultural practices of creative collectives in particular places of cities in Indonesia and Malaysia as the main object of its study. The way in which the empirical materials in this study have been gathered and analysed are methodologically informed by cross-disciplinary perspectives coming from media and cultural studies, urban media and communication studies, and visual studies. A mixture of methods is also employed, and these sets of methods are structured within two selected, combined methodologies, taking insights from ethnography and visual methodology; both methodologies attuned to the significance of context and sensitivity to people in places where they live and work.

In what follows, I will examine literature and recent discussions within both methodologies that support the chosen methods in addressing the research objectives. The elaboration here will also touch upon the way I design, manage and reflect on studying the informants' practices by delving deeper into their experiences, while at the same time doing or practicing my methodological approaches. In other words, following the ethnographic concepts proposed by Pink et al. (2016), investigating practice means to deal with the question of what people *do*, while studying experience focuses on the aspect of what people *feel*. In this chapter, the discussion explores the way I understand what my informants do with creativities in their everyday life. It especially focuses on what they do with digital media and creative practices in the city and what they feel while doing such practices.

I have used the ethnographic and visual method in order to see what might be normally obscured, or in the words of de Certeau (as mentioned in the previous chapter), to hear the murmurs of city dwellers. The chosen methodologies and methods have allowed me to grasp important elements of their lived cultures: by being present in the collectives, spending time with the people, asking them to voice their values, witnessing the way they show me what things important for them (e.g. crafts products, working tools, books, personal collections), following their social media accounts and engaging in social media conversation. Through gaining and maintaining their trust, I have been invited into their ways of life. In addition, my photographic practice for documenting urban environment and the creative collectives' daily activities can enrich the ethnographic materials by seeing the official discourse on heritage city and creative city in the cities, and alternative articulations, bodily and spatially expressed by these creative collectives.

Multi-contextual ethnography for studying cultural practice

Adrian Athique (2008: 32) rightly states, "in the first place, ethnography is an empirical tradition that seeks to manufacture situated knowledge". By situated, this refers to the particularity of materials this methodology could potentially gather at various sites of social and cultural practice, yet the "production of such knowledge" appears beyond these gathered evidence. When it comes to the notion of authority of knowledge, according to him, the situated knowledge produced from ethnographic work is, indeed, sited in the research subject. This leads us back to the notion of "presence" and "distance" managed by the ethnographers in their writing to bring up the balance between the "I was there" voice of them and the "suppression of that voice so that the text's author is rendered absent" and foreground the informants' voices (Gray, 2003: 185-186).

Hence, in researching contemporary culture – as the focus of this study – a specific epistemological standpoint has to be clearly stated early on. 'What do we mean by culture?' is a core question to be asked first. In responding to this question, I am influenced by Raymond Williams' (1981) notion of "lived culture". According to him, lived culture is the modern form of understanding culture that no longer emphases on "an informing spirit – ideal or religious or national" aspect, but focusing more on aspect that "has been primarily determined by other and now differently designated social processes" (Williams, 1981: 11).

Drawing from Williams' understanding of lived culture, another scholar expands the explanation that lived cultures deal with the concerns of:

> [h]ow we can make sense of the ways in which culture is produced in and through everyday living. […] How these practices might relate to identity, to a sense of self and to social relations, questions that a larger sample would not necessarily deliver. (Gray 2003: 11, 16)

This means any studies within such an epistemological position can investigate everyday practice of particular research subjects. The aim, then, is to understand meaning-making processes as part of the construction of the research subjects' identities. This kind of understanding of culture also resonates with another view of everyday practice as an articulation of "ordinary culture" (Humphreys, 2018: 5-7). By ordinary, it is meant that lived cultures indicate not only the usual and regular aspect, but also the 'connective' and 'contextual' as the traits in ordinary culture that constitute one's daily life. The ordinary becomes a significant site since it "can represent broader social values and systems that shape the human condition" (Humphreys, 2018: 5). Drawing insights further on Raymond Williams' notion of a "cultural triad", Humphreys writes:

> [Williams] reminds us that culture can be thought of as divided into the ideal, the documentary and the social. The ideal culture is that which we aspire to. The documentary culture is the textual, artistic, intellectual and artefactual products of a society. The social culture is the particular way of life and the everyday practices which represent a society. (Humphreys, 2018: 130)

The ethnographic work conducted in this study has its objective to examine this understanding of lived cultures. In relation to Williams' cultural triad mentioned above, this study explores the 'social' through the everyday practices in the studied creative collectives and the relationships among the members. This study also examines the 'ideal' as articulated by their voices on the way of living in the city, while the 'documentary' is occurred on the artefactual of their everyday lives as mostly captured in the visual part of this study.

Digital ethnography

In order to understand digital media practices of the informants, digital ethnography is employed in this research. This methodological choice has its own on-going debates since there is more than one explanation about what digital

ethnography really means. There are many interpretations seen from various disciplinary traditions that, consequently, have different approaches in choosing its methods (see Hjort, Burgess and Richardson eds., 2013; Hine, 2015; boyd, 2015: Pink et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2016, among others).

Nonetheless, in the context of the current digital proliferation in people's everyday lives – including within my informants' daily lives – it is impossible to understand their digital media practices without trying to "understand other aspects of their worlds and lives" (Pink et al., 2016: 10). The focus of such an analysis, as they further suggest, can be particularly on these "domains of activity in which digital media are used rather than on the characteristics or use of media", in other words the research methods should be "non-digital–centric" (Pink et al., 2016: 10). This work connects with the notion of media-related practice discussed earlier in Chapter 2.

While trying to investigate what people do with digital media in such an ethnographic understanding, the researcher is also exposed to sensory experiences. This enhances the possibilities to understand practice through elaborating what people actually feel by paying attention on, for example, the soundscape during observations and interviews. What do people actually *feel* when they actively engage in and through digital environment? This question leads me to investigate further the notion of experience that examines the way people feel (Pink et al., 2016). As Pink (2016: 21) explains, there is a need for the ethnographer to be immersed "in sites of other people's experience".

Immersive, as Hine (2015) also puts it, is one significant trait in doing ethnography through her 3Es strategies, i.e. embedded, embodied and everyday experiences. When "the digital is increasingly entangled in everyday experience" (Pink et al., 2016: 23), the need to apply an immersive way of researching people's experiences becomes more prominent. Hine explains the immersive as follows:

> The ethnographer's immersion may involve taking part in the same activities that people living in the setting carry out, enabling the ethnographer to develop an understanding from the inside, which takes seriously how activities feel as much as what they achieve. Even where the practicalities of the setting preclude full participation, an ethnographer's immersion in the setting allows her to learn by observing in very close proximity, and enables her constantly to test her emerging interpretations with the people involved. (Hine, 2015: 19)

Informed by the above proposition as a methodological framework, the ethnographic exploration in this study also engages with a digital ethnography perspective. The study itself is based on a series of 'taking part' in media-related

practices by selected members of creative collectives in two Southeast Asian cities. These are in Bandung and George Town, a proclaimed creative city in Indonesia and a creative, heritage-inscribed city in Malaysia respectively. The objective of this ethnographic work is to 'understand from the inside' the way in which these people 'experience' their everyday creativities in relation to any relevant daily 'practices', including, what they do with digital media as part of their everyday routines. On the aspect of social media practice, the focus in this study is their media practice on Instagram. The preliminary finding during the pilot observations and interviews shows that all of the informants and their creative collectives use Instagram as the main platform, and the other social media platforms are simply the mirrors of their Instagram contents. This has become part of their everyday lived experiences.

The importance of understanding lived experiences is due to its possibility to reveal another articulation. Gray (2003: 26) argues, "experience is not an authentic and original source of our being, but part of the process through which we articulate a sense of identity". Yet, identity is not an obvious notion. Studying experience itself is basically "to focus precisely on the unspoken or unsaid elements of everyday life" (Pink et al., 2016: 39). In doing so, to address the notion of identity and investigate it deeper, the ethnographic approach (through participant observation and interview methods) in this study is enhanced by visual methods. This has twofold meanings in this study. First, based on the digital ethnographic method, the visuals here can refer to the use of visual presentations as expressed in the informants' Instagram accounts. This becomes a departure point to understand the informants' everyday digital experiences. Then, this is explored through various methods in both online and offline activities in 'closer proximity' with their realm of self-presentation and identity articulation. Secondly, having gained access to such proximity, I also experience their daily routines through the visual production – i.e. shooting photographs – about their activities and spatial contexts in the field. (A further explanation on the use of photography can be read in the following section).

Such a strategy allows for a comprehensive way of understanding the daily experiences of informants in their own sites, while also fulfilling a deeper context of their Instagram practices. Relying on their posted images on Instagram and observing these online contents only would not be sufficient to grasp the many elements of practice and experience. That is why several principles in digital ethnography are employed in this study, including the consideration of practices and experiences in both online and offline settings. Further explanation on the

way this combination of methods is applied in this study is elaborated in another section of this chapter.

In terms of spatial sense, there are two types of site of this study. The first type is the so-called 'field' or offline site where the everyday creativities take place in an urban context, that is to say the spatial and geographical location of the creative collectives and their activities. The second type of the spatial site is the digital space. That is the online site of each informant's Instagram and their creative collectives' digital social media accounts. Both sites have significant role in providing supporting evidence for this study.

Critical visual methodology: the use of photography

Roland Barthes, a French cultural theorist, concludes his book, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (2000 [1980]), with these sentences:

> [t]he two ways of the Photograph. The choice is mine: to subject its spectacle to the civilized code of perfect illusions, or to confront in it the wakening of intractable reality. (Barthes, 2000: 119)

Speaking about 'taming' the Photograph (he uses a capital P), he proposes two ways of dealing with the proliferation of photography in late-modern society. It is noted here that when this book was published in France in early 1980, digital technology including digital photography had not yet become part of people's everyday life. However, his reflective thoughts in this book remain relevant today.

The reflections in *Camera Lucida* mostly come from the point of view of the image viewer, or as Barthes mentions it as the *Spectator*, not from the view of the photographer or the *Operator* as he calls it (Barthes, 2000). This idea of what a viewer might see, and feel, towards a photograph has intrigued me to develop my ethnographic approach with the combination of field observations, conversational interviews and the use of photography to cover both points of view.

The photograph itself, as explained by Gray (2003: 21), "has a long history of signifying 'truth', often being invested with the status of 'evidence'". But, of course, the nature of images made by a photographic process does not indicate 'truth' in such a single, or solid way. Rose (2016) responds to the debates on photographic truth by proposing the two tendencies of the use of photography in research:

Many researchers simply use photographs as records of what was really there when the shutter snapped. [Thus,] photographs as evidence of the real. Others, however, argue that it is less the visual content of a photograph that matters and more how it is made and interpreted in the context of a specific research project. [Thus,] the interpretation of photos is always context-specific. (Rose, 2016: 309)

In the era of ubiquitous images of digital photography – what some scholars call a "superabundance of photography" (Heng, 2017: 225) – the researchers' task in using photography within their studies faces a new challenge. Heng (2017: 225) points out, "researchers must find ways in which their photographs work harder than just to depict and describe; they must expose different kinds of truth." I am aware of these challenges when employing photography into the set of my research methods. In the photographic method used in this study, I approach 'truth' as constructed processes involving the whole interactions amongst the informants, also interactions between them and their spatial environments, and between them and me as the researcher throughout the research processes. In doing so, the images captured from the photographic practice in this research should be understood as the visual form of these interrelationships that visually interpret and comment the discussed subject matters. It is, then, important to 'read' the images alongside with the written discussions of the analyses, and vice versa.

Such a concern also finds articulation in the work of Gillian Rose (2016) who suggests "critical visual methodology" that considers "the cultural significance, social practices and power relations" embedded in the visual (Rose, 2016: xxii). She suggests the benefit of using photography in urban research as well: photographs "can convey something of the feel of urban places, space and landscape, specifically of course those qualities that are in some way visible" (Rose, 2016: 308). Additionally, since photography has a potential to grasp "sensory richness and human inhabitation of urban environments", it is precisely due to such a reason that I incorporate photographic methods within my ethnographic approach in this study.

Similar to the above thought, Morphy and Banks (1997: 18) argue that capturing everyday routines with the use of visual tools including "filmic and photographic records may give access to a dimension of reality that is otherwise unrecoverable". Even the classic works of John Collier Jr, an early American visual anthropologist, have shown that employing "photography for social research (the term visual anthropology was not coined until about 1965)" can productively help in "making cultural inventory with the focus on cultural vitality" of specific groups within larger societies (Collier, 2009: 30-35).

The way I design my ethnographic work in the field is also complemented by the visual aspect through the production of photographs. I use my camera, as reflected by Collier (2009: 49), more as a systematic tool for information gathering rather than as an expressive device of my own. The type of photographs that I produce is informed by a documentary mode or style. Documenting practice and experience from the studied field in such a style allows the photographer to capture any silent, invisible, or subaltern groups "to have a voice", it is in a way "to document 'hidden' lives and worlds, to 'tell different stories' and reveal different accounts" (Gray, 2003: 30). The role of the photographs in this study is equivalent to my field notes, interview responses, screenshots of the informants' social media contents, and other gathered information. In this view, then, the way the photographs made in the field and presented in the analyses are less intended as illustration, but more as an analytical element that forms a parallel visual narrative next to my scholarly written analyses.

The documentary mode or documentary style of the photographs is another term I prefer to use here rather than explicitly categorise my visual methodology in the established categories of documentary photography or social documentary. Indeed, documentary photography itself has its own theories and debates within the history of photography. Rather than being drawn into this genre debates, here I follow the basic principle saying, "the distinguishing feature of documentary photography is its use of natural materials and 'straight' technique" in shooting the photographs (Parr and Badger, 2004: 116). I created photographs of and about the people and their activities in the selected creative collectives within urban settings. This way is also in accordance with the capacity of photographs to "speak beyond the literal reference of objects" (Tormey, 2013: xvii). My photo production itself, following Tormey's suggestion, was not conducted in a 'voyeuristic' way but more in an 'immersive' way.

In recent time the practices of and discourses on documentary photography – or, more precisely photography in documentary mode or style – have gone so far into a more variety of form, presentation, technique, utilisation, and politics of representation. However, a few main principles remain. These guide me in designing the way I produce my photographs within this documentary mode/style trajectory. First and foremost, the photographs I make from the fields are 'visual commentary' of the chosen social and cultural phenomena. Additionally, the photographs should convey two elements. These are (1) their capacity to deliver the 'truth' from and about real world, and (2) their potential to offer the photographer's comment on this truth. While doing participant observation and conducting interview, I create photographs of and about these informants and

their activities within the selected creative collectives of the cities to build visual commentary and analysis along with the non-visual gathered information. All these are done in order to grasp the lived cultures and also present the constructed, situated 'truth' from these research subjects in a non-directive approach of qualitative research. As Tormey (2013) assures:

> By purposefully not offering a closure of meaning, nor providing an authoritative answer, photographs can engage a viewer in the co-construction of knowledge through raising questions. They can address the discourse rather than 'speaking about' this or that or these people. (Tormey, 2013: 76).

Co-construction of knowledge is also in line with the purpose of ethnographic work. The ethnography and visual methodology work altogether in this study to build the very formation of the gathered empirical materials. In terms of the methods in collecting these materials and the way I organise, interpret and present them in specific stages of this study are the main focus of the following section.

A mixture of methods and materials

There are two specific cities as the locations where the field research takes place in the region of Southeast Asia. These are Bandung in Indonesia and George Town in Malaysia (Figure 3.1). The first city, Bandung, is the capital city of West Java province in Indonesia and is well known for its arts, youth and creative works demonstrated through many expressions and media platforms (Luvaas, 2012; Jurriëns, 2013, 2014; Dellyana and Rustiadi, 2019). The city of Bandung has campaigned and branded the city as emerging creative city since 2005. They also co-initiated and joined a consortium called Southeast Asian Creative Cities Network along with George Town in Malaysia, Cebu in the Philippines and Chiang Mai in Thailand (SACCN, 2014). This city has officially been appointed in joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network on 11 December 2015 in the section of Cities of Design (UNESCO, 2015).

The other city is George Town in the neighbouring country, Malaysia. George Town is a heritage-cum-creative city located in Penang island state. It is well known as a global heritage city especially after George Town was officially listed by UNESCO as the World Heritage Site along with Melaka in 2008 (UNESCO, n.d.; Khoo et al., 2017). After receiving this heritage status, the local governments of George Town and Penang state in Malaysia create many initiatives supported

by many international agencies – e.g. UNESCO and other global cultural institutions – and demonstrated in many forms. The city dwellers respond to such programmes and this new global city status in diverse ways, including those who have been working within creative scene in the country.

The selection of these two cities is based on the contemporary situation in which both cities self-proclaimed a designation as creative cities, then after planning and conducting relevant strategic policies they were able to receive international recognition as a creative city or heritage city with culture and creativity as their main core. Both cities are also part of the consortium of creative cities network in the region. The focus of this research, however, is neither on the macro contexts of discourses on creative cities nor the policy evaluation studies of the local governments' programmes related to creativity. Rather, this study focuses on the ways in which the city dwellers respond to these creative city discourses through understanding their everyday practices. The research subjects are the group of people who individually and collectively have been working in creative-related scenes in each city, but remain silent or hidden in this global discourse of their respective creative city. Borrowing what Gray (2003: 42) explains, this research positions itself as "a study of a 'micro' world", that of groups of people as creative collectives, "set within a 'macro' understanding of the broader social context" of the urban contexts and global discourses on creative cities in Southeast Asia.
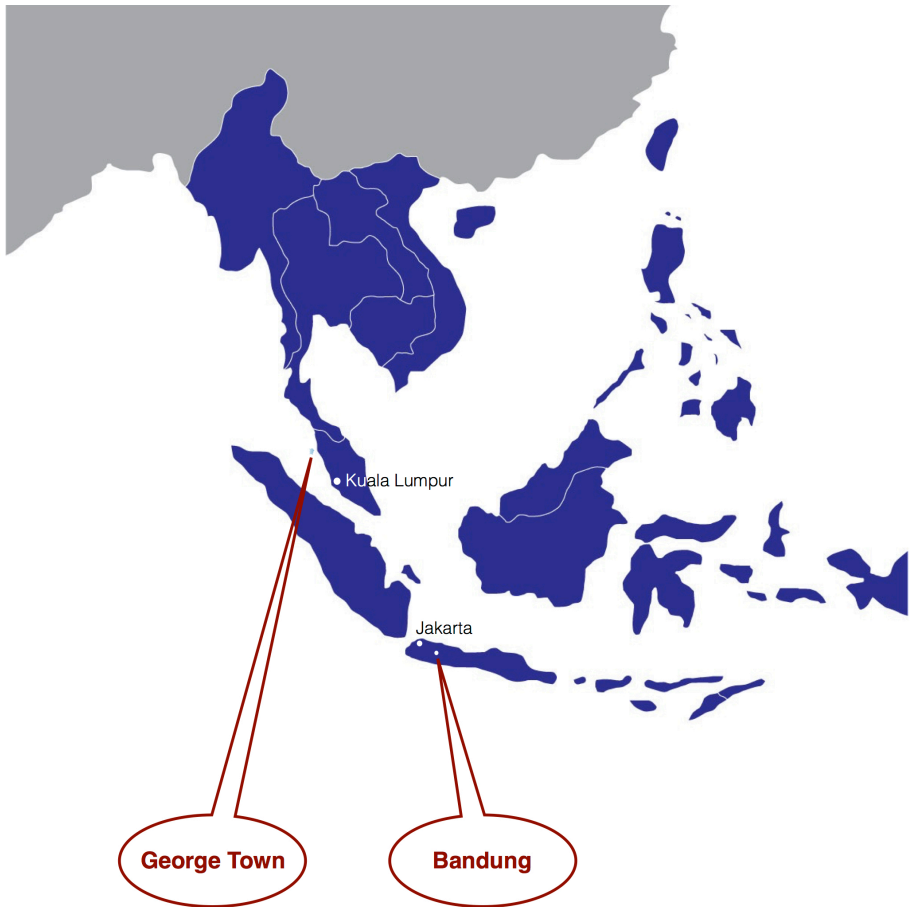
Figure 3.1
The studied creative collectives are based in each of the two creative cities in Southeast Asia: Bandung in Indonesia and George Town in Malaysia.[2]

The field research in both cities were conducted in 2016 and 2017. Alongside information gathering in the physical spaces and geographical places of both cities, remote digital observation has also been an on-going process since spring 2016 until spring 2019. The research planning began with finding the key informants

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[2] Source of the vector map: https://www.vecteezy.com/vector-art/105867-free-state-map-of-southeast-asia (attribution: Veecteezy.com). This is a stylised and modified map for the illustrative purpose only in this particular matter, therefore the detailed shape and the map scale cannot be referred for different purposes than what is appeared here.

for the study. I began with broad online observations by searching and following any websites, weblogs, online forums and social media accounts of people or organisations in both cities that involved creative production of any kinds of creativity. In doing so, there were a few considerations that I learned during this process about excluding certain kinds of groups that were part of global or multinational corporations, government bodies or directly part of government initiatives, creative activities on a big scale as in the manufacturing industry, and start-up ventures. These groups and persons were excluded as outside the remit of the research project, but the information from them are considered as supporting context of the key informants' wider social network.

I found out a few names of people and their groups in the earlier stages of this study. It turned out that trying to make the first contact with them through email was not the most effective way since I received no response. I changed my way by contacting them in the digital platforms they regularly use, like Facebook and Instagram, from my own social media account. I eventually received more welcoming responses, and I could continue with the next stages.

In October 2016 I conducted my first pilot interview via video call with one of the key figures of a creative collective in Bandung. This semi-structured interview was meant to test ideas about the main topic of the research, while also asking general questions about the activities the group routinely engaged in. This pilot interview was also aimed to snowballing further contact details within the same collective and other creative collectives in the network or beyond. Based on the interview guide for this pilot stage, the general questions I asked dealt with four aspects: [1] the informant's general profile (name and contact details, profession, daily routine and role in the collective); [2] the general profile of the creative collective (establishment, main activities, flow of work and communication within the collective, people involved in daily routine, the role of its place, perception on the type of collective, reflection on the process of working together, interaction and relation with other creative collectives in the city); [3] the media practice (digital media platforms organised by the collective, content management of the digital media, media networking, targeted or imagined media audience, the role of these digital media sites or accounts for the collective's work, relations between the collective's accounts and the members' personal social media accounts, relations between the collective's online content management and the offline activities they regularly organise); and [4] reflections on values (reflection on the personal meaning of the collective, reflections on relations between the collective and personal work or project, reflections on creative practices, reflections on the meaning of the city to the creative work and to themselves). The intention of the

pilot interview was to cover quite wide-ranging topics in order to learn about these creative collectives and to complement my early online observations. This pilot interview helped me to re-visit and re-structure my own plan for the next stage because I conducted the first fieldwork in both cities afterwards.

The first fieldwork took place in Bandung and George Town from October to December 2016. Based on the information I gathered earlier and several other contact details I gained from the pilot interviews, I did the first fieldwork as an exploratory stage of this study. The aim of the first fieldwork is to understand the articulation of digital media practices and their relations with creative practices in the selected cities, including the interplay between online and offline activities in regard to the construction of their identities. In each city I started by meeting one initial contact I had gained the trust of from the pilot interviews in the previous stage. This way later helped me in finding and meeting with the next relevant informants. I managed to interview people from two creative collectives in Bandung and one in George Town at this stage. This extensive exploratory phase enabled me to collect information that helped me to re-focus the research for further stage in terms of the main subject matters and methods. Second, the presence of myself in their own places rather than digitally mediated through audio or video call helped me to build trust and foster a relationship between the researcher and the informants.

The second fieldwork was conducted a year later. From September to October 2017, I re-visited both cities and met the same and a few more informants and also managed to meet and observe more creative collectives. The limited scope of groups and people I met in the previous fieldwork has led me to find and integrate more stories from more people in the creative collective scene to grasp the various voices and understand the cultural dynamics happened in both cities. This 2017 fieldwork was a follow up of the previous year's exploratory field research in the same locations that developed the research design, initiated first contact with the key informants and explored the possible methodological approaches. In the 2017 fieldwork, there were several objectives that shaped the research design further. First, the fieldwork intended to develop deeper contact with two creative collectives where information were previously gathered in the first (exploratory) fieldwork in the year before, i.e. Tobucil & Klabs in Bandung and Hin Bus Depot in George Town. Second, the fieldwork involved finding and building contact with other creative collectives; third, meeting and interviewing key informants to obtain more information on four topics: general profile of the creative collective, the routines of their creative practices, the use of digital media in relation to their creative works, and their personal reflections (on creative making, current

profession and creative scene in the city). Fourth, the field work involved observing activities of each collective and its members by focusing on the practices in their everyday situation, including the routines, the variety of media use, the soundscape, the social tensions and the relations to each other. Fifth, following the members' social networks that have relevant practices or contexts with their everyday routines or their collective orientation, either within the same city or in other cities. Sixth, the fieldwork involved finding and documenting relevant documents or archival materials about the two cities to complement the main narrative being studied; and the seventh, documenting the everyday life photographically of which covering the collectives' practices, their social networks and their cities visually (the built environments and the urban vibes).

In terms of methods, this study employs a mixture of methods in qualitative research informed by ethnographic and visual methodology as discussed in the earlier sections. This set of methods is a combination between online observation (Hine, 2015), participant observation (Jensen, 2012: 273), qualitative interviews – from in-depth interview (Hill, 2012: 308; Jensen, 2012: 270) to conversational interview (Moores, 2000: 10; Gray, 2003: 43; see also Jensen, 2012 who proposes 'naturalistic interview'; Kusenbach, 2003 who uses another term called 'go-along interview'), and photo-documentation in documentary mode (inspired from Tormey, 2013; Rose, 2016; Heng, 2017). Various collected materials of this study, then, are in the form of observational notes, transcribed and annotated interview responses, curated visual materials (the photographs), audio recording of soundscape experiences, and published materials in both cities as supporting contextual materials.

Regarding the conversational or go-along interview, this method requires the field researcher to be present in the "local settings" (Moores, 2000: 10) or the "social settings" (Jensen, 2012: 271). In other words, it demands the researcher to "accompany individual informants on their 'natural' outings […] ethnographers are able to observe their informants' spatial practices *in situ* while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time" (Kusenbach, 2003: 463). Following such a method, I further interviewed my informants in their own social settings while, at the same time, I participated and observed their activities, such as workshop, discussion, or event, with them and their social networks whenever possible.

The field observation, as ethnographically informed, is done by approaching the subject persons in their own environment. Sites of observation can be divided into three areas: [1] the collective's site (house/office/co-working space/studio/store, depend on the way in which each collective refers or defines

it), [2] the members' social spaces outside their collective (e.g. regular café being visited, friend's studio, and pop-up market or events they involve) and [3] the streets of the two cities. The first two sites were observed in conjunction with the informant presence, while the latter (streets of the cities) were selected and observed without the informant presence; the streets became the sites to collect visual contexts of the city where the studied creative collectives are located and culturally interacted.

The observation conducted in George Town in 2017 were a back-to-back type, i.e. I came to each collective on a daily basis and participated in the collective's different active hours – they do not refer to this as working hours. A few collectives follow common opening hours, from midday to around ten in the evening, whereas others have a more random schedule and mostly the members arrive and begin their activity in late afternoon or evening. What I did in this city was following the collectives' schedule and the members, especially in the afternoon and evening, using any other time – mostly from early morning to midday – to explore the city streets and shoots relevant photographs there.

All the studied collectives in George Town reside in one compound called Hin Bus Depot; it is an old building complex that used to be a bus depot in the 1970s. This former old bus depot area has housed several creative collectives in George Town since 2014. The compound is owned privately by a family, yet this family does not run or involve in the daily organising of the place as a creative hub. One member of this family becomes a contact person, or as one collective refers him 'Director', for all creative collectives who reside there. Each collective becomes a tenant and pays a rent to the compound's owner. Although the compound is considered an old building, Hin Bus Depot is located a half kilometre outside of the designated heritage buffer zone. Thus, different activities and physical alterations are possible. However, the owner maintains the physical look including the old parts of the compound, without any major renovations, while the owner adds a few non-permanent buildings to accommodate different needs of various types of creative collectives upon request. Before becoming a creative hub, this building compound hosted a solo exhibition of a mural artists from Lithuania, Ernest Zacharevic, who now resides in Penang. This event attracted wider attention, especially from those who work in creative scene. After this event, the owner began to allow a few groups to use this space for their activities. This gradual increase in activities continue up to the present time of writing.

Each creative collective runs their own activities, while regularly contributing to collaborative projects, as well as involving other creative collectives from their wider networks. The focus in this thesis lies on the practices and experiences of

individuals in four creative collectives. These collectives are (1) Pokothings who runs a wooden craft workshop, (2) Grafikdistrict Solutions who creates an open forum for young graphic designers and illustrators, (3) Weez Concept (KIWE) that manages a handmade craft studio and accessories store, and (4) Hin Bus Depot – as the space-management collective, not the name of the whole compound – that regularly organises a pop-up independent market, art exhibitions and social gathering for creative collectives.

In Bandung, the studied creative collectives are not located in one place. There are four creative collectives whom I studied, they are (1) Tobucil & Klabs, a craft collective; (2) Kineruku, an alternative library, café and open space; (3) Omuniuum, a support system for independent music scene; and (4) Omnispace, an art collective. Except Omuniuum and Omnispace who share the same building on different levels, Tobucil & Klabs and Kineruku reside in their own place. In one collective, Tobucil & Klabs, I had a chance to have the 24-hour type of observation. In the 2017 fieldwork, I spent my first two nights in this city by staying in Tobucil's studio. Coincidently, their studio is in a house with extra bedrooms that are usually used by their friends who pay a visit or collaborate with them. Two staff of Tobucil also live there and stay in two separate bedrooms of the house.[3] By staying here and spending more than 24 hours without interruption, I could both observe the collective's everyday routines in a complete picture and engage in deeper conversations with the people. In three other collectives in Bandung (with different places and set ups as Tobucil & Klabs) I followed the back-to-back strategy as I did in George Town. I gained trust from each interviewee or members of the collective, as well as conducted interviews with the key informants. The tables below show the list of interviewed key informants in the studied creative collectives in each city.

Table 3.1
The list of interviewed key informants in George Town, Malaysia.

| CREATIVE COLLECTIVE | COLLECTIVE TYPE | INFORMANT NAME | GENDER | | NOTES |
			M	F	
Hin Bus Depot	Art gallery and common space management	Khing		√	32-year-old event manager.
		Wanida		√	32-year-old gallery manager.
		Hafiz	√		26-year-old graphic designer and event programmer.

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[3] In Indonesia it is a common practice in many organisations that one or two member/staff/helper live permanently in their office or this rented house. They are usually a college student or bachelor who are responsible to do housekeeping of the office/studio and coincidently need a permanent accommodation for themselves.

		Sharifah		√	26-year-old event assistant.
Pokothings	Wooden crafts studio	Alex	√		30-year-old designer.
		Marie		√	63-year-old designer.
WEEZ Concept (KIWE)	Handmade crafts	Wee	√		44-year-old designer.
		Kitosa		√	43-year-old designer. They create the collaborative store, KIWE, along with another accessory designer named Kazimi.
Grafikdistrict Solutions	Graphic design collective	Chun Woei	√		43-year-old animator, graphic designer and lecturer.

Table 3.2
The list of interviewed key informants in Bandung, Indonesia.

CREATIVE COLLECTIVE	COLLECTIVE TYPE	INFORMANT NAME	GENDER		NOTES
			M	F	
Tobucil & Klabs	Craft collective	Tarlen		√	43-year-old bookbinder, Tobucil's co-founder, programmer and freelance writer.
		Palupi		√	42-year-old knitter and Tobucil's yarn and financial manager.
		Elin		√	41-year-old crocheter and Tobucil's store manager.
Kineruku	Alternative library and common space	Ariani (Rani)		√	43-year-old entrepreneur, co-founder of Kineruku.
		Budi	√		40-year-old librarian and Kineruku's Director.
Omuniuum	Independent music merchandiser, distributor, and gig organiser	Iit (Boit)		√	41-year-old merchandiser and co-founder of Omuniuum.
		Tri	√		48-year-old manager and co-founder of Omuniuum. Both Boit and Tri also initiate and organise *Liga Musik Nasional* (Limunas), a collaborative musical event in Indonesian independent music scene.
Omnispace	Art collective	Nasrul	√		A visual artist and financial administrator of Omnispace.
		Erwin (Ewing)	√		39-year-old visual artist, art teacher and co-founder of Omnispace.

Eight creative collectives in the tables above become the main sites to which empirical focus of this study are gathered. This selection is made based on these creative collectives qualifications for the general guideline: to find and study individuals and their groups who have been working in creative scene in each city, yet their activities and role remain silent, unnoticed, or not being acknowledged within the mainstream creative city discourses or the so-called official city programmes.

Apart from interviewing these key informants, I managed to engage in conversational interviews with 16 other people during the fieldwork. They were mainly participants of the collective's events, people I met during my field observations, and friends or part of the social networks of the key informants. It happened not only in both studied cities, but also in other cities I had a chance to observe. For example, a few informants from Bandung involved in a pop-up crafts and arts market in Ubud, Bali, named *Pasar-Pasaran* (literally means 'a kind of market'). I travelled there with my informants and experienced the events in Ubud, then met and interviewed the organisers – who are also craftspeople – and explored their relationship and engagement with my key informants from Bandung. This go-along interview and observation methods gave me significant insights in understanding the values within craftspeople and handmade makers, as well as specifically in providing me with information on the media practices by these craft communities. Also, the way in which my key informants from Bandung are perceived by their wider social networks.

In a different occasion throughout the fieldworks, I have also stopped by in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, to observe Jakarta Creative Hub and *Gudang Sarinah* (Sarinah Warehouse). The first is a government-initiative of co-working space, while the latter is a private-initiative one but run by urban collectives in a more open way. These two creative hubs are mentioned by some of the key informants in Bandung either in supportive or the opposite ways. By visiting these locations in person, I could get the contextual meanings the informants have on specific issues related to being a creative hub and the culture of making.

All these interviews and observations are focused on creative and cultural practices. It includes the way the key informants engage, use and perceive any kinds of media in their everyday life, whether it relates to their creative practices or personal and interpersonal relationships. I have also witnessed during the field observation some kinds of behind-the-scene situation when the informants were creating their Instagram post. I shot some pictures about these too. It is important to see and experience the social and cultural settings during this moment and

relate them later with the image they finally post in their Instagram's account to enrich my analysis.

When I shot any photographs about their activities, places and other relevant subjects within their creative collectives, I positioned myself as an "unobtrusive observer" (Heng, 2017: 209). I produced every image in non-obtrusive ways to make sure that my subjects felt comfortable with my presence (and also with my camera) and maintained their own social and cultural settings. There were no staged photographs I made from the fieldwork; every image was shot in its own setting as observed at the moment it was taken. In general, the photographs produced in this study cover two sites: the creative collective and the city. The first is the focus of this research and the main drive of the narrative, while the latter plays as a wider context and complements the first aspect in building the complete narrative. Photographs being made of and about the creative collectives covered elements such as: subject persons, the place of each collective, the daily routines (creative practices), products being made (if any), the social interactions within the collective, the media practices, the social networks they were involved with (e.g. collaborative project), and interactions from the general public or the audiences of any events held in there.

Meanwhile, photographs being made of and about the city covered elements such as: the city streets, street arts and graffiti, significant public signs, everyday tactics, material cultures (e.g. landmarks and other built environments, signature dishes), collective identity signifiers (e.g. national flags, public memories visualisation, government- or corporate-led creative programmes in public spaces). The function of these photographs of the cityscape is as supporting evidence of the other photograph series coming from the previous site shot within the creative collectives. According to Heng (2017: 53), researching "a social group, institution or individual" could be more comprehensive by considering to "seek out the spaces where they inhabit or dwell in; spaces can give us clues into social life of communities". It is with this intention that these two sites are important to be visually documented in this study. The selected photographs are mostly presented in the collage form, building the visual analysis element of this thesis that foreground the notion of photography as visual communication. Besides, this form is intentionally chosen to resonate the way in which photography – especially digital photography – is currently consumed: multiple pictures in one frame exposed in stream flow of images, not a single photograph to another. This is also in order to exemplify the way the photographic-based communication digitally done by the informants in their everyday life, especially through the use of visual-saturated social media like Instagram.

Regarding the making of soundscape recordings, my aim is to gather more sensory experiences and to accompany the visuals as another sensory experiential element. This method matters in researching "invisible sensory and affective experience" through routines and activities in everyday life (Pink et al., 2016: 25), here in the contexts of everyday routines by the creative collectives' members. This type of empirical material is useful in complementing the ethnographic vignettes I write within the analyses.

Online observation is also part of the set of methods. This was done by following all key informants' social media accounts, mainly Instagram. Digitally, I became visible for my informants through this Instagram platform. I did not play a role as a "lurker" (Svensson, 2017: 83), because I was intentionally active and visible in any digital interactions with my informants to maintain the trust and continuous relations during the study. I have conducted this remote digital observation prior to the first fieldwork in 2016 up until mid 2019. For this particular method, I used the feature that is available and provided by the architecture of Instagram itself, that is the bookmark button. I bookmarked selected posted by the informants that relevant with the focus of my study or provide additional contexts of any information previously gathered through observation, interview and photo-documentation in the field. All these bookmarks, then, were categorised into different folders according to their collective and themes in my own Instagram account to make it easy for recalling these relevant posted images from the informants. Screenshot is the technique that I used to store these data offline as well as presented them in this thesis. This is important to mention here beyond its technical function since, as Frosh (2019: 65) categorises screenshot as one of the key poetics features of digital media, "the screenshot is a kind of document, a remediated photograph, and a mode of witnessing and poetic world disclosure". In doing so, the visual materials gathered from these bookmarked and screenshot images are related to witnessing the poetics of everyday life and how my informants articulate this through their online environment by using the features of the digital media itself. By analysing the poetics way of everyday living as gathered from the ethnographic field observation and participation, and the photo-documentation method, we can enhance our understanding of the poetics and politics of their articulation in the cities.

Reflections

No one lives inside a topic of research. (Miller et al., 2016: 29)

Reading the above sentence in Daniel Miller and his colleagues' book about their ethnographic work on social media, I cannot agree more. Doing an ethnographic study, as they continue, leads us as the researcher to gain some kind of "holistic contextualisation" of our informants' lives (Miller et. al., 2016: 28). But, do we really grasp the whole of her or his life? Are the life episodes of our informants, the kinds of ethnographic vignettes, or insights gained and interpreted from the field fragmented and isolated one to another? Or, are these 'research findings' actually experienced by our informants in mixed, entangled practices of their daily life? Similar to Miller and his research team, I cannot avoid such reflexive questions.

In the method reflection of their book entitled *How the World Changed Social Media,* as part of the book series of Why We Post (Miller et al., 2016), they realise that every informant they study does not separate each aspect of her/his life into fragmentary topics, factors, or elements. However, an ethnographic study can still provide us with a deeper understanding of social relations and cultural practices taken place within particular group(s) of people. Organising, and presenting, our research findings through a contextualisation as comprehensive as possible is one key element to achieve the very benefit of doing ethnographic study. In Miller's words, it is what they call holistic contextualisation:

> Holistic contextualisation means that everything people do is the context for everything else they do. As a method ethnography cannot really get at every aspect of a person's life, but in trying to achieve this we at least gain a broader sense of what these aspects may be. (Miller et al., 2016: 29)

Based on similar understanding of holistic contextualisation, all collected materials in this research support and dialogue with each other in the analytical process. The relation between the visible and the social (Rose, 2016: 328) is analysed in the research questions; organising and categorising of the collected information in this study follows the ethnographic process once the saturated moment is achieved, i.e. when repeated information, a kind of social and cultural pattern, can be detected. The interpretation process itself is done in reflexive ways by re-visiting the different types of collected information: the verbal, the written and the visual materials. This process has become what Gray (2003: 147) calls "a process of continuous interpretation" in qualitative research. All these eventually lead to five thematic conceptual findings that guide me to structure the analytical chapters as presented in this thesis. The five conceptual findings are subtle resistance, disruption of cultural memory, culture on display, alternative space, and articulation of creative selves.

The presentation of the analyses is based on the very characteristic of this research itself, mixing the ethnographic written explanation and the "unorthodox forms of research dissemination" (Pink et al., 2016) by employing photographs to co-narrate the analyses, and specifically in the form of visual essays in chapters 7 and 9. All the collected materials – including the informants' posted images, my own photo-documentation, interview quotes and observational notes – can be used in the analysis including the photo-essay chapters since I have gained the consent from all informants. The written consent signed by each key informant have been collected; the consent explicitly gives permission to me to interview and take some photographs of them, and use the materials in my research publications. I use their real nickname in any presented quotes, i.e. the same nickname as their friends and fellow members in each collective usually call them. The interactions I build with the informants are another significant process in producing 'knowledge' within this research, as it has been reminded:

> To be reflexive can be defined as the ways in which we, as ethnographers, produce knowledge through our encounters with other people and things. […] Reflexive practice is also considered to be an ethical practice in that it enables researchers to acknowledge the collaborative ways in which knowledge is made in the ethnographic process. (Pink et al., 2016: 12)

In the photographic part of this research, ethically I have been constantly doing the reflections on my own practice as the researcher in the field. My informants – and their activities, experiences and spatial contexts – are not simply my photographic objects. They are a subject being photographed (Barthes, 2000) and they also become my 'collaborator' in trying to understand and examine their everyday practices, the parts of their lives they have permitted me to witness and experience together. This visual documentation and reflection process developed significant human interaction in this research, rather than a subject-object relationship. Inspired by the photography of Henri Cartier-Bresson, I approach my photographic subjects in similar principles as him:

> [y]ou have to have some psychological insight, you have to know the people and you must work in a way that's acceptable to them. […] Above all, be human! (Cartier-Bresson, Chéroux and Jones, 2017: 36)

The resulting images in this study should be read altogether with other gathered information. Also, the photographs might be "less individually compelling", but the way in which these are presented as "the collective informational content"

(Collier, 2009: 49) constructs a far more extensive and complete source of the analyses.

To sum up, the use of both ethnographic and visual methodologies here functions as a foundation to draw the production of poetics and politics of everyday life as practiced by the researched subjects. This is especially in the sense to – borrowing de Certeau's main intention in studying everyday life – "allowing those practices to become visible and audible" (Highmore, 2002: 151). In the chapters that follow, I will now turn to elaborate the creative voices in these two cities. Before embarking to tell the stories of my informants' daily practices and lived experiences (chapters 5-9), the next chapter will discuss the contextualisation of relevant key issues on heritage and creative city branding and policy initiatives faced by the two cities: George Town and Bandung.

| 4 | Stories from the Cities: Contesting "Heritage Inc." and "Creative City Bandwagon"

When I first arrived in George Town, Malaysia, I stayed in a small hotel in the city centre. Staying in this self-proclaimed heritage hotel, as many other hotels and backpacker hostels in the area claim, I have to pay a heritage tax. The fee is officially required by the state government of Penang for the protection of heritage areas in the city. In terms of the amount, it is designed based on the class of the hotels. Visitors staying in a three-star hotel or below have to pay two MYR (Malaysian Ringgit), or about less than a half Euro, per room per night. Those who stay in a four-star hotel or higher are required to pay three MYR per room per night. Those amounts are neither considered high or expensive for Malaysians in general, nor for most visitors coming from abroad. A local government tax such as this is increasingly common for visitors to heritage sites and cities around the globe.

Like in other heritage places, hotel visitors in George Town are informed and required to pay this heritage tax when they check-in at the hotel. Since it is a government-required fee and based on the real duration of staying, the hotel management cannot mix it with the room booking payment or other hotel's services that the visitors might already pay before their arrival. Usually the hotel management asks visitors to pay in cash just before they get their room key. I observed common practices of hotel guests rummaging for coins or small notes in their wallet, pockets, backpack, passport pouch, and elsewhere. Not everyone has small note or coin and as some hotels do not accept credit card payment for small transactions, I noticed that often visitors finally paid this heritage tax either with foreign currency or larger denomination Malaysian Ringgit notes. In such a way hotel guests in George Town are exposed to the idea of heritage city branding upon arrival. Indeed, they are not only aware of this city's heritage status but

encounter the heritage discourse through their bodily experiences, the fumbling for coins and notes, the seemingly trivial but necessary payment for heritage status.

This chapter analyses the policies and discourses, and the contested narratives of contemporary George Town as a heritage city, followed by the similar analysis of contemporary Bandung as a creative city. It is in this chapter that the discussion on the formation of official and/or mainstream narratives within each city is focused on, in particular what I term the cultural industry narrative of "Heritage Inc." in George Town and the "creative city bandwagon" in Bandung, echoing Lofgren's (2005, 2014) criticism of "catwalking" city branding. By analysing the main narratives emerging in both cities, particularly in the contexts of becoming a heritage city and a creative city, this chapter has the purpose to frame the official narratives which are contested by the research informants in the latter half of this thesis (see chapters 5-9).

"Heritage Inc." in George Town: heritage imagination and contested narrative

George Town is the main city in Penang Island, part of Penang State in Malaysia. This state has 1.7 million inhabitants while the population of George Town are no more than two hundred thousand people (DOSM, 2019; the 2019 estimation). The majority of Penang's population, including in George Town, are Chinese Malaysians and this group is also the most urbanised group in the state, which shows a different demographic character than other states in Malaysia (Goh, 2002: 148). Recent demographics signal a similarity to the national proportion (Penang Institute, 2019). Since 2014 the *Bumiputera*[4] or the common term referring to the Malay citizens – and all other indigenous people as defined by the Malaysian federal government – has surpassed the Chinese Malaysian population in Penang. In the 2019 estimation, there are now 42.8 per cent of *Bumiputera* residing in Penang State, while 39.1 per cent are Chinese Malaysians

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[4] *Bumiputera* is the generic term used by the Malaysian official institutions, referring to the Malay-Muslim and some other groups of people considered by the national constitution and the federal government as the indigenous of Malaysia. This Malay term (also used in Indonesia, spelled *Bumiputra*, though it is getting uncommon in recent times) literally means 'son of the land' or the 'native'. This term and its meaning have somehow been contested due to its identity politics; reason being that some groups of Malaysians feel they are subjected as the other or 'less native' and, consequently in some other contexts, being prejudiced as less patriotic to the normative ideal of the nationalist agenda.

and the rest of 18.1 per cent consists of Indian Malaysian and non-Malaysian citizens (Penang Institute, 2019). In George Town the Chinese Malaysians are still the majority of its population, even though recent years have marked the increase of other groups as similar to the trend occurring in the overall districts of Penang State. Spatially, George Town historically was characterised by its segregated ethnic enclaves; these enclaves are less pronounced in recent years (DeBernardi, 2004: 223).

In colonial times, the city was an English East India Company (EEIC) colonial outpost since 1786, and part of the Straits Settlement in 1826 (Ooi, 2016); the city played an important role as a trading hub with its port city character (Cheng et al., 2014) that had resulted in a "cosmopolitan centre of immigration" (Goh, 2012: 46). In more recent times, George Town regains its global recognition after being officially inscribed as a World Heritage Site by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 8 July 2008 in the cultural heritage category (UNESCO, n.d.; Cheng et al., 2014). Listed together with Melaka, UNESCO states that both these historic cities of the Straits of Malacca have "outstanding universal value" (OUV). Some of the OUV criteria, according to UNESCO, are as follows:

> Melaka and George Town represent exceptional examples of multi-cultural trading towns in East and Southeast Asia, forged from the mercantile and exchanges of Malay, Chinese, and Indian cultures and three successive European colonial powers for almost 500 years, each with its imprints on the architecture and urban form, technology and monumental art. […] [Both cities] are living testimony to the multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Asia, and European colonial influences. This multi-cultural tangible and intangible heritage is expressed in the great variety of religious buildings of different faiths, ethnic quarters, the many languages, worship and religious festivals, dances, costumes, art and music, food, and daily life. (UNESCO, n.d.)

The praise by UNESCO continues by saying that the reason for this inscription is "over 500 years of trading and cultural exchanges between East and West in the Straits of Malacca" (UNESCO, n.d.; see Khoo et al., 2017: 8). One historian also notes that this inscription is an international recognition of the "maverick attributes" of George Town as a "cosmopolitan city" and Penang in general across different historical periods (Ooi, 2016: 182). Although the official nomination dossier of this heritage site was submitted in 2005 (Cheng et al., 2014), the whole process was longer than that and the preparation for its final enlistment took almost ten years (Khoo, 2012). The public discourses and initiatives on heritage

in Penang itself even dates back to the 1980s when many social issues, such as the maintenance of old shophouses, rent control policy debates, and economic decline were faced by this city (Ooi, 2016). Several relevant initiatives and events initiated mostly by the local civil society organisations were held to openly discuss such matters, including the establishment of Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) in 1986 by "local advocates of conservation" (Ooi, 2016: 186); also the organising of Penang Story Conference in 2001 and 2002 by PHT, Chinese New Year street festival by the Nanyang Folk Culture, and workshops and performances by the Arts-Ed initiatives since 1999, to name a few (Khoo, 2012; DeBernardi, 2004: 269). The state-led initiative formed the State Heritage Committee that involved 16 NGOs and selected professional agencies (Cheng et al., 2014: 639) to mainstream these heritage issues into public discourses and dossiers.

Figure 4.1
The heritage imagination in George Town is mainstreamed by the state-led and private institutional initiatives.

Responding to this inscription, the state-led initiatives have become more prominent over the past decade. The local governments of George Town and

Penang state in Malaysia created many initiatives supported by international agencies – e.g. UNESCO and other national or global cultural institutions – and demonstrated in many forms. One of these initiatives was the commission of public art projects since 2009 up until today, followed by the establishment of World Heritage Incorporated (WHI) as the key institutional agency in April 2010 for managing and coordinating the heritage-related programmes in the city. Along with the Penang State Government, WHI, and Penang Global Tourism, the City Council of Penang Island also co-supports the George Town Festival (GTF). All these key state-based institutional agencies have fully endorsed this annual city festival held since 2010, showcasing visual and performance arts. Private initiatives from corporations or individual businesspeople, mainly in culinary and tourism industries, embrace this kind of mainstream imagination of cultural heritage by creating or re-shaping their businesses to be in line with heritage-related themes. Introducing the co-sharing urban bicycle brand and establishing private thematic museums that charge an entrance fee, are just a few examples initiated by the private sectors (Figure 4.1). Thus, the heritage discourse in this city enters a new intensity in city branding after the establishment of WHI and world heritage status becomes part of the Penangites' daily realities.

Figure 4.2
From welcome banner in the airport's arrival terminal, the festival brochures, to a few performances of the George Town Festival 2016 and 2017.

However, there are problematic issues faced by George Town after such extensive activities in regard to this international recognition. According to Khoo (2012: 41), what happened in George Town was alarming in terms of the "real-estate based development model" that was a direct response to the heritage status and the resulting "loss of community" especially in the inner parts of the city. Goh (2012) also shares similar concerns. She argues that the heritage status Melaka and George Town have received is used by the state, mainly the federal state, as part of the project of "national identity making", to which "heritage is seen as a means for the state to impose a unified collective past" (Goh, 2012: 44). Goh (2012) critiques these kinds of "heritage imaginations" which can eradicate the dynamic parts of cultural heritage itself, while potentially being used for either nationalist or capitalist agendas. In Kusno's (2010) words, this is similar to what he discusses as a single narrative of spatial practice in building the modern city, i.e. a "nationalist urbanism" narrative. To Goh (2012: 43-44), it is more productive to perceive heritage as "a practice which creates new forms of knowledge", that is a mode of cultural production for turning "heritage spaces into civic and not merely tourist spaces" with "recourse to the past but which produces new ideas".

The city is now crowded with tourists. They are drawn in by the overt campaign of heritage as a discursive theme, which in turn generates business, which in turn means economic growth. In line with the Malaysia's agenda to boost creative industry under the national policy entitled *Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara* (DIKN, National Creative Industry Policy) since 2009, the heritage discursive theme in George Town also embraces creative discourses and practices in most of their programmes. As mentioned in the DIKN policy, the national government of Malaysia recognises creative industries into three groups: "multimedia, fine arts and heritage" (Barker and Lee, 2018). The state-backed policies and their creative-related programmes are nevertheless – borrowing Barker and Lee's (2018: 16) argument – giving "little space to the meaning of culture or creativity" itself. These policies and practices are intended more towards the economic benefits as a driver of economic growth through investment, employment, tourism and other sectors that could increase the national income. Such a tendency also happens in responding to the heritage recognition of George Town.

Alongside the crowds of tourists, the city is also a 'crowded space' because there are crowded interests and players in George Town that transformed the city into more than a tourist destination. It is part of larger structural realities that the city has become what I interpreted as a *Heritage Inc.* This is an umbrella term I use here to cover the mainstream discourse and practices of heritage in contemporary George Town. Two critical heritage studies scholars critique the common

conceptualisation of heritage and the main tendencies of heritage programmes that follow such a conceptualisation; as they write, many scholars, heritage professionals and state officials have "focused on the symbolic functions of heritage as a repository for the cultural memory of societies, thus emphasizing the role heritage plays in relation to national history and identity" (Haldrup and Bærenholdt, 2015: 52). This kind of view is precisely the one that narrates the official, mainstream heritage discourse and programmes by the state-led initiatives in George Town. In regard to the relation between heritage and memory, "the commodification and 'touristification' of memorialization" of objects that are considered having heritage values is also a common tendency happened in heritage locations or sites (Sather-Wagstaff, 2015: 196), including in this city. Although Haldrup and Bærenholdt (2015) propose an alternative approach, i.e. "heritage as performance", and this is also generally used within the George Town's official heritage initiatives, but the practices of 'performance' within the main heritage narrative of this city do not fully embrace the critical approach of "performance *of* heritage", "performance *at* heritage sites", and "performance *with* heritage" as these scholars have discussed. Mostly, the practices of performance happened within this main heritage narrative are another form of commodification and 'touristification' in a formalised institutionalisation either by the state-led, private, and national or global cultural bodies in corporation-culture style. Considering all these traits of the main narrative, I propose the term *Heritage Inc* to signify the very characteristics of the official discourse and its related practices of heritage in George Town. Borrowing the naming from the key state-backed institutional agency aforementioned, WHI, *Heritage Inc* here refers to the mainstream interests and social actors responding to the heritage discourse, a condition that forms the backdrop to how the heritage city in George Town is a contested space for various economic, cultural and political interests, and social actors.

To understand the scale of the various stakeholders, there are at least four groups of institutional actors. The state agency – local, regional (state), or national (federal) government bodies in Malaysia – is the first. Their main interest is to maintain the UNESCO recognition by focusing on the importance of cultural capital and to sustain the trading hub status. As manufacturing industry is no longer the main success story in current Penang, boosting global tourism becomes a lucrative sector. The state agencies in Penang have worked together with both non-profit and profit-oriented institutions to achieve this goal. With the repeal of the Rent Control Act in Penang in January 2000 (Goh, 2002), the possibilities to transform the cityscape in the island were seen as the main physical and, of course, new economic potentials. This now defunct Rent Control Act was the

government's legal tool introduced in 1966, targeting all pre-war buildings, i.e. built before 1ˢᵗ February 1948, in order to avoid the "escalating rents due to an acute shortage of buildings" especially in George Town (Goh, 2002: 155). It is difficult for the landlords of these old buildings, then, to redevelop or alter their premises. Yet, there are two sides responding to the aftermath of the repeal of this Act. On one side, those who have concerns about the heritage preservation worry that many old buildings might be changed or even diminished. On the other side, the state and private sectors see a new opportunity in the potentiality to redevelop not only the urban housings and physical infrastructures of the city, but also incorporate the heritage discourse into such urban planning projects.

As noted by scholars who study the historical development of urban Penang, this state shows disparate urban developments within its region. Geographically Penang State consists of two areas: one part is located in the mainland (the Malay Peninsula) and the other area is in the Penang island where its main city, George Town, is located. Throughout its modern history, the urban developments in this state are "concentrated on the island rather than on the mainland" (Goh, 2002: 155). Both heavier industries and cheaper housing are two main indicators which support that disparate characteristic of the urban development. With the recent world heritage status, followed by many related programmes to maintain this status, the trajectory of this urban development – both in George Town and Penang Island overall – designed and led by the first actor, i.e. the state agencies, remains the same and even more extensively.

The second actor is the cultural agencies at local, national and global levels. UNESCO and all its relevant sub-structure agencies become the main agencies. In the local and national level, there are World Heritage Incorporated (WHI) and Think City Sdn Bhd, to name a few. This second group foreground the idea of city as business, in the sense that heritage is the key umbrella theme to re-develop the city by mainly building new sustainable urban economies based on cultural capital.

Next, the third group of social actors are the representatives of civil society organisations. They can be found within various domains, e.g. NGO of heritage protection, groups of critical architects, critical urban planners association, as well as student movements. The key approach of these actors is influenced by conservationist groups alongside other issues regarding sustainable city living. For them, apart from seeing the city as a business site – like in the first two groups – city is first and foremost perceived as a site of representations. This can refer to representation of idealisation of the meaning of heritage, representation of social class or particular marginalised group of people within the heritage issue, and

representation of social status. These civil society actors combine with the other two stakeholders form the constellation of *Heritage Inc.*

The fourth group of social actors are not directly involved with the others by taking part in such institutions or initiating the urban programmes within those institutions. This group is loosely organised within communities who have their own imaginations on these heritage issues, which are different than the main narrative to be found within the *Heritage Inc* system. In terms of the professions of these groups, it varies ranging from the hawkers (one of the distinctive social features in George Town, see Figure 4.3), construction workers, school and university students, small business entrepreneurs, to the creatives. This thesis focuses on the creatives, drawing insights from Lefebvre's *the right of the city*, where the city should be planned and developed "for people, not only for profit" (Brenner et al., 2012; see Sennett, 2019).

Figure 4.3
The everyday works of hawkers, the distinctive street food stalls in George Town.

The creatives are important to consider here because the way the *Heritage Inc* narrates their heritage imagination is by elaborating creative ideas and practices in the city's programmes. But, how do creative workers in the city itself perceive such an official narrative and create their own imaginations? It is something this thesis investigates to gain more varied and deeper perspectives from the city dwellers. The creatives in this thesis refer specifically to the independent creative collectives in George Town, operating as small business or micro entrepreneurial enterprises,

as individual artists and artisans, and creative professionals. Their co-existence relies on the collaboration among them and the collective system of working, creating/making, interacting and networking. For this type of group, as different with the other three actors identified above, the city is seen as a site of creative expressions and mutual sharing. To the members, their creative collective has a potential to voice and create the dynamic processes of living in, as well as sustaining, the city from different perspectives.

From this mapping of players or group of actors, it is clear that George Town is a crowded space within which these various actors perform the *Heritage Inc* narrative. Apart from the nationalist heritage imagination (Goh, 2012), the problematic of such a narrative deals with several issues. It begins with the fraught issue of ownership of the meaning of heritage, then followed by tensions on space for creativity, space for alternative or multiple identities, space for developing arts and crafts, and the way in which a collective building could have space to emerge and develop in the city. Having said this, there is an urgency to see the local dynamics within the noisy, crowded, well-known type of city development in this heritage city. An example is shown by the creative collectives in George Town in contesting the spaces of this heritage city. One of these local dynamics also deals with the anxieties of losing communities to which the creative collectives articulate their voice through their everyday lived experiences. Spatial practices and the ways these group resist the single heritage imagination in their city become a means of articulating their voice through little things and small acts they do within their own community and broader networks. Before I discuss this further in the next chapters, the following section elaborates the way in which the official narrative takes form in Bandung, another creative city in Southeast Asia.

Bandung and the "creative city bandwagon"

Before embarking on this research, I have visited Bandung in Indonesia a couple of times for various reasons. I even lived and worked there for about three months in 2005. There is one thing I always do in Bandung: culinary exploration. To many Indonesians and regular visitors from abroad, Bandung is well known as a city that offers different types of food experiences. Due to its higher topographical altitude, with colder climate than the rest of the major cities in Indonesia, and the mixed ethnic groups since its colonial time, Bandung's food culture has enriched the city. It is part of the city dwellers' everyday lives and now, to some extent, also an important consideration for travellers visiting this city.

On one day during my second fieldwork in Bandung in 2017, I found an interesting place in the downtown area. But, this time, it was not food that attracted me most, but the name of the place and its brand logo. This place, more like a cafeteria than a fine dining restaurant, was named Warteg Hipster. First, a side note on the meaning of *warteg*. *Warteg* is a shortened form of *Warung Tegal* (Indonesian: the food stall from Tegal). In Indonesia the contraction form, *warteg*, no longer refers to its literal meaning. This type of food stall was commonly run by people from Tegal, a town in Central Java, who urbanise to any bigger cities and open this food stall as their coping mechanism to survive in the difficult living of such cities. Now, in Jakarta and other big cities in Indonesia, *warteg* can be owned by people from various geographical origins. It has been a practice as well as a representation of class, i.e. those who struggle in the city through this informal economy organised in familial management. Its existence is considered important within the working class and urban poor since this type of food stall not only provides homemade foods at affordable prices, longer opening hours, but also creates a social space.[5] When this cafeteria in Bandung uses the name Warteg Hipster, to me, it is interesting – and somehow problematic – because the working class representation, as signified by the culture of *warteg*, has been appropriated by juxtaposing it with *hipster*, a term that in current urban Indonesia is mainly considered as part of the upper middle class (sub)cultural expression. The naming of this cafeteria, indeed, is a design-oriented purpose and marketing gimmick.

The logo design consisted of a single letter of "W" in striking golden yellow placed on the plain red background. On top of this design one can read the smaller typography of its full name, WARTEG HIPSTER, as written in capital and painted white. The way this cafeteria designs its logo (big "W" in a round curve shape), including the chosen colours (red and yellow), one cannot avoid its visual association with a typical restaurant brand: the logo of the fast food chain, McDonald's. This type of culture jamming, i.e. visually playing with a famous corporate or commercial product logo, is indeed not a new practice. But the *Warteg Hipster* cafeteria in Bandung does not obviously subvert or critique the capitalist hegemony symbolised by McDonald's. I noticed when coming to this cafeteria, ordering food, that there is something unique occurring in this place. They serve menus of common Indonesian homemade meals, yet they label each of them with unique names. Words in humorous tone are easy to be found in

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[5] A detailed discussion by Simone (2014) on the "urban majority" and the working-class resilience in Jakarta is a relevant study to understand the social formations in such a big city, including the way in which *warteg* and other so-called informal economies become part of significant features of the city.

many corners of the dining area. Many more attractive efforts in the visual graphic design, interior design and typography are used extensively inside this cafeteria. On the surface, it seems that these efforts function as a place marketing only. But, reading all these signs of creative efforts, and connecting them with broader signs in the surrounding area, it is clear that this is typical of the city. This neighbourhood is surrounded by factory outlets, shopping centres, hotels, public and corporate offices. Many other cafés, restaurants, hotels, shops, and even public offices in this area use similar creative gimmicks in their daily business of naming, branding, and promotion. The menus in the cafés or restaurants are written not as simply a list of food and beverage options, but also offer thematic storytelling. A post office located only three blocks away from the cafeteria made a comical figure as their philately mascot, printed in a big size and placed next to their entrance. The city has been consumed by a creativity fever.

Bandung, the capital city of West Java province in Indonesia, was officially listed in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) on 11th December 2015. Announced by the UNESCO Director-General at its headquarter in Paris during the general assembly of the 10th anniversary of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Bandung was designated along with 46 other cities around the globe as the new members within this network at the time (UNESCO Press Service, 2015). As of writing, the UCCN has 246 cities members from more than 72 countries. Bandung is listed in the network's sub-field section of City of Design. The local government of Bandung and its organisation partners in the city have campaigned since 2005 and officially prepared to register the city to be taken into the network three years prior to this designation.

Long before this designation by UNESCO, design practices and businesses in Bandung has been part of the city's character expressed in various domains. School and higher education institutions that have design-focused courses and programmes become one of the institutional supporters that provide practitioners in design industries. But, beyond academic institutions, the growth of hobby-based communities has also played significant contribution in the new formation of design creatives in the city. In the late 1990s these hobby-based communities in Bandung – e.g. skateboarding, surfing, music – have created their own product brands, especially in the domain of fashion and independent music scene (Dellyana and Rustiadi, 2019: 311). The establishment of do-it-yourself (DIY) clothing companies and distribution outlets (famously called in Indonesia as *distro*) created new dynamics in the creative milieu of the city (Luvaas, 2012).

From a small-scale community-based business, this DIY-type of creative enterprise eventually marked the new face of the creative industries in Bandung.

Figure 4.4
Trunojoyo street in Bandung, *jalan distro*, one of the DIY clothing scenes in the city.

As more travellers come to the city, mainly the weekend visitors from other cities in Indonesia and the neighbouring countries, Bandung's shopping infrastructures also grow rapidly. A few city streets that used to be a private residence suddenly become famous spots as *jalan distro* (the street of distribution outlets) like in Trunojoyo street (Figure 4.4) or *jalan FO* (the street of factory outlets) like in Riau street or L.L.R.E. Martadinata street and many other streets in the busiest part of the city. But, the success stories of a few clothing companies and stores are not always experienced by most of other players. After the early boom years, the DIY fashion industry in Bandung now faces difficult realities. The independent clothing companies have to deal with the higher prices of supplies from neighbouring towns as its main support system, while the independent distribution stores rely on debt to boost their promotion and renovate their physical stores. Additionally, they have to face the exponential rise

of the rent from the landlords due to the famous status of its streets and the penetration of big chains of retail business that open similar type of stores nearby. Meanwhile, internally in each group some tensions and conflicts – between owner and employees, among employees, inter-employee in different *distro*s – begin to emerge as well. Structurally, there is no clear public policy from the local government that ensure and protect their business and their creative values as mostly promoted as the 'locomotive' of design-led creative industry in the city. The DIY creatives now face multi-layer difficulties as a result of spatial tensions between the state, the property owners, the new creative economy trajectory and the space of creative expressions. Thus, an idealised creative industry scene that used to be relied on this creative milieu has now been challenged in both its practice and ideal views.

With 2.5 million inhabitants now living in 167.3 square kilometres area of the city (BPS Kota Bandung, 2019), Bandung is considered a crowded city. The UN population projections ranks Bandung as the 83rd most populous city in the world, reaching 4 820 000 inhabitants by 2025 and 5 300 000 people will be in urban area of Bandung by 2030 (Demographia, 2010). With this demography, Bandung is facing a continuous challenge to be a sustainable city economically and environmentally. Creativity, then, is embraced as the new approach in the urban design and planning of the city. Since the city gained its international recognition as a creative city within UCCN, the state-led programmes foreground the ideas and practices of creativity through the elaboration of the discursive notion of creative city as in line with the thoughts on "creative class" and "global creativity index" by Richard Florida (2002). In the last three years, the local government has slightly shifted the public discourse by introducing – and frequently use in public speeches and documents – the discourse on smart city and sustainable city.

Mochamad Ridwan Kamil (b.1971) is notable to discuss here in regard to the mainstreaming of creativity in Bandung as of today. He is a former architect and urban designer that since September 2018 has become the Governor of West Java Province. However, his story with creativity in Bandung started a couple years back. In January 2008, as a follow up of a series of events in the years before, an organisation named Bandung Creative City Forum (BCCF) was established (Rustiadi et al., 2019: 320). This non-profit, non-governmental organisation was established with the intention to create a forum for creative communities in the city. One of a few events that led to the establishment of this forum was the 3rd Asia-Europe Art Camp 2005 held in Bandung by a Singaporean-based organisation, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), in collaboration with a few local institutions and individuals in Bandung (Le Sourd et al., eds., 2005). Kamil and

his architectural firm Urbane Indonesia (at the time) was actively involved in this event. A year later, in 2006, he was made the winner of the British Council's Young Creative Entrepreneur Award for Indonesia, and was invited to the UK to see the implementations and experiences of creative economy and creative city in the country (Rustiadi et al., 2019: 322). With a few other similar events initiated or in partnership with British Council on the topic of Creative Cities, Kamil has been actively involved until he and a few other figures in Bandung initiated BCCF. He became the first chairman for BCCF in 2008.

In the early years of its activities, BCCF focuses on facilitating and creating community-based programmes, including the city festival namely Helarfest (Helar Festival). The follow up of their programmes showed that many key figures within BCCF experienced constraint on building mutual partnership with the local government (Rustiadi et al., 2019). In the national level, creative economy policy was firstly introduced through the establishment of the ministry specialising in this issue and the release of The Blue Print on the Development of Creative Economy Indonesia 2025 by the then Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in 2008. In the following administration, under the presidency of Joko Widodo (commonly known as Jokowi), this framework on creative economy was institutionalised further in 2015 by the establishment of BEKRAF (*Badan Ekonomi Kreatif*/The Indonesian Creative Economy Agency) as a semi-autonomy institution (UNESCO, 2016; BEKRAF, 2018). Issue of creative economy itself was also one of the key programmes Jokowi raised in his presidential campaign during the Indonesia's General Election 2014. This agency, however, was merged into and become part of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy on 23rd October 2019, three days after Jokowi was officially re-inaugurated as the president for his second term 2019-2024. This merger attracts different responses from some creatives and critics in the country. Some of them thought that this move will reduce the autonomy and less bureaucratic style that have been shown by this agency as a state-financed institution outside presidential ministries in the last four years, while a few other people agree and perceive it positively (Aditia, 2019; KumparanNews, 2019; Thomas, 2019). The effectiveness of this new institutionalisation and its impacts on creative industries and the creatives who work in the country are not fully clear. But, one obvious thing is that Jokowi's second-term administration has no longer put creative economy as its core programme in his presidential campaign in 2019, also afterwards, when he was finally re-elected as the president. Since 2008 the implementation of this national policy in every province or city and on each domain of creativity are also unclear, including in Bandung. It was no wonder

that BCCF, according to Rustiadi et al. (2019), expressed their disappointment with the way the local government acted. In responding to such a condition, M. Ridwan Kamil along with the support of BCCF and his friends, decided to run for the Mayor of Bandung election in 2013 and he won it.

As the new Mayor of Bandung, with his professional background as an architect and social engagement in creative economy issues, Kamil changed both the physical and bureaucratic landscape of the city. Basically, he implemented Florida's (2002, 2012) thought on making a creative city and the British Council's framework on creative economy in the city, and combined with his professional experiences as an architect he set out to re-design the look of the city of Bandung. What people witnessed from his policies and their results were celebratory discourses and initiatives, which interlinked creative city, creative economy, urban economy, and urban design. His typical programmes were a combination of scattered, tentative urban design intervention projects with the appealing labels of placemaking or the naming of its programmes. For instance, *Kampung Kreatif* (creative kampong) competition, Bandung Fun Days with the intention, as claimed, to raise the happiness index of the inhabitants of Bandung, *Rebo Nyunda* (Wednesday for speaking and dressing in Sundanese), Thursday English, *Jumat Bersepeda* (the bike-to-work every Friday), BandungJuara.com news portal (though this portal is no longer available at the time of writing), and Little Bandung to expand the trading market of local produce (Rustiadi et al., 2019: 324). The renaming of empty public spaces owned by the state as 'new' city parks is also another typical programme.

All these state-led programmes, what Jurriëns (2018: 57) calls Kamil's "creative city showpieces", invite both praise and critiques from the people in the city. Those who praise him are mainly his political supporters and/or seeing the development of the city as linear as the development of the city's built environment. In terms of this type of 'development', indeed, Kamil's administration has made (or, re-designed) plenty of built environments across the city. However, questions remain as to whether all these built environments and the programmes address the real problems faced by the city. Meanwhile, the critics focus on losing an essence of creativity for the Bandung people. When BCCF was initiated, and Kamil still played a key role in it, the goal was to create an idealised forum to connect the creative communities in the city independently. But, when Kamil occupied the Mayor's office, BCCF "has been closely collaborating with Kamil's city government in designing creative economy policies" (Jurriëns, 2018: 57). Then, Kamil ran for the Governor and he eventually won. What happens to the creative city policies in Bandung then? No one knows for sure. Because all his

policies as a Mayor cannot be separated from his personal character, the foundational changes in the city's policies, creative infrastructures, and a way of managing programmes become really dependent on his own way of leading and governing. He continues such an approach in the provincial level. What remains in the city of Bandung is his legacy: the city's beautification.

Historically, Bandung has many nicknames. Alongside the city of flower (*Kota Kembang*) and the shopping city, this city has been frequently labelled as *Parijs van Java*. The 'beautification' of the city from the point of view of outsider is the main reason of this nickname since the colonial times. It is no wonder that up until today, beautification of the city including the one Kamil has done (Jurriëns, 2018: 57) during his role as the Mayor from 2013 to 2018 is still the main narrative in Bandung. There are different historical explanations on the origin of which the term *Parijs van Java* was firstly introduced in the colonial Bandung. However, these various archives and historical explanations agree on one thing that the term has been widely used in promotions of the past, and carried through into contemporary city branding. The first use ever noted was a marketing promotion of a commercial event in Bandung in 1920 by a Dutch trader (Kunto, 1984; Jo, 2016). This kind of city brand was also widely used by a Bandung-based tourism association during the colonial time, *Bandoeng Vooruit* (Dutch: Bandung Forward), through global promotion of the city tourism (Sylado, 2014). They were also involved in building several physical infrastructures in the city and published the monthly magazine, *Mooi Bandoeng*, from 1933 to 1941 (Hutagalung, 2010). All these initiatives had the intention to attract more sales of products or services owned by the European businesspeople in Bandung and invited more global tourists and settlers mainly coming from Europe (Kunto, 1984; Hutagalung, 2010). An identical interpretation of the term *Parijs van Java* between its use in colonial time and in recent time can still be found in Bandung, that is to perceive – and brand – the city in its exotic way as outsiders see the exotic and the modern in an image of Paris. This kind of tendency occurs in commercial brandings and local government initiatives in Bandung.

The exoticism of the branding of contemporary Bandung has become embedded in the everyday talk in offices, shopping centres, streets, and elsewhere in the city. The official campaigns by the city's government incorporate this form of beautification through the design of public announcement online and in the streets and, mainly, in the new infrastructures built for supporting creative economy. For instance, the announcements for reminding passers-by to maintain the zero-waste programme and avoid vandalism in *Teras Cihampelas*, a recently opened skywalk in the Cihampelas area, are focused more on its design form

rather than the effectiveness of its public policy. The announcement employs the practices in advertising by using comical or tend-to-be funny copywriting in a popular design form of social media interface (Figure 4.5, photo on the right). Similar tentative projects in the essence of trying to elaborate creativity for communicating public policies are the common practice done by the state agencies in Bandung.

Meanwhile, not far from the locations where such urban designs take place, many urban problems remain unsolved. The water quality of its main river, Citarum, has been of concern for many years by critical scholars, artists, and activists in the city (Jurriëns, 2018). The traffic congestion is another main problem experienced by the city dwellers and visitors that is rarely addressed through creative solution and innovation. Additionally, the spatial struggles within the city, including the dilemma between pedestrian's right, the street vendors and informal workers (Figure 4.5, photo on the left), and the city's beautification project are constant problems Bandung has to deal with.

Figure 4.5
The cityscape is the space of tensions: a juxtaposition of the everyday use of urban space by the street vendors (left) and the state's official project in 'beautification' approach (right).

The city beautification and other state-led programmes in Bandung have made this creative city imagination as part of "neo-liberal approach to the creative industry focusing on instant result (economic profit)" that mainly has short-term goals (Jurriëns, 2018: 57). There is a need to explore other possible approaches to make sure that the meanings and spaces of creativity in the city lead to good impacts for the city dwellers. To find such other approaches, the practices among the creative collectives are foregrounded in this thesis. There are several critical artists in Bandung, practicing socially engaged art that links between their artistic

practices and socio-cultural issues these artists experience (Adhisuryo, Ahmad and Supriyanto, 2017; Jurriëns, 2018). Similar things also happen in other domains of creativity, such as in craft and independent music scene.

To sum up, I reflect on two photographs I shot from George Town juxtaposed below (Figure 4.6). The official narrative in either George Town or Bandung is designed with a top-down approach, an approach that is questionable regarding public participation within its processes. In so doing, it is no wonder that the main character of the official narratives in each city has a tendency to pursue economic benefits or growth as its most important aspect. Some socio-cultural issues and actors in George Town and Bandung are therefore mostly marginalised, sometimes even neglected. Restrictions, limitations, lack of support systems and limited spaces for creative expressions are the main impacts of this official narrative. Likewise, this tendency is symbolised, for example, in the public signs inside buses in George Town that show plenty of "NO" signs (Figure 4.6, photo on the left). This practice, I argue, symbolises the emblematic notion of the limitations of official narratives in both cities in general. Meanwhile, the lived cultures of the city dwellers demonstrate a richer nuance of practices that might inspire different voices and lead to an understanding of various meanings on, for examples, ethnic and urban diversities as well as cultural identities.

Figure 4.6
Contested spaces for durian. A symbolic form of the contested ideas, objects and practices in the city.

To draw a metaphorical example of such a contrast, I refer to the ban on transporting durian fruit in public transportations and other public spaces in George Town. It is a restriction which is part of the prohibition of other things

and activities, signifying the restricted character of the state's narrative in controlling public behaviours. For some people in the city, durian is considered as the king of tropical fruit. However, due to its strong distinctive smell, particularly for foreign tourists or visitors unfamiliar with durian, the fruit is forbidden in public places by the official narrative. As "smell can be especially insidious" in the city (Tan, 2013: 57), many cities or even state authoritative bodies try to control the smellscape of their urban areas through several policies, including by administering specific regulations, releasing advices or guidance for public, applying fines or other punishments, building infrastructural intervention, and any other necessary means. This kind of policy is what Tan (2013) calls the "olfactory politics" in urban spaces, mainly done in a single type of controlling the odour of the city through "scent-orship".

Drawing from contemporary theoretical debates in urban geography, Tan's (2013) study is focused on the problematics of regulating the public and civic spaces due to the "olfactory pollution" allegedly targeted towards smokers in Singapore. Borrowing on both its empirical and theoretical discussions, I see a similar resemblance between what happens in such an olfactory politics in Singapore and the durian restriction[6] in George Town. This restriction, however, does not stop people adoring durian. "The king of fruit" is part of their lived cultures; one could not grasp the reasons people enjoy durian so much without understanding the practice of adoring, selling, smelling, buying, tasting and eating it from their perspective. For Penangites who favour durian, a type of this premium fruit (Figure 4.6, photo on the right) is famously known as *mau sang wong* in Chinese, it is called *mau sang king* in Penang Hokkien dialect, or *durian mon thong (bantal mas)* and *durian klon* in Malay; these various names and the way the locals put a special label on the fruit signal how much durian is valued in everyday conversation. The possibility to taste and eat it in public is also a micro move that contests the official narrative of prohibition. This, I argue – informed by Tan (2013: 56, 68), is a form of "sensory disruption", ensuring urban diversity

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[6] Restriction of bringing durian, and any other materials that consider to have strong odour, in public transportation is not a new phenomenon nor distinctively occurs in Southeast Asia only. Airlines and airports around the world have this strict regulation in many years for safety reason during the flight. However, the tendency to expand this restriction into wider spaces and contexts – especially in urban spaces – is the one I focus on here. The way in which this new tendency on durian restriction is shown and 'forced' in the city, I argue, has moved further beyond the safety reason for passengers and public transports' workers. It is an "olfactory politics" in the city that mostly has its own "sensory ideologies" beneath the moral, material, bodily and regulatory consideration (Tan, 2013).

to "foster a convivial culture, one that is empathetic towards a myriad of unpalatable sensual[ous] practices".

This sensory disruption, a civic practice in liking, buying and eating durian in public that counters the city restrictions, can be seen as illustrative of the micro-moves of the creative collectives analysed in this thesis. The next five chapters present analyses informed by the lived cultures in both cities, examining the different voices and narratives articulated through the everyday practices as a form of defiance regarding creative politics in these branded heritage and creative cities.

| 5 | Subtle Resistance: Alternative Voice through Spatial Practice in the City

Both cities, as discussed in the previous chapter, face constant changes throughout their own histories and cultural trajectories. At this time, the important question is how do the people within the cities cope with such struggles, managing between the noisy discourses of an outward-looking model of new identities – either as heritage city and/or creative city – and a more inward-looking view of pseudo-glorification as the harmonious, multicultural society. Yet, the conditions in the field are not easily categorised within this simple dichotomy. I have listened and observed the different views from the people who live in both cities during this study. Those who live and work within the various creative scenes have different voices than the mainstream creative works that contribute to building the city's economic growth and urban cultures. The people whose everyday practices I have studied so far articulate a form of resistance towards what their cities have become something that reminds me of Krätke's (2012) critique on the capitalist imperative of creativity and innovation. This capitalist tendency has become a new model in developing the city by exploring – sometimes also exploiting – the cultural and creative capital as new urban economy through the overarching buzzword of creativity and innovation.

Speaking about resistance itself, considerable studies have shown us much about the diverse forms of political resistance against dominant or hegemonic power in different periods across various places; this includes resistance that has occurred in Asian cities and postcolonial historical and contemporary contexts. These kinds of studies focus on, for example, the "overt resistance and subaltern resistance" in South Asia (O'Hanlon, 1988; 1989), the non-violent resistance by employing "mobile-phone–facilitated rumours against the government censorship and communication control in urban China" (Liu, 2013), and the political struggles to influence public policy in contemporary Southeast Asian societies

(Weiss, 2017). But investigations on different kinds of resistance outside political realms, e.g. cultural resistance, are only a few by comparison. One of investigations on cultural resistance is Goh's (2005) study, examining a form of cultural resistance in contemporary urban Malaysia, that demonstrates a critical discussion on the relations between capitalist model of economic development of the country, the ethnic anxieties, and the local, cultural practices of propitiation (see also Goh, 2019; Gledhill, 2019). Goh's study is a rare example that foregrounds cultural resistance in an urban setting within Southeast Asia. More investigations on cultural resistance, offering various nuances and contexts, are needed further to understand the multidimensional of contemporary urban living and cultures in the city, most importantly in postcolonial Asian cities.

This chapter offers another nuance of cultural resistance by focusing on the interrelation between heritage and creativity in George Town, Malaysia. Building on the insights of Stuart Hall's (2006) notion of resistance, this chapter examines the lived experiences of individuals from the creative collectives who are rendered silent and unnoticed against the backdrop of the excessive discourses and the global institutions', corporations', or state-backed initiatives in responding to the city's inscription as UNESCO World Heritage Site. The local and state municipalities, supported by various global agencies, have incorporated many strategies to address and maintain this global recognition, including by using creative works and creative industry sectors in their on-going programmes. In this chapter the discussion will be centred on the way these creative collectives' lived experiences are articulated as a form of "spatial practice", a concept I borrow from Abidin Kusno (2010). Here, the spatial practices specifically touch upon three intertwining aspects: creative and cultural practice, cohesion, and visual environment of the city. Using the case of four independent creative collectives and their members in George Town, this chapter focuses on the question of in what ways are creative and media-related practices contesting the dominant discourses in Malaysia? And, specifically, how do creative collectives in this city contest the spaces of the heritage city and shape the meanings of their urban spaces? In addressing these questions, I argue that the cultural resistance articulated through spatial practices can be understood as an alternative voice, particularly in producing a resourceful, organic space, and also addressing the anxieties of losing communities in this postcolonial city.

Cultural resistance and spatial practice

Resistance can take form, for example, as a social resistance contra the state (Weiss, 2017), or against different social institutions, from religious orthodoxies (Goh, 2019) to cultural authorities (e.g. international agency, established knowledge framework, local or national elite). Likewise, the social actors who initiate and struggle in performing resistance might be the subaltern or subordinate class (O'Hanlon, 1988, 1988), civil society organisations (Weiss, 2017), or even private sector (Goh, 2019). The strategies or modes of resistance in which the social actors take form vary from one to another. These are ranging from the wide spectrum of civic protest, social disobedience, to non-violent strategies by incorporating street protest and advocacy politics (Weiss, 2017), voluntary public engagement (Cheng et al., 2014; Liu, 2013), and "creative resistance in artistic practices and grassroots initiatives" (Goh, 2019: 502).

In general, as Hall (1996: 11) points out, theorising resistance can be perceived as an effort within the theory of power. Resistance itself is usually expressed within the context of the "contested and contradictory character of cultural change" (Hall and Jefferson, 2006: viii); such a context can ignite responses from particular group(s) who are left behind, marginalised, or simply ignored. Thus, these expressions are important to be investigated and understood, since it will lead us to grasp the way in which power is being exercised. The relations between a subordinate and a dominant culture is a way to scrutinize this display of power. Within certain settings, resistance can take different forms related to binary oppositions of colonizer–colonized, elite–grassroots, supra–contra culture, hegemonic–counter-hegemonic, for instance. Discussing the context of class struggle, in particular the youths of the post-war British working class, Clarke (et al.) argue:

> The subordinate class brings to this 'theatre of struggle' a repertoire of strategies and responses – ways of coping as well as resisting. […] Not all the strategies are of equal weight: not all are potentially counter-hegemonic. Some may even be alternatives. (Clarke et al., 2006: 34)

In this thesis I follow Grossberg's suggestion to shift from a "model of oppression" towards a "model of articulation as transformative practice" (1996: 88). This model of articulation can be very useful to approach and elaborate cultural resistance by studying lived experiences and analysing it further in connection with structural realities, an approach that has always been advocated by Stuart Hall (see Hall and Jefferson, 2006). As Grossberg (1996: 100) argues

"people experience the world from a particular position" and realising that "such positions are in space rather than (or at least as much as in) time", I also consider the importance of space in studying such lived experiences.

To understand the lived experiences of the creative collectives' members, any relevant structural realities are taken into consideration along with data from the interviews. These are related to some aspects, such as the built environment where they live in or work in everyday life, the visual environment of the cityscape and the way they respond to all these things. All these will be considered here as spatial practices, a notion borrowed from Kusno (2010: 11) who argues that spatial practice could help one "to interrogate what lies within as well as beyond the representation". This will help us to potentially open different layers of memories too, as he states:

> It can unpack what is sought to forget and remember, what it cannot quite represent. It is in this sense that the visual environment (be it architecture, public space, or an ordinary building that no one intends to become a monument) plays a role in mediating politics and histories and in registering public memories. (Kusno, 2010: 11)

Spatial practice in this sense is by no means considering built environments as the ultimate important aspect. According to Kusno (2010: 11), built environments can be simply "a form of a banal technology of memories". To him, since memory refers to "the way in which the past – consciously or unconsciously – structures how one lives the present" (p.27), spatial practice constitutes more aspects than simply practices on urban design or urban planning. Spatial practice explores the connections between any material and non-material aspects in the city, the city dwellers' practices in dealing with all those aspects and, as he further suggests, by incorporating time into understanding space it can help us to disclose the interrelations between past and present in a more dynamic way. In his words, he calls this spatial practice approach "spatializing memories (instead of periodizing memories)" (p.13). This is the kind of spatial practice approach that I adopt in critically analysing cultural resistance and lived experiences in Southeast Asian cities.

Indeed, the notion of spatial practice in general can be rooted back to Henri Lefebvre's work. As he compellingly defines it as one of three "conceptual triad" along with "representations of space" and representational space" in understanding the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). According to him, spatial practice:

[e]mbraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*. (Lefebvre, 1991: 33, original emphasis)

To Lefebvre (1991: 50), "the reproduction of social relations is predominant" in spatial practice. This is very relevant to equip me further in observing, describing and analysing the urban cultures I studied. That is, the everyday practices of the creative collectives who articulate alternative voices in the abundance of heritage discourse and its materialisation in their city.

Visual transformation of the city

An international public art competition was held in George Town in 2009, initiated by *Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang* (MBPP/the City Council of Penang Island).[7] It was an invitation to create artwork and design intervention for the public spaces in George Town in responding to its new brand as a world heritage city. "Marking George Town", the name of this state commission project, was won by Sculptureatwork on 7th September 2009. This Kuala Lumpur-based sculpture studio submitted an idea of a series of iron rod sculptures, depicting what they claim as "the voices from the people that would reflect the unique character of each location through amusing caricatures" (Sculptureatwork, n.d.). These series of site-specific artworks took the visual form of comical caricature drawing, yet in three-dimensional shape and installed permanently in selected streets of the city (Figure 5.1). The studio began to work in 2010 and completed 52 sets of sculpture in 2013 that eventually become part of the city's new icon.

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[7] When this state-commissioned public art project was held in 2009, the name of the local council was *Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang* (MPPP/the Municipal Council of Penang Island). On 1st January 2015 there was a change of the local state structure and institution in which the MPPP was elevated to *Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang* (MBPP/the City Council of Penang Island). The discussion on this particular event and throughout this thesis will use this recent name, i.e. MBPP, for consistency reason and easy cross-reference.

Figure 5.1
The iron rod sculpture. "Marking George Town", the state-commissioned public art project that depicts the local stories.

A sketch of local stories, mostly folk oral legend, is the inspiration of each iron rod sculpture. The way all the artworks depict a specific skit or legends are also designed in relation to where they are going to be installed. As the studio claims, each caricature reflects the story specifically originated from the chosen street. This public art – in their overall forms and strategies – resonates to what Kusno (2010) says as a spatial practice that considers the interconnection between built environment (here, the city streets and designated locations or buildings), collective feeling (the artwork's form and content), public memories (the depicted local stories), and the social interactions (the way people respond, use, or in some conditions also ignore the artworks). This commissioned art project seems to be an ideal model of spatial practice to strengthen the heritage branding of George Town. It offers a new mode of cultural and knowledge production in this city by combining visual art, memory and humour experienced through both physical and emotional encounter with place. This kind of public art approach, however, is not continued in the city.

The state government continues to commission more artworks under the "Marking George Town" project and other similar initiatives. Yet, the approaches and strategies have slightly shifted away from the initial one. As part of George Town Festival 2012, the state has commissioned Ernest Zacharevic, a Lithuanian-born artist who resides in Penang, to create a series of wall murals. At the time, he painted four murals that eventually became the new icons of the city: the famous Kids on the Bicycle (or, Laughing Children on a Bicycle), Old Motorcycle, Kungfu Girl and Clan Jetty Kids on the Boat.[8] In 2014 he made a series of artworks entitled Art is Rubbish in George Town, including a few murals that were exhibited as part of his solo exhibition in the place where now is called Hin Bus Depot. Then, he managed to create several other projects, including a collaboration with Martin Ron, an Argentinian artist, where they painted together a giant mural of Girl's Flying on a Turtle on one side of Chulia Mansion. Zacharevic's distinctive murals in George Town attract global attention to the city, as the global tourists also started to come in a massive influx (Figure 5.2).

Notwithstanding the concept and artistic quality of Zacharevic's murals (Haven, 2014), the follow up street art scene in this city now tends to be in different mode of spatial practice than the early years when all these artworks were initially made. Visiting every street where these murals and other street arts are located, I experienced a homogenous spatial condition: a lot of visitors crammed in the tiny corners of the streets, many newer street vendors (not the traditional hawkers) sold merchandise or memorabilia of the famous street arts, visitors bought souvenirs, took pictures and selfies. Apart from the tourists, the streets were also full with local passers-by, as well as cars and trucks from many stores nearby. The drivers occasionally honked their horns because some tourists stood in the middle of the street to take pictures or simply talk to each other. This is now a typical episode one can see and experience in the very location of famous street arts in George Town. A contemplative moment to experience the artworks, while understanding the message and its connection with the place like these artworks used to be intended, is now a luxury.

Commissioned street arts in the city are mostly funded by the state, other projects are also initiated and financed by social organisations and many private

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[8] In 2012 the visual artist, Ernest Zacharevic, did not give specific titles for all his murals. All these 'titles' were firstly mentioned by the city dwellers and visitors who took photo of the murals, or made selfie of themselves with these murals as the background, then gave labels to the murals and widely distributed them in any media platforms, including social media. The current official campaigns, for example by the Penang Global Tourism and other state agencies in the form of brochures, pamphlets, public documents, or media advertisements, always refer Zacharevic's murals with these labels or titles firstly introduced by the viewers.

initiatives. These private initiatives made by corporate offices or brands, hotels, private art galleries and private museums are mostly to advertise or publicise their business or simply as "a creative external decor" (Mok, 2014). Street arts in this city have altered themselves from a visual medium that can initiate dialogue between different social actors, between past and present, to merely an ephemeral medium of spectacle display, or what Amin and Thrift (2002: 32) call an "alienated visual spectacle".

Figure 5.2
Thanks to massive tourism? From monumental street arts by Ernest Zacharevic (the previous page) to spectacle display as the new mainstream pattern of spatial practices in the city.

Voices of the undercurrent

Speaking about this recent tendency in the street art scene of this city, an informant shares his concern in an ironic tone:

> I think street art has been happening long before these [Ernest Zacharevic's works in Penang], during my college time over here. When Ernest drew his first mural here, it became a sensation […] Now, people start to follow a few steps what Ernest has done. Yeah, it's a good way, but things become not that nice. Because, everyone else think that, 'Hi, Ernest can draw, I can draw as well.' These people will come in and draw not up to the standard of drawing quality. And, we see that the pattern now is that a lot of artist-wannabe they come in to Penang and draw something on the wall, they take photo and take photo of themselves. And in the name card they say, 'I am a street artist.' And then, they're going to KL [Kuala Lumpur] or other big cities and say, 'Hi, I draw a street art in Penang, in George Town.'
> (Chun Woei, 43, M, animator and graphic designer)

Chun Woei who initiated an open forum for illustrators and graphic designers, named Grafikdistrict Solutions, feels responsible to share his concerns with younger artists. To him, it is important for artists to master their artistic skills, but most importantly, to understand the context where the artworks will be put or interact with wider public. He himself is also a member of the Public Arts Review Panel (PARP) in George Town that encourages people who want to draw on any walls in the city to deeply understand the character of limestone antique walls of this heritage place that require a specific technical approach, while also considering the cultural context of its location. The panel that was established by the City Council in July 2014 has its main aim, quoting from the then Chief Minister of Penang Lim Guan Eng, "to review the wall paintings as we have received numerous complaints about the quality of these paintings that do not meet with the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) requirements" (Mok, 2014; The Star, 2014). What he means by the OUV is the key characteristics set by UNESCO which recognised and granted George Town as world heritage site due to its three OUV, i.e. multicultural history, heritage and unique architecture.

Street art in the city is a common strategy being appropriated in many heritage or creative cities. It is a form of placemaking to enhance the city's brand or character. However, this creative placemaking is most of the times done as a top-down activity and, then, this can turn into a problem for the city itself (Platt, 2019). Studying Liverpool after its designation as European Capital of Culture 2008, Platt (2019) writes that this city experienced what she calls a formal intervention of placemaking that pushed the city towards the strategies of creative city branding in a top-down way. Yet, "there has been a disconnect identified in the official placemaking discourses of the city and the everyday experiences of the people" (Platt, 2019: 364).

All informants that I talked to in George Town also resonated with this kind of alternative resistance towards the official placemaking discourse and practices. This happens not only in the street art scene, but also other scenes of the everyday dwelling in the city. For instance, commenting on the way George Town Festival prioritises artists, craftspeople, or programmers from outside the city and promotes big names only, one informant says:

> This is something that makes me sad. I don't care, but you see, this is the trend in the culture [cultural industries]. They look into big pieces things, they don't see all the small.
> (Wee, 44, M, handmade crafter and entrepreneur)

It is clear that what he means by 'small' in the above quote refers to multiple meanings of subordination. It could refer to individuals or groups of local artists; small can also refer to a more localised initiatives and small businesses, and their orientation, collaborative project, and event, which may attract particular audiences. As a small handmade brand owner, Wee and his partner decided to rent a space in Hin Bus Depot and stay close to other creative collectives. To him, the way this place is intended and managed in a non–large-industry mode shares similar values with his own principles. "The owner can make this place more valuable to himself, like a more commercial one, but it [Hin Bus Depot] is not; this [kind of gesture] is what even the government don't do," said Wee.

Figure 5.3
Open forum, open space and many elements. Ideal, but not an easy one to sustain.

I argue that the type of spatial practices these collectives create is a means to build social continuity and cohesion, the very trait of spatial practice as conceptualised by Lefebvre (1991). Beyond what appears in the built environment or the events in Hin Bus Depot compound, the struggles as well as the tactics of spatial formation "to interrogate what lies within as well as beyond the representation" (Kusno, 2010: 11) are formed by these creatives. It is more sustainable to build their cohesion in such a closed, mutual environment that makes them possible to share similar values, contribute ideas and work together. Below is an excerpt of my conversations with Khing (32, F, event manager) and Wanida (32, F, gallery manager) – both of them members of the Hin Bus Depot art space management – on their reflections in managing the space:

> Khing: As you can see this space is very organic.
> Zaki (author): You use this term, organic. What do you mean by that?
> Khing: Organic, because it wasn't planned, it's just happened. We keep walking and we hit the wall. We learned, we talked to people. People give ideas.
> Zaki: What makes it different to have a physical space like this?
> Khing: Being a physical space actually has a lot of changes. People come in and talk to us. People throw their ideas. So, from there we learned, absorbed. We decided what we want to do with the information we got. Because our training in fine arts, or communication and public relations, were actually not so much about placemaking or thoroughly about the community.
> Wanida: Hin Bus Depot is the whole physical space. We [Hin Bus art space management] only manage the art events, the gallery and the common space. But, all these other tenants, they are independent.
> Khing: We are a small group, so we talk [to the Director Board] about who would like to be in, we're curating this space. We don't want Starbucks, we don't want McDonald's! So, we let artisans come, or anything creative basically.

In other context, creative works can also function as a form of cultural resistance towards an established manner or dominant value. It is experienced by a contemporary wood-craft designer and maker, for instance. Since Penang is well known for their traditional handmade artefacts, including furniture and the famous Penang-style paper lantern, making these crafts in a new different way than others usually do is a problematic thing for younger, progressive craftspeople. One of them explained:

> For example, making the paper lantern. We're not supposed to make it differently, George Town is like that. [In making furniture,] people just come to us and say, 'You shouldn't use plywood, this is not good quality, it would not last hundred

years!' I asked them, 'Do you own IKEA furniture at your home?' 'Yes we do,' they said. So, what do you think is IKEA concept? [laugh]. I find it quite funny sometimes.

(Alex, 30, M, wood-craft designer)

Alex's concern is mainly regarding the prejudice he and other fellow artisans face from the traditional wood-crafters collective. He sees a difficulty in bridging dialogue among different generations or different approaches in creative making, and his collective resist hegemonic creative practices connected with heritage discourses. Paper lanterns, considered as one material object of cultural heritage within the official heritage imagination, become an object as well as a site of contestation especially for younger designers and craftspeople that want to use different materials or try different techniques and designs.

From the street art scene to craft world, individuals within the creative collectives have shown the way they cope with the abundance discourses and practices of the impact of heritage status in their city. Their articulations in coping with such a situation demonstrate an alternative voice, the voices of the undercurrent, by employing everyday tactics through particular spatial practices. All these can be understood as their subtle resistance through building cohesion within their communities, sustaining a continuity of relations within their collectives and local places, and working on small things, using creative works in a different manner than the dominant practices they associate with the wide heritage branding in the city.

Coping with the anxieties of losing communities

While the main narrative under the discourse of "Heritage Inc." focuses on its fear of losing income, privilege status and social role in local-national-global triadic relations, the independent creative collectives have their own anxieties. They voice concerns on anxieties of losing communities, for example, in relation to ethnic and racial issues, inclusivity, and recognition by other city dwellers intergenerationally. In general, problems of multi-ethnics and multi-races interactions are everyday realities in Malaysia, including in George Town (Goh 2005, 2012), as well as the state interference in the people's social lives inclusive of creative works and expressions (Barker and Lee, 2018). Although the co-existence of these is present in the public discourses, the true realities of its tensions are difficult to openly discuss in public. However, the creative collectives in Hin

Bus Depot compound articulate a more nuanced discourse and practice on the tensions regarding race and ethnicity. The common value experienced in this organic creative hub is more plural, and the attitudes of each individual tend to be more cosmopolitan.

The nationalist agenda in the country, indeed, tends towards a main anxiety of "cultural loss" (DeBernardi, 2004; Goh, 2005). Cultural loss here mainly refers to the losing cultural expressions in terms of material cultures and collective identities of particular ethnic minorities. Either in George Town or in Malaysia in general this kind of anxiety is part of prolonged racial tensions in the country, especially between Malay (and other groups considered by the government as *Bumiputera*), Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians; these racial tensions ensure every minority group is to a certain degree threatened by the majority or those who own more economic or political power in society. Regarding the impact of world heritage site inscription, there is also "the anxiety over the diminishing living community within the designated heritage areas", especially due to excessive gentrification, causing "the displacement of inner-city inhabitants" (Ooi, 2016: 188-189). In response to such problems, there is a societal reaction of the inward-looking attitudes when it comes to race, ethnicity, or religion. But the people in Hin Bus Depot develop different mode of practices and attitudes than this national tendency. They show a more cosmopolitan view, and on occasion voice a longing for pluralism. In a quite lengthy reflection, Chun Woei – the founder of a creative collective – speaks about what has changed in his wider community:

> I mean this thing has been going on for quite sometimes. In Malaysia we have Malays, Chinese and Indians. Everyone's arguing what is our Malaysian identity, everyone wants to be in the front line. But, to me, I feel that the thing that build Malaysia is not one thing; it is this three-flavour that what we have today.
>
> Like, I remember during my young days, my mom and my grandmother who don't really speak Malay, but they were really interested in Malay drama or Malay films. Maybe that time we don't have our shows, only *RTM*. Every Friday we have this *Panggung Jumaat*, everyone was watching Malay drama, Malay films, or Malay telly movies. The Malays watched the Chinese movies. The Chinese and Malays watched the Bollywood films as well. But, sadly now we don't see that anymore.
>
> At that time, I feel it's more colourful. So, the identity part is full, Malaysian today is going backward. People tend to cling to themselves, like very protecting themselves from others. [...] Something is missing now.
> (Chun Woei, 43, M, animator and graphic designer)

What Chun Woei and other people do in each collective is to move beyond an anxiety of losing communities by exploring the possibilities of their respective collective to be an open space, an inclusive one. They attempt to reclaim the three main socio-cultural characters of George Town embodied in the city and its historical context: multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism (Ooi, 2016: 172). This kind of mindset by the creative collectives is not designed in a top-down approach as practiced by the state or any global agencies working in this city, yet it explores what Platt (2019: 365) labels as "the vernacular spaces of creativity". It is a resistance without overt protest, offering an example of spatial practices from below. As Lefebvre states:

> Spatial practice is neither determined by an existing system, be it urban or ecological, nor adapted to a system, be it economic or political. […] thanks to the potential energies of a variety of groups capable of diverting homogenized space to their own purposes. (Lefebvre, 1991: 391)

Figure 5.4
The 'vernacular spaces of creativity' in Hin Bus Depot compound.

One of the formations of these 'vernacular spaces of creativity', for example, happened in one episode at Hin Bus Depot on 11 November 2016. On the date Hin Bus Depot hosted the closing night of In-Between Arts Festival (iBAF), a sub-event of the annual city festival in George Town. During the closing event that they named it as "Evening Picnic at Hin", a young Bangladeshi Malaysian comic started to tell his jokes on stage. This stand-up comedian, who used to live in Canada and has moved back to Penang, shared a series of brief jokes to the audiences that were mostly the creatives who live and work in the city. Many of his punch lines were about his self-deprecation on everyday issues of living in contemporary Penang and a few satirical comments on ethnic and racial stereotypes. In a performance style that mixed his enthusiasm for the city with an intimate address, he made a few jokes that poetically resonate with my overall discussion in this chapter, as follows:

> Now I've been living here long enough that I can…yeah, most of my life now I've been living in Malaysia. So, I could say I'm a Malaysian. I get annoyed when I see these stupid tourists coming here. Because where I work, I have to deal with a lot of stupid tourists and a lot of stupid-tourist questions. […] And this is the most important, I cannot help you in choosing a tattoo design that reflects your stupid tourist personality. I've seen so many tourists come here treating the cultures like…*ehmm*…to show off to their friends! Why can't you use something from your own cultures? Use Shakespeare or something. Maybe he wouldn't have a problem with that. Or, you American, you can just put, 'McDonald's, I'm loving it'. [Audiences laughed].

> […] Okay. Now, like I said, I was also once a stupid tourist here, but I am a Bangladeshi, so the experience is different. Oh yes, one more thing is: my people are considered fragrance trace, meaning we have a strong odour. And, I can tell you it is kind of true. But, it's not that Bangladeshi have a strong odour, it's that people who work hard have a strong odour! [Audiences clapped]. We do not have sissy jobs, like artist, singer, and event organiser. [Audiences laughed]. We have real jobs, we build things, we break things, and then we put them back together! [Audiences laughed]. Comedy is also a frivolous job, I can tell you that. But we are just better off than all of you. Let me tell you this, the darker the folks the better the jokes. Thank you! [Audiences laughed, whistled and clapped].

Reflections

I saw that some members of the audiences nodded along while saying, "So true…so true!" Throughout my fieldwork in George Town, I have witnessed the identical nuances with what this comedian talked about. My day-to-day experiences in this city, from observing the everyday lives in the city streets and other public spaces to interacting with the members of creative collectives, have been frequently exposed with similar stories about how challenging it is for these open-minded groups of people to live in this city. The audiences that listened to this comedian – including me – can easily relate to all the life episodes, everyday scenes and daily anecdotes that he told on stage, in particular "we build things, we break things, and then we put them back together", illustrating the making do and resourcefulness of local inhabitants.

Gaining a global status, such as the world heritage city, can significantly impact not only the built environments and the policies in the city. But it has also cultural implications to the way the city dwellers experienced their city. This tendency happens in George Town after being officially listed as the UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. More than a decade has passed since this inscription, several issues remains as there are new challenges to be faced by both the government and the people who live in the city. Such issues include the different approaches to heritage and the contested narrative of using creative works to strengthen the heritage status.

To those who work in creative milieu independently in this city, such as the members of Hin Bus Depot, Pokothings, WEEZ Concept and Grafikdistrict Solutions, they develop a particular spatial practice as an alternative way to cope with these problematic situations. It is articulated through the way they build cohesion within their community, sustaining relations socially and spatially, focusing on small things, and using creative works in a different manner than the dominant practices within the heritage city discourses. All these are also useful in addressing the anxieties of losing communities that discursively dominate local and national realms. The way they demonstrate their alternative voice, however, is without any overt protest or confrontation. It is their subtle resistance while dwelling and working in the city throughout their daily lives; that is the site of analysis for this chapter.

How does this subtle resistance take into further form and deal with other issues? The following chapter will further analyse the entanglement between cultural memory, heritage and creativity as a site of contestation in George Town.

| 6 | Disruptive Tactics on Cultural Memories in the Heritage-Creative City

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008, George Town has transformed itself from a multicultural melting pot to a creative city within a rich postcolonial context. The initial transformation of this city into a creative city can be understood within the framework of "creative city-making" (Landry, 2006, 2008), an approach that does not only consider the importance of built environment developed through infrastructure-driven projects, but more importantly focuses on the balanced relationships among the many elements within the city. This chapter employs the notions of "culture on display" (Dicks 2003) and "everyday tactics of dwelling in the city" (de Certeau, 1984; de Certeau, Giard and Mayol, 1998; Highmore, 2002) to explore the different voices in this city. It also investigates the relation between cultural memories and identity struggles in the specific case of George Town, as exemplified by individuals within creative collectives of the city. The discussion in this chapter addresses the questions on the ways these creative collectives articulate their identities, also on the ways creative and media-related practices contest the dominant discourses on heritage and creativity in George Town.

Entangled practices of heritage, memory and creativity in the city

George Town started as a port and trading hub during the colonial Straits Settlement (Cheng et al., 2014), then as a manufacturing and resort tourism city in the 1970s (Goh, 1998; Khoo, 2012), to the more recent role as a cultural heritage and global tourism city (Goh, 2012). The city embarked on a new model

of urban revitalising, employing a creative city approach. Yet, the policies and their practical implementation, as well as the responses from city dwellers, demonstrate different nuances from what happened in many other creative cities including the understanding of public participation in the urban planning processes. The city programmes use artistic and creative city strategies in order to strengthen their cultural heritage branding. It would be misleading to simply compare what happens in George Town with creative city policies and practices that take place in major European or Northern American creative cities. Similar experiences from other cities in the Asian region, especially those with a postcolonial context, would perhaps provide a more directly relevant comparison (Kong and O'Connor, 2009). Shanghai's experiences, for example, have at least three similar conditions with the context of George Town, especially in terms of "possessing a historical industrial heritage, the mix of Eastern and Western cultures that potentially gives the city a distinctive diversity in culture and attracted different talent" from various places within and outside the country (Wei and Jian, 2009: 168).

George Town is well known as a heritage city. After this city was officially listed along with Melaka by UNESCO in 2008, the state-led initiatives become more prominent. These included the commissioning of many public art projects from 2009, followed by the establishment of World Heritage Incorporated as the key institutional agency in April 2010. The George Town Festival, an annual performance and contemporary arts festival held since 2010, is another state-backed cultural programme as part of the so-called official creative city narrative. These state-led initiatives were in line with other urban policies introduced after the city gained heritage status, such as a heritage tax for visiting tourists, regulation of heritage buildings and tourism investment in becoming a creative city (Khoo et al., 2017). These kinds of state-led 'creative' initiatives were soon followed by other initiatives from commercial organisations, especially those involved in tourism and the service industries. These programmes articulated an idealised cultural memory of the city, projecting a single heritage imagination whereby the multi-ethnic characters of the city are presented as harmonious across different historical periods. However, the social realities in this city show intricate networks of various views, conflict and tension. This kind of idealised cultural memory is perceived as the key focus to which the city's authorities (re)explore its heritage label into more tangible things through the entanglement of heritage, memory and creative practices in a linear way. The projection of cultural memory in such an articulation in this city, however, is by no means without problematic account. The notion of cultural memory is:

[p]remised on the idea that memory can only become collective as part of a continuous process whereby memories are shared with the help of symbolic artefacts that mediate between individuals and, in the process, create communality across both space and time. (Erll and Rigney, 2009: 1)

The sense of shared communality within the city has various meanings to different people or groups who dwell in the city. The state initiatives in George Town tend to articulate the state's version of cultural memories in their fixed and material forms by displaying in the form of city branding, economic reasons, economic advancement and global tourisms. "Marking George Town", a state-commissioned public art project, is one example. This public art commission was established to foreground public cultural memories, through placemaking within the city. This adheres to Landry's idea of approaching creative cities in a holistic way to be about "cultural aspiration, its networks, values and stories, also its sensual dimension" (Pagh and Vesterdal, 2008: 9; see also Landry, 2006).

The first selected project for "Marking George Town" was won by a Kuala Lumpur-based sculpture studio, Sculptureatwork, rather than local artists from Penang. The next commissioned project was the famous mural series in 2012 made by a Lithuanian-born visual artist, Ernest Zacharevic. Despite the artistic merits of all the artworks, these cultural programmes have neglected the essences of creative city-making. There is very limited participation by local talent, or differing views about local memories, and a limited variety of forms of creative placemaking as discussed in the previous chapter.

Everyday creativity and cultural memory on display

These state-led programmes, borrowing Bella Dicks' (2003) notion on the transformation of the city into a destination, have become a project of "cultural memory on display". As a result, the voice of particular groups of people who live in the city and especially those who work with creativity on a daily basis are excluded. As Dicks (2003: 68) argues, urban planning strategies and developments tend to focus on the creation of spectacular, design-led, retail and entertainment zones in the contemporary city, eventually resulting in "the spectacular, celebratory image on display in urban enclaves" targeted more at tourists from afar, local weekenders and day trippers or other middle class urban populations. Such a strategy of culture on display reinforces existing social and cultural exclusion.

This chapter intends to demonstrate how the different voices from the edge in George Town, articulated as part of the disruptive tactics by the creative collective in this city, have become an alternative narrative on understanding the becoming of creative city with its heritage contexts. These voices can be read as an alternative narrative of identity formation, against the singular narrative projected by the state – a "nationalist heritage imagination" (Goh, 2012). Cultural memory, as an inevitable arena in the heritage imagination in this city, becomes a site for contestation of identities whereby multiple narratives should gain similar positions rather than being perceived as a cultural threat to each other. Informed by Michel de Certeau's seminal works, mainly his "poetics of everyday life" and "everyday tactics of dwelling in the city" (de Certeau, 1984; de Certeau, Giard and Mayol, 1998), this chapter elaborates the everyday tactics by creative collectives in responding to cultural memories projection in their city.

Voices from the creative collectives

The empirical materials presented in this chapter are focused on one episodic timeframe that is during the 8th George Town Festival 2017 and the commemoration of Malaysian Independence Day in August 2017: these are two particular moments that signify the top-down strategy by the government. They are also concerned with fixing the meaning of cultural memories displayed through the designated creative practices. It is, then, relevant and important to examine how people actually respond, as well as articulate their own voices, during these particular moments at the time. The analysis in this chapter explores the everyday experiences of groups of people from four George Town creative collectives who reside and work in Hin Bus Depot (Figure 6.1).

Based on the elaboration of these individuals' everyday experiences living in the city and working in the creative scene, their concerns about what really happens to their city and the way they articulate their diverse views are elaborated here in three analytical areas. These are disrupting memories, the politics of inclusion-exclusion and the formation of organic space. These signify an alternative grassroots narrative on the city's cultural memory. The practices of these individuals in each creative collective can be understood as a way of negotiating their own cultural identity in the face of the state-endorsed creative city narrative. All these will be elaborated further in the following sections.

Figure 6.1
The building compound of Hin Bus Depot (inside yellow line) as seen in this aerial view during day and night, it is a home for several creative collectives in George Town since 2014.

Disrupting memories

Cultural memory can be understood in a dynamic way. It is not something fixed across time and space. It is:

> [a]n ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting in which individuals and groups continue to reconfigure their relationship to the past and hence reposition themselves in relation to established and emergent memory sites. (Erll and Rigney, 2009: 2)

However, as explained already, the way in which cultural memories are officially projected and materialised in George Town is far less dynamic (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2
Culture on display in the city: the state-commissioned public sign in Penang International Airport and the diorama in a private-owned museum.

In responding to the world heritage status – mainly to attract global tourists and investment – both the state's and private institutions' initiatives, indeed, creatively show their heritage legacies by exploring the notion of cultural memory. Yet, these initiatives are trapped into making a linear, single interpretation of memories as a cultural heritage that presumably constant, harmonious and tend to be fixed all the time. For instance, the official narrative evokes, through urban signposting, the remembrance of glorious colonial port city of Penang under the British Colonial Empire, while forgetting the problems of colonialism and its legacies in modern times. In other parts of the city, a single ethnic-based representation can also be problematic. This approach neglects the divergent realities of multi-ethnic society in Penang. It is very problematic, because as Kusno (2010:12) argues, "postcolonial cities cannot be based on the presumed coherence of a collective memory, even though such an approach is desired".

This kind of 'official' cultural memory by the state-led programmes in George Town, focusing on the dimension of "material memory" only (Erll, 2008), has presented significant difficulties of introducing new ideas or different ways of doing things in George Town. It is mainly due to the absence of two other important dimensions of cultural memory: the "social" and the "mental" dimensions (Erll, 2008). To return to the experiences faced by the wood-craft collective in this city, mutual support by the creative collective and their network are the key baseline to build the dynamic interactions and 'social' memories among them. One member of a creative collective expresses his concern:

> People in George Town just go on with their life, day to day, they don't change their routines. So, with what we're doing, sometimes creative stuff or art stuff, people don't have any time to be interested in creative stuff. […] I have a point to make here…this city has a problem with young people. This city population is very ageing, so new ideas hard to come by. When young people, like us here in Hin Bus, set up something new, fresh, or young, I think we're kind of disrupting something. Maybe positively, maybe negatively.
> (Alex, 30, M, wood-craft designer)

This wood-craft designer shows his frustration at trying to be accepted for his practices in his own local city. Wood-craft making is not something new in George Town. The practices as well as the products have been done in almost entirely the same way from one generation to another in this city. When several new craftspeople try new techniques, or new approaches in production designs, they face difficulties in showing these to the wider public. Another member in the same collective with this young wood-crafter also says that, for them, the options

come into either following what have been practiced by other makers, but never really make change in the field, or trying to explore the different ways no matter it would be hard to be positively perceived in their own place. They tend to choose the latter, but they realise they have to expand their horizon by collaboratively work with other similar craftspeople from other cities and countries, involving a networking with art and creative milieu outside the wood-craft, and initiate wood-craft workshops to attract other likeminded people who might share similar interests with them.

In George Town, and in the Malaysian context in general, the idea of growth and rapid progress as a sign of modernity is rarely contested (Goh, 1998: 168-169). Thus, for those who work in a less market-oriented industry, it is not easy to articulate themselves as a creative self while maintaining self-sufficiency in this city. Receiving support from public funding is another rare opportunity for them.

> After four, five years we're running our handmade products in Penang, we feel that it's very hard to survive. Unless you do it really like a part-timer, you know, 'you take it or leave it *lah*', like that. [Penangites in general] they do not really appreciate. Especially, the price goes first, you know. So, what we think is, if you want to really make it as a business, you need the other supports. This is the very important thing.
> (Wee, 44, M, handmade crafter and entrepreneur)

The above quote is a common response from creative collectives' members that voices how they perform the tactics of dealing with their daily obstacles. The creatives deal with this challenge by forming closely knitted communities. 'You need the other support', or another expression with the similar tone like 'You should do what you like, not just follow others', are common expressions amongst the creatives. Mutual support helps them to sustain self-motivation, while at the same time, it indicates a disruption to the non-dynamic cultural memories projected in any state-led programmes.

Figure 6.3
The facade in the back side of Hin Bus Depot compound, a tactics in dealing with heritage limitation.

This fixed type of memory derives from the way the heritage status and the politics of remembrance are designed by the city officials in George Town. All these tend to be interpreted in a rather narrow sense, that is, preserving a legacy of history, and particularly preserving physical legacies in a fixed and static meaning. Liinamaa's (2016) study on urban memory discourse in Toronto's creative city projects shows similar tendencies. When she says that, "cities often risk romanticizing art, artists and history" (Liinamaa, 2016: 661), the city's imagination on cultural memory tends to forget the city dwellers' narratives about the ways they experience the city.

As "memory is not only historical, psychological, social or political but also aesthetic and spatial" (Liinamaa, 2016: 657), the way some creative collectives aesthetically respond to their physical environment is part of channelling their voice and worthy of our attention. The photograph shown above (Figure 6.3) is taken in the back side of Hin Bus Depot compound where two creative collectives use this part of the old buildings as their office and workshop studio, namely LUMA and Grafikdistrict Solutions on the left and the right respectively.

Many ways can be used to channel anger, frustration, worry, or hope both individually and collectively. Social groups in other places commonly choose forms of social protests, such as demonstration or occupying public spaces. Concerning social inequality, racial prejudice and cultural representations in their city, the creative collectives in Hin Bus Depot utilise various aesthetic and communal approaches. The limitation on altering old buildings in the city, due to strict heritage regulation, for example, elicit a response by some creative collectives. Murals, especially the non–state-commissioned type, are obvious disruptive tactics these creative collectives employ to show their cultural dissent. Painting the wall in a more colourful theme without changing the building structure, as seen in Figure 6.3, is one way to articulate their feelings. While on other occasions, a few local street artists draw murals in hidden corners of the city (Figure 6.5.), critically responding to the abundance of the state- and private-commissioned street arts primarily with the intention of attracting global tourists and financial investment (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4
Tourism boost: the state-commissioned street arts projects (right and upper left corner) and commercial initiatives by hotels and other service industries (lower left).

The weekly pop-up market held every Sunday by Hin Bus Depot is also an example of a communal approach being used to address the lack of appreciation and accessible market for the local crafts and independent handmade scene. The informants talked about many different topics, subjects, or periods to be remembered in the city based on each respective interest or concern. All of them agreed that the collective remembrance projects in George Town ought to be more inclusive, allowing depiction of multi-voices and reflections from different ethnic groups incorporating inter-ethnic and inter-generational consideration. This kind of effort has emerged in a micro site in the city, and within and amongst their creative collectives in Hin Bus Depot.

The politics of inclusion–exclusion

Tensions between older and younger generations, racial prejudice, or different tastes are identified by the collectives as hidden aspects that the creative cities' policy should reflect upon. Two informants from different collectives reflect on their experience of the local art scene:

> There is a kind of tension between the old and young people among the art scene *lah*. The older artists they are, like, established and they are doing all this watercolour [painting]. And, now it's contemporary art. They don't mix, they don't talk to each other very often.
> (Alex, 30, M, wood-craft designer)

And,

> George Town is somehow still very small and there are still a lot of conservative people here, both in lifestyles or politics, that cannot accept new ideas, new techniques, new ways. So, we somehow still have restrictions.
> (Chun Woei, 43, M, animator and graphic designer)

Figure 6.5
The creative collectives make their own murals in a few hidden corners of the city.

All the city's programmes after the 2008 heritage status follow-up the development from previous decades. The distinctive feature that might be different from previous decades is the city's fascination to design any cultural-related programmes, using the discourses of heritage, creativity and preservation of cultural memory. Yet, for some city dwellers who work in the cultural field, art or craft scene specifically, they do not feel represented in any of these cultural programmes. This is a form of the politics of inclusion and exclusion (Kusno, 2010: 12). The politics of inclusion-exclusion which occurred in George Town result from a selective remembering of traditional and well-known cultural practices, while forgetting new and emergent ones:

> Even George Town Festival, they are looking for the artists from outside, from KL [Kuala Lumpur] or overseas. Just a few artists from Penang are invited. […] For me it's not George Town Festival. […] I am not sure how they are planning it, I just can't agree with George Town Festival inviting all outsiders, from out of this state and from overseas.
> (Kitosa, 42, F, handmade crafter and entrepreneur)

Media representation, especially local and national newspaper coverage of the 8th George Town Festival 2017, shared the same narrative with the idealised image promoted by the state agencies (Yacoob, 2017: 28). They presented an idealised view of a successful event in which the city plays a significant role in global cultural interactions. There was an idealisation of multicultural representation, in which the event was held to encompass and accommodate all ethnic cultural groups in the city. Most of the creative collectives' members, who routinely deal with this issue through their creative practices, expressed concerns about the lack of engagement with local creative groups in this approach led by the government.

In local newsletter, a one-panel cartoon (M.E., 2017: 2) represented a narrative engaging inclusively with the global values for culture. The cartoon depicts three main characters in one-panel scene: "a male traditional art performer", "a male local (tour) guide" and "a female outsider" (presumably a foreign tourist). The dialogue in this newspaper cartoon is written in Malay mixed with a few English verbal expressions, as the common spoken pattern in Malaysia. This dialogue can be translated as follows:

> Woman (visitor)   : Wow…
> Male (guide/local)   : GTF (George Town Festival). Promotion of culture, art, heritage of the locals' activities. BEST!

The visual elements, such as portraiture of the characters (visitor/tourist, local guide/citizen, local performer), ethnic/traditional music instrument, wardrobe of the characters, facial expression and body gestures, re-enforce the message of a successful global event. This kind of representation, again, demonstrates the mainstream narrative in an outward-looking model of mobilising the creative capital of the city. I also noted before that most of the main events in this festival consisted of performance arts by groups or artists coming from outside George Town and even outside Malaysia: the main performances involved contemporary art of dancing, theatre and music, attracting audiences who were mostly global tourists or visitors. Only a few traditional and contemporary local arts were performed and exhibited, and these were showcased at the fringes, not in the main festival programme. In responding to such a tendency, the creative collective members show a different way of perceiving this event than the mainstream media coverage. They express their concern:

> There are many small talks saying 'hey…this artist came last year, now it's the same artist again'. Or, the George Town Festival could be questioned, 'this is foreigners, you can see these are foreign performers, not Malaysian; from UK, from other

countries'. And then, some of the answers would be like, 'no young [Malaysian or local] artists, not many'. I think, this is part of the scene *lah*.
(Marie, 63, M, designer)

And,

It raises a question mark. 'You're calling it George Town Festival, but you're not promoting any arts and crafts from George Town', you know. You just import all those from other countries. […] This happened not only once.
(Wee, 44, M, handmade crafter and entrepreneur)

There are strong concerns amongst these creative collective members about not being recognised, i.e. being excluded, by their own city and fellow city dwellers. As in any form of politics of remembering, the forgetting part is always associated with power relations. In this particular situation, the lack of representation demonstrated a top down policy approach rather than a policy that is grounded in local communities and local creative practices. A "pro-community mindset" (Ooi, 2016: 197) in cultural and public programmes, that many local critics and scholars raised as a concern when George Town has just been inscribed by UNESCO as World Heritage Site, is now becoming significant. As exemplified by these creative collectives, they are now struggling with the imbalance of power relations in their own city. Collaboration among each other is one tactics that they mostly do in dealing with this imbalance of power. Rather than complaining or lamenting the exclusion from the state, or other mainstream institutional agencies, they believe in and maintain the power of collaboration. "Today you need collaboration; we need more of community-based, collective-based kind of initiatives," is the firm opinion of Chun Woei.

Formation of organic space

Indeed, the recent cultural programmes and urban policies have reformatted the city into an aspirational global creative city with an emphasis on cultural heritage and consumption. However, this strategic way of conjuring the heritage city through state and private commissioned urban creativity is not the only way of responding to the formation of urban spaces and the city-making processes. Resisting this top-down policy, the creative collectives in Hin Bus Depot have responded with a range of interventions through creative placemaking. This often happens in an organic way, through creating, working, managing, networking and building a sense of community.

Figure 6.6
Hin's family: the place, the people and the activities inside.

> Being at Hin Bus Depot opens up a lot of opportunities for me personally. I met
> new people, I met new friends. Basically, the whole networking.
> (Hafiz, 26, M, graphic designer and event assistant)

The way the government and international agencies work in George Town can
be understood as an example of cultural consumption. It is similar to Dicks (2003:
7) who argues, "cultural display is increasingly geared towards the cultivation of
the model consumer rather than the model citizen". Meanwhile, an organic model
in building collectivism and a sense of communality is demonstrated by the
creative collectives in this city. The resistance to this cultural consumption model
derives naturally from the cultural producers' perspective on building a sense of
communality with strong incentives to produce and making culture. In Hin Bus
Depot – the creatives call themselves 'Hin's family' (Figure 6.6) – they influence
the making of 'organic space' by employing new ways of making and producing
crafts, artworks and collective practices that are non-proprietary, based on
collaboration, embedded in everyday life, and open for social interactions with

audiences in an organic way. Speaking about the way they organise their collective, one informant says:

> More open. No, there is no structure, there is no bosses, there is no who is the boss whatsoever. We call it like a round-table thing.
> (Chun Woei, 43, M, animator and graphic designer)

The essence of space itself, as Stasiewicz-Bienkowska (2014: 75) suggests, is "perceived as untrodden and pathless; space is often associated with openness, mobility, freedom and venture, but it can also signify peril". In the case of these creative collectives, their organic space in Hin Bus Depot is a dynamic one and offers freedom and opportunities, though they realise their everyday struggles to cope with the perils or challenges are also high. There are many challenges for sustaining such creative projects in the city. As Kusno (2010) observed, spatial struggles or the rights to the city is ultimately an exercise of power. In such a situation, one member reflects:

> Even though there are so many groups [in the compound], it's a good mix. The whole Hin Bus, as a space, is a good collection of mixture of different people and activities that make it work.
> (Marie, 63, F, designer)

Although the above expression indicates an idealised situation, in practice these creative collectives still face difficult challenges, especially in relation to other people's perception about their profession or the way they work. They also have a sense of worry for not being included or recognised in wider urban communities, as well as concerns for their own livelihoods as craftspeople or artists against the backdrop of a single heritage imagination by the state. To be taken seriously through their creative intervention in the city, they have to be included or recognised by wider urban communities (such as the George Town Festival). This is challenging because of the top down nature of creative city policies, leaving little space for the creatives to express themselves in the city. But the creatives will persist. Most of them express their confidence too, they believe that they still have something worth fighting for. One key person in the collective compellingly says:

> I think why we work and some don't … this space happened because we have groups doing art together … it wasn't a placemaking advert, it wasn't a space a developer looking for a group of people to activate the space. So, we have a real, genuine content.
> (Khing, 32, F, event manager)

Reflections

As a continuation from the discussion on subtle resistance in the previous chapter, this analysis has presented a case study of community-run creative collectives residing in Hin Bus Depot in George Town, Malaysia. Through the question of 'whose cultural memory?', I show that local ways of life and everyday tactics are important building blocks for thinking about the discourse of creative and heritage cities, particularly in Southeast Asia. The disruptive tactics employed by the local creative collectives challenge not only the globalizing creative and heritage cities discourse, as applied in different urban contexts around the world, but who should be defining the parameters of this borrowed policy narrative.

The three analytical areas situated the creatives' disruption on the so-called official culture-on-display, articulating through their own everyday tactics. This intervention by members of creative collectives should be viewed outside of the heritage framework; it ought to be understood in a broader social and cultural framework. The creatives' articulations in George Town also contest the way cultural memories in this city are formed and institutionalised. In short, they create an alternative narrative to the common practice of the politics of remembering and forgetting in this creative city that has heritage contexts in contemporary Malaysian societies.

By showing and investigating these voices from the edge of the society, this chapter reminds us, as Lee (2018: 3) suggested, that we should not only perceive "Asia as a place for empirical fieldworks", but also its potential to be "a core site for the production of theoretical knowledge". It is my hope that the discussion in this chapter could contribute to Lee's (2018) sense of theoretical knowledge production on cultural resistance towards cultures on display in creative heritage city branding. As Jim McGuigan (2009: 169) suggests in *Cool Capitalism*, many cities around the globe tend to follow the global "prescription for creative development" and it is important to consider this particular case of George Town to enrich the variety of responses by city dwellers to the discursive bandwagon of global, creative city.

The following chapter will be discussing the streets of the cities, one of key urban spaces where practices of creativity are juxtaposed, materialised and contested. This particular chapter, presented in visual analysis, will bridge between the analyses on subtle resistance and disruption of cultural memory (chapters 5-6) and elaboration on the alternative space and articulation of creative selves by the exemplification of Bandung's case in the subsequent chapters.

| 7 | Creativity in the Street: The Practices of Aestheticizing Urban Spaces

In order to comprehensively understand the studied creative collectives' cultural practices, the cultural landscapes of the cityscapes themselves cannot be ignored. As Terence Heng (2011: 266) convincingly argues in his study on ethnic-related practices in urban landscape, cityscapes could "consider the wider material environment that individuals find themselves in". Drawing from such an argument, this chapter elaborates the articulation of creativity in the streets of Bandung and George Town to provide wider contexts of the cityscapes which the creative collectives interact with and reside within. Cityscape is used here to refer to the urban environments that visually symbolise why the creative collectives contest, resist, or question the notion of creative city in their own city.

The empirical materials presented here are focused on the cityscape – mainly the city street – a site where discourses on creative cities are imagined, materialised, and contested. City streets are rich sites for analysis, as Walter Benjamin explores in his seminal work, *The Arcades Project*. As Merrifield notes:

> Benjamin's urbanism likewise strikes up the band and dances in the street. His city is a city of a hope, a place full of pedestrians, sexiness, and bustling streets. In his streets, exteriors become interiors, private individuals become public citizens, and strollers become dandies and flâneurs who blush before the eye of no one. In this way, Benjamin sings a paean to an expansive and inclusive urban public space, one that releases the unconscious yearning of the collective and internalises the whole wide world. (Merrifield, 2002: 67)

In the city streets, discursive imaginations and contestations are symbolised in their material forms, including the creative articulations of constructing and branding an idealised creative city (Löfgren, 2014). By questioning these articulations, this chapter analyses the dilemma of visual and material aspects of

creativity in the streets of Bandung and George Town, a dilemma between the creative city as imagined (or, idealised) and as lived (or, symbolised) through the experiences of the city dwellers. The following analysis takes its form in a photo-essay. The aim is to explore this dilemma through a critical visual methodology in a form of a thematic series of photographs, and to understand the broader contexts of the cities where the creative collectives' members spend their everyday lives.

The visual essay uses photography as its main tool, as "photographs may reveal what we are normally unable to perceive, because our perception is too slow or because we are unable to focus on two things simultaneously" (Steiger, 2000: 155). In this sense, the photographs could potentially provide us with not only more accounts of information, but also – borrowing Roland Barthes' (2000) expression – surprising elements of everyday, mundane life. The pictures presented in this chapter are shot from the cityscapes and differ from the pictures shot within the creative collectives (as discussed in the method chapter). Informed specifically by the methods of urban walking (Heng, 2015; 2017; see also Springgay and Truman, 2017) and photography in documentary mode (Collier, 2009; Parr and Badger, 2004; Rose, 2016), and presented in a visual essay form (Simoni, 1996; Steiger, 2000), the photographs were shot in four different locations within each city. These locations are: historic site; main road or crossroad; city park; and abandoned space. All four locations are considered here as part of what Amin (2000: 240) refers to as street life, considering "the street is a place in which different individuals and groups, and different aspirations and desires, constantly jostle for space". I found that these four locations were where these articulations of creativity materialised most consistently within the built environment. In addition, abandoned spaces were also selected for another important reason: many state-led or other official urban planning or programmes in both cities have paid a lack of attention to the abandoned and forgotten spaces and ruins within their own cities. However, such spaces have been demonstrated to be important sites for the articulation of various voices. As Paiva and Brito-Henriques (2019) reflect in their study on abandoned and ruined spaces in Portugal, these locations are important to the city for different reasons, including the possibilities of vegetation growth, serving as venues for public events and activities, the production of particular soundscapes, and the interpenetration between the technological and the biological, as well as human and non-human relations.

Thus, the urban walking enables "everyday walking practices that create a rhythmic understanding of place" (Springgay and Truman, 2017: 31) which are combined with the visual and material aspects through the production of

photographs in documentary expression. In terms of the analytical form of this chapter as a visual essay, it is designed in accordance with the possibilities of such an alternative form of research reporting to "ground abstract concepts or theories in the materiality of space" (Paiva and Brito-Henriques, 2019: 538). Here this is seen from the representation of the everydayness and creativities in the city streets as photographed from the field.

Thematic curation of all photographs follows the theoretical framework of this research. 'Aestheticizing urban space' is specifically chosen as a particular concept to organise and analyse the pictures. This concept, informed by Lu Pan's (2015) study on street visual politics in East Asian cities, explores the use of any visual expressions – in her case graffiti and street art – in public spaces in the context of urban environments, whether they are made through state-commissioned projects or personal, unsanctioned initiatives that change the visual landscape of the city. The photographs in this chapter show that aestheticizing urban spaces in Bandung and George Town deal with three themes. These are cultural memory on display, superficial visuality, and spatial struggle. These themes structure the way the visual essay is presented.[9] There is also a distinctive note under each photo-collage to provide a clear reference whether the photo-collage is shot from Bandung or George Town.

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[9] The photo-essay in chapter 7 is one coherent visual presentation. That is why all photo-collages appearing in this chapter are titled under one figure heading only, namely "Figures 7 - Aestheticizing urban spaces in Bandung and George Town".

Cultural memory on display

Bandung

Bandung

One way of articulating a creative city is through the juxtaposition of many layers of historical records, different contexts of time and place, various designs in building construction and typography, and linguistic metaphors. Indeed, "street visuals […] have personal and social connotations, reflecting the collective memories of a particular society" (Pan, 2015: 5). The politics of memory dealing with both remembering and forgetting is being practiced in the public spaces of Bandung. For example, recalling the term *Parijs van Java* (Dutch: the Paris of Java) as one of the city's nicknames is a selected remembering of a term that was introduced firstly by European settlers – especially the Dutch – in Bandung during the colonial period which connotes the exoticism of the other, using the discourse and knowledge structure at the time that were framed, materialised, and institutionalised by and with the European colonial power without including the view and perception of a place by the local inhabitants in the colonised land.

Another articulation is the use of a quote from M. A. W. Brouwer in one of Bandung's main roads: *Bumi Pasundan lahir ketika Tuhan sedang tersenyum*. He was a Dutch scholar and columnist who spent most of his life teaching, writing and living in Indonesia. This famous quote literally means "The land of Pasundan [the former name of greater Bandung before and during the colonial period] was

created when God was smiling", and signifies an authorisation of knowledge in a current time that still has a legacy of its colonial past. These kinds of remembrances show the dilemma of cultural memory by remembering selected perspectives while other aspects are left forgotten. This dilemma resonates with Kusno's (2010: 11) argument that any visual environment in the city "plays a role in mediating politics and histories and in registering public memories".

George Town

Such practices of remembering are also found in George Town, Penang. Arriving at the Penang International Airport, my eyes cannot ignore the obvious, long row of panels in one corridor of its terminal. These panels are juxtaposed with one to another, hung on the wall neatly, creating a sense of linear storytelling. Each panel consists of a combination of old, black-and-white photograph(s) and typography in the form of horizontal banner with repeated words such as 'old', 'history', and 'heritage'. It is clear from the first panel located closest to the arrival terminal's main door that all these panels belong to one thematic campaign. Since there is no commercial brands whatsoever in the panels, and under the titling of

"Penang history", any travellers or passers-by can perceive this series of panels as a materialisation of what Kusno (2010) describes as registering public memories. This welcome signpost at the Penang airport focuses on (re)presentation of the 'old' colonial structure of knowledge selectively chosen in building the identity of Penang (as well as Penangites) as its single narrative in remembering the place. This kind of tendency in displaying a singular cultural memory by glorifying the colonial past takes form in various places in the city, including the display of a wooden-train wagon, part of the 1920s Penang Hill Railway operated by the colonial government. During the colonial period, this funicular railway was operated to the benefit of a particular elite group – mostly upper-class and European – who had estates or access to Penang Hill, an area considered a villa enclave in the hilliest part of the island with the verdant and cool clime. Many other social dimensions of the time are selectively obscured, if not forgotten, in such 'official' displays. The colonial structure of knowledge (here, representation of the so-called official history) is done in a similar way as practiced in Bandung, by recalling the colonial authoritative power in George Town through the presentation of quotes, images and historical records borrowed from the British colonial period in the island.

Apart from such 'official' remembering projects, recalling the ethnic roots – e.g. Cantonese-Chinese Malaysian, Hokkien-Chinese Malaysian, Tamil Malaysian, and so forth in the broader context of Penang – is another type of articulation of cultural memory on display. Anyone who visits Penang for travelling purposes will find themselves easily creating their own itinerary. Many free tourism brochures are easy to get in order to help anyone create plans while visiting or staying in the city or the island. These brochures are available in many booths and convenience stores, one can find either the general tourism information or in the specific themes, both completed with a map. One can choose whether she or he needs a travel guide in, for example, exploring the culinary arts of the city (or the island), the heritage trail, the street arts trail, the directory of museums, or different ethnic communities. On one day I simply picked one of these brochures and followed the guide inside. I ended up in a compound called Khoo Khongsi. I picked a brochure about a famous heritage building named after a wealthy Chinese clan association. Looking at the representation of this place both in the brochure and the way in which the place host cultural events, it is obvious that such a representation serves what Gilbert (2000) argues as an urban revitalisation approach called 'tourist gaze'. This concept refers to a strategic approach of urban planning – here in the context of urban cultural heritage – that focuses more on the way in which a project or a place is seen or consumed by tourists, rather than

firstly addressing the social and cultural need of the inhabitants or the most related communities in the city (Gilbert, 2000: 260). From this kind of 'tourist gaze', thus, the clanhouse that has its official name Leong San Ton Khoo Khongsi looked magical. The compound's centre is a fully-ornamental, grand main building of the clanhouse surrounded by a few smaller buildings that now function as the clan's offices, community-run motels and museum. Yet, similar to the way in which cultural memory is displayed through the gaze of colonial structure of knowledge, here the memory is also narrated in a single, linear way. This occurs by glorifying the effort of a specific, elite group of society – as exhibited in their diorama and museum collections – while presuming the non-existence of other clans, ethnic groups, sub-ethnic communities, or subcultural groups throughout the formative histories of the city.

Many ornamental designs and cultural roots to aestheticizing the city become evidence of cultural displays found in both cities in this study. From these examples in Bandung and George Town, cultural memories are still treated in "the storage models of memory" (Sather-Wagstaff, 2015: 195) whereby heritage objects become "a repository for the cultural memory of the societies" (Haldrup and Bærenholdt, 2015: 52) to build the so-called official narrative of the city. This kind of perceiving cultural memory may lead to an essentialist approach towards cultural identity. Indeed, identifying cultural identity(ies) in both cities is never an easy task, because when "postcolonial memories remain unsettled and are played out in the city through the contestation over heritage, identity and difference" (Kusno, 2010: 11), the intermingling between memory and cultural identity becomes a kind of never-ending project in such cities.

Superficial visuality

Jalan Asia Afrika, Bandung. The Asia Africa Street. "What is the longest road in the world? The Jalan Asia Afrika, connecting from Asia to Africa!" That is a common pun by locals in Bandung, referring to the most famous, historic street located in the heart of the city. This one-way street, a 1.5-kilometre inner-city road is the very symbolic site of Bandung's role in the most outward-looking way. Apart from its central location in the city, i.e. the designated 0 KM spot since the colonial period, this street gained its reputation (and its name) after Bandung hosted 29 newly independent countries of the two continents for the *Konferensi Tingkat Tinggi Asia Afrika* (KTT Asia-Afrika / KAA), also known as the 1955 Bandung Conference.

In April 2005 when the 50th commemoration of KAA was held, the municipality began the urban revitalisation of this city on this street as the symbolic core of the so-called "Bandung Spirit" that inspired the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement which has played a significant geo-political role of the Global South throughout the Cold War era. A decade later, in April 2015, the 60th commemoration took place here at the same time when the city applied to be part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Again, the urban revitalisation – mostly focusing on its built environment through its changing visual landscapes – became a major programme in Bandung.

Jalan Asia Afrika, Bandung. Walking down this street several times in 2016 and again in 2017, I witnessed and experienced the transformation of not only the street but also the overall look of the city. From the five-way intersections in the eastern point to the crossroads in the most western part of the street, my walks were not simply somatic routines. It was a way to "read the city from its street-level intimations" (Amin and Thrift, 2002: 11). I was exposed to multi-layers of histories: local, national, global. *Gedung Merdeka*, *Swarha* building and other heritage buildings; Offices, banks and hotels, several with art deco architecture; and KAA-related monuments in various scales. Yet, while I was 'drifting' in such a psychogeographic walking (Lyons, 2017; see also Debord, 1958), I was also drawn into a visual journey with random temporal and spatial contexts. All those physical signs of histories are scattered and juxtaposed in this street along with many current ornamental designs and activities: the long horizontal banner describing the history of the city in colourful design, notable quotes on a few walls, temporary human-size statues of notorious global figures, ornamental lightings on some trees, and the street vendors in cosplay costumes of fictional characters. Then comes the finale in front of the Bandung Grand Mosque at the west corner of this street: an urban park – the *Alun-Alun Kota Bandung* – with its majestic grandeur of green artificial grass in this tropical city!

The similar pattern of urban revitalisation, focusing on the changing visual aspects of its built environments in a very surface-level manner, takes place in many other corners of Bandung as well. This is manifested in the ubiquitous 'new' things in the city, from the creation of colourful urban signposts, creative city branding by putting physical forms of urban lettering or design, and the re-labelling of unused, empty spaces into small-scale *taman kota* (city parks) in eye-catching looks with humorous names. Of course, most of these kinds of city parks maintain the amusing use of artificial grass, which ultimately shows the artificiality of the creative city branding. This superficial approach in re-designing the public spaces in the city – through the use of the standardised look of artificial grass,

colourful and appealing designs, popular catchphrases, and other similar features – in Bandung is actually a form of city branding that relies on "the idea of the city as an *experienscape*" (Löfgren, 2007: 75; my emphasis) which has been criticised empirically and theoretically (see Löfgren, 2005, 2014; Jensen, 2007). Approaching and branding the city as an experienscape can only potentially hide or ignore the real problems in every newly-branded location, failing to address the true needs of the city dwellers who live and interact with these public spaces.

Bandung

Southeast Asian creative cities have become a product, particularly in terms of their visual appearance. Any corporate-led and state-based initiatives to present and project an idealisation of a liveable city through creative expressions in the cities leads to another signification of meaning. The aestheticizing approach to urban spaces can lead to an unequal accumulation of capital and consumption. Instead of empowering the city dwellers or supporting the communities and collective-based initiatives, these practices make the imaginary of a modern-and-progressive city a superficial visuality, without addressing the very real social issues or problems in the city. For instance, the on-going issues on land reforms, waste management and environmental issues, gentrification, socio-economic gaps or urban inequality, and the practice of populism in local politics. In this way "the new home that the city might become is replaced by an alienated visual spectacle" (Amin and Thrift, 2002: 32).

The creative city, then, is perceived as a discourse to pursue an idealised, imagined growing city mainly in an economic sense. Looking at other global cities from a distance becomes a model in achieving this ideal. At this stage, postcolonial cities put themselves in a project "where the global rather than the colonial is the reference for the local" (Huat, 2008: 239). Any enthusiastic efforts in manufacturing the visuals of the city to be more attractive – for financial investment and the global flow of human and economic capital – can be understood within the context of what Chua Beng Huat (2008: 234) ever reminds us in a critical tone, "economic growth is a marathon without a finishing line […] the entire society is oriented to the future". In the specific context of branding the city into a creative city, focusing solely on its experienscape while at the same time neglecting the multidimensional of urban lives could lead to new problems rather than bringing positive growth to the city. Löfgren - who has done many studies on other creative cities with similar tendencies – reflects and shares his conclusion:

> The perfectly designed city suddenly becomes the dead city, the pleasant city is turned into the boring city, the creative city oscillates between control and chaos and the attractive city can become one that is superficial. (Löfgren, 2007: 97)

Elsewhere, Löfgren (2014) says that city branding is always a matter of selective focus in packaging and narrating the city, while at the same time being a project of preparing to overlook and ignore. In the case of creative city branding in Bandung real risks arise from a tendency to ignore real urban issues by developing a superficial approach in designing the built environments.

George Town

The superficial visuality here can be understood as a result of the production of a "non-identified urban place or object"[10] due to the global influence that forces an emerging city to embrace the identity of a creative city: attracting the so-called creative class and building creative economic capital. To achieve this creative city, imagination, design and creativity have been appropriated by many cities around the world, from Milan to Melbourne and from Colombo to Copenhagen, as "a strategy for economic development" (Knox, 2014: 197). The creation of new sites or building constructions in Bandung, such as the Bandung Creative Hub and the Cihampelas Skywalk (*Teras Cihampelas*), are obvious examples of such initiatives that explore design and creativity solely for the purpose of economic development. Likewise, the creation of private museums in George Town is done with a view towards expansive commodification of the city's heritage status into marketable capitals in the interests of global tourism, rather than as part of a cultural strategy. This market-driven way of designing the city or making creative spaces within the city is usually part of "place marketing" efforts (Knox, 2014: 204-205). At this point I remember an evocative quote below in critically responding to such practices:

> Forming the creative face of the city often focuses less on supporting creative production, public participation or education, and more on creating larger spaces for consumption. […] private spaces as pseudo public spaces. (Pan, 2015: 148)

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[10] The term "non-identified urban place" (also referred to in other contexts as "non-identified urban object") came to my knowledge for the first time when I listened to a speech by Alain Bourdin, a professor in urbanism from the École d'Urbanisme de Paris. The concept, as he defines it, refers to the common practices in urban design and urban planning projects globally whereby many installations of material objects or placemaking efforts have no cultural references whatsoever to their locations or social contexts. He explained this concept in his keynote speech at the Third International Conference of Young Urban Researchers (TICYUrb'18) on 20th June 2018 in Lisbon, Portugal. Further information on his works can be seen here https://www.urbanisme.fr/actualite-du-bidonville/invites-406 (in French) and here https://ticyurb.wordpress.com/speakers.

Spatial struggle

The city has always been a contested space of many social processes and conflicts. As expressed in other words, "the city is by definition a space of encounters with difference" (Yeoh, 2001: 460). This also happens in Bandung and George Town, where aestheticizing can signify spatial struggles led by social actors outside of the state or commercial agencies within the cities. Whether it takes form in commissioned public arts, unsanctioned street arts and visual street-activism, or everyday tactics of dwelling in the city, the spatial juxtaposition becomes an articulation of 'discourse-in-place' on these social processes.

George Town

George Town

On an evening in early December 2017, I was buying my dinner from a busy corner of Lebuh Chulia, a street in George Town famously known as the hawker street. It is a heaven, one of a kind, for street food enthusiasts. I was standing, waiting for my order of a plate of *Nasi Goreng Mamak* (the Peranakan style of fried rice). While waiting to get a seat, since every seat was still occupied, I drifted away to explore this street in a deeper way. Lebuh Chulia that night, and as any evenings, was packed with people and moving things: the hawkers who were busy preparing their clients' orders, the come-and-go of crates of food produce, the sound of plates and glass being moved around, the hungry buyers (street food enthusiasts, tourists, also locals), the motorcycles, the cars and the tropical rains poured down all night long. In hawker streets like this one, the co-existence of many actors and things become the main beat of street life that maintains the dynamism of the city. In such limited physical spaces, the human and non-human elements orchestrate the spatial struggle creatively as the very essence of their everyday lives. The hawkers – old and young, Malay-, Indian- and Chinese-Malaysians – mix with local and international diners, and all sides partake in interactions beyond the necessities of food and beverage. They have to interact in motions, requiring walking from one party (the diners) and fast-moving hands or limbs from the other one (the hawkers). This episode from a street food site in the

city indicates how the dynamic beat and connection actually still take place as tactical ways in the people's everyday lives.

Global tourism in massive influx, indeed, brings at least twofold issues to the city dwellers. First, it is considered as an opportunity, as seen in the hawker streets every night. But, secondly, it is also perceived as a threat to particular living communities or considered a peril to the spatial condition of specific groups – the clan jetties, for example. These communities, occupying the south-eastern parts of George Town, have been living their specific areas of this city with their own unique beliefs and cultural practices for many generations. Originally "a working-class Chinese quarter" (Ooi, 2016: 179) and known by their quieter style and slower pace of living than other inner-city dwellers, the waterfront clan jetty communities face a new challenge due to these constant, buzzing crowd of tourists who come and walk around inside their neighbourhoods, practising the changing pattern of tourism from "gazing to grazing" (Löfgren, 2007: 81). In a few areas of these clan jetties, one can spot announcements or signposts that have different nuances than the state-tourism campaigns. "BE SILENT" placard, written in three different languages (Malay, Chinese, English), hung on the wall of a few houses in Lim Jetty to indicate this kind of spatial struggle. It is a spatial struggle for avoiding the cultural loss of their community, while trying to cope with a new cultural landscape in their city due to the impacts of more diverse and global influences. In Bandung, the street vendors or hawkers and marginal communities are overlooked within the main narrative as a creative city. They actually share similar traits with the spatial struggles experienced by George Town's city dwellers.

Bandung

Thus, there are different voices outside the main narrative constructed by the state or the global cultural agencies in both cities. The photographs presented in this chapter signify both the 'official' narrative and the counter – sometimes as the disruptive, other times simply the alternative – narrative in imagining, as well as living in, creative cities. This also indicates how discourses on creative cities are articulated in ubiquitous and entangled ways in the city streets. Both "the memorialisation of the past and the spatialization of public memory in the postcolonial contexts" (Yeoh, 2001: 461) have been demonstrated in these two cities as discussed in this chapter. It includes the significance of such a spatial struggle that can be understood in order to provide space for the "the subaltern to speak" (Yeoh, 2001: 464). For the relevance of my study, it is the way the creative collectives make room for their subtle resistance to exist. Further discussions on this will be presented in the next chapter.

Bandung

Figures 7
Aestheticizing urban spaces in Bandung and George Town.

| 8 | Narrating the Creative Selves: Everyday Media-related Practice in Creative Collectives

Spatial struggles in the creative cities by contesting the official narrative have been analysed in the previous chapter. These struggles are shown in various forms of creative expressions in the street as one key element. Beyond the city streets, those struggles are also part of everyday practices of particular individuals. Using their creative collectives as their spatial and social ground, these individuals articulate their voices through the formation of alternative space in the city. Drawing on the case of creative collectives in Bandung, this chapter analyses the everyday practices by several individuals who run and maintain their respective group. This discussion can also be understood as the ways they narrate their cultural identities as creative selves through the practices of making and networking, while simultaneously defining and re-producing the meaning of spaces, both in offline and online settings.

Creative collective: the site of creative practices

Bandung is well known for its youth culture and vibrant local arts scene, as demonstrated through many expressions and media platforms. The municipal government of Bandung is part of the Southeast Asian Creative Cities Network, a consortium that also includes George Town in Malaysia, Cebu in the Philippines and Chiang Mai in Thailand (SACCN, 2014). As indicated in the introduction and chapter four, Bandung has become the home for several independent groups and community-based initiatives who employ creativity as their core orientation and activity. These including clothing companies, distribution outlets (*distro*), art collectives, sketching and drawing communities, independent music distributors and merchandisers, book lovers and comics

productions, alternative libraries and other do-it-yourself (DIY) groups (Luvaas, 2012; Jurriëns, 2014; Dellyana and Rustiadi, 2019). From a historical viewpoint, Bandung has long had several groups involved in art and creative works, including the famous *Bandoengsche Kunstkring* (Bandung Art Circle) that had "848 members in 1928, a symphony orchestra and a theatre company" (Mrázek, 1994: 35).

In contemporary Bandung, forms of collective creativity are intensifying and diversifying. Urban Cartography, a project initiated by a collective named Common Room in 2005, has made a directory of the creative collectives in the city:

> Urban Cartography […] meant to map DIY communities in Bandung since the mid 1990s, including punks, skateboarders and independent fashion, book and music businesses. These communities have been using a diversity of media and techniques, ranging from assembled computers, pirated software, photocopies and silk-screen to radio, internet and SMS, for producing various types of creative output, such as music, fashion, websites, journals, zines, posters, video clips, stickers and badges. […] The Urban Cartography project covered 23 creative communities in Bandung. (Jurriëns, 2017: 201)

There is a common pattern in the formation of socially-bonded group, called *sanggar*, in the creative and art scene in Indonesia. *Sanggar* is the specific Indonesian term that refers to such a collaborative group, and has been widely adopted from the 1960s onwards to refer to a group that operates more like a kinship, in which one person (usually a founding artist) becomes the leading figure in the group and develops patron-client relations. The majority of members within a *sanggar* typically live in the same place and it is characterised by mutual support (Rath, 2003). The collectives in post-1998 (i.e. post-Suharto, post-authoritarian) Indonesia still share a few traits of the older *sanggar* model (Spielmann, 2017), but they now include more dynamic forms of networking with wider actors and a newly emergent notion of 'alternative space'. An Indonesian art critic and co-founder of an art collective defines such space in the following way:

> So, what is alternative space? It can be at least described as the following: a 'relatively free' space which is managed by artists or their sort, intends to organise an art activity or anything related to it, has a participative quality, ideologically independent […] and tends to be a resistance to an established system. (Kurniawan, 2003: 36)

In the next section, I elaborate upon the meaning of alternative space as an on-going project within the new collectives in post-authoritarian Indonesia.

Creating alternative space, articulating identity

The first collective I discuss here is Tobucil & Klabs (hereafter called Tobucil), which consists of creatives involved in bookbinding, knitting and crochet. This collective started as an alternative bookshop in 2001, and the name itself, Tobucil, was initially an acronym of *toko buku kecil* (literally "small bookshop"). The bookshop has later become a more secondary activity for the collective as they have developed businesses selling their creations (both online and offline) and running regular workshops on art making and craft skills. The second collective is Kineruku, an alternative library and bookshop that was set up in 2003 to address the need for a creative space for the book lovers and cinephiles in Bandung. This collective has expanded its activities by running a café, a coffee roasting line named Kopiruku and a vintage shop named Garasi Opa, which is located at the same house as the library. The third creative collective, Omuniuum, began as an alternative bookshop in 2003, and since 2007 they have transformed themselves into "a small shop of reading and listening" (Omuniuum, n.d.) which doubles as a distribution outlet for independent Indonesian bands. The fourth collective is Omnispace[11] that was formed on 16 April 2015 as an art collective, consisting of no less than ten young, emerging visual artists in the city. This collective organises an alternative art space, also "embodies art and alternative activities" to support contemporary culture and the art scene in Bandung (BDG Connex, n.d.). The alternative art space of Omnispace is physically located in the same building with Omuniuum. All key figures in these four collectives know each other due to their involvement in various collaborations or shared events either in Bandung or other cities.

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[11] There are variants of written form in referring the name of this collective. In several art publications and catalogues, the name is written differently, such as Omni Space, Omnispace, OmniSpace, OMNISPACE, or OMNI.Space (Azhar, 2019; BDG Connex, n.d.; Darren Knight Gallery, 2019; IndoArtNow, n.d.). In this thesis, I write "Omnispace" for a consistent cross-reference and easy index entry to find. This written form is also the one that the collective's members usually write in their own publications (Adhisuryo, Ahmad and Supriyanto, 2017; see also the members' posts in their website and social media). Orally – during my interviews with them and conversations among each other – they simply said "Omni" as the short nickname, referring to their collective's full name, Omnispace.
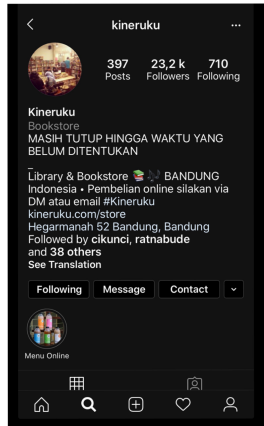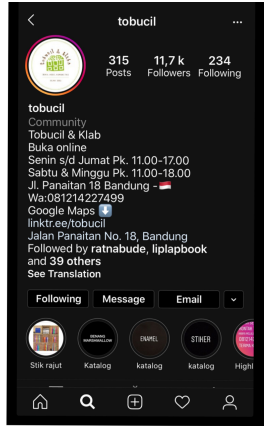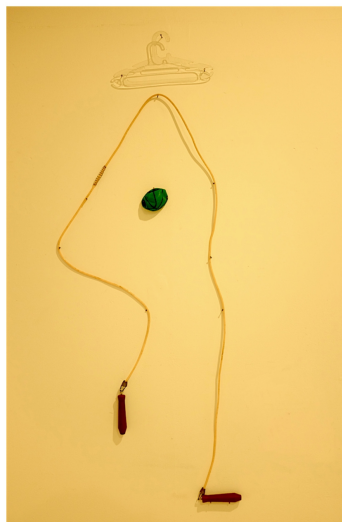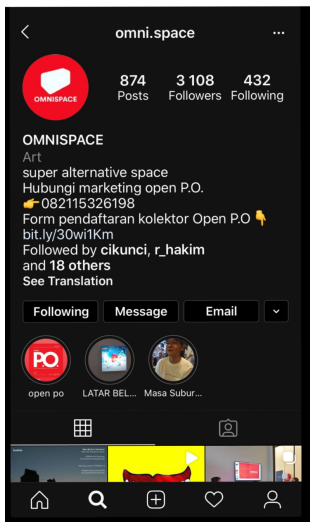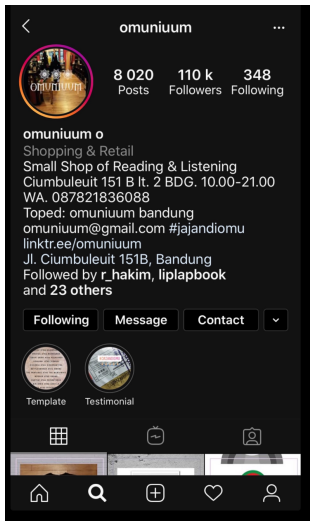
Figure 8.1
The 'home': the physical and the digital space. Photographs by author and screenshots of the collectives' Instagram account.

Visiting the key sites where each creative collective resides in, it becomes clear that these places perform many different functions: the collective residence is the

members' commercial store, but at the same time it is also their office, workshop studio, library, gallery, a gathering place for family and friends, and a place to be away from their own houses. This creates a strong overarching sense of a communal home and this can also be felt, for example, from the facade of each house, the use of furniture in various designs, the smell of homemade coffee in the morning, and the sounds of friendly conversations inside. The collectives' Instagram accounts also evoke a sense of home (see Figure 8.1): for example, in @tobucil (Tobucil & Klabs' Instagram account), @kineruku (Kineruku's), @omuniuum (Omuniuum's) and @omni.space (Omnispace's), the feeling of home is conveyed through the personal storytelling in the captions added to daily posted images.

Tobucil was initiated in 2001 by Tarlen Handayani along with two of her friends, Rani Elsanti Ambyo and Connie Chysania (Murti, 2012: 83). Tobucil have relocated four times in the last 19 years and at the time of writing they reside in a house they have rented since July 2016 in downtown Bandung. The members of Tobucil share the rent cost of amount IDR 60 million (approximately EUR 3,500) per year with other collectives, a price that is considerably high in Bandung. Omuniuum has also a similar situation, sharing the rent of their *ruko* (Indonesian: *rumah-toko*, a three-storey block apartment) with other tenants, one of them is Omnispace that organises their small-scale gallery and alternative art space in the third level of this *ruko*. Only Kineruku have a permanent location, as this collective uses the owner's family house.

By choosing to become a bookbinder, knitter, or crocheter, members of Tobucil have deliberately chosen alternatives to mass production or other forms of routinised labour. As a journalism graduate from a university in Bandung, Tarlen worked as a scriptwriter in a local news radio station prior to co-founding the collective. At Tobucil, she now plays a role as the collective programmer/general coordinator (*Koordinator Umum*), though she describes her role in less managerial terms:

> I am a bookbinder, the Tobucil's programmer and a freelance writer. This order is intentional. The biggest portion now, indeed, I am a bookbinder, secondly I also take care of Tobucil, then thirdly I write, if I remember. [chuckled]. I, myself, am still an active member of AJI [*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen*, the association of independent journalists in Indonesia] of the Bandung chapter. I don't want my membership there being cancelled just because I no longer regularly write, it would be ironic then. [chuckled]. I am one of the AJI Bandung's founding people.
> (Tarlen, 43, F, bookbinder, event programmer and co-founder)

Other members also see themselves primarily as creatives, and identify their current roles in Tobucil as contributing to their emotional and social well-being:

> I studied metallurgy in university, then now I involve more in knitting. Well…for me, creativity feeds my soul [*kebutuhan batin*].
> (Palupi, 42, F, knitter, yarn manager and knitting mentor)

> Before joining Tobucil in 2005, I used to work in an interior design agency, a bank, then an automotive leasing company. I was so stressful when I worked in these office-based types of work [*kerja kantoran*]. My work experiences were so inflexible, time-consuming, not good for my own health, and I wasn't myself back then because I worked like a robot.
> (Elin, 41, F, crocheter and operational manager)

The use of vernacular terms is notable here. These two phrases, *kebutuhan batin* and *kerja kantoran* (by Palupi and Elin respectively), are in Indonesian, and the former means sustenance for the soul, while the latter refers to the inflexible character of formal work. Craft-based creativity for members of Tobucil (Figure 8.2) has become more than simply a job: it is a 'poetic' way of finding and building a sense of identity. Their everyday creativity is perceived as a process "which evokes a feeling of joy" (Gauntlett, 2018: 87). Having said this, they show a "form of connection that can make a unity" of different elements without forging a linkage all of the time, referring to Hall's (2019c: 235) sense of "articulation". I argue, Tobucil's members articulate their identities by connecting their craft-based activities, maintaining social relations among members, managing their use of the private and collective domains, and their collective space, in order to flexibly connect their own cultural identity of dwelling and living in their city.

Figure 8.2
Articulating identity through creating.

Tobucil presents a blueprint – or perhaps survival kit – for being an independent creative collective in Bandung. In other words, the 'stubbornness' of everyday practice (de Certeau, 1984; Highmore, 2002) is chosen by this collective with the awareness of its consequences and difficulties. They handle challenges by focusing on the everyday tactics that build a sense of commonality among them. Part of the campaign by the municipal government in developing Bandung as an emerging creative city is grant schemes, which are offered by both the local government and international cultural agencies to individuals and groups. These funding schemes, of course, require the recipient of the grant to create activities or programmes that are in-line with the strategic plans strictly designed by either the state or international funding agencies (Le Sourd et al., 2005; Rebernak ed., 2008: 5). Tobucil members have decided not to take part in several funding grants (either from the state or non-governmental organisations) and declined invitations to join prize-winning social entrepreneurship competitions because of the restrictive nature of the grants, despite acknowledging that the offers were tempting:

We never want to join any kind of competition that uses a label such as social entrepreneur, even though we might be doing that in practice. But, that label and the competition along with it have changed the very true sense of commonality in community into a commodity. Our community is not commodity!
(Tarlen, 43, F, bookbinder, event programmer and co-founder)

Figure 8.3
Juxtaposition of commonalities in Tobucil & Klabs: the store, the products, the workshops, the people.

Commonality here is vital for making the creative collective into an "alternative space" (Murti, 2012: 66-67) for those who share similar values. In Tobucil, craft-

making becomes the 'make-do' of available cultures (see Highmore, 2002: 148), and allows members to perform inventiveness in their everyday lives. This notion is expressed in an excerpt from Tarlen's blog post below:

> An Encounter with Different Views of 'Culture of Creating'
> [E]very traditional knowledge (either in the West or in the East) has its simple technology, practical application, and wisdom towards the environment. It leads to the balance of lifestyle, both physically and spiritually. [...] 'Creating' is not only an obligatory effort to make someone into a 'productive' human being, but most importantly, 'creating' builds ideology and spiritually fulfils the self where 'creating' is an act that makes everyone feels empowered. Creating also forms our understanding on the principle of process that always need time, tolerance to failure, and the awareness that everything cannot be possessed instantly. These kinds of attitude will grow our ability to prevent ourselves from becoming greedy. (Handayani, 2015, translation by the author)

Palupi, another Tobucil member, also expressed her thoughts on the impact of the collective's activities and interactions on her own creativity and daily work. Like Tarlen, Palupi feels that Tobucil teaches her about the importance of 'process' in order to feel empowered. Committed to independence, both personally and collectively, these are their tactics to maintain this feeling of empowerment and appreciation for the slow, long processes of craftwork. Palupi, a 42-year-old female knitter and Tobucil's yarn manager, has been involved in Tobucil's activities since 2002, starting as an informal helper. In 2006 she began her new role as the knitting tutor in *Kelas Merajut* (Knitting Class), one of Tobucil's weekly open classes. While Palupi was knitting a beanie for one of her customers and I was helping Tarlen's assistant in folding up a bookbinding order, we engaged in a conversation on what the collective means to her:

> Zaki (author): Now, after these years of your involvement here, how do you see Tobucil?
> Palupi   : Do you mean how [Tobucil] is seen from outside, or from the inside?
> Zaki   : I mean, inside…from yourself. How do you, for example, label this group? According to yourself and your experiences involved so far.
> Palupi   : Oh, that. To me, I saw [Tobucil] as a community, actually, and more. More like…[pause]…hmm? It's also a kind of training ground, a place where people can learn something.
> Zaki   : So, a community and also a training place?
> Palupi   : Yes, there's a sense of learning too here. For the development of any individuals [who involve or take benefit from the activities].

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Even though it might not involve or targeted to bigger group of people, at least, it gives opportunity for those who want to learn something here. In crafts, writing, and other things too. That's why it's important [for Tobucil] to keep its existence because of this reason.

When this conversation took place in Tobucil, the soundscape was filled not only with our voices, but also the electronic sewing machine operated by Tarlen in the other room. The constant interval of this sewing machine's sound and Palupi's continuous clicking sound of her knitting needles mingled with our friendly talk. Other members who were working either in the same room with us or in other rooms sometimes jumped into our conversation, adding relevant information, or, on other occasions, simply smiling, laughing or making friendly jokes.

Aside from Palupi's reflections on the collective's role, the nuance of this collective space also indicates a significant trait of the everyday practices in Tobucil, that within the collective there is no strict delineation of working time, social or family-like time, and leisure time. As urban space is always considered to be filled with sounds almost all the time (Bull, 2016; Tonkiss, 2016), however, the everyday soundscape in Tobucil – though the place is located very close to the downtown area – is completely different with the buzzing noise of the city. When Adorno's analysis on cities leads him to propose the notion of "space of habitation" (cited in Bull, 2016: 78), I interpret that the way in which this everyday soundscape – along with other everyday practices and spatial formation – of this collective demonstrate such a similar notion on the production of space as a collective habitation. The everyday soundscape in Tobucil is another indication of the collective's space; as Tonkinss (2016) observes on the importance of sounds in the city, the soundscape in this collective have become atmospheric to these people and an evocative element to build shared memories among them. The different elements of making craftwork, the sounds of the sewing machine, talking amongst each other, in Tobucil are mixed organically and each occurs throughout daily routines, which include routine work, regular classes and workshops. These create a condition of, as Adorno calls it, "states of 'we-ness'" in the city (cited in Bull, 2016: 79).

This organic mix of everyday practices can also be found in another collective, Kineruku. As Kineruku has been situated in their owner's family house since their establishment, they do not need to deal with the issues of regularly relocating their premises. However, this creative collective has developed a similarly organic approach to managing, developing and networking their daily work. From the

outside, Kineruku's house looks like a common house located in Hegarmanah neighbourhood, a housing area in the upper-north of Bandung. It is located outside of the city's buzz and has a cooler climate, a quite perfect place to house an alternative library in this tropical city. Only a small sign box labelled "Kineruku" placed in their front terrace indicates that there are more activities inside than any other common houses. Entering the building I can see that the furniture is laid out like a family house – a set of small antique chairs and a coffee table in the terrace, the dining set in the main room (possibly a repurposed living room), and the outdoor chairs and tables in the rear veranda facing the backyard. Indeed, the atmosphere of a warm family house welcomed me and anyone else who came to this place. Yet this house no longer functions just as a family home: it is a library, a bookshop, a coffee house, a small restaurant, a vintage items shop, a social gathering place, a site for discussion; all in one place. The soundscape is also unique, not as quiet as in a university or public library as most visitors can be heard greeting one other and engaging in friendly conversation. I sometimes overheard visitors talking at other tables, but the people's voices were also not as loud as in a café or restaurant. It feels as if the staff and visitors have reached a common understanding of the acceptable behaviours and the level of voices required to allow the different activities in Kineruku to run smoothly.

Rani, the owner and one of the leading figures in Kineruku, dedicates a small-yet-spacious room in the backyard for any gathering activities, from open discussion and book launches, to performances by selected independent musicians and bands.

> We used to name our event Seruku, lasting till our first five events or so. Seruku, *Seru-seru di Ruku*.[12] This is something that we want to re-activate again. We want to have a kind of event that has relaxed ambiance, and organised in continuous way. This is the spirit of Seruku, actually. It takes form as a discussion club-like. Sharing forum, but in a more relaxed way.
> (Rani, 43, F, entrepreneur and co-founder)

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[12] Seruku, the name is an abbreviation of *Seru-Seru di Ruku* (Ruku refers to *Rumah Buku*, the former nickname of Kineruku) that in this context means Having Fun in Kineruku. The abbreviation form itself, *seruku*, is an Indonesian word with its own meaning, though it is not commonly used in its written form. It is mostly used in vernacular informal utterance. *Seruku* literally means 'my fun'. The use here by Kineruku signifies both the literal full-form phrase meaning and the playful meaning of its abbreviated form, referring to their intention to create a fun, relaxed discussion event.

She spoke about this during one late afternoon after Kineruku successfully co-organised and hosted a discussion that invited a performance artist. Afterwards, she explained that she wanted to hold such events more frequently at Kineruku. Rani and her husband, Budi – the collective's Director and Rani's key partner in organising the collective – realise the importance of maintaining the fun part of any activities in their collective. This is not only intended to attract more visitors or participants, but most importantly to maintain their vision of Kineruku as not only a place for economic transactions, but as a place where relationships are built upon a foundation of mutual sharing. Budi illustrates this using one of their daily activities:

> We don't just sell things here. Now with our new section [Garasi Opa, the vintage shop line], for example, it basically started with our own illusions that our vintage items have their market value, but apparently it's not that simple. So even our business practice, if I can say that, has to re-route in a different way. So, then, we don't advertise us, or what we have here, not like that. But it appears that we actually sell, quote, unquote, knowledge. […] When people search info online and come to Bandung, looking for vintage things, old recordings or vinyl for instance, they will have in their mind to come to Kineruku and look for me. Then, we chat about that, here and there, before they decide whether to buy or not what they need.
> (Budi, 40, M, librarian and director)

In the other collectives, Omuniuum and Omnispace, I also witnessed how social relations become important for maintaining their collectives' daily practices, especially in dealing with the issues of dwelling in this city. Observing their daily routines and speaking to Boit and Tri, a couple that initiated Omuniuum, their spatial and social environment demonstrate a strong sense of social relations as the key aspect for them.

Omuniuum, as of writing, rents a three-storey shophouse in the upper-north of Bandung, located in the area close to one of the busy universities in the city. They use the second floor for their store and for events they occasionally organise, while the third floor in the last five years has been used by Omnispace, an art collective that organises an independent gallery and art-related activities. Omuniuum shares the first floor with another tenant who runs a service business targeted at university students. On the first floor, the collective has a kitchen in the corner and a few tables and stools in the hallway. At this 'open kitchen', most of their informal meetings and other planning work take place. Apart from Boit, Tri, Omuniuum store's staff and Omnispace's members, most people who gather here are the collectives' friends and acquaintances from the local independent

music scene and young visual artists, and these individuals often come with their family members as well.

> We used to think that Omu[niuum] is like a bus stop: people come, please interact with each other here, then feel free to go again.
> (Tri, 48, M, manager and co-founder)

Then, his partner continues by explaining further:

> [It is] still like that though, a little bit. But, now more people engaged more with us, involved with the network or just routinely hanging out here. […] Eventually the network is getting stronger, we ended up become friends too. With more friendship we have built so far, trust among each other is stronger. In our business, we cannot but rely on trust. As simple as that, [we] keep going.
> (Boit, 41, F, merchandiser and co-founder)

At their open kitchen on the first floor, the trust that serves as the foundation of the collectives' social relations is built through the routines of creative work, managing the sale of merchandise, cooking and having dinner together. The fourth collective, Omnispace, relies on a mutual trust relationship as well. One member reflects on this collective:

> In the beginning I was actually uncomfortable to be called as an artist, sounds too heavy for me. A few years ago, when I jumped into the art world, to be honest, it was due to the commercial reason. […] At the time, I just knew how to make artworks, that's all, even in one method only: the reverse engineering technique. But after I met other young artists and made Omni[space], I learned from them. Their different techniques, approaches, also their ideas in responding to any situations they face or emotions they experience.
> (Ewing, 39, M, visual artist and co-founder)

While another Omnispace's member, Nasrul, was busy making sketches in his notebook, Ewing chatted with him and the others who were sitting in this open kitchen, waiting for the dishes cooked by Boit that they were about to share and eat together. The smoke of deep-fried chicken and a vegetable stir-fry filled-up this tiny hallway, then the smell of freshly grinded *sambal* (chili relish) seemed like a cue, automatically signalling everyone to begin their evening routines in this place: having dinner together, while talking about the programmes Omnispace had and plan to run, the unique questions the Omuniuum store received from their customers in the last few days, stories about another member who was

joining an art residency in another city, and some everyday conversations about family matters (e.g., struggling to enrol their kids to a middle school, dealing with parents' expectations, and so on).

For Tobucil, Kineruku, Omuniuum and Omnispace convivial social relations and fun are the primary considerations in designing and organising their collective's activities in the bustling city of Bandung. Indeed, fun is one of the key notions in urban living. As Bhattacharya (2000: 79) notes, "more than landscapes, fun [in the city] is possible because of the people". The way in which fun is approached in these collectives' everyday practices is by foregrounding the element of social relations among people who involve and interact through their activities both in online and offline settings. This understanding of multidimensional elements of the city is a notion that somehow has been neglected by the top-down approach in the development of contemporary Bandung, where physical infrastructures and built environments have become the main focus in urban revitalisation programmes. In this sense, it is worth reiterating this statement here:

> B]ut there is more to the city than simply an inventory of the visible. […] For cities are more than the inventory of things to be found in them, precisely because they are also about the social relations that constitute them. (Pile and Thrift eds., 2000: xix)

What these collectives have practiced, I argue, resonates with the very essence of the city as not an agglomeration of material or tangible objects but as comprising many other elements – as quoted above. Those elements, in the context of these four collectives, include social relations, shared values (e.g. against commodification of community), spatial struggles, bottom-up placemaking and making-do for survival in the city.

Alternative to the 'tourist gaze'

For many members of Tobucil, their creative collective is a place to gather different people from various backgrounds, to create a loose association, and to serve as a space where *tukar pikiran* (Indonesian: sharing ideas) is possible. As Elin, a 41-year-old female crocheter, puts it:

> Tobucil is like a place [*wadah*] for sharing ideas [*tukar pikiran*]. I prefer to call it as *wadah*.
> (Elin, 41, F, crocheter and operational manager)

Wadah is an Indonesian word that literally means "a place to put or save something", while metaphorically it is used when people talk about "a gathering place" or "an association, an assemblage".[13] Elin's *wadah*, as well as other individuals from all four creative collectives, is imagined, perceived and lived through their own organic processes. It then becomes a kind of hub, i.e. a social and creative hub, that is designed and developed in a somehow unstructured yet dynamic way of living in the city.

What these creative collectives have practiced is quite contrary to the 'creative hub' imagined by the local state-led programme. Among other things, this programme has been materialised through the establishment of the Bandung Creative Hub building compound in December 2017 (Figure 8.4). The notion of a creative hub is institutionalised by the state through the visible material of physical infrastructure, structured plans, grand ideas and visibility, strict regulations, but also a lack of mutual and sustainable engagement with the relevant social actors. Observing the spatial and social practice in the compound of Bandung Creative Hub, I noted at least three issues. First, the institutionalisation of creative places has been designed with a very top-down approach. The voice of the state, including their consultants on urban planning and design, is by far the most prominent. Secondly, the notion of hub is perceived as an axis that serves the needs of the state rather than addressing the needs of creatives, creative institutions, and the innovation and implementation of creative practices within the city. Most of the visitors I observed sat alone, a few in small groups, using laptops or other mobile devices to take advantage of the free wireless internet connection this building provides. Third, and most visible and obvious, Bandung Creative Hub explores the notion of creativity in a very superficial manner. The building is filled, on some floors to a quite excessive level, with both illustrative, colourful, and ornamental murals, paintings, inspirational typography, and other figurative symbols. All of these are scattered across all levels of the building without a particular connecting theme or artistic style and are accompanied by excessive warning signs, mostly of the *dilarang* (don't-do-this) type.

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[13] This translation is based on the Dictionary of Indonesian Language (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia – KBBI)*, the official dictionary published by the National Language Board of the country. The online version can be accessed at https://kbbi.web.id.

Figure 8.4
Bandung Creative Hub, the state's imagination on creative city, focusing more on built environment.

The way in which creative imagination is proposed by the state-led programmes, including the establishment of Bandung Creative Hub, is indicative of the so-called official narrative of understanding, defining and living in a creative city. Although as scholars have noted elsewhere, there are many urban projects which tend to prioritise the "*tourist gaze*, suggesting that many places have been consciously or unconsciously shaped by the ways in which they are seen or consumed by tourists" (Gilbert, 2000: 260, original emphasis). In Bandung such a tourist gaze approach can be seen in the visual prominence of the state-led creative city projects. These not only appear within the city's physical space, but are also found in official digital campaigns and the social media feeds of Bandung's public figures.

On the contrary, the social media practices of the studied creative collectives do not show this tourist-centred perspective. Similar to the way in which they build their social relations within each collective, their actions in social media reflect a desire to build mutual and closely acquainted relations with their target audiences.

There are loyal customers we've been dealing with for years. And every time they talk with Omu[niuum]'s account, we make sure they know and feel like talking to human being. That's something that we always try to show to them.
(Tri, 48, M, manager and co-founder)

Writing the Instagram caption is my role. Omu[niuum] could survive if we have storytelling to offer. I choose the simplest expressions of language that are easy for anyone to understand. And, as far as possible, not written in English.
(Boit, 41, F, merchandiser and co-founder)

Both Boit and Tri stress the importance to actively respond to their followers' comments, though Omuniuum's social media account sometimes receives repetitive questions from potential customers and, as Boit puts it, requires frequent banal but necessary explanations. Another collective, Tobucil, faces a similar situation. However, their tactical way in dealing with this is by creating and managing several accounts for different purposes. The collective's Instagram account is filled mostly with the catalogue of new products in store and calls for participation in upcoming workshops. "Tobucil's account seems more one-way; yes, the two-way talk is still possible, but we limit our way to respond to all comments there," said Palupi. They have specific WhatsApp and Line numbers for dealing with more detailed responses to customers and potential participants of any workshops. Additionally, each crafter in Tobucil has their own craft brand's Instagram account separate from their own personal account, and they use these accounts for dealing with crafts orders and work-related activities. Kineruku's members emphasised to me the process they go through before any posts are made and published online:

What we post is based on our discussion first [between Rani, Budi and one appointed staff]. There's no written guideline, just talk to each other. There's no do and don't list…everyone knows already, especially in avoiding a kind of show-off posting. No need to show our personal connections [with some people or institutions], for example. Or, showing off our knowledge on something. Nope, not like that. Even if we want to write about a particular thing we know, we try to write it as humble as possible. Sometimes we use humour, or other ways, to say something.
(Rani, 43, F, entrepreneur and co-founder)

In choosing the digital media platforms they frequently used, these four collectives do what is pragmatic: they simply follow the principle of what is most

convenient for them and most easy to be accessed by their targeted audiences. Ewing in Omnispace said:

> We choose the popular one. We now tend to [use] Instagram, it's simply more effective, popular and simple for people to access. […] Ideally, we want to capture and share all activities we do by posting them all, but so far, we mainly posted the pre-events only. We mostly forgot to publish any post-events information. Everyone [in Omnispace] basically can be the admin of our social media, but it's Arum [another member; a photographer-cum-musician] who is more diligent to do this and the one who is persistent in responding comments, if any.
> (Ewing, 39, M, visual artist and co-founder)

What all these quoted practices suggest is that these creative collectives focus in the social processes among themselves first in dealing with the everyday routines of social media posting. Though all collectives realise that they also need followers, participants, or customers in some situations, the way they manage their social media contents and interactions is far from the 'tourist gaze' perspective. By paying attention more on the key values within each creative collective rather than manufacturing an image or strategically constructing an impression, they have developed tactics in their social media routines based on their own storytelling creation, pragmatics, and social relations among themselves in the whole process. All four collectives do not manifestly cater to the 'tourist gaze', and instead place value on objects and events and people that differ significantly from the official Bandung 'brand'.

Figure 8.5
Tactics in media practice: "we could survive if we have storytelling to offer".

Having tried so hard to keep such an approach, however, each collective also faces the difficulty of in-between positions. No matter how critical they are of the main narrative as proposed and designed by the state, they also deal with the everyday struggles both individually and collectively. For the art collective such as Omnispace, maintaining themselves as an independent group while individually they need to survive after the Southeast Asian art market boom (ca. 2000-2010) is not easy. They face an awkward positioning of themselves in the art scene: coming from (or, some members are just getting into) the commercial art scene, and initiating a few experimental art-related activities that are considered uncommon in the mainstream art world. For example, Omnispace initiate a biennial programme called *Getok Tular*, introducing a more open, inclusive mechanism of art auctions, with the intention of giving more freedom and transparency in process and a connection to both the artists and the art collectors. The collectors can be everyone either those who are already familiar with the art practices, or friends, neighbours and acquaintances coming from different social and professional backgrounds. This programme is organised in a relatively small-yet-intimate environment. Although Omnispace receive income from this programme, as they collected twenty percent of every settled auction, the most important thing for them is the introduction of this experimental idea that can actually be put in practice. This art experimentation is also intended to raise

awareness of other art spaces – both the mainstream galleries and the alternative art spaces – in the city to show that building such a simple connection between artists, their artworks, the art space management and the general people who collect the artworks are possible. This effort is important to note here as one of their tactics in coping with the dilemma of their in-between position: between official and non-official, mainstream and alternative, commercial and non-proprietary, local and global, also consistency and inconsistency in choosing pragmatic ways in craft making, doing arts, managing social media, and organising alternative library, or book and music record store. For Omnispace in particular, this tactical approach is an inevitable and embodied part of their current art practice, focusing on 'art that work' rather than merely on the making of artwork. As one member writes in a collective art book:

> Even after the [art market] boom, artists should not only think about artwork. There are many things other than making artwork that we do in art. […] We've done many things to make this art-field more habitable for us other than just making artwork. (Ewing, 2017: 229)

From book, craft, art, to vintage suitcase

Outside of building relations with customers, followers, or targeted audiences, the collectives build social networks among each other that blur the lines between their online and offline relations. This is shown in the intertwined practices between selecting content for their social media accounts, holding events, and a shared fascination of particular topics or objects. It happens in Kineruku, for instance, where they run a vintage shop named Garasi Opa that has both an online and offline store. Ria, the Co-Artistic Director of Papermoon Puppet Theatre, a performance puppet-theatre artist from another city who happened to be the guest speaker in a discussion in Bandung, knew about Kineruku's new vintage shop firstly from Instagram. Then, she became interested in the collections of this vintage shop as she has a fascination with collecting vintage suitcases for props used in performance and her own private collection. Eventually, the circuit of network among three persons, Tarlen (Tobucil in Bandung, acted as the event's moderator at the time) who has a similar interest in collecting vintage suitcases, Ria (Papermoon in Yogyakarta), and Rani (Kineruku in Bandung) is socially formed and culturally bonded.

This network is also mediated by creative works through the use of vintage material objects and via social media. As Löfgren (2016) argues, there are emotional and affective values in sensitive objects people feel attachment to, including in this case a shared fascination with vintage suitcases. According to Löfgren (2016: 126), "the suitcase is not only a container for stuff, but also affects, dreams, anxieties and ideals." Based on this interpretation, then, the circuit of network of these three people from different creative collectives articulates their practices and identities through material objects, here vintage suitcases. The meaning of this object travels symbolically through their social media and creative practices. This case is exemplary of the organic way in which everyday practices happen in these collectives, and their networks play a role in sustaining what Hall calls "articulation of connected practices", as referred to earlier (as quoted in Winter 2018: 369; see Hall, 2019c).

The articulation of connected practices happens between Omnispace and their wider network. Ewing, one of the co-founders of Omnispace, never had any interactions, collaborations or programmes together with Omuniuum's members before he co-initiated his art collective. When two of his friends in the Bandung's art circle used the empty room on the third floor of Omuniuum's place as their personal studio named *Jiwo Tentrem*,[14] Ewing and a few other friends occasionally came there. They brought their ideas, their artworks and eventually initiated activities together. Ewing himself has previously co-developed an experimental art group, namely "A Stone A"[15], that he continues into follow-up projects – such as

[14] The *Jiwo Tentrem* studio was initiated by two Bandung's artists, Mufti "Amenk" Priyanka and Ageng Purna Galih. After Omnispace was formed and began their group activities in 2015 at the very same place with this studio, both artists remained working there and occasionally also involved in several Omnispace's programmes. Amenk is also part of "A Stone A", an art-and-music group along with Ewing and a few other artists. For further details on a history of the space and the network of people involved there, see Adhisuryo, Ahmad and Supriyanto (2017).

[15] "A Stone A" was established by a few Bandung's young artists, namely Amenk, Ewing, Muhammad Akbar, Ori and the late Andri. As an art collective, they combine between music, performance art and visual art as their core media in their work. Beyond the aspect of medium they use in their artwork, according to Ewing, this initiative is first and foremost an art experimentation by foregrounding a combined element of "local expression, kitsch, popular form of performance and music". The local expression he mentioned here refers to the way in which the group's name was formulated. The words *A' Stone A'* is a common expression requested by young audiences in any music gigs in Bandung, meaning to request the band on stage for playing any The Rolling Stone's songs no matter which local bands are performing. In Bandung where Sundanese language is the mother tongue for most of the people, the complete expression is said: *Aa', Rolling Stone, Aa'!* (Sundanese: *Aa'* means Guy, Dude, or Bro, usually used as a general and friendly greeting to any men). To me, the intention to use this vernacular expression from the local music gig culture in combination with the global popular

Side B, A Stone B, *Intimidasi Vitamin C*, among others. When I met him in a rehearsal prior to his collective exhibition at the Selasar Sunaryo Art Space in Bandung, Ewing said that on the same evening they were going to be one of the opening gigs for an exhibition called "Re-Emergence". Both emerging and established Bandung's artists were involved in this exhibition that took place in an art gallery in the city. A few hours after I finished talking to Ewing in his rehearsal, I went back to Omuunium, meeting up again with Boit and Tri. Both of them were planning to come to the exhibition's opening with their friends. Although not visual artists, Boit and Tri feel connected to Ewing and his friends ("A Stone A" and "A Stone B"). They share similar values and orientation beyond the artwork itself. To Ewing and his collective, the artworks are the sensitive objects for Omnispace's members and their wider network.

culture icon (i.e., The Rolling Stone) as the inspiration to name this art group is worth to note. As most of Ewing and his friends' artistic expressions also play out with the notion of popular culture and kitsch, the aesthetic and ethical messages of their art are concerned with critical, social issues experienced or witnessed from their surroundings. Having said this, the practice of naming as demonstrated by this art group is beyond a simple, mundane thing. This articulates a specific meaning to which these young artists want to be perceived both through their art and collective personalities.

Figure 8.6
From the circuit of social networks to the shared meanings of artwork and vintage suitcase as sensitive objects. Photographs by author and screenshot of Tobucil's Instagram post.

In another collective, Tobucil & Klabs, Palupi builds a similar 'articulation of connected practices' with the works of a prominent visual artist named Mulyana. He gains his reputation in contemporary art world through his major works, making both a series of imaginary characters (called The Mogus) and gigantic art installations depicting coral and underwater ecosystem fully made by knitted and crocheted yarn. Palupi, who is a knitter and Tobucil's yarn manager, has helped Mulyana's artwork processes since the beginning of his career when they both involved in knitting class and workshop in Tobucil. Palupi also contributed in one of Mulyana's recent solo exhibitions called "Multiple Hands by Mulyana and Friends: Celebrating 10th Anniversary of The Mogus" on 3-26 August 2018 in Bandung (Mulyana, 2018). During this exhibition period, Mulyana actively posted in his personal Instagram account, showing a glimpse of the exhibited artwork, the visitors' responses, and also mentioning, tagging and appreciating the people whom have involved and helped him in the decade of his art making journey. Here, the material objects of knitting (yarn, tools, the artwork resulted from the process, "The Mogus", video documentation of the processes and testimonies by contributors) and the collaborative exhibition become the sensitive objects and space for Palupi to engage with her wider networks in craft and art scene.

By considering this interplay, here specifically between online and offline social networks, and sensitising objects and space, one could see how media practice cannot be separated from a broader set of social practices. Those practices occur within a frame of reference (Hobart, 2010) that leads us to understand cultures in a particular situation. There are possibilities for freedom in creating a communal way of organising works, people and collectives. Such an effort is another way of articulating their cultural identities, choosing alternative ways of making do in the city and continually finding ways to co-exist.

Reflections

The creative collectives are more than physical places where individuals with similar fascinations and ideas gather and work together. These are also sites that have been continually producing spaces through everyday creative practices performed by each individual who takes part in it. These groups collectively connect ideas, values, creative processes, everyday problems and routines. Their media practices are formed using the potentiality of both online and offline social networks. These are the voices of their tactics in maintaining their personal and

collective efforts in their daily lives. Book, craft, art and vintage suitcase symbolise their voices as part of these identity articulations.

de Certeau, Giard and Mayol (1998) argue that the main intention in studying everyday life is to allow the everyday voices to be heard by positioning the researcher's voice as one of many voices in the text, not a strategic master-voice; in order to produce polyphonic or multi-voiced texts through varieties of both content and style. I do hope that, by presenting images and vignettes from Tobucil, Kineruku, Omuniuum and Omnispace, I have showcased the voices of communities engaged with creative work and world-making on a daily basis. While the Bandung government may benefit from its new listing in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, these collectives create their own narratives in their city, based on circuits of reciprocity and conviviality outside the discourse of urban planning and design.

Thus, the everyday creativities practiced by individuals within the studied creative collectives articulate their personal and cultural identities. The intertwining practices in both online and offline settings assist these individuals, as well as their respective creative collectives, to build social relations and maintain commonality amongst them. More discussions on the connected practices, to which such an alternative narrative is further articulated, can be found in the next chapter.

| 9 | Connected Practices in a Visual Essay

This chapter aims to reflect on the way in which 'holistic contextualisation' (Miller et al., 2016) has been applied to the everyday creativities I studied in the creative collectives. As the five previous analytical chapters have analysed several conceptual themes separately as the key aspects found in this research, this chapter adds another layer of the analyses by reflecting on the practices I have observed, experienced and taken part in within the context of my informants' daily lives.

To refer to the photographic practice in taking pictures, the ways I have presented the analyses in this thesis have analogically included using a 'wide angle lens' on the discourses of creative and heritage cities, alongside a closer look at creative collectives with the 'zoom lens' perspective; now in this concluding chapter I 'use' another lens, 'normal lens' angle, which affords a way of seeing the subject matter and capturing the variety of contexts surrounded the analysed topics in the thesis.

For example, in the previous chapter, I mentioned Elin in Tobucil & Klabs labelling her collective with an Indonesian word of *wadah*, meaning as a place to put or save something and also an association or assemblage. Not only with Tobucil, but in my overall analyses on all the creative collectives, I have located their *wadah* in the bigger picture of the cities seen from a 'wide angle lens' perspective of the analyses. Then, I have focused my analyses closer with a 'zoom lens' by investigating their daily practices, focusing on the articulation of different elements in detailed sharpness of their everyday creativities. Here, in this chapter I am slightly zooming out, using the 'normal lens' perspective to which I can still get the 'sharpness' of the details but capture the connected practices in their everyday lives. This 'multi-lens perspective' enables me to analyse the very form of articulation (Hall, 2019c). As "no one lives inside a topic of research" (Miller et al., 2016: 29), my reflections in this chapter is formed from a perspective of a 'normal lens' that allows me to see and understand the connected practices of my informants holistically contextualised.

This chapter is presented in a semi–photo-essay form. It is similar to chapter 7 in terms of its visual analysis form; this visual essay touches upon the everyday practices both in offline and online settings, and their correlation in its relevant contexts. The visual evidence collected specifically from the studied creative collectives in both cities are arranged in three sub-themes as the most common features found in the entanglement of their everyday practices. These saturated patterns in the empirical materials include social settings in media-related practices, material objects and social cohesion, and labour of love. All of these patterns are discussed through the form of a collage that offers reflections on the field notes, interview quotes and visual evidence in the photographic method both shot from the field and screenshot of the creative collectives' Instagram posts.[16] The visual evidence juxtapose these everyday practices. Regarding the use of screenshot, as Frosh (2019: 65) reminds us on its importance in the current digitally-informed social practices, we could perceive the screenshot as "a kind of document, a remediated photograph, and a mode of witnessing and poetic world disclosure". Both the photographs I shot from the field and the images captured through screenshot of the digital images posted by the informants are used here as a mode of witnessing for the articulation of connected practices (cited in Winter, 2017; see Hall, 2019c). Here such connected practices are taken from the everyday lives of the informants within each creative collective that are narrated alongside their own voices taken from the quoted conversational interviews with me and the interpretations informed from my field notes.

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[16] Similar to the photo-essay presented in chapter 7, the photographs in chapter 9 are also one coherent visual presentation. Having said so, all the photo-collages appearing in this chapter are titled as one figure heading only, namely "Figures 9 - Connected practices in everyday creativities".

Social settings in media-related practices
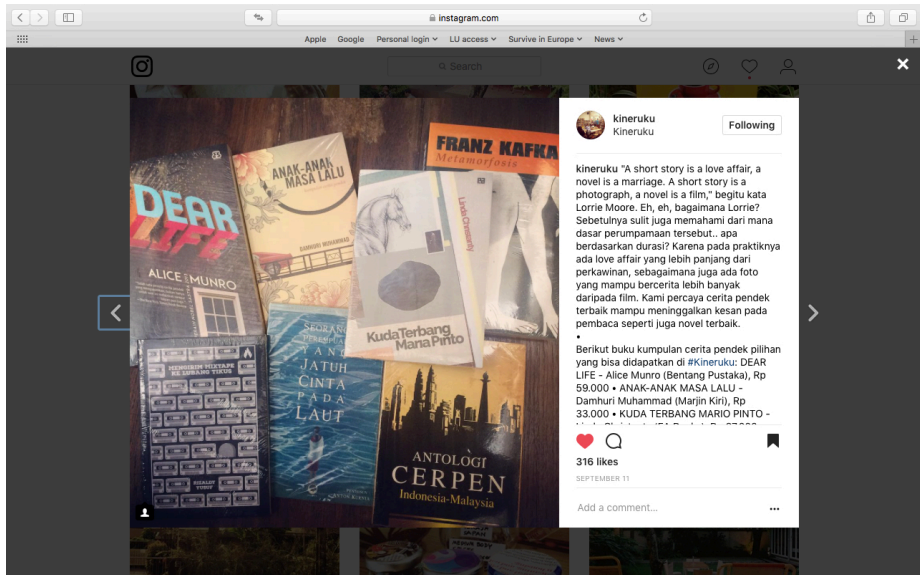
On one afternoon, I was engaged in a lengthy conversation with Rani, the co-founder and owner of Kineruku, an alternative library, café and bookshop in Bandung. Accompanied by a cup of freshly roasted coffee from the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago Rani had just bought, we were sitting in one of the verandas in Kineruku's house. She enthusiastically told me the new changes happened in this collective. We met and talked one year before, at the very same place, and she can recall the way she told me the life journey of Kineruku since its establishment. On the second time we met, on that afternoon in 2017, she proudly showed me the new renovation of the discussion room in the backyard, some small changes in the menu of its kitchen service, newly purchased items for their vintage shop, and most importantly, the involvement of more people as Kineruku's crews. During our conversation, as always, it was interrupted a few times by phone calls, greetings to guests she knew, calls from the staff in the kitchen, and questions by staff in the reception desk or their social media content management. Rani and her husband Budi, who co-organise this collective together, have an office on another level, but prefer to be on the same floor with all Kineruku's main activities. "We have a room upstairs, for computer and stuff. Budi's and my office, supposedly. [Chuckled]. But, most of the times we are here

[downstairs] with all our crew during our opening hours. It's easier and quicker for them to get in touch with me if something needs to be discussed or decided," said Rani.

A guy came in to our table. He is Andika, part of the crew who at the time had a main role to create thematic, continuous Instagram posts for Kineruku's account based on what they have in the library and bookshop. "*Sebentar ya* [Just a sec], Zak," Rani said to me. As discussed in another chapter, this collective always focuses on the process of collective discussion on any images they are about to post (chapter 8); in this moment I witnessed how it happened. The sequential shots as shown above, indeed, documented stage by stage in the preparation-and-taking-shots; what is of note beyond the technical aspects is the social process. They did the photo-shooting many times, changed the arrangement of the books a couple of times, also tried different angles with the adjustment of available light. In between all these technical stages, they sent messages to Budi who were not present at the time. They actually shared messages in a WhatsApp (WA) group designated for three of them – Rani, Budi and Andika – to specifically discuss the process of creating an Instagram post before it was finally published. Both Rani and Andika were involved in a quite intense discussion, considering Budi's suggestions sent by WA message, before they shot other pictures. Finally, they picked one image and Budi, from another place, re-edited the caption in such a way as to showcase a variety of short story books available in Kineruku.

The making of a single Instagram post reiterated the importance of social settings in the everyday practices of all the studied creative collectives. Their media-related practices cannot be understood thoroughly without considering the way they engage with and build from the social relations among each other and all aspects in their social settings. At this point, media-related practice has become the very site for investigating the "assemblage of practices of production, distribution, engagement and use by different people in different situations" (Hobart, 2014b: 510), here specifically on everyday creativities within the collectives. In Tobucil & Klabs, for example, the prominence of social settings in the daily practices of creating Instagram posts are also apparent. Having different types of collective's activities than Kineruku, the social settings in Tobucil are formed through the mixed of activities and encounters of regular members, friends and acquaintances who stop by the place, and workshop with participants. The character of social media posts by Tobucil is a combination between pragmatic ways of using resources around them (e.g. garage as the shooting place, personal collection of vase or plants as ornamental properties, or friends to help) and people's involvement in their social activities.
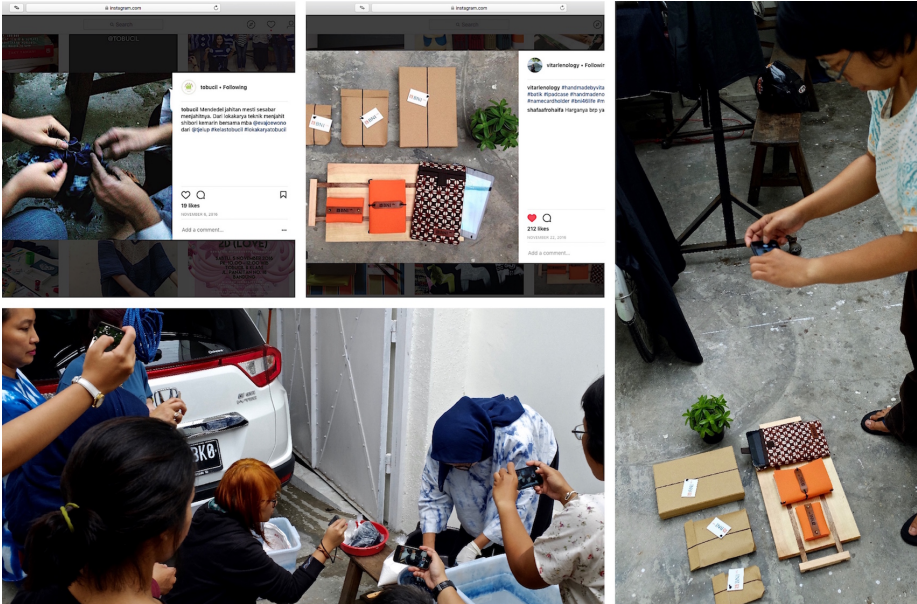
Speaking of the use of Instagram, all informants talk in a similar pattern. They basically use the social media platform due to its popularity. Even though they have signed up for various platforms already, they tend to be more active in using Instagram in recent years. As one informant explains:

> In the last three years we move all information we share to be centralised in Instagram. Why? Because we see that the characteristics of our targeted audiences are now in Instagram. Facebook is now as a mirror only. We use an app to forward any information we post in Instagram, so it would be automatically linked to Twitter, as well Facebook. We no longer use Facebook as our main social media. […] It means we won't be busy with comments. So, we can simply ignore all irrelevant comments in Instagram. In Facebook it's hard to avoid and ignore such comments.
> (Tarlen, 43, F, bookbinder, event programmer and co-founder)

Boit in Omuniuum does the similar thing too. All creative collectives tend to have these pragmatic tactics in the way they optimise the availability of social media platforms:

> We use many media, and now Instagram for the main, then link the contents to other social media. We use Flickr for the products catalogue only. The current

motivation to use Instagram more is to make sure that people could continually communicate with us without complicate them or us in the store.
(Boit, 41, F, merchandiser and co-founder)

Choosing media platforms becomes something organic and also pragmatic to all these creative collectives. Pragmatism is a key here, part of their tactics of subtle resistance. Whilst there are some elements of brand awareness in the use of social media, mainly these platforms spread their vision and ideas on the ways they perceive things in their everyday life. For a few other members, what they actually do with social media is based on convenience without any consistency in a specific purpose. They put energy into people's participation in their activities. As Ewing, a visual artist, realises that perhaps his collective might no longer existed or stay the same in the future. But, to him, he is more than happy to see their collective's ideas and alternative approaches in doing art are known and continued by other people. He ensures:

The uniqueness of Omni[space] is…this is the place where everyone can make mistake. Yes, actually, it is like that! 'While we are here, let's make any mistakes as much as possible!' Because in some places, making mistakes are somehow impossible. So here we feel freer, also we have pleasant experiences and joys in doing things. […] Maybe in the future Omni[space] won't have any more [physical] space. Maybe we have to hunt for a new one. We don't know. Of course, as a collective we want to have a long life, because – as some friends ever said to us – a space like this shows that there is still a hope! If we and other similar spaces are gone, the hope for all of us and for the future artists will also be gone.
(Ewing, 39, M, visual artist and co-founder)

Material objects and social cohesion

The pragmatic tactics in building social cohesion is another way the creative collectives maintain their activities and self-sufficiency. On my second arrival in Hin Bus Depot compound in George Town, I attended a full-week event named OBSCURA Festival of Photography. The art gallery and open space in the backyard were busy with the crowds, days and nights. Events were varied, ranging from photo exhibitions, artist talks, panel discussions, workshops on photography, photobook and portfolio reviews, photo-project presentations in every evening followed by music performances. The event itself was listed as part of fringe events of the annual George Town Festival, and it has a more

independent organisational structure than the main festival. For Hin Bus Depot, the way they hosted this in their place was not different than other events or fringe festivals they are involved with. The ambience was similar to a big event, small community events, or pop-up independent market. One member of the collective talked to me, the curator of this photography festival has been a good friend of the collective in recent years; they were involved in a few other exhibitions and art events before they eventually become the regular host for this festival. 'Friendship', a continuous relational process, is the major characteristic in sustaining the collectives in both cities. The pragmatic way of deciding activities – and the follow up consequences – by relying on mutual friendships has become a key pattern in each collective. Social relations, trust, collaboration and commitment to shared responsibilities are the manifestation of the way in which the creative collectives try to survive and sustain their existence.

It was almost midnight when I realised the closing night of OBSCURA Festival of Photography 2017 was officially ended. But most people stayed, sitting around in small circles near the stage and on the grass. I eventually ended up joining and moving from one group of people to another. My paper cup was already empty, and I did not want to fill it up again. I felt tired too. Just before I was about to excuse myself from the last group I sat together on the grass, the guy in front of me flooded me with a lot of information: an after-event party in an artist's house, other exhibitions and events happening in other places, and names of people I have just heard that night (later on I know that those are names of some emerging visual artists in Penang). Although he is not a member of Hin Bus Depot and other collectives I studied, he seemed to know and be known by everyone else in this place. I realised that a couple hours earlier, I may have been introduced to him by Khing, the Hin Bus Depot's Event Manager with a group of friends while we were queuing for snacks and drinks. At the time, it was quite surreal to me to receive such acceptance in a new social environment. But, in retrospect, the significance of friendship and continuous social relations plays a significant factor here. Khing, my key informant as the Event Manager of Hin Bus Depot, is herself a contemporary dancer and co-initiator of a pop-up party organisation. Having been introduced informally by the member of this creative milieu to their fellow members and networks, I was no longer a total stranger. Yes, I am the 'new guy', but my presence that night was not considered as awkward; instead I was welcomed into the collective's circle.

A year before, I had a more difficult situation. Aside from knowing fewer key persons in this compound, I also just learnt about the importance of my appearance in starting to get in touch with the group I was about to study. As it

has been written in other ethnographic literature, when one is conducting participant observation it is significant to think about 'accepted/expected' appropriate behaviour, and the researcher's appearance can potentially lead the field research either into a smooth process or become a failure from the beginning (Millet et al., 2016; see Gray, 2003). I learned by trial-and-error the importance of my appearance. One example is the use of a fabric tote bag. The first time I came to Hin Bus Depot compound in George Town, trying to find other people I could talk to, I did not think through my own appearance. I dressed as usual in my daily routines: trousers, loose t-shirt, hat, boots and a backpack; sometimes I occasionally took out my small notebook and a pen from the bag in case I needed to write a few quick notes. In this city, then, I looked like a university student or a member of census staff. No one refused to talk to me, but they simply responded in short answers, yes-or-no replies. At the time, I had not met Khing and Wanida yet, the Event Manager and Gallery Manager respectively in Hin Bus Depot who were known by almost everyone else in the whole compound. So, I struggled to introduce myself and mingle without an 'insider contact'. After two days of mingling, and not succeeding in getting any contacts or information, I realised that the way I dressed was too noticeable; I looked so different than the others who regularly come here. The next day, I altered my daily attire a little bit. I kept the hat (because the days in George Town can be very hot), then it was combined with shorts, body-fit t-shirt, sneakers, and – the most important feature – I changed my 'school' backpack with a fabric tote bag.

I noticed it from previous days; this kind of fabric tote bag was used almost by everyone in this compound. Having met and talked to a few people – e.g. visual artists, yoga instructor, dancer, comedian, foreign students who decided to run an organic farm workshop here – in my early encounters in this creative hub, they basically do many different things in this compound, from crafts to arts, from yoga to organic kefir and soap making. But one thing that links them and these various activities is ecological friendly values and practices. Though such a universal value currently tends to be mainstreaming in a global discourse, it is not a common view in George Town. Outside the Hin Bus Depot compound, that kind of view and attitude is still considered as a new, foreign-import value and practice. While here, a fabric tote bag, for instance, is considered as a more eco-friendly object than plastic bag and polyester or oil-based synthetic materials of a backpack. The common use of fabric tote bag is fully embraced in this place in the senses of both embracing such an ecological-concerned view and practicing a commonality of cultural identification. Some tote bags I saw were also part of

merchandise of previous art events, results of a screen-printing workshop, with personalised, and sometimes also political, messages.

The fabric tote bag for the people in this organic creative hub, then, becomes a material object that represents symbolic meaning of shared values, communal practices, and sometimes a political aspiration. To me, as a field researcher in this place, the use of tote bag here is also a borrowed 'lingo' from a current universal discourse and practice that is combined with their own vernacular expressions of social relations, sense of taste, and local issues or aspirations. With my new regular appearance, including my own fabric tote bag, I found an easier way to get along with them. Of course, once I was introduced by Khing and Wanida to their fellow members and friends, I experienced more acceptance by other people who regularly work and/or visit the events here. I kept using my tote bag though. It was practical, it was comfortable, and I felt my informants were also more comfortable around my presence.

As Miller et al. (2016: 31) notes about the importance of a researcher's appearance in ethnographic fieldwork, I agree that it is not the most significant factor in doing successful ethnography but it still plays a key role. Even though managing our own appearance sounds like a trivial thing, I experienced that a good understanding of our informants' everyday practices and their social environments can benefit us with relevant cues and deeper insights. The tote bag became a sensitising object in my sensitising observations. Similar to the kind of 'tote bag cue' I found in George Town, another material object could be detected in the creative collectives in Bandung. These material objects have elevated their symbolic meanings from a simply functional tool or thing to a sensitive, affective object (Löfgren, 2016) within the studied groups. Understanding these material objects in such a way is a significant aspect of gaining access to more individuals or their groups, and understanding layers of emotions surrounded the everyday practices.

In Bandung, the fabric-tote-bag approach works well too in some collectives. At the craft collective, in particular, I found other sensitive objects. Apart from tote bag and vintage suitcase (see chapter 8 about vintage suitcase), the leather case for my camera I use become an entry 'lingo' that made my introduction in Tobucil & Klabs run smoother. Apparently, this collective, consisting of craftspeople, works with leather-based materials in recent years. They highly appreciate any kind of handmade processes and products, and leather is one material that requires a patient process and special treatment. When they saw my camera's leather case, they started to ask a few things and I eventually passed the ice-breaking stage of the introductory phase of my early ethnographic fieldwork

in this collective. For these craftspeople, the personal story behind every handmade product is somehow more important than the product itself. In another collective, Omnispace, building an ecosystem through an alternative auction named *Getok Tular* is not less important than the making of artwork by the artists themselves.

Alongside of the tote bag, vintage suitcase and leather handmade items, I found out that postcard is part of everyday practices of one member of Tobucil. I observed this for the first time from a few of Instagram posts by Tarlen, the bookbinder. She posted the postcards she received from her closest friends who travelled overseas or other islands in the country. Then, I saw her postcard collection in person, hanging in one wall of her working studio in Tobucil. She told me every story beneath each postcard: about the person who had sent it out, her/his travel to the place where the postcard came from, the story about the postcard itself, and other stories that might not so related to the postcard but still somehow are connected with the person's life stories. It is clear that Tarlen perceives these postcards beyond their material and functional meanings. The postcard is one of her sensitive and affective objects that leads her to connect with her friends, their life journeys and experiences, and at the same time connect to her own reflections about her life journeys and experiences. She also has a regular practice to buy and send postcards to her friends back every time she has a chance to go somewhere outside her routine works or family travels.

Once I returned to Sweden after concluding my last fieldwork, I sent her – and other people in all collectives – postcards. I usually send my postcards on the special moments like New Year, Eid ul-Fitr (the end of Ramadan fasting month for Muslims), and the Chinese New Year (for the collectives in George Town). In both Malaysia and Indonesia it is a common practice to share greetings during these moments by sending a special card; more recently this practice has been replaced by online greetings in social media, text message, or web-based applications. But I chose to send my greetings through selected postcards, that depicted local and artistic stories, and sent these via regular mail service. My first intention with this was simply to maintain relations between researcher and informants. Although I have followed their social media accounts regularly after I concluded my fieldworks in 2017, and they have followed me back, I tried to use various channels to keep these relations, maintaining my 'presence' among them. Because in the development of this research, I sometimes still need to contact them individually, asking a few confirmations of their statements or clarification about dates, places, names, and so forth. Yet, I do not want to lose their trust and become another 'census guy' that keeps asking questions without showing that I

care about what they are actually doing and feeling. By using these special moments and the physical form of postcard, I shared my care about the joyous feelings they were experiencing with their families and friends in their cities or hometown. Apart from this research-intention, to me it was also felt natural to do so after building relations with them over several years and sharing many different life stories.

I cannot know exactly whether all my postcards have arrived and were well received in all addresses. But some informants texted me to say thank you and sent greetings back to me (which is a common cultural practice during such moments). One person replied by sending postcards on other occasions. Tarlen, the one who collects postcards from friends, made a photograph of the postcard I sent to her then posted in her Instagram:
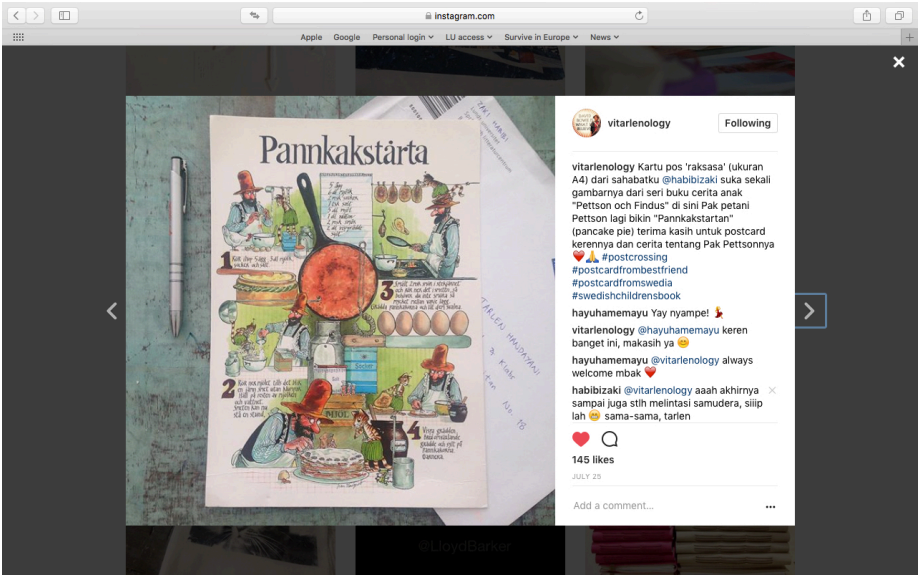
Here the practice of sending a postcard seems to speak more than simply a tool to maintain the researcher's presence and participation from a remote distance. I realise that the postcard I sent – an A4-size postcard depicting a Swedish children's book characters, Petsson and Findus – and the practice to send it to them are basically the same 'creative lingo' they usually use with their own social networks. This step could somehow help me to dig into deeper layer of feelings my

informants have experienced. It also reminds me of the importance in studying experience, that is "about what it is like for other people to 'be' in the world, and how we know and learn about this beyond words" (Pink et al., 2016: 39). In my own research experience, the way I try to relate to the informants' feelings is by continuously look through different 'lenses' of perspectives and understanding the significance between the details within the practices and the broader contexts of such practices. Then, I also use the material object my informants have feelings attached to it, the use of unique postcard for instance, to connect with the people I have become part of.
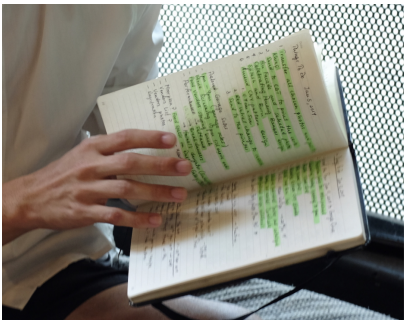
Material objects, with their sensitive and affective meanings, within the everyday practices of these creative collectives, have helped me to navigate the balance between the notion of "closeness" and "distance" in ethnographic work. As closeness is "related to intimacy and understanding […] emphasizing an insight perspective […] to take part in everyday life, share the 'little' moments" (Bengtsson, 2014: 867), I gained much better understanding of my informants' everyday lives by getting involved in perceiving and using particular objects they share distinctive values and meanings within. In that sense, the tote bag, vintage suitcase, postcard, self-roasted coffee, yarns, knitting needles and crochet hook, bookbinding and wooden-craft tools, physical notebooks for the daily working scheduling and note taking have their symbolic meanings in constructing the sense of identity, building relations among each other, and maintaining social cohesion within each collective.

Yet, as close as I possibly try to engage with all these layers of their everyday practices, I am still at a 'distance'. After the fieldwork, I continue to do the remote digital observation, mainly using Instagram. Apart from that, I have a distance with their everyday rhythm since I have my own everyday rhythms while doing such a digital observation, e.g. researcher's own work and family rhythm, that might be different with the rhythm I totally experienced with them during the fieldworks. Thus, distance might create a limitation in developing the ethnographic work further. However, as argued by Bengtsson (2014), managing distance should be as important as maintaining closeness in ethnographic research, especially when it involves online environments. In my research, both closeness and distance work together as my reflexive tools in every stages of my research to organise between participating in the others' lived daily practices, getting sense of every inter-related practices, values or objects, and interpreting all these connected practices into a sound argument constructed in a clear narrative. Of course, asking questions – both to my informants and to myself – are constant practices throughout all these research processes.

"It's okay to be slow": labour of love

In one of my times at Tobucil, I had a lengthy conversation with Palupi, the knitter and yarn manager:

Palupi : Overall, to me Tobucil has two meanings. First, since now I focus on the yarn business, Tobucil has become my very place for the learning processes about how to manage this business.

Zaki : A process to become, or perhaps has been, an entrepreneur?

Palupi : Ah, not really. Entrepreneur...? Not really. Because, I do many things actually. [Chuckled]. I do the business, but also teaching [on knitting] as my way to share what I know and what I can to others.

Zaki : I see. How about the second meaning then?

Palupi : The other one is when I can teach people about knitting, then they can create their own knitting business and doing good in their business, that satisfy me more. I can see the real impact of my teaching. This also what Tobucil's role is actually about. Because this does not happen in the Knitting and Crochet Class only, similar situations come up from other classes and workshops too. The participants create their own brands, for example, or they become trainers in other places. From the Feature Writing Workshop and the Photo Story Workshop, a few participants eventually work as journalist or their works are published in the media after joining the activities [in Tobucil].

In the beginning of my fieldwork, I was the one who continuously asked the questions. A conversational form of interview rarely occurred. It made me get almost nothing and nowhere with the research, because I could not understand the multilayers of practices and people's involvement I saw in their places, as well as in their social media contents. Then, I stopped asking questions; I came to events they held, joined it if possible or became observer if it was an event for registered participants only. If there are no events, I just came to share breakfast together with them and help out with their works. In one occasion, I helped a collective in finishing the work of a bookbinding orders, putting them in boxes, and along with other members, loading the boxes to the delivery truck service. Thus, the conversational form of interview emerged gradually and naturally during, in between, and after such activities. The informants also started to ask questions to me, it became more like a dialogue. Even the way I asked questions, then, ensured I no longer sounded like a census guy filling in my questionnaire.

Thus, the conversational interviews led me to know other relevant people, and I gained important cues on what to ask or to do next. Also, like the one with Palupi excerpted above, this conversational interview brought me to the key significant statements that resonate the main insights and guided me in connecting-the-dots amongst all entangled practices I have observed and participated. For instance, with such a key statement I could understand their connected practices in relation to examining the articulation of their identities as part of the social formations (Hall, 2019b; 2019c) that take place in this particular context of the city. Also, the formation of their organic spaces through making, interacting, and networking. Sometimes without specifically asking particular questions, after a few hours of talking about many different things, an informant could suddenly share detailed information or a missing link in my collected information. Like the one below by one workshop mentor:

> I usually run a workshop in Jakarta, but in 2014 there was a chance to hold a two-day *Main Kayu* ['Playing with Wood', a DIY carpentry] workshop in Bandung. That was when Tarlen firstly joined as one of the participants. Afterward she offered me to run the same workshop in her place, at Tobucil. Why not, I guess. Then, now it becomes a regular workshop.
> (Hendro, 53, M, woodworking studio owner and wooden-craft workshop mentor)

Additionally, the type of observation and interview I conducted has led me to understand the patterns of everyday routines, the collectives' organising structure and the inter-connection of people, places, or objects. Based on such an approach, I could firmly say now that the role of each member in every collective is clearly defined, yet there is a flexibility when it comes to the everyday practices. Collaboration among each other and with wider network gives more influence in forming the daily practices, all these happen in an "organic way" (Spampinato, 2015). Flexibility in dealing with various spaces is another key finding. It resonates in the way they are being flexible in online activities through their Instagram accounts. But, flexibility in work and social interaction takes its toll; they sometimes do also feel tired, bored, or lose inspiration. Their everyday works is, indeed, a 'labour of love' in whatever fields they involve themselves with. But boredom and tiresome feelings are also part of their everyday life. At Tobucil, all the members sometimes take a break; what I mean by this is most of the craftspeople in this collective rely on their income based on a purchase-order (PO) system submitted by their customers via Instagram: on some occasions these makers stop the feature to contact them, meaning they are in temporary pause of production.

Elsewhere, the creative collectives never close their physical store, library, studio, or gallery outside the regular closing time, but they sometimes create distance within their daily routines. Kineruku closes on Tuesday, and the intentional reason is, as follows:

> People from other cities usually come here when they don't need to go to work. So, we are open during the weekend. But we had to have one day off from everything. Since most places, like museum or gallery, are usually closed on Monday, so we keep open on Monday. If we also close on the day, people would have more limited places to go then. So, Kineruku is closed every Tuesday. Apparently, in Javanese [Budi himself belongs to this ethnic group], *Selasa* [Tuesday] means *sela-selaning menungsa* [when people have free times], so we shouldn't work either. [smiled].
> (Budi, 40, M, librarian and director)

Taking a break or deciding on a closing day, is a means of creating distance; modifying activities to sustain their labour of love approach to work and life. While the forms of such tactics vary from one person to another, and from collective to another, the functions remain the same. They try to sustain their creative collectives not only in its financial and social aspects, but also the emotional aspect of everyday labour to which have to be in line with the common values and interests they build together. As Juliastuti (2015) notes, creativity also needs a break to be imbued with fresher thoughts and insightful ideas. In Pokothings, a wooden-craft collective in George Town, the slow process is more important as opposed to the mass production system of assembly line and furniture productions. Alex, one of the designers and key figures in this collective, enjoys his slow process in working with his fellow designers and her manager. For them, this slowness not only deals with the production processes but also slow process in enjoying the works they have created, either big or small projects.

Alex contemplates his daily practices as he says, "For us, making is easy; the hardest part is how to make others 'buying' the idea we offer." He realises it is not an easy task to make other people appreciate his works and the way he and his collective work in different styles than the common practices of the traditional wood-craft makers in the city (chapter 5). That is, those who mostly work in a quick speed, using an industrious way. Whereas, for Alex, "It's okay to be slow." In Bandung, Tarlen thinks about her life journey, that is her labour of love as a creative self, through the way she develops her fan-relations with her favourite band, Pearl Jam. As for her, "I like Pearl Jam, their songs, but mostly, because I can relate to their life stories." "My life journey," Tarlen continues, "somehow shares similar cycles with theirs [Pearl Jam band], I learned from them how ups and downs can strike us, but eventually we keep the values that we should fight for."

The slow process of creating crafts, artwork, or events and the organic way of managing the collectives are other key aspects in articulating their cultural identities within the urban spaces they live in. As Tarlen's favourite song of Pearl Jam is "In My Tree", she can relate to the lyrics and experiences of the band further. Because, for her and metaphorically also for many of the creative collectives, the nourishment of themselves and their collectives should be organically grown slowly like a tree, surviving in the environment that might be challenging or even trying to bring them down. For all these creative collectives,

keeping up the values they stand for is their primary concern in sustaining their collectives, and themselves, in their cities.

"Pearl Jam … here is the lyric I like the most, taken from my favourite song, In My Tree: 'Let's say knowledge is a tree; yeah / It's growing up just like me, yeah'."

Figures 9
Connected practices in everyday creativities.

| 10 | Conclusions

The city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city, the city where we are,
simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it.

(Roland Barthes, "Semiology and the urban")

Night comes to the city not only with the lights going out,
but with the sound going down. It never turns off,
it is just that some things – the cadence of night voices,
distant traffic – grow louder in the mix. […] as though
you hear the city sleep. It can make you dream tall.

(Fran Tonkiss, "Aural postcards: sound, memory and the city")

Approach and contribution

There are particular groups of people in the city whose voices are important to be
heard. They initiate or join a group that can be categorised as a creative collective.
In this research the studied creative collectives articulate their voices through
everyday practices that mould the material city, for example, through independent
murals and handmade crafts; the imagined city, for example, voicing ideal visions
of their multicultural, plural and inclusive communities and their cities; and the
lived city, for example through grassroot and independent creativities, formation
of organic spaces and creative hubs. As cities are always constituted of these three
multidimensional elements, the ways in which these creative collectives articulate
their voices are a significant key point to be analysed within the context of global
discourses of creative and heritage cities.

In both cities the main narrative in relation to creativity or creative city is
officially designed by either the local or national governments in collaboration

with private sectors and/or global cultural agencies. Such an official narrative has also incorporated local actors in some of their programmes, yet most of the studied creative collectives in this thesis either never been invited, or declined any involvement with state, corporation and global cultural institutions. Their intention is to keep their collectives and creative works as independent as possible, thus sustaining their creative/art work, networking, and distribution, at the peripheries of official narratives of the heritage city and creative city. The aim of this research is to understand the everyday media-related and creative practices of individuals in creative collectives that are situated in emerging creative and heritage cities in contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia. The research enriches academic discussions on practice theory, everyday life, and urban culture, within the fields of media and everyday life, critical visual methodology, and urban media and communications.

This thesis examines the articulation of individuals and their creative collectives in two cities from Southeast Asia, the creative city of Bandung in Indonesia and the creative, heritage-inscribed city of George Town in Malaysia. These articulations are studied through the understanding of their everyday lived practices in their respective city, especially in relation to their daily creative and media practices. Drawing insights from existing research, the findings refer to five key areas: everyday creativity; articulation and cultural identity; media, space and the city; place branding and the city; and cultural memory and urban cultures. These theoretical considerations begin with the elaboration on the notion of everyday creativity as an articulation of media-related practice in everyday life (de Certeau, 1984; Hobart, 2010; Gauntlett, 2018). Then, the theory of articulation and cultural identity (Hall, 2019b, 2019c) is central to the thesis. The interrelation of media, space and the city gives a foundation to analysing articulation through everyday creativities in the city (Lefebvre, 1991; Gray, 2003; Kusno, 2010). The fourth theoretical consideration is place branding and the city, seen from the critical studies on city branding (Löfgren, 2005, 2007, 2014). The fifth theoretical proposition is to consider the importance of cultural memory and urban cultures (van Dijck, 2007; Erll and Rigney, 2009; Reading, 2009, 2011).

From such theoretical considerations, the research questions are formulated to address three key questions on articulation of creative selves in everyday life by the creative collectives and their members, the ways in which these articulated practices (creative and media-related practices) contest the dominant discourses of creative/heritage city branding in each city, and how these practices are shaping and re-shaping the urban spaces, memories and cultural identities of the cities. The overall objective of this research draws upon the intersections between media

and cultural studies, everyday life studies and urban media and communications, to understand how the tactics of individuals within the creative collectives disrupt, or counteract, the official narratives and the top-down strategies of Bandung and George Town as global creative and heritage cities. As such, the thesis explores the everyday lived experiences of individuals and their groups from different creative collectives in these two cities as subtle resistance, offering insights into the murmurs of everyday life (de Certeau, 1984; de Certeau, Giard and Mayol, 1998) and micro-moves to contest the idealised creative city (Löfgren, 2014). All these enable the creative collectives to make do, be resourceful, to nourish their values, social bonds and way of living and working in their cities.

When Roland Barthes (1971 [1997]: 160) mentions in his essay, "Semiology and the Urban", that "the city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language", the subtle resistance argued in this thesis can be understood as the way in which the creative collectives – as cities' inhabitants – "speak their city" using the very language discursively formed by themselves, to each other, and in responding to the dilemma of official narrative surrounding them and the challenges for their survival. The creative collectives focus on slow growth, sustaining their micro-climates, and recognising their deep roots within their urban environment.

This research is approached from two combined methodologies, taking insights from ethnography and visual methodology. The empirical work is based on the field research conducted from 2016 to 2017 and follow-up digital observations in 2018-2019. This study employs a mixture of methods in qualitative research ranging from participant field observation, remote digital observation, conversational or go-along interview, and photo-documentation. The visual method is used as a distinctive method to complement the other methods for capturing richer nuances of everyday creativity, and also functions as a method in presenting visual analysis. One of the key contributions of this research comes through the organic mixing of different but complimentary methods in order to generate analysis of the material, spatial, visual, and identity, memory and belonging within the two cities; the research highlights how the people and their creative collectives articulate an alternative way of making do in the city. Their subtle resistance is both a strategy of survival and a form of finding ways of existence as creative collectives. The ethnographic and visual methodologies applied here made this contribution possible.

Significant findings

Through the analyses on the key themes relating to articulation, from spatial practice in the city, cultural memory, to cultural identity, this research has demonstrated those analyses and led to the most significant findings, i.e. the subtle resistance as the very formation of creative voices in the cities. The articulations of the subtle resistance are found in the everyday practices of the collectives in four conceptual arenas: disruption of cultural memory, culture on display, alternative space and articulation of creative self. These are summarised below in relation to each research question.

How do the creative collectives and their members in George Town and Bandung articulate their creative selves in their everyday lives?

The ways in which the creative collectives and their members do the everyday creativities within their own group and in their respective city show the processes for them in narrating their creative selves. All the creative collectives, having their own domain and character, present a 'survival kit' for being an independent creative collective in George Town and Bandung. This survival kit is their way of articulating the 'stubbornness' of everyday practice (de Certeau, 1984; Highmore, 2002) as chosen by these collectives with their awareness of its consequences and difficulties.

   Furthermore, the members of the creative collectives have built social relations, trust, collaboration and commitment on shared responsibilities. Similar patterns can be found in the relations across the collectives through collaboration, friendship and shared values on particular objects and issues, for example organic spaces, or trust amongst each other. These are the manifestation of the way in which the creative collectives try to survive and sustain their existence. Alongside the social relations built among each other and the pragmatic ways in using social media (mainly Instagram), most of these creative collectives have built relations and nurtured trust through the symbolic meanings of "sensitive objects" (Löfgren, 2016). Handmade notebook, crafts tools, postcards, self-roasted coffee, vintage suitcases, tote bags, for example, have become the material objects that interact, transport, and transform the shared values and build social cohesion among each other in the creative collectives.

In what ways are their creative and media-related practices contesting the dominant discourses of heritage/creative cities in Malaysia and Indonesia?

The research has looked beyond examples of political resistance to focus on cultural resistance. Cultural resistance by these creative collectives is an articulation for contesting the dominant discourses and practices on heritage city of George Town and creative city of Bandung. However, this cultural resistance is expressed in subtle ways through disruption on official cultural memory, for instance. The form of this cultural resistance is their subtle voices that can be read as an alternative narrative of cultural identity formation against the backdrop of discursive and material elements of the single narrative projected by the state, either the "nationalist heritage imagination" (Goh, 2012) or the top-down creative city imagination.

   One example of this resistance includes the network of people from different creative collectives articulating their practices and identities – through material objects, social media, or creative practices – which lay foundation for them to contest the dominant discourses. This happens in the way some creative collectives resist or decline the city or private funding, and the ways they nurture fringe events, and cultivate inclusive interactions and participations within and among their collectives.

In what ways are urban spaces shaped and reshaped by the practices of these creative collectives, and why does this matter to the contextualisation and conceptualisation of media, space and cultural identity in the city?

The notion of commonality is vital for making the creative collective into an alternative space for those who share similar values. These spatial practices occurred in the creative collectives are different with, for instance, the top-down approach of the state-led creative hub. In particular collectives, craft-making becomes the 'make-do' of available cultures (Highmore, 2002) and allows members to perform inventiveness in their everyday lives. In other collectives who have different activities alongside crafts, the make-do and the inventiveness are found through the event organising, the creation of room for open activities, the participatory and open processes of creating exhibitions and performances.

   These spatial practices are the way these creative collectives create 'organic space' that is maintained in a fluid way, recognising these spaces as containing potentials and challenges. The organic space here means the way in which these creative collectives perceive themselves as non-proprietary collaborative groups,

employing creativity as the very core of their everyday life, and interacting with each other and social actors in a fluid way. All these occur as an alternative voice to the way in which the imagined creative and heritage cities are officially designed, materialised and institutionalised by the state as seen in urban space through strategic approach of cultural memory on display and superficial visuality.

Why do this organic space and alternative voice matter in the city? First, the cultural and media-related practices of the creative collectives – ranging from the material objects they use, the craftmanship, the social media, the local friendship group, the familial mood – enrich our understanding of cultural resistance and spatial struggles in urban environments. Second, the formulation of cultural identity for these city dwellers gives us insight into the material, the imagined and the lived city as interlinked. Their practices and identities are both specific to these collectives and their cities, and offer a wider perspective of the value of flexibility, resourcefulness and resilience, of trust and friendship, in creative urban spaces.

Overall, the creative voices in both cities in Southeast Asia take form as an articulation of subtle resistance. The studied creative collectives in both cities articulate their resistance in alternative ways through their everyday creativities in building their own social groups as the 'home' for the members and whoever else is involved within the home, the organic space (of training ground, creative studio, creative hub), and the spatial formation to express their spatial, cultural and social struggles in the city. The creative collective is also a space for social relations and building trust, a space of humility, but at the same time it is also a space of making do, trying to survive, preserving the sense of cultural identities. These are examples of subtle resistance, articulating with both creativity and make do of living in the cities flooded with dominant discourses and practices to be part of their processes in constructing (and struggling to maintain) their cultural identities.

Further reflections and future research

To reflect further on possible trajectories for future research, there are some points to raise about conducting a micro-scale ethnographically informed study. The creative, visual and material of the subject matter not only become the focused areas of the research, but have also influenced the way in which the research is conducted and analysed. Michel de Certeau once argued that the main intention in studying everyday life is to allow the everyday voices to be heard by positioning the researcher's voice as one of many voices in the text, not a strategic master-

voice but rather in order to produce polyphonic or multi-voiced texts through varieties of both content and style (de Certeau, Giard and Mayol, 1998). The way I presented this study is inspired by a similar trajectory in showing the voices of everyday creativity and their relations with contemporary media and visual culture as practiced by the people who deal with creative works and live in cities on a daily basis.

Subjectivity and reflexivity have shaped the way I approached my subject matter, the way I interacted with the subject persons and groups, and interpreted the empirical materials. The two aspects, subjectivity and reflexivity, have also shaped my own experiences interacting with the people and the gathered information, and to some extent, shaped the way 'knowledge' was communicatively constructed through these encounters and relations during the research process.

Indeed, as an ethnographically and visually informed study, this research avoids generalisation either in terms of the subject matters (creativity, media practice, space of/in the city, identity articulation), the social groups (class, gender, demography, etc.), or geographical locations (the cities, Southeast Asia, or Asia). This research is better understood as a detailed investigation on particular aspects of articulation of media, space and cultural identities in contemporary cultures of Southeast Asian societies that can enrich both the academic and societal debates on topics relevant to heritage and creative cities, on creative collectives, and everyday creativity.

Since the phenomena of heritage city and creative city branding is a global trend, the research on investigating various voices responding to this trend and their responses in agreeing or struggling with the implications would be one aspect possible to research. In Southeast Asia and Asian region, the main narrative on heritage and creative city proposed by the state and supported by global cultural, financial or political agencies remain in place as a dominant narrative. Some city's governments begin to 'listen' to new approaches and consider more participatory ways in designing, building and governing the cities. Whereas in some other cities, the local (and also the national) governments tend to be more authoritarian in their public policies through the frame of populism shown in everyday politics. The impact on the creative milieu varies from one to another. It is then important, for instance, to map and recognise the variety of creative collectives in the city, based on their creative domains, intentions and main values, social and political aspirations, locations, or scale of activities and people involved. The result of such a mapping study might not address the voices of each collective or the members, but it would provide a baseline database that can be used by ethnographers and

cultural researchers to design their further research. Such a database is needed since the constant changing and dynamic movement of groups and issues in Southeast Asian cities, as well as the lack of comprehensive general information of the creatives and their relevant groups, are one key obstacle in beginning to conduct and build access for research in the region.

One critique raised by researchers is an over emphasis on technological, institutional, political economic explanations, or symbolic representations of media in urban environments (see Morley, 2009; Moores, 2012; Moores, 2018). Although such media foci have their own signification contribution within the academic debates in urban media and communications, it is important to address such a critique with the use of different perspectives, theoretical combinations and variety of methodological approaches and tools. Drawing from practice theory, the conceptual use of media-related practice in this thesis hopefully could address such a critique. By focusing on the micro level of cultural practices, media-related practices can be understood in various cultural contexts with different social or political tensions. Thus, one could develop the conceptualisation of media-related practices, and a more non-media centric approach, to social and cultural practices within particular historical, spatial and temporal contexts.

In this final part of the thesis, I am going to reflect on my own memories in interacting with my informants, organising the collected materials and writing the thesis. In my office room there is a world map I have put up more than three years ago. It is an upside down world map I bought whilst in Australia, and the artist has placed Australia in the north, thus changing the name, so the country can no longer be referred to as Down Under. In this map the Antarctica becomes the North Pole and the Arctic is located in the south. All the names of cities, places and other map legends are written normally with precise scale like a common map, only it is rotated 180-degrees. Initially I simply put this map as a practical joke for myself. But, while organising my empirical material, refining my field notes, re-listening to some recorded materials, and building the argument in writing, the map is no longer a creative joke to me. It is the very idea that resonates with the voices of my informants. A year before I finalised this thesis, I found another 'upside down' map in an art exhibition catalogue. I made a copy of the map, and put it up under the previous map on my office wall. The artwork itself is part of an installation art project by Ross Sinclair, a Scottish artist, entitled "Journey to the Edge of the World – The New Republic of St Kilda" (1999). His politically motivated artwork raises a critical voice on the cultural loss experienced by St Kildans since the introduction, and hegemony, of the so-called modern way

of living from the British mainland. Sinclair's 'upside down' geographical map installed in a public space in Edinburgh has created "a strong sense of 'making do', of being temporary […] a space of simple constructions [of St Kildans' memories] … also a space of repository, where St Kildans' culture and spirit is kept safe, awaiting its chance to be used once more" (Dean and Millar, 2005: 134).

Both maps have accompanied me throughout the reflective processes of this research, and these 'upside down' maps have symbolically become the constant reminder for me to understand the voices of the creative collectives. That is, offering an alternative perspective in looking at the space they live in (i.e. the collective, the city) and the issues that arise in their everyday practices that ought to be recognised and listened to within the established 'map' we are all too familiar with for creative cities and heritage cities. Their struggles as a subtle resistance are ongoing, and many times they face difficulties and constraints. The creative collectives and their members also experience boredom, frustration, or tiresome feelings. One scholar who studies community movement in the region says, "the story of an alternative space is not unlike the story of an ordinary human being; there will be times when he or she gets bored and needs to be imbued with fresh ideas" (Juliastuti, 2015: 267). I witnessed how these also occurred in every collective. However, each creative collective and every individual within it, has their own tactics both expressed in online and offline spaces to keep their respective creative collective nourished and sustained for the foreseeable future. I finalised this thesis during the Covid-19 pandemic year. Although my field research, the analysis and most of the writing have been concluded prior the global outbreak of this pandemic, I still had a chance to witness remotely the ways in which my informants cope with this situation. While business-as-usual was no longer the norm during this unprecedented time, I was surprised to see my Instagram newsfeed posted by informants. Some created new interesting projects from home, others switched into a completely different activity they usually do. A few people decided to move to other cities and pursue academic degrees, or do the same profession but in different city, whereas a few others remain in the same city. Overall, I witness not only the energy of resistance they have shared with me during my field research, but in this difficult time also the energy of resilience.

Back to the memories in Bandung, on one night in 2017, Tarlen had a short break from her work in Tobucil & Klabs. She went out from her studio, stretching her back a little bit, then looked to her smartphone. When I asked whether there are bookbinding orders or new news from friends, she replied that she was deleting her old post in her personal Instagram account. It is one of her routines since she

has two Instagram accounts, one for her bookbinding work and the other one is her personal account. "Like our place, these posts are never permanent," she said it in smile, "but, the way we keep our key values are continued wherever we go or stay." She uses her personal Instagram account for expressing a few moments with friends and family, but when the moments have passed and the contexts of meeting or activities have changed, she prefers to delete some old posts to avoid unnecessary comments, or irrelevant tags and so forth. She and other people in the creative collectives realise, there are many things that would not be permanent in their everyday life. The Instagram posts might be deleted sometimes, as the place of their activities could be moved to other locations too, but their values and resilience remain.

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Book, book section, journal article

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About the Author

Zaki Habibi is a media studies and visual culture researcher with an interest in the interrelation between everyday life and cultural practice in cities. He completed his Bachelor of Communications in Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia and received his Master in Media and Cultural Studies from Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia. Since 2016 he has worked as a doctoral researcher at the Department of Communication and Media, Lund University, Sweden, where he conducted his doctoral research and written this thesis.

Habibi's most recent publications are a book chapter called "Whose cultural memory? Disruptive tactics by the creative collectives in George Town, Malaysia" (in an edited volume *Re-Imagining Creative Cities in Twenty-First Century Asia*, 2020) and a journal article entitled "Book, craft and vintage suitcase: everyday media practice in creative collectives" (*Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 2020). This thesis is his first single-authored monograph.

He also published popular articles and photo-series in Indonesian printed media, such as *Suara Merdeka, Bernas Jogja, Kompas, The Jakarta Post* and *National Geographic Indonesia*. A few of his photography works were exhibited in collective exhibitions, including his street photo-series "The Beat of Copenhagen" (2008) and his documentary photography project on the visual representations of abandoned spaces in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, called "Abandoned and Beyond" (2015). When working from home was a default mode during the Covid-19 outbreak in Sweden in March 2020, he initiated an online talk series on the issues of everyday life in the city. Collaborating with two of his colleagues in Yogyakarta, he writes and produces the talk series in videocast and podcast named "*Obrolan Kota dan Keseharian*" [The Talk on Everyday Life in the City].

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