BRITISH COUNCIL

Generating creative value and resilience in pandemic times

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Foreword

In recent years, creative hubs have shown to be a significant part of creative economies around the world. They have become recognised for the inventive and flexible ways in which they support entrepreneurs, artists, artisans and other creatives. Hubs can play many roles in their communities, from energising and curating communities of mutual support and learning to bridging multiple networks locally and globally.

Creative hubs also face many challenges. Hub managers lack business and management skills. There is a low understanding among stakeholders of their valuable contribution to society, innovation, the arts and the economy. There is a need for better articulated, evidence-based policies to support them effectively.

In partnership with the Design Center of the Philippines under the Department of Trade and Industry, we developed Creative Innovators, a programme that ran from 2018-21. It aimed to contribute to more sustainable and impact-led creative hubs that can better support the wider creative industries, leading to more inclusive cities and communities. Through it, we have come across almost 200 hubs in the country.

As creative hubs continue to gain significance across the world, we wanted to find out more about what makes them unique organisations. What can they offer to creative communities that other support systems cannot? What makes them essential and irreplaceable?

To find out, we commissioned Creative Friction, a creative community strategist and consultant based in the UK. Creative Friction sees creative hubs as a key part of a creative person's journey through the interactions that they provoke and facilitate. We wanted to find out how this principle applies in a Southeast Asian context.

Our questions have led to 'Generating creative value and resilience in pandemic times', a truly insightful report documenting the 'creative value added' of hubs during a global crisis.

One important thing to note from the study is that despite the immense impact generated by hubs, they themselves need help in order to survive and keep making a difference in their respective communities.

We are grateful for Creative Friction and the Creative Innovators fellows for their generous contribution during a difficult time.

As Covid-19 continues to impact the world, this report offers a good outlook on how we can keep strengthening and championing the arts and wider creative economy in the Philippines and around the world.

Malaya del Rosario
Head of Arts and Creative Industries
British Council in the Philippines

Executive summary

During the past decade or so, creative hubs have emerged as important catalysts of local creative communities and economies around the world, including in Southeast Asia.

The purpose of this in-depth research report is to explore how notable hubs in the Philippines generate *creative value added* for their members and how they have shaped the *creative resilience* of their respective communities during the Covid-19 pandemic. The former refers to how, by enabling a range of fruitful interactions, creative hubs can drive problem-solving, learning and meaningful progress among their members. Creative resilience, on the other hand, refers to the ability to bounce back from adversity and adapt to changing circumstances through innovative action and sensemaking (Weick 1988).

Hubs generate 'creative value added' through enabling interactions that drive problem-solving, learning and meaningful progress among members. **In other words, creative value is successfully 'added' by hubs when they enable interactions that members and member teams experience as beneficial in the context of their ongoing creative journeys.**

The Covid-19 crisis has foregrounded the role of creative hubs as generators of both creative value and resilience within communities of entrepreneurs, artists and other creatives.
In this report, we first set out the common challenges that Philippines-based hubs and the wider hub community have faced due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. We then survey the notable and most promising measures the hubs have adopted so as to build up their own resilience as well as the resilience of their individual members, paying attention to the several valuable ways in which support from the British Council has contributed to this dimension.

In our conclusion, we articulate what is distinctive about the adaptive tactics and value generation approaches of creative hubs amid the Covid-19 pandemic, which set them apart from incubators, accelerators and other entrepreneurial organisations they are often compared (or confused) with.

Our key conclusions include the following:

It is clear that hubs are not 'incubators' or 'accelerators' that can be evaluated simply by counting the number of successful or investment-ready start-ups they produce[1] (or the amount of funding such startups raise). Instead, the value generated by a thriving creative hub is often understood to be more multi-dimensional, diffused and nuanced in character, as well as strongly mediated by its community.

[1] An 'incubator' can be defined as an organisation that supports the development and survival of a set of start-ups through at least four of the following five services: access to physical resources, office support services, access to capital, process support and networking services (Pauwels et al. 2016:14). Meanwhile, 'accelerators' similarly serve start-ups but are defined more by a mix of active mentorship, intangible learning opportunities/knowledge, networking and financing, directed at making emerging companies 'investment-ready' more quickly.

The proclivity of Philippines-based hubs for active (internal) **community-building** and (external) **networking activities** arguably form the foundation of their resilience.

In line with their community logic and culture, the hubs in our sample have manifested – and continue to manifest – **an ethic of care** that has played a vital role during pandemic-related turbulence.

Less obviously but as importantly, the hubs included in our study have contributed significantly to member adaptation work through triggering **collective sensemaking processes** (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 2005).

Beyond being communal, caring and capable of triggering value-adding (cognitive-affective) interactions, Philippines-based creative hubs have also been distinctive in terms of their own **entrepreneurialism** amid fast-changing circumstances.

Finally, the creative hubs examined in this report have maintained a high degree *of* **fluidity and diversity** throughout their existence, enabling flexible responses in the face of crisis.

Evaluating creative hubs from a new angle

During the past decade or so, a collaborative organisation known as the creative hub has emerged as an important linchpin of local creative economies around the world. The British Council proposes that a creative hub is ‘a place, either physical or virtual, which brings creative people together. It is a convenor, providing space and support for networking, business development and community engagement within the creative, cultural and tech sectors’ (British Council 2015). Elsewhere, it has been noted that hubs are united by their belief that inviting participants from diverse fields and areas of expertise to interact and collaborate leads to creative outcomes (Toivonen & Friederici 2015).

As such, hubs have become recognised and even celebrated for the inventive, flexible ways in which they support entrepreneurs, artists, artisans and other types of creatives. Although each individual hub tends to be relatively small, serving perhaps a few dozen to a few hundred regular participants directly, they can play many vital roles, from providing key resources needed for creative work - including but not limited to physical workspaces and studios - to energising and curating communities of mutual support and learning, while also bridging multiple networks both locally and globally.

These common denominators notwithstanding, in reality hubs do adopt many contrasting forms, models and strategies. For instance, some choose to focus heavily on a particular industry such as film, fashion or music. Others place a strong emphasis on offering training opportunities for early-stage creators and their teams, catalysing important learning processes. There is plenty of dynamism to observe as well: any given hub may find itself undergoing a radical transformation in the space of just a year or two, switching from one model to another or finding new stakeholder groups and members to serve amid changing circumstances and opportunity structures.

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This considerable malleability and adaptability of creative hubs - while undoubtedly one of their core strengths and sources of resilience - has posed challenges to those seeking to better understand, assess and measure their value.

It is clear that hubs are not 'incubators' or 'accelerators' that can be evaluated simply by counting the number of successful or investment-ready startups they produce[2] (or the amount of funding such startups raise). Instead, the value generated by a thriving creative hub is often understood to be more multi-dimensional, diffused and nuanced in character, as well as strongly mediated by its community.

Also, how different members and stakeholders benefit from their participation in a hub can vary dramatically (Dovey & Pratt 2016), as can their motivations. Hubs rarely enrol all members in structured programmes, although they do frequently choose to host various acceleration or mentoring programmes targeted at specific sub-groups. In any case, it remains a distinct challenge to capture and articulate the types of value that a given hub produces over a particular period of time, or by extension to assess the value collectively produced by a diverse set of hubs in a specific locale, city, country or region.

Yet these difficulties do not mean that we should give up on the task of more clearly and concisely grasping the value that hubs are generating and the further value they *could* generate through innovative support, in particular contexts and globally.

As a relatively new player and organisational form (Toivonen & Friederici 2015) within the creative economy, there is a clear need for hubs to be defended *vis-a-vis* skeptical decision-makers and commentators. Any funding targeted at creative hubs needs to be carefully and thoroughly justified - especially in present times of resource scarcity and deep uncertainty.

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[2] An 'incubator' can be defined as an organisation that supports the development and survival of a set of start-ups through at least four of the following five services: access to physical resources, office support services, access to capital, process support and networking services (Pauwels et al. 2016:14). Meanwhile, 'accelerators' similarly serve start-ups but are defined more by a mix of active mentorship, intangible learning opportunities/knowledge, networking and financing, directed at making emerging companies 'investment-ready' more quickly.

This is why, even if we intuitively grasp and acknowledge the 'value added' of creative hubs, we must continue to develop more objective, informative and evidence-based approaches to demonstrating to interested parties the value and worth of particular hubs, or sets of hubs[3].

Such approaches and resultant findings can arguably also drive qualitative improvements among creative hubs while helping intermediaries better design and focus their support measures.

The report in your hands seeks to make a contribution to these efforts to better assess and articulate the value of creative hubs to relevant parties, including key funders, institutional supporters (such as the British Council), local communities and policy-makers.

What originally motivated this report was the opportunity - identified by the sharp-eyed commissioning team at British Council in the Philippines - to assess the 'creative value added' of fast-developing Philippines-based hubs by drawing on the prior work of Creative Friction and the first author of this report.

This prior research had yielded two useful contributions. First, it had articulated how hubs generate 'creative value added' through enabling interactions that drive problem-solving, learning and meaningful progress among members (see Figure 1)[4]. In other words, creative value is successfully 'added' by hubs when they enable interactions that members and member teams experience as beneficial in the context of their ongoing creative journeys[5].

Second, Creative Friction's previous work had also given shape to the NetCreate Methodology that allows us to investigate value-adding interactions in practice. It amounts to an adaptive approach to tracing and elucidating the focal interactions and sources of support that help shape a core idea or project – whether a business model, design blueprint, digital service or tangible product – within an innovation community or programme (for an in-depth scholarly introduction to this methodology, see Toivonen, Idoko & Sorensen 2020).

[3] This situation in many ways mirrors that seen in the coworking industry that makes myriad claims about the supposed benefits of coworking spaces, but with recourse to little evidence and few consistent methodological frameworks (Toivonen 2018). But whereas the coworking industry derives revenue from individual and corporate users, creative hubs more often receive (all or some of) their funding from public sector bodies and foundations which subjects hubs to more formal evaluation requirements.

[4] As opposed to approaching 'creativity' as an individual-level characteristic or variable, we view it as a process through which creators endeavour to generate products, services, artistic outputs or practices that are viewed as new and valuable by relevant audiences. The creative process entails considerable unpredictability and it is shaped inescapably by social interactions and contexts.

[5] To clarify, 'creative value added' can be assessed in qualitative and/or quantitative ways, by examining the characteristics and frequency of interactions that can drive forward the work of an individual creator or a team. Qualitative approaches should focus on (1) establishing how helpful interactions are arrived at, including how they are directly or indirectly facilitated by a particular hub; and on (2) examining in detail how such interactions help drive a member's/team's progress along their creative journey (whether this manifests in incremental changes or learnings, or in radical direction shifts). Quantitative research may focus, for instance, on researching the frequency of interactions that challenge an aspect of a creator's work, or that introduce them to new ideas.

In the present report, we apply the NetCreate Methodology to uncover in detail how Philippines-based hubs generate 'creative value added' through their day-to-day practices and activities, and specifically through prompting innovative interactions and encouraging help-seeking/help-giving behaviours (on the importance of such behaviours to creative collectives, see Hargadon & Bechky 2006). Using this data-driven approach, we are able to pinpoint sources of value generation through rich qualitative interview data, addressing certain frustrations with existing analyses and evaluation studies that appear to investigate everything but the moments and mechanisms that most *directly* help hub participants with their projects and challenges.

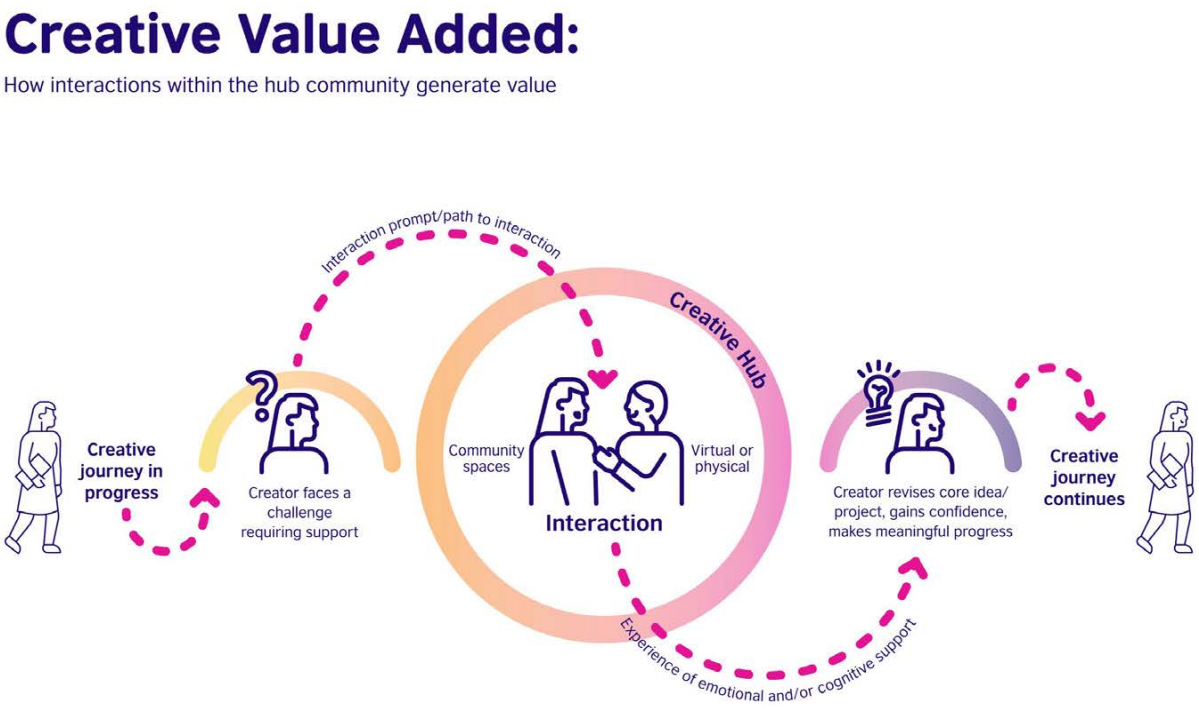

Figure 1

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic that caused the Philippines to go into lockdown starting in mid-March 2020 (with restrictions gradually easing off since late May 2020 and stricter lockdowns being imposed for a few weeks depending on the area), the creative hubs selected for this evaluation study were subjected to an entirely different kind of test.

Suddenly, just as many of these hubs had reached a degree of hard-won economic stability and recognition, they were forced to adapt to fundamental disruptions to their operations. They had to close their spaces for two and a half months or longer from mid-March 2020 onwards, resulting in radically diminished income.

In addition, hub managers and members alike had to deal with pandemic-related mental health issues, in addition to all the economic challenges. The pandemic has also required the hubs to reevaluate their work and business models while simultaneously being relied upon for crucial member support amid challenging circumstances.

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Our research inevitably had to be adapted to these changing circumstances as well. This meant switching from an emphasis on close-range participant observation (of value-generating interactions and the creative journeys they shape) to online interviews, conducted through three rounds, with both hub managers and participants. We furthermore decided that this report should adopt a two-dimensional focus, analysing the selected hubs prior to the pandemic and in its midst. We opted to first clarify the basic (pre-existing) hub operating models and the ways in which they had supported creative interactions prior to March 2020. Subsequently we explored responses to the pandemic at the level of each hub and in relation to members, including the support they were receiving from other hub community members.

This shift in research design prompted us to examine creative value added by paying attention to the ways in which hubs were supporting their members' creative resilience - the ability to bounce back from adversity and adapt to changing circumstances through innovative action and sensemaking (Weick 1988). We have sought to uncover tangible examples of interactions that

have helped hub members address an adaptation challenge and thereby enhance their resilience in the face of the pandemic.

Throughout our research and data collection activities we have sought to elicit evidence on how the specific support interventions of the British Council in Philippines and Design Center of the Philippines have benefited the hubs included in our study. The British Council has organised various training opportunities and workshops for hub leaders, both before and during the pandemic, under the Creative Innovators Fellowship Programme, as well as through the Creative Innovators Mentoring Programme that has paired hub leaders with expert mentors from the Philippines and the UK to discuss issues of leadership, strategy and management (Table 1).

While isolating the effects of these support measures on hubs and their members is difficult from a conventional methodological perspective, we identify ways to 'connect the dots' and discuss the beneficial roles that the British Council's support has played from the perspective of the hubs surveyed. In the future, we would encourage project teams to initiate and design evaluation and data collection activities earlier on in the support process, as this can yield even richer and more consistent evidence that relies less on (often patchy) memories of past events.

Table 1. Timeline of activities

Activity	Date	Organiser/Partner
Launch programme	July 2018	British Council in partnership with the Design Center of the Philippines
Creative hubs: Learn 101	October 2018	British Council/Nesta/Hivos/Design Center of the Philippines/Philippine Trade Training Center
Creative skills bootcamp	February 2019	British Council/Design Center of the Philippines/Apl de Ap Foundation/Thames International Business School/Nesta
UK study tour + networking event for fellows Skills development study tour for ICE scholars	November 2018	British Council/Thames International/Embassy of the Philippines
Post-fellowship cascading/sharing events via grants	August – October 2019	Creative Innovators Fellows

Creative Innovators Mentoring Programme	August 2019 – February 2020	British Council

Next, we discuss our data collection activities and research sample in more detail.

Data collection approach and creative hub profiles

This research utilises in-depth semi-structured interviews to derive key insights on how the 13 hubs included in our sample have generated creative value and resilience, both prior to the pandemic and following its onset. We have surveyed and analysed the following:

- The self-definitions (or identities) of each hub;
- The hubs' primary business models;
- The nature of their membership and wider network;
- The support they offer and the ways in which they catalyse interactions, collaborations and commercial progress among members;
- Their adaptations and transformations since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the first Philippines lockdowns since March 2020.

Three rounds of interviews were conducted during the study period. The first round took place in March to April 2020 (coinciding with the first Manila lockdown, 17 March – 31 May) and during this initial round 13 hubs were interviewed. Subsequent rounds took place in August (in-depth interviews with the managers of three selected hubs) and September-October (in-depth interviews with altogether nine hub members from the three selected hubs), respectively.

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As a result of the first round of interviews, it became clear that not every 'creative hub' in our sample had similar priorities or conformed to a shared model. We therefore found it vital to

capture the defining features of each hub to explore whether a number of distinctive creative hub models existed within our sample.

Any subsequent assessments of 'creative value added' and the interactions that produce such value, we contended, would need to be conducted with an awareness of the basic differences of each creative hub model and their relevant contexts, to ensure a fair and appropriate assessment of each case and to allow us to subsequently compare like with like.

Based on the data from the first interview round, we placed the 13 surveyed hubs (Table 2) into three meaningful types. These categories, although not perfect, reveal that the hubs in our sample focus primarily on offering either:

a. sales and marketing support and/or space
b. co-creation communities or
c. training and resources (see Figure 2).

We can further make a distinction between for-profit vs non-profit orientations while distinguishing between hubs that are *workspace-focused* (with a central role given to a shared physical makerspace, workspace or learning space), *partnership-driven* or *oriented towards serving artisans from a heritage standpoint*.

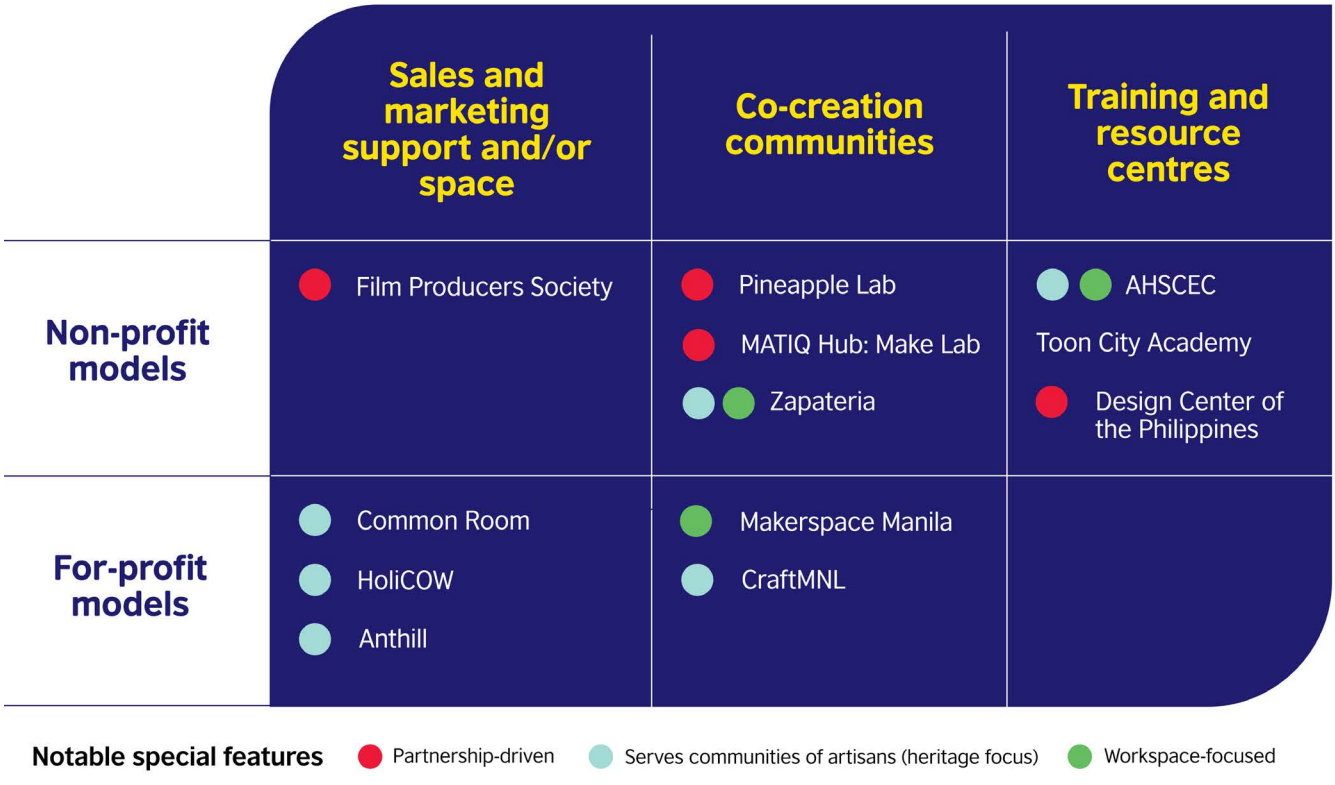

Figure 2

Some of the hubs we have studied fall into a hybrid area where they mix some elements from two categories. They all fall along a spectrum where some seek to strengthen the *preconditions* to successful creative entrepreneurship and artistic work (category c: training and resource centres) while others are *generating creative value added in the here and now* through the sparking of new ideas as well as the initiation of viable new partnerships and projects (category b: co-creation communities), while yet others are focused primarily on the *commercialisation of craft products, skills and projects* (category a: sales and marketing support and/or space).

Our questions in relation to the pandemic revolved around the immediate responses of the hubs in the March-April period, their short- and long-term crisis plans, and on the support they have received and/or that they felt they would need in order to adapt to the severe new challenges.

Based on the results of our initial interviews (March-April 2020) and further online scoping of ongoing hub activities (August 2020), three creative hubs were selected for in-depth research: Common Room (sales and marketing support and/or space), CraftMNL (co-creation community) and Film Producers Society (sales and marketing support and/or space).

These hubs were selected with reference to the above categorisation scheme, as indicated in the parentheses, but they were chosen also because we had noted, at the first interview stage, that each of these three hubs had begun to implement dramatic shifts in how they delivered value to members in responses to the pandemic.

The second round of interviews was conducted from August to September 2020. The managers of the selected hubs were asked detailed questions about changes in their hubs' core model, the interactions they were fostering amid the pandemic conditions, the needs of their members and networks, support provided by the hub community (or lack thereof), their outlook for the hub in the context of a changed cultural landscape, and their long-term plans.

To further understand the creative value added of the hubs, we asked the hub managers to identify and introduce hub members who we could interview. We decided to reach out to members who exhibited *varying degrees of engagement* with their hub, as follows, to yield a fuller picture of how diverse members were benefitting (or not):

- Members who had actively engaged with the hub pre-pandemic and *remained active* up to the time of their interview (during the pandemic);
- Members who had actively engaged with the hub pre-pandemic but *distanced themselves* when the pandemic started;
- Members who had been relatively inactive pre-pandemic but *started to actively engage* with the hub when the pandemic started;
- Members who had been relatively inactive prior to the pandemic and *remained relatively inactive* in relation to their hub as the pandemic started.

A total of nine in-depth interviews were conducted with hub members in October 2020. These comprised interviews with three members from each of the hubs that were selected for closer

analysis. Hub members were asked about their interactions with the hub before and during the pandemic, the level of support that hub provided in relation to their work, the challenges that they were facing because of Covid-19, and their outlook in relation to their work and to the hub.

Table 2. Profiling the 13 hubs included in this study

Creative hub	Profile and purpose	Hub categorisation
ANTHILL Fabric Gallery	ANTHILL is a social and cultural enterprise working on elevating Filipino culture through the application of Philippine weaves into contemporary and circular design. It supports cultural preservation and sustainable livelihood through community enterprise building among its partner artisan communities.	**Sales and marketing support and/or space** +Serves community of artists and/or artisans (heritage focus) +For-profit model
Artisanal Heritage Studies & Creative Enterprise Center (AHSCEC)	AHSCEC is a school-based creative hub that is involved in developing an enterprise curriculum and research, production, and marketing of indigenous-inspired products and technology. It houses the Mindanao Folk Arts Museum. The purpose of the hub is to inspire students to become entrepreneurs who adopt and embody the cultural heritage of Davao	**Training and resource centre** +Serves community of artisans (heritage focus) +Non-profit model
Common Room **Selected for in-depth follow-up research*	Common Room is a shared retail space that houses products of around 200 local artists and creatives. They provide a space for experimentation for artists to learn the business side of making their art more sustainable. The space also hopes to inspire people to pursue art and see it as a means to earn a living.	**Sales and marketing support and/or space** +Serves community of artists and/or artisans (heritage focus) For-profit model
CraftMNL **Selected for in-depth follow-up research*	CraftMNL is a hub that hosts and organises workshops on handmade things. It is a community of makers located in various geographic locations. It aims to integrate local and heritage craft into mainstream crafting.	**Co-creation community** +Workspace-focused +For-profit model
Design Center of the Philippines	The Design Center of the Philippines is a government agency committed to cultivating a culture that thrives on creativity, value creation and innovation. It aims to	**Training and resource centre**

	become a central hub that engages various creative hubs in public and private partnerships.	+Partnership-driven +Non-profit model
Film Producers Society **Selected for in-depth follow-up research*	Film Producers Society is a group of producers and young filmmakers supporting independent Philippine cinema through its film marketing services. The hub aims to answer the question, 'How can Filipinos access good independent films?'	**Sales and marketing support and/or space** +Partnership-driven +Non-profit model
HoliCOW (Holistic Coalition of the Willing Inc.	HoliCOW is a sustainable furniture and housewares company based in Cebu City. The hub works with designers and communities producing innovative and sustainable products. Its purpose is to further the country's weaving traditions and tropical materials.	**Sales and marketing support and/or space** +Serves community of artists and/or artisans (heritage focus) +For-profit model
HUB: Make Lab	HUB: Make Lab is an incubator space and cultural platform that works with homegrown creative brands. Its programmes are geared towards cultural initiatives and engagements within the neighborhood of Escolta. The purpose of the hub is to support the artistic and cultural community.	**Co-creation community** +Non-profit model
Makerspace Manila	Makerspace Manila is a community of makers, designers, artists, engineers, supply chain professionals, consultants, manufacturers, and educators. It is a fabrication lab, learning center, and a design and strategic consultant. The hub collaborates with people, institutions, businesses, and schools to transform themselves into entities that are part of a larger movement to uplift communities. It aims to build a nation of problem-solvers and to provide quality, pragmatic, technology-driven education at a reasonable cost.	**Co-creation community** +Workspace-focused +For-profit model
MATIC Hub	MATIC Hub is a sustainability-focused and multidisciplinary enabling space for Cebu's creative community. It provides a platform for start-ups, communities, and youth organisations to collaborate with experienced stakeholders in academia, industry, and government.	**Co-creation community** +Partnership-driven +Non-profit model
Pineapple Lab	Pineapple Lab is an artist-led creative hub located at the heart of Poblacion, Makati. It aims to find innovative and creative ways of bringing communities together and creating a safe space for voices, messages, and ideas to circulate to others - not just operating in a vacuum.	**Co-creation community** +Partnership-driven +Non-profit model

Toon City Academy	Toon City Academy is the training facility of Toon City, an animation studio, that trains new animators, students or young professionals who want to change careers.	**Training and resource centre** +Non-profit model
Zapateria	Zapateria is a co-creation hub for footwear design and development. It is a shared studio and an incubator space for footwear-based creatives. Its purpose is to foster a new breed of shoemakers and designers who are inclined to utilise creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.	**Co-creation community** +Workspace-focused +Serves community of artists and/or artisans (heritage focus) +For-profit model

Note: Hubs highlighted in purple were selected for the second and third interview rounds.

Hub adaptations and transformations during the pandemic

Outlining the key challenges

In this section, we first lay out the common challenges that the hubs and the wider hub community have faced because of the pandemic. We then survey the salient and most central measures the hubs have adopted in order to build up their resilience and adapt as organisations.

The main challenges faced by the sector included loss of income and financial insecurity; the difficulties of shifting activities online (including unequal access to the internet and online platforms); growing pandemic-related mental health concerns; and inadequate government support for the creative and cultural sectors.

Creative hubs are presently overcoming these by adapting in multiple ways, building up their resilience and transforming their practices, operations and business models. They are doing so through reevaluating the way they deliver their programmes and business, building digital platforms to support their (now remote) member communities, and mobilising both existing as well as new partnerships.

Loss of income and financial insecurity among hubs and their members

One of the most dramatic and obvious challenges the creative hubs and their members have had to face since March 2020 is the sudden loss of income brought on by the closure of physical spaces due to the lockdowns and ongoing restrictions. Business operations, projects, events and other in-person activities were postponed or cancelled.

For most of the creative hubs interviewed, they had to continue to pay overhead expenses such as rent and staff salaries. Some hub managers worried about having to let go of their physical space given the long-term effects of Covid-19 on social gatherings. A few of the hubs have decided to close their physical space to redirect funding to the transformation of their hub. One of these hubs is Common Room which has closed its flagship store in Katipunan, Quezon City.

The pandemic had hit the incomes of the hubs and their members even prior to the implementation of formal Covid-19 measures in the Philippines. Hubs shared stories with us about cancelling projects due to international travel restrictions (e.g. artists coming to Manila for a programme) and cancelling events due to health concerns. Furthermore, since the pandemic has affected everyone, creative hubs were experiencing difficulty in collecting payment for their services. This delay was attributed to the closure of offices due to quarantine measures and overall decrease in revenue among a range of organisations.

For the members of creative hubs, the loss of income that they were experiencing could be devastating. Members of creative hubs are usually freelancers who earn through commissioned work and/or projects or business owners who earn through retail sales or through their own physical stores.

A good number of them also rely on pop-up events to earn money by selling their work. One hub member shared that some of their patrons wait for an event or ‘con’ (short for convention) before they purchase their products in bulk. This is also an opportunity for both the creative and the patron to meet each other in person and form a sort of connection.

Creatives in the early stages of their careers also find it more difficult to adapt to the pandemic since a lot of them have not yet established a steady stream of clients. Because of quarantine measures, opportunities to meet new clients became limited since spaces and events for networking (including galleries and shows), were closed or cancelled.

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The financial toll of the pandemic will have long-term effects on the creative hubs and their members. Everyone we interviewed anticipated long-term effects on their income. They are

uncertain about how artistic and creative work will be received by their consumers, audiences and the general public in the coming months or years. There is a consensus that the creative sector is being treated as 'non-essential' and may not be able to bounce back immediately post-pandemic.

Some of the hubs are anticipating a change in shopping habits post-pandemic where consumers will not be as keen to buy their products. A member of Common Room shared that the development of new products slowed down due to drastically diminished demand for their products.

For Film Producers Society's Baby Ruth Villarama, a major worry is that the general public will *remain* hesitant to enter enclosed public spaces such as the cinema:

> *'We are anticipating changes in audience behaviour when the pandemic is over. The general audience won't be rushing to go to small public spaces like cinemas after the pandemic.'*

Physical space and internet access

Although most of the creative hubs are doing their best to accommodate work-from-home arrangements, some have raised concerns that this is not sustainable due to the nature of their work or their key programming. This is true for hubs that work with local communities to manufacture products such as ANTHILL and HoliCOW and those that organise artistic and cultural events such as Pineapple Lab and HUB: Make Lab.

Shifting activities online comes with various serious difficulties for hubs and their members. Pineapple Lab mentioned that some artists and creatives do not have access to a stable internet connection at home and that it is sometimes easier for an artist to do their work at the hub space (or studio). The Design Center of the Philippines also commented that some of the communities that they work with do not have access to online platforms making it difficult for the centre to get in touch with them and to shift their work online. Furthermore, shifting to online platforms poses questions about financial sustainability. MATIC Hub talked about redesigning their programming for online platforms, yet monetising future online events and courses remains a formidable challenge.

Translating the overall feel of a hub's space and conveying the personal touch of the creatives online is another challenge. For some, shifting online would mean starting from scratch or relearning everything that they know about their work. A member of Common Room talked about how many local creative businesses lost their personal touch because they usually connect with patrons through events.

Because of Covid-19, small creative businesses were forced to shift online where personal connections can be challenging to establish and transactions have a tendency to become

robotic. Another creative affiliated with CraftMNL talked about how shifting online entails additional capital since a brand would need to buy ads to reach an audience. The brand would also need to know how social media algorithms work for you, especially when the online space has become crowded.

Impact of the pandemic on mental health

Some of our interviewees pointed out that mental health needs have been grossly overlooked during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Philippine context. Respondents emphasised that productivity among creatives is intimately bound up with their mental and emotional wellbeing. As Roma Agsalud-Agsunod, Founder of Common Room put it, ‘Art is really personal for them [artists]. If they don't earn through their work, they perceive it as something being wrong with them [personally].’ Another hub member shared how their motivation to create new products has waned because of the huge negative impact of the pandemic on their sales.

For some creatives, physical interaction inspires new ideas and heightens work motivation. Because of quarantine measures, physical gatherings have been limited to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The reduced support that can be gained through physical interaction partnered with the stress of loss income takes a toll on the emotional and mental wellbeing of the members of the creative hubs.

Inadequate support for the creative and cultural sector from the government

When asked if the creative hubs were expecting any type of support from the government, the majority of the hub managers said that government support available was inadequate. Unyx Sta. Ana, Zapateria’s Founder and Managing Director, described the creative and cultural industry as being ‘at the bottom of assistance priorities". A few hubs that qualify for government assistance have decided to pass on the support because it is too small for their operational needs and to save the government funding for other organisations that need the assistance

Responding and adapting to the new challenges

We asked the creative hubs how they were adapting to the ongoing pandemic at three levels:

1. As an organisation that needs to financially sustain itself
2. In terms of responding to member needs
3. In terms of their broader community and industry context.

As organisations, most of the hubs were shifting their programmatic activities and any business activities online. This was done by improving and upgrading their existing websites and by building additional online platforms for new initiatives like a learning management system or a video on demand platform.

In terms of responding to member needs, the immediate reaction to the pandemic was to check up on the hub community and their partners, cross-promoting each other's Covid-19 initiatives and activities, and to provide immediate relief through in-kind relief packages containing essential items like food, face masks and disinfectant (alcohol), or through fundraising for colleagues who lost their income due to the lockdowns.

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Checking up on the hub community and cross-promotion of activities among the creative hubs continued even after the lockdowns were lifted by the government. Collaborations between hubs and among members of the hub community also continued.

At the community and industry levels, the hubs began to gather data on how much the industry was losing due to the pandemic and started to lobby for support from the government. At the same time, the hubs were involved in initiatives making and donating personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontliners and communities. Most hubs were working hard to adapt to the pandemic, stating that they were taking things one step at a time - with a cautious sense of optimism - since the situation remained volatile and unpredictable.

After the onset of the pandemic, most of the hubs we surveyed decided to strengthen their online presence and translate their programmes and business services into online formats. For many of them, plans to go digital existed prior to the pandemic - its arrival simply forced the hubs to fast-track the implementation of these plans. Hubs that normally organised events and workshops began to host ad hoc webinars and livestream workshops. For Common Room, CraftMNL and Film Producers Society, they have gone beyond just moving their business or programmes online by building an entirely new kind of online presence and digital tools to transform the core work of their hub.

To provide a tangible example, **Common Room** is making notable changes to its business model - that could be characterised as transformative - so as to make it resilient to future crises. The hub re-launched its online store (https://commonroomph.com) in April 2020 and started offering custom art through #ReSTORE. This initiative showcased not only the products of the hub members but also their creative talent and the services that they offer. Since the re-launch of their online store, the hub has seen an increase in their onlines sales. Aside from upgrading its website and online store, the hub is building a multi-functional studio that will house the hub's inventory for the online store and will serve as a space where their members can create not just art, but also online content.

One of the main challenges the hub faced was how to translate the ‘feel’ of their spaces online. Their physical spaces were designed to effectively showcase local artistic talent and inspire people who visit them to explore their own creativity. Common Room is transforming itself while staying true to its purpose by setting up platforms where their members can create online content, share their stories, and showcase their skills and services. The hub has created a YouTube channel and Patreon account for this purpose. The hub managers are sharing weekly updates about the hub’s transformation with their members not only to inform them, but also to give their members something to look forward to and to encourage them to plan for their own work.

Figure 3. Common Room’s YouTube content

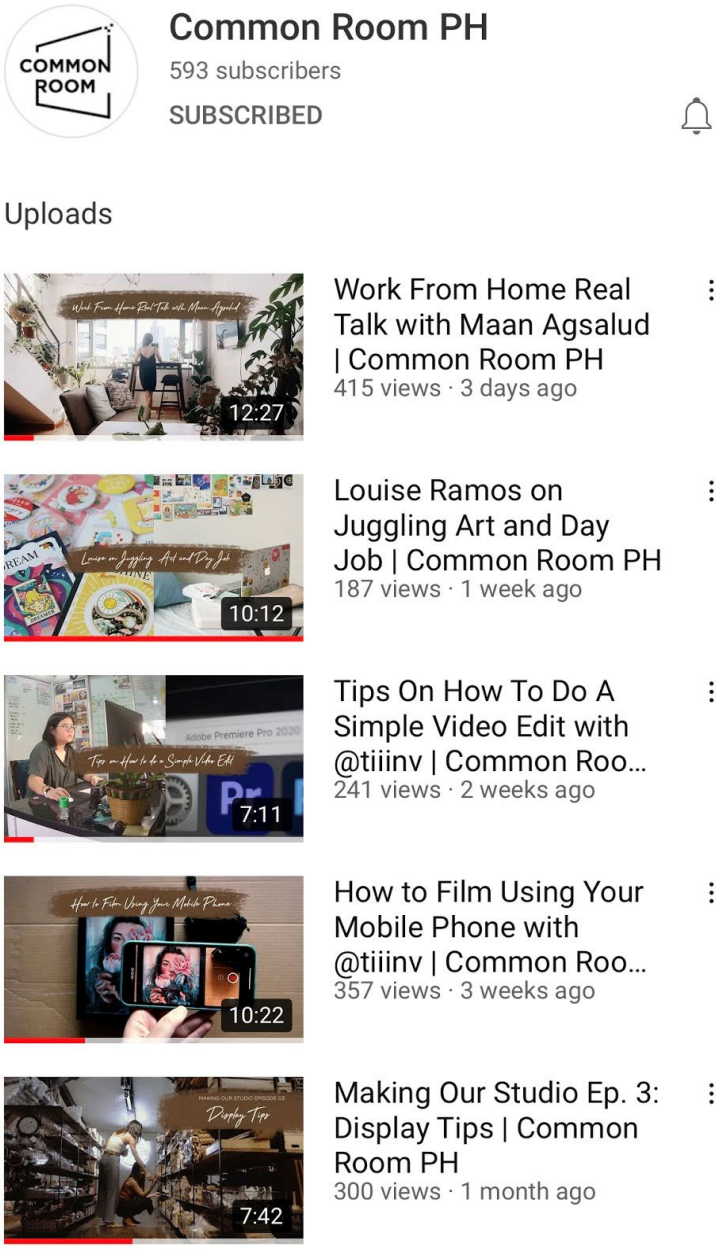

Figure 4. Common Room's Patreon announcement

CraftMNL, on the other hand, is developing an on-demand learning management system where the hub's workshops can be accessed by the user at their own pace. This is accessible through a new website (https://online.craftmnl.com) that the hub is building in-house. Because of this transformation strategy, the hub management is learning content creation with what is available to them while building the platform from the ground up.

At the moment, they have individual users who have used their on-demand learning management system. Their goal is to have more group users, corporate clients, and working parents avail of the new way that they're doing their workshops. The workshops are usually inclusive of a crafting kit containing materials that they try to source locally.

We spoke to one of the users who happen to be a part of the hub community. She gave positive feedback about the platform. What appealed to her the most is that the platform is convenient to use and that because of the crafting kit, there's no need for her to leave her home. She also liked that workshops provide a range of options for the users if they don't have certain crafting or household equipment at home.

Aside from building an online platform for their workshops, the hub also organises live workshop sessions on Instagram and Facebook. According to Marielle Nadal-Reyes, Co-founder of CraftMNL, they are after the most effective learning experience for delivering their workshops online.

Although the hub is building infrastructure to support their workshops online, they plan on going back to the traditional way of delivering workshops when the situation improves. This is because there are certain workshops that require a physical studio (e.g. pottery) and a physical space can foster human connections that can't be replicated online.

Figure 5. CraftMNL's on-demand learning management system

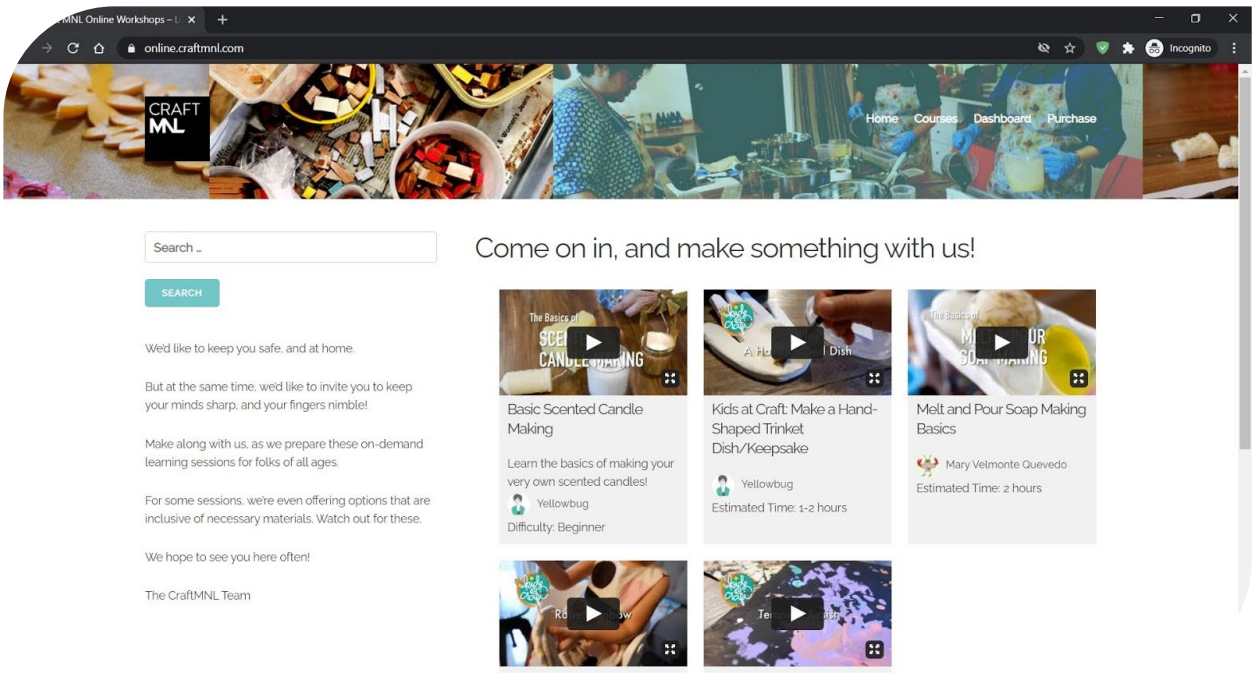

Figure 6. Example of a class offered on CraftMNL's new on-demand platform

Another example of adaptation is the **Film Producers Society's (FPS)** involvement in the first online documentary film festival in the Philippines, *Daang Dokyu.* The goal of the festival is to showcase documentaries to a wider audience and to make people reconsider documentaries as films rather than as news. This event was originally slated in March 2020 but the government declared the lockdown a week before the festival's opening.

After months of monitoring the situation and deliberation about whether or not they will push through with the festival, the festival organisers - which includes one of FPS's hub managers - decided to continue in June 2020. The festival organisers had three months to mount an online film festival - a feat for the team since they will be doing this for the first time.

Furthermore, the festival organisers decided to extend the duration of the festival from one week to seven weeks in order to create more impact. The festival organisers had three main tasks:

1. Set up the online platform
2. Curate the programme, and
3. Build partnerships and mobilise the audience.

FPS was responsible for partnerships and audience mobilisation. The hub's main strategy was to establish partnerships with schools in the Philippines (e.g. selecting films in the festival for a class subject) and to use media marketing.

With an extended festival run and a targeted marketing plan, the festival surpassed their viewership target of 20,000 making it a success. The festival also garnered a lot of positive feedback, not only for the quality of the documentaries that it screened but also for their socially relevant online talkbacks.

As the festival was ongoing, FPS received partnership inquiries from schools, many of them they didn't have the opportunity to get in touch with. What helped in spreading information about the festival was the media marketing the festival organisers and word of mouth reviews among educators. A member of hub shared how they felt overwhelmed by the support and the influx of partnership requests but the feeling was a positive one.

Aside from surpassing their viewership target, one of the achievements for the hub was the requests from schools to replicate the festival. At the moment, the festival organisers and the hub have not yet decided if they will replicate the online festival in the future. However, due to its success, the festival organisers are considering mounting the festival every two years.

Figure 7. Daang Dokyu online promotional material

Figure 8. Daang Dokyu promotional material showing how the festival can be accessed

Figure 9. One of Daang Dokyu's socially relevant online discussions or talkbacks is about the environment

Box 1. Immediate and ad hoc responses to Covid-19

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, creative hubs mobilised support not only for their community, but also for the creative and cultural sector as a whole and for frontliners. Below are some of the initiatives that the creative hubs spearheaded at the height of the lockdown.

Collecting data on how much the creative and cultural sector is losing and advocating support for creative and cultural workers

Taking the lead in gathering information about how much the creative industry is losing because of the pandemic is Pineapple Lab and their **'I Lost My Gig' campaign**. I Lost My Gig is a website that contains an online survey about arts and culture work lost because of the pandemic. It also contains information about artist relief funds and pending laws for the protection of freelancers and creatives.

Some of our interviewees are also involved in policy advocacy and fundraising initiatives through their affiliations or as a personal advocacy. For example, Film Producers Society is supporting 'Lockdown Cinema', a fundraising initiative for 1,500 film workers who lost work because of the pandemic. One hub manager is also part of a group that is petitioning the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) to realign government funding to support artists, cultural workers, and creative spaces.

Production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

A number of creative hubs were involved in Covid-19 response initiatives. Makerspace Manila and CraftMNL were making PPEs and donating them to frontliners. Makerspace Manila was also approached by groups to design innovative medical tools to compensate for the shortage of equipment in hospitals. Some of the hubs are also producing and selling face masks and other essential products to ensure the hub's sustainability during the pandemic.

Adding creative value across multiple levels: Supporting members prior to the Covid-19 pandemic

In this section, we will discuss how hubs provide creative value for their members. There are two dimensions where hubs create impact - first is professionally oriented, while the second is social. Specifically, hubs offer creative value by supporting the business or careers of their members, sparking collaborations, making members feel supported, and sharing feedback and learning.

Supporting business growth (including market access and visibility)

Creative hubs support the business and/or professional growth of its members by providing opportunities for creatives to showcase their work and access to a market or audience. This is done by providing a space for their members - physical or virtual - where they can express their creativity, display and sell their work, and easily connect with an audience. For some hubs, they do this by building a physical space like in the case of Common Room which uses its stores to cater to local artists and bridge them to the retail market or Zapateria that has an area in their studio where they showcase the work of their shoemakers.

The founders of Diyalogo, a comedy design lifestyle brand, shared how being a part of Common Room established their credibility as a brand and people who approach them usually say that they learned about their brand through the hub. Some hubs organise pop-up events where their members can showcase their work for a period of time in different locations. These pop-up events also provide an opportunity for creatives to test the feasibility of their business idea and build confidence in their work. Tish Hautea, Founder of Sqooid - a printmaking, stamps, and block making brand - shared that CraftMNL is one of the first bazaars that she participated in when she left her advertising job. She found the hub's 'Maker's Market' refreshing because the hub featured participants on their website and that motivated her to 'step up her game.'

The wider hub community also supports business and professional growth by promoting each other's work and encouraging each other to pursue their ideas. Marita de Leon, a crafter who facilitated workshops at CraftMNL shared how crafters in their hub are encouraging to each other and amazes each other with the different types of crafts that they do. They also cross-promote each other's work on social media and encourage each other to pursue other crafts making her feel that she can do it too.

Sparking collaborations

Creative hubs foster collaborations among members in the hub community and/or facilitate partnerships between their members and another organisation. Hub managers typically actively seek out partnerships to the point where their hubs establish a certain level of economic and social capital. This allows hubs to attract partnership opportunities for the hub itself and for its community.

There are instances when the hub would inform their members about opportunities that would allow them to widen their personal and professional network. Hubs that were examined in-depth were generally regarded as generous with opportunities. Interviewed hub members share stories about how the hub would forward to them large projects with corporations or institutions or would share with them professional development opportunities organised by the hub partners like workshops or bootcamps.

> **Kyle Nieva, a film producer, participated in an exchange programme by the British Council where he went to Leeds in the United Kingdom. He learned about the opportunity through the Film Producers Society. Kyle was able to establish international connections during this time including director Rafael Manuel who is based in the UK. Together with Don Senoc, Film Producers Society's hub manager, Kyle collaborated with Rafael on a short film called Filipiñana which won the Silver Bear Jury Prize (Short Film) at the Berlin Film Festival - one of the most prestigious film festivals in the world.**

At the hub community level, collaborations are made possible through the interactions among members and the wider hub network. Interactions among hub members can be deliberately facilitated by the hub by organising activities like hangout sessions, year-end gatherings, etc. It can also happen organically when members visit the physical space of the hub or when they participate in hub-organised events such as workshops or exhibits.

Sometimes these interactions can also lead you to meet people from other hubs and become a member of another hub community. One respondent shared how she met and was acquainted with the Founder of Common Room and other artists through CraftMNL's Maker's Market. Through these interactions, she was able to become a part of both CraftMNL and Common Room's hub community where she was able to collaborate with other local artists.

However, the level of engagement of members with the hub community varies. Some members may prefer to distance themselves from the hub for various reasons like introversion, busy schedules, difference in personal interests, etc. Interactions with the hub are essentially voluntary but they need to be initiated by the hub for creative added value to materialise.

Making members feel supported

Creative hubs are also spaces where social connections and friendships are formed. The social support that creative hubs offer is one of the top reasons for joining and engaging with the hub according to our respondents. This kind of support is usually offered by the hub managers themselves or by fellow hub members. Hub managers usually support the hub community by offering guidance, encouragement, and/or a feeling of some form of security in a sector that may not offer traditional forms of stability. The manner in which hub managers offer support vary - some foster a mentor-mentee relationship, some assume the role of a business partner, others are more personal in their approach like family or a friend, and there are hub managers that combine parts or all of these features.

Fellow hub members also provide invaluable social support by checking up on each other, encouraging each other, promoting each other's work, and sharing struggles and achievements with each other. The openness, friendliness, and sense of familiarity attract creatives to engage with a hub and these are also the same things that maintain their engagement.

Cat Limson of Bedazzled and Luna Maia shared the value of social support:

> *'It's nice to know that other makers go through the same thing in their work. Sometimes, it's not advice that I'm after - just being heard and knowing that there are people who appreciate what you do is enough. It's different if you work in an office where you receive regular feedback. As an entrepreneur, you usually work alone.'*

For some creatives who are not originally from the area where they are currently based, creative hubs can be a great place to build relationships.

As Louise Ramos, an artist affiliated with Common Room, shared:

> *'We call ourselves 'roomies' and I have built friendships with some of the makers. I'm originally from the province and the personal relationships that I have built in Common Room is important to me now that I live in Manila.'*

The sense of camaraderie partnered with openness to each other's ideas builds an environment that is conducive to feedback and learning.

Feedback-sharing and learning

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Creative hubs foster an environment that is conducive to feedback-sharing and learning. The exchange of information among members of the community is a key feature of the relationships within a hub.

Given that there is a certain level of familiarity and openness among hub members, information sharing becomes a natural part of their interactions. The information being shared can be about an activity outside the hub community that members can participate in, tips on how to grow professionally and improve their craft, sharing new art forms or creative outlets that they can pursue, type of products they can create, improving social media presence, etc.

Some hub managers would intentionally facilitate information exchange within the hub community by organising feedback sessions.

A good example of this is the 'kapihan' (coffee) sessions that Common Room organises for its members at the end of the year. During this activity, around 50 to 100 hub members would hang out and share tips on a range of topics - from planning for the Christmas season, how to take their business to the next stage, etc.

Sharing of constructive feedback can also be done through email, messaging apps, and in-person one-on-one meetings. Information sharing can also happen informally when hub members would chance upon each other in the physical space of the hub or in other places.

There are hubs that offer a more formalised way of providing feedback. Some hubs like AHSCEC, MATIC Hub, and the Design Center of the Philippines provide an opportunity for industry experts and stakeholders to review their members' proposals and outputs.

In some hubs, a mentoring system is built into their programming. For example, Toon City Academy adopts a one-on-one mentoring system in their animation workshops where students were given assignments that they work on together with their mentor. This hub also uses a drawing exam to assess the skill level of their students and to monitor their progress as they go through the training. Makerspace Manila has a developed system for assessing progress. After

their four-day intensive workshops, the hub is part of the follow-through of their students' progress through their consulting service.

Furthermore, some hubs use conventional tools in assessing their members' work. For example, the Film Producers Society uses SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis for the films that they market. The hub's core team screens the film that they'll market and understands the vision of the filmmaker and the expectations of the producer. From there, they develop their marketing or production plan and they work on it further with the producer.

For creatives in the early stages of their career, the information they gain from the hub community can build the foundation and shape the type of creative that they'll become. One respondent told us that everything she knows about the creative industry is because of the hub community. She learned the business side of the sector like licensing and was mentored by a more experienced illustrator who is a part of the hub.

In relation to our previous discussion about the hubs offering a feeling of support, hub members also offer support by providing guidance and mentorship to fellow members who are less experienced in the sector. Younger hub members may approach more experienced hub members to ask work-related advice and wisdom.

Many of the hub managers and members that we interviewed shared that they felt like their businesses or careers were picking up or starting to stabilise before the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Unfortunately, one of the most affected sectors during this pandemic is the creative industry. Some of the respondents have shared that they think the earliest when they can recover is in the year 2022. Because of this, creative hubs are finding ways to make their community more resilient to crises.

Cultivating hub members' creative resilience during the pandemic

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Philippines, the hubs included in our study started responding in a myriad of ways to the changing situation. This was reflected clearly in our interviews with hub members who particularly emphasised how their hubs have been reaching out to them, initiating activities to keep them visible, and guiding them in adapting to the situation. In this section, we organise relevant findings around three key themes: enhancing resilience, making members feel supported, and future outlooks.

Enhancing resilience of the hub community

Creative hubs are adapting and transforming themselves while simultaneously building the resilience of its members and network. They are doing this by shouldering costs and providing material support to help their members get through the pandemic and focus on enhancing their resilience.

An example of this is Common Room's initiative to waive rental fees. Some of the creative hubs are continuing their efforts to help their members stay visible and promote their work. They are doing this by hosting live workshops and discussions or by organising online auctions or campaigns showcasing their members' works.

Since the pandemic started, CraftMNL has been hosting live events and workshops to maintain the visibility of the hub. One of the online events that they organised is a live discussion where crafters shared the struggles that they are facing because of the pandemic. Tish Hautea describes this as 'a way to remind people that we are still here.' On the other hand, Pineapple Lab hosted an online exhibit and auction called 'Proof of Life' that features artworks of local artists.

For some hubs, they are enhancing their websites and building their digital infrastructure. This is being done in an effort to give their members a more long-term platform to stay visible and to support the members' transition online. An example of this is Common Room's effort to enhance their website by steadily uploading their members' products and featuring the services of their members as discussed in Chapter 2 of this report.

Building on the hubs' pre-pandemic feature of supporting their members, hub managers continue to provide guidance on adapting their members' work to the pandemic. One hub member shared how she sought advice from Common Room's hub manager when the lockdown started. She was considering doing the production of her items herself at home. The hub manager asked her if she will be able to manage all the work herself and that question made her pause and reconsider. What's striking for her is that the hub manager doesn't tell her

members what to do - she asks questions that make members think. She also shared how the hub manager encouraged her to pursue selling online. She was initially resisting using online platforms to sell products because her items are non-essential and transitioning online would require additional effort to establish.

Making members feel supported

Creative hubs are striking a balance between checking up on their community and providing space to allow members in their community to regroup. This is a balance that is tricky to strike. At the end of the day, participation in the hub community is voluntary. However, members often benefit from prompts and out-reach, but sometimes these can be too much. At the beginning of the lockdowns, all creative hubs that we interviewed made an effort to reach out to their communities and check how they're doing. They did this by organising virtual sessions or using messaging apps.

For hubs working with local communities like HoliCOW and Zapateria, they held regular check-ins with their respective communities to learn about their situation and the assistance they need. In addition to balanced communication, hub members also feel supported through the resilience enhancing initiatives of the hubs. The sense that hub managers are dedicated to their work and the hub community builds the feeling of security among hub members to the point where some would see them as 'family'.

> **It should be noted that hub members interviewed struggled to answer our question about the type of support they currently need. Many of them do not (or did not) seem to know what kind of support they need and felt like the pandemic was out of anyone's control. Subtle challenges exist on this dimension as well which include members not reaching out proactively for advice, often because they struggle to identify what their key problems and needs are. The hub community could play** *an even stronger sensemaking role* **here - helping members to explore, identify and define their evolving challenges - provided that interactions are initiated in one way or another (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 2005).**

Finally, it should be noted that support does not only come from the hub managers, it is also provided by the hub community. This type of support is typically self-organised and spontaneous - as is the nature of networks and communities. Don from the Film Producers Society shared that since film productions are on hold, people in their industry and network were forced to look for other sources of income. Many of them started selling food and other products online. The network would support each other by buying from each other and check up on how they're doing in the process of doing so.

Future outlook

Hub members are using this period in contrasting ways. Some are rethinking their long-term plans, while others are focusing on the present moment and not assuming things will improve in 2021. For example, one hub member shared that the pandemic forced her to pause and evaluate the direction of her business, its branding, and goals for the future. She is currently working on the rebranding of her business and initially wanted to finish this by the end of 2020. However, she realised that she needs to 'honor the season that you're in' and adjusted her timeline to complete the rebranding to 2021. In contrast, another hub member shared that she is not thinking about 2021 because she thinks that it will be the same as 2020. She used to do business projections before the pandemic but now she takes things day-by-day.

Some hub members also expressed their desire to return to physical spaces in the future. Diyalogo expressed their hope for the physical stores of Common Room to survive this period and maintain their physical stores in the future. A hub member of Film Producers Society shared that although the hub is shifting its activities online, they still want to return to the cinema. He expressed the need to make the return sustainable and safer for the public.

Interviewed hub members also shared the type of support that their industry needs. Kyle of the Film Producers Society expressed the need for some form of financial assistance, especially for the vulnerable workers with low pay and no health insurance such as utility men and production assistants. Eman, who is from the same hub, also expressed the need to support vulnerable film workers and also workers in other businesses that rely on them such as transportation, catering, etc.

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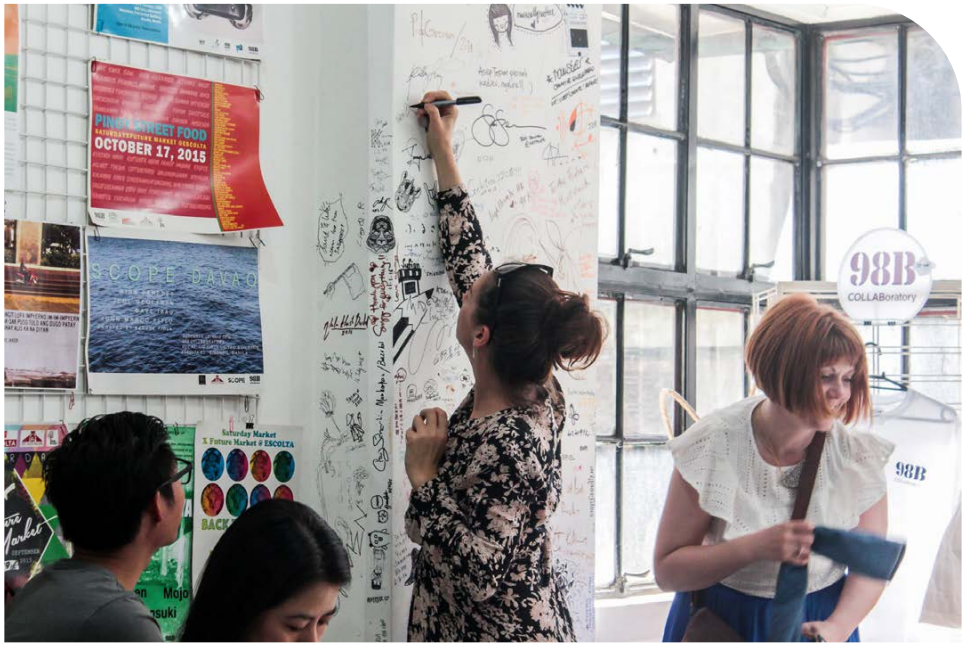
Insights for hubs and capability-builders

This research and evaluation project initially set out to explore and assess the 'creative value added' of British Council and Design Center-supported creative hubs in the Philippines. With the arrival of the devastating Covid-19 pandemic, the project began to also investigate the creative resilience and adaptation strategies of hubs and their members. A rich body of data was amassed through three rounds of data collection, resulting in the foregoing chapters.

Instead of attempting to comprehensively summarise all our findings here, in this final section we reflect on the question of *what, if anything, is distinctive about the ways in which hubs have adapted amid the pandemic and continued to generate creative value.* What factors – if any – make creative hubs unique in terms of their responses, and what count as their most important strengths amid the tumultuous circumstances of today?



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First, the proclivity of Philippines-based hubs for active (internal) community-building and (external) networking activities can be seen as forming the foundation of their resilience. That these hubs have remained functional and adaptive during the pandemic rests entirely on the myriad ways in which they had 'saved up social capital' prior to March 2020.

The relationships they had enacted between diverse members meant that they could continue to exist as innovative communities online, without regular physical meetings, and even offer opportunities for serendipity, or 'planned luck', between members (Busch & Barkema 2020). The supportive internal relations and orientations they had cultivated were amenable to being transferred onto a digital plane, building on existing norms and behaviours.

> **Had the hubs taken a more narrowly goal-oriented accelerator-type approach to their support work – perhaps viewing non-goal-oriented socialising and relationship-building as a waste of time – this transition would not have been possible.**

In similar fashion, had the hubs we studied emphasised their role as (mere) physical spaces or incubator office services, there would not have been a strong community to begin with. That these creative hubs have defined themselves confidently as member-driven communities and acted accordingly have formed the cornerstone of their resilience, whatever their financing and other resourcing challenges may have been during the pandemic.

Also, the fact that the British Council vigorously organised new opportunities for inter-hub networking and ecosystem-building in the pre-pandemic years has enabled important problem-solving and knowledge exchange conversations between different hubs during the pandemic. This parallel dimension of community-building between hub founders and leaders has likewise contributed to the resilience and adaptiveness of hubs to a significant degree.

Second, in line with their community logic, the hubs in our sample have manifested – and continue to manifest – an ethic of care. This is a hard-to-manufacture, impossible-to-commodify collective quality that engenders mutual support based on a genuine concern for others in one's community, further contributing to the resilience of the hubs in times of crisis. As we saw above, both hub managers and members regularly and actively checked up on others in the initial pandemic period and beyond, both through individual communications as well as collective platforms and events.

Although aware that being overly pro-active could be experienced by members as uncomfortable or off-putting, such managers and peers nevertheless displayed a care ethic and ensured that the *familial* character of hubs would survive even without frequent physical interactions.

That some hubs went out of their way to grant fee reductions to members while also supporting them through crisis fund-raising further shows how they transcended a pure commercial logic (considered by the authors as the defining character and vulnerability of larger coworking chains internationally) that easily undermines communal, selfless commitment and mutual support. While communities can continue to exist for their own sake and to some extent independently from economic performance and resourcing, purely market-based business units can not.

Third and perhaps even less obviously, we argue that the hubs included in our study have made significant contributions to member adaptation work through triggering collective sensemaking processes (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 2005). As we saw in Chapter 4, hub members have frequently struggled (during the pandemic) to adequately identify and define the nature of their challenges.

By catalysing interactions and open sharing between peers and between peers and community managers, hubs have made the identification and definition of practical adaptation challenges and options significantly easier and more meaningful.

As a result, diverse creatives have found new and better ways to 'problem-solve' and work towards positive responses to difficulties related to the pandemic, in a way that respects the individual decision-making of creatives and teams but that 'adds creative value' through a collective process. Importantly, this sensemaking has had both cognitive and affective dimensions, generating not only new ideas but also engendering uplifting emotions and energy to support member progress.

Fourth, it should not be missed that, beyond being communal, caring and capable of triggering value-adding (cognitive-affective) interactions, Philippines-based creative hubs have also been distinctive in terms of their veritable *entrepreneurialism* in the face of fast-changing circumstances. This means they have not only demonstrated agency in terms of obvious business and support choices (e.g., temporarily closing physical spaces to save on expenses or taking their communities online through digital events and learning content) – they also have engaged in substantial and rapid innovation together with their members.

The Film Producers Society's decision to organise a path-breaking online film festival offers one pertinent example here, as do the efforts of Common Room to showcase the skills and services of its members online in unprecedented ways. Such fast-paced entrepreneurialism would have been less forthcoming had the hubs existed within larger bureaucratic structures, e.g. as public sector-funded incubators or as the local offices of national or global hub chains.

Fifth, although harder to evidence through conventional social research methods, we find that the creative hubs examined in this report have maintained a high degree of *fluidity and diversity* throughout their existence. In this sense, they have continued to resemble an ever-evolving creative startup or innovation lab more than a formalised, highly institutionalised incubator or accelerator programme, or any kind of more standardised business organisation.

This fluidity arguably relates both to the structural features of hubs – including their semi-open boundaries that allows for diverse members to engage and disengage flexibly – as well as their unstable funding basis that promotes entrepreneurialism and inventiveness by necessity. In any case, it can be argued that such fluidity and familiarity with constant change has served the hubs well in the pandemic period. The decision of most of the hubs in our sample to work with diverse creatives at different developmental stages has further reinforced their fluidity and adaptiveness.

We believe that the above five considerations help explain and appreciate the adaptability and distinctive strategies of creative hubs since March 2020. Our elucidation of these factors is not meant to be taken as an argument in favour of reduced support for hubs, on the basis that they are able to survive and even thrive perfectly well without external financing and other forms of support – clearly this is not the case and additional funding and ecosystem enhancement remain of paramount importance.

Still, we find it important to tease out what is relatively unique about hubs as fluid and responsive generators of creative value within an industry landscape where they are frequently confused with other types of organisations and platforms (incubators, accelerators, coworking spaces, ecosystems and the like).

In closing, there is certainly a plethora of ways in which hubs can further enhance their resilience and that of their members (or participants) in coming years and months. Our evidence shows an overall trend towards a rapid digitalisation of core hub functions, including their community interactions, skills development and promotional activities.

We hope that vital cultural and government agencies such as the British Council and the Design Center, and other hub support actors will work together with the hub sector to enhance its capabilities in relation to this digitalisation trend. Within this overall trajectory, it will surely be as crucial as ever to firmly and confidently bear in mind the foundational, defining strengths of creative hubs – starting with their community logic, collective sensemaking abilities and entrepreneurial qualities – as more and more of their work will take place in the virtual world, or through a novel mix of physical and digitally mediated activities.

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