

PERFORMANCES OF CREATIVE HUBS IN INDONESIA: LESSONS FROM SEMARANG'S EXPERIENCE

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Abstract. This study evaluates the performance of Creative Hub Semarang (CHS) in fulfilling its dual objectives as a collaborative space for creative economy actors and a tourism destination. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative surveys with visitors to capture perceptions and satisfaction and qualitative in-depth interviews with government and creative actors. Results reveal that CHS's strategic location in Kota Lama presents an opportunity to bridge the creative economy with tourism. About its role as a creative hub, while CHS has provided essential infrastructure and networking opportunities, its operational model and fragmented management hinder its ability to foster active collaboration and innovation. Challenges include limited trust between government entities and creative actors, bureaucratic constraints, and restrictive regulations. To strengthen CHS's role, a more integrated and collaborative management approach is needed, alongside clearer communication of its objectives.

Keywords: Collaborative; Creative actors; Creative economy; Creative Hub Semarang (CHS); Tourism

[Judul: Creative Hub di Indonesia: Pembelajaran dari Pengalaman Kota Semarang]. Penelitian ini mengevaluasi kinerja Creative Hub Semarang (CHS) dalam memenuhi tujuan ganda sebagai ruang kolaboratif bagi para pelaku ekonomi kreatif dan tujuan pariwisata. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, penelitian ini menggabungkan survei kuantitatif dengan pengunjung untuk mengetahui persepsi dan kepuasan mereka serta wawancara mendalam secara kualitatif dengan pemerintah dan pelaku ekonomi kreatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lokasi CHS yang strategis di Kota Lama memberikan peluang untuk menjembatani ekonomi kreatif dengan pariwisata. Sehubungan dengan perannya sebagai pusat kreatif, meskipun CHS telah menyediakan infrastruktur penting dan peluang jaringan, model operasional dan manajemen yang terfragmentasi menghambat kemampuannya untuk mendorong kolaborasi aktif dan inovasi. Tantangan yang dihadapi antara lain terbatasnya kepercayaan antara entitas pemerintah dan pelaku kreatif, kendala birokrasi, dan peraturan yang membatasi. Untuk memperkuat peran CHS, diperlukan pendekatan manajemen yang lebih terintegrasi dan kolaboratif, disertai komunikasi yang lebih jelas mengenai tujuannya.

Kata Kunci: Kolaborasi; Pelaku kreatif; Ekonomi kreatif; Creative Hub Semarang (CHS); Pariwisata

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1. INTRODUCTION

The creative economy has become a sector that plays an important role in structural changes in Indonesia's national economy. Macroeconomic studies show that between 1990 and 2005, the creative economy had a significant influence on changes in the structure of the national economy while experiencing rapid growth (Zuhdi, 2012). The term creative economy became popular in Indonesia at the beginning of the new millennium

through a community of creative young people who developed the indie music industry and clothing business in Bandung (Fahmi, Koster, & van Dijk, 2016). In general, the development of the creative economy became increasingly visible after the enactment of Law No. 24 of 2019, which was accompanied by the formation of the Creative Economy Committee (Kusumawardana, Dwimawanti, & Yuniningsih, 2023).

The creative economy in Indonesia is generally dominated by the craft, arts, and culture sectors

that characterize many regions in the Global South (Fahmi et al., 2016). These industries play a role in economic development at the national level and are important contributors to economic development in various regions (Fahmi, Krismiyaningsih, Sagala, & Rustiadi, 2023). In addition to contributing to economic development, the creative economy in Indonesia has also shown resilience during the pandemic, as shown by a contribution to GDP that is greater than that of the creative sector in the United States (Kusumaningrum, Maulana Prasetya, & Farid Styo Wibowo, 2024). However, for this sector to develop more optimally, a collaborative platform is needed that can support innovation and community engagement (Leng, Mui, & Badarulzaman, 2023; Merkel, 2019; Shavrizal, 2024; Wicaksono, Pratiwi, Wibowo, & Fadlillah, 2023). In this context, creative hubs (CHs) play a crucial role. CHs not only serve as a platform for the creative economy but also encourage cross-cultural dialogue and enhance social cohesion through the meeting of creative actors from different backgrounds (Komorowski, Fodor, Pepper, & Lewis, 2023; Labbe, Zuberec, & Turner, 2022).

In Indonesia, several CHs initiatives have emerged, one of which is the Creative Hub Semarang (CHS). CHS is located in a building owned by PT PPI in the Kota Lama area of Semarang (Junida & Wijaya, 2020), which functions as a Creative Industry Gallery (Galeri Industri Kreatif-GIK) by the Semarang Department of Industry. The main activity served at GIK is a showroom for the fashion, culinary, and craft sectors (Yulianto & Maya, 2019), and it is also used as a relocation place for antique traders previously sold in the Taman Sri Gunting, Kota Lama area. Currently, the CHS functions as a creative center under the Semarang Department of Culture and Tourism, which aims to support creative economy actors through collaboration spaces and events, as well as a showcase and marketing space to connect the creative industry with tourism through the intervention of the Department of Industry. This dual function makes the unique characteristic of CHS not found in most other CHs. In addition, the approach applied in the establishment of CHS is top-down, unlike most CHs concepts, which often grow independently or through bottom-up

community initiatives (Boswinkel & van Meerkerk, 2023; Chaloupková, Kunc, & Koutský, 2023; Daldanise & Cerreta, 2019; Johnstone, Choi, & Leong, 2016; Labbe et al., 2022).

This condition makes CHS an interesting object for analysis, especially regarding its performance in realizing its two main objectives: as a collaboration space for creative economy players, and as a tourist destination that integrates the creative economy with tourism (Humas Jateng, 2021). This research assesses the performance of CHS from both perspectives, with the hope of providing recommendations for service improvement and sustainability of CHS as an economic and tourism node for creative industry players in Semarang.

Creative Hub Performance

The term creative hub (CH) has a wide range of meanings. The most common definition refers to a space, either physical or virtual, in which creative industry actors converge (Dovey et al., 2017). Meanwhile, other perspectives, such as those offered by Bérubé and Gauthier (2024) and d'Ovidio and Pacetti (2019), broaden the concept by suggesting that cities with competitive advantages in the creative economy can themselves be considered CH. This perspective shifts focus from a specific space to the broader governance of a city and its ability to foster an environment conducive to the growth and development of creative actors. Furthermore, many studies that focus on creative economy actors define CH as innovative and collaborative spaces typically initiated through bottom-up approaches and characterized by independence (Boswinkel & van Meerkerk, 2023; Daldanise & Cerreta, 2019; Johnstone et al., 2016; Labbe et al., 2022). These variations in definitions highlight the ongoing challenge of clearly defining CHs and establishing consistent quality indicators for their evaluation (Flego & Tei, 2024; Pratt, 2021).

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Kalitova, Durankova, and Kovac (2019), proposed six performance indicators to assess the success of a creative hub. Success in this context refers to the CH's ability to impact creative economy actors and their surrounding environments, including local and global economies. According to these indicators, a successful CH should 1) support local economic development, 2) maintain a sustainable business model, 3) promote inclusive empowerment and skill development, 4) connect with local communities, 5) be recognized and accepted by local communities through its programs, and 6) engage in continuous evaluation and planning. However, these indicators are not universally applicable, particularly in diverse contexts. In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, CHs often focus on workshops, exhibitions, and art activities (Chaloupková et al., 2023; Siregar & Sudrajat, 2017), and may operate as top-down initiatives to develop creative industries rather than business-driven entities. Thus, assessing CH performance requires adapting these indicators to local contexts, as Pratt (2021) emphasizes.

The CHs typology in Indonesia, as categorized by Siregar and Sudrajat (2017), consists of three types: creative, coworking, and makerspaces. Each type has distinct characteristics. Creative spaces are community-driven initiatives designed to serve various community purposes, often with few or no business motives. In contrast, coworking spaces and makerspaces are more business oriented, providing both physical and non-physical spaces for collaboration and co-production, with makerspaces specifically equipped with tools to support production activities. Until 2017, most CHs in Indonesia were initiated by communities or individuals (Siregar & Sudrajat, 2017). However, in subsequent years, the government has taken a more active role in establishing CHs as part of its efforts to position the creative economy as the cornerstone of Indonesia's economic development, aligning with President Jokowi's Nawacita program (Mulyadi, 2018). This government-led initiative has intensified, particularly with the development of CHs in super-priority tourism destinations (Kemenparekraf RI, 2021a).

The development of CHs in Indonesia's super-priority tourism destinations introduces characteristics that differ from those of the

established CH theories. Through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), the central government serves as the primary stakeholder in establishing CHs across five super-priority destinations. This approach is heavily top-down, designed not only to provide a platform for the growth of creative economy actors (Dimiyati, 2020; Kemenparekraf RI, 2021a), but also to support broader goals. Kemenparekraf, through its Deputy for Tourism and Creative Economy Coordination, emphasized that these CHs are envisioned as supporting facilities for enhancing the quality of super-priority destinations (Kemenparekraf RI, 2021b; Soenarso & Handoyo, 2020). This objective underpins the development of CHs in these strategic locations, aligning them with a broader national agenda for tourism and economic growth. However, to function effectively as creative spaces, CHs must meet at least three core roles to positively contribute to the creative community: creating and transferring knowledge to practical applications, providing education and training to empower individuals, identifying local innovation systems by fostering networks and community meeting places (Chaloupková et al., 2023), and promoting collaboration (Flego & Tei, 2024).

Given the additional functions of CHs established by the government through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), it is essential to examine their roles in greater depth. This is particularly important to understand the specific context of each CH (Pratt, 2021; Virani, 2015). The image of a creative hub significantly influences the success of a tourism destination (Anshari & Windasari, 2022; Puh, 2014). Anshari and Windasari (2022) identified two key factors that shape destination image: information sources and personal factors. Information sources include media, promotional materials, and word of mouth, while personal factors include motivation, travel experiences, socio-demographic characteristics. These two factors contribute to the formation of cognitive and affective images that together create an overall destination image. This image plays a crucial role in influencing tourists' decision-making process when choosing travel destinations. By understanding these dynamics, the role of CHs as both creative spaces and contributors to

destination image can be aligned with tourism and economic goals.

2. METHODS

This research focuses on assessing the performance of Creative Hub Semarang (CHS) through a mixed-methods approach, namely qualitative and quantitative methods. The assessment of CHS performance is based on its main purpose as a collaboration space for creative economy players, as well as a destination that integrates the creative economy with the tourism area (Humas Jateng, 2021). The mixed analysis method was applied to obtain a comprehensive understanding from the perspective of CHS users, both as general visitors and creative economic actors. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to evaluate the perceptions of visitor satisfaction and the quality of services provided by the CHS. Meanwhile, qualitative data generated were analyzed through a descriptive approach to identify the perspective of government and creative economy actors with CHS services as a creative hub.

Quantitative data were collected from August to September 2023 through on-site and online surveys of CHS visitors using Google Formular. The use of these two methods aimed to achieve a wider range of respondents with a variety of visitor origins. A total of 108 respondents were collected using a combination of these two survey methods, with 10 respondents (9,3% of the total respondents) obtained through direct surveys. The limited number of respondents from the direct survey was due to the preference of visitors, who mostly came for sightseeing and were less willing to take part in the survey. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 50 years, with the dominance of respondents aged 21-23 years old. This age dominance is related to the tendency of more online respondents, such that the age range of respondents is more focused on generations that are more familiar with technology and online research methods (Couper, 2005; Revilla & Höhne, 2020).

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including

representatives from the government and creative economy actors (Table 1). The latter group included individuals from the culinary, fashion, and craft sectors, as well as other creative economy participants who lack access to showcase spaces at the CHS. These interviews, conducted in August 2023, aimed to explore CHS users' perceptions regarding its performance as a collaborative space for creative economic actors. To ensure confidentiality, all information collected from interviewees was anonymized and coded, making it impossible to identify individual participants. The coding system consisted of three parts: the interviewee's initials, code of the organization they represented, and date of the interview.

Table 1. Participants of the interview and organization code

No	Organization	Code	People Interviewed
1.	Government		
1.	Department of Culture and Tourism	CT	1
2.	Department of Industry	I	1
3.	Creative Economy Committee	K	1
4.	GIK Officer	GO	2
2.	Creative Economy Actors		
1.	Culinary	AC	5
2.	Fashion and craft	AF	1
3.	Film, animation, and video	AFAV	1
4.	Advertising	AA	1

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis below builds on the key concepts discussed in section 1. This study begins by examining the formation process and objectives of the Creative Hub Semarang (CHS) to provide a comprehensive understanding of its local context. The analysis then focuses on the role of the CHS as a tourist destination, delving deeper into its performance and effectiveness in fulfilling its original purpose. Additionally, this study explores another CHS role as a collaborative platform for various sectors of the creative economy.

Creative Economy and Creative Hub Semarang

The creative economy in Semarang has developed across all sectors. Data from the Semarang

Creative Economy Committee (Komite Ekonomi Kreatif-Komekraf) in 2021 indicates that the city's creative economy is dominated by the culinary sector (81.93%), followed by music (9.67%), crafts (1.83%), performing arts (1.64%), and fashion (1.17%) (Prajanti et al., 2021). However, according to Hikmah, Ratnawati, and Darmanto (2021), the exact number of creative economic actors in Semarang remains unknown. The head of Komekraf expressed similar concerns.

“Currently, data from each local government office is still not fully synchronized. It can sometimes be challenging to share data, as the process can be complicated. Therefore, the data is not yet complete and is still in progress. Integrating data on creative economy actors indeed requires significant effort. When we encourage creative economy actors to register, they are often concerned that it might lead to higher taxes.” (GP/K/180823)

One strategy to address these issues, the local government through the Department of Industry, established the Creative Industry Gallery (Galeri Industri Kreatif - GIK) as a sign of commitment and support for these creative economy actors. This initiative aims not only to showcase the government's concern for the creative sector, but also

“to foster trust and collaboration with creative industry players” (H/I/240823).

Located in Semarang's Kota Lama area, GIK provides a platform for showcasing Semarang's creative products, and offers a promotional venue to support industry visibility. Research highlights that strong local government support through the creation of market demand in strategic locations can enhance the sustainability of government-creative community relations (Jiang, Qian, Zhang, & Chen, 2019). This framework underscores the importance of fostering trust between creative actors and the government, suggesting that establishing supportive spaces is an effective way of encouraging the growth and integration of the creative industry.

The GIK provides exhibition spaces for a variety of creative industries, including fashion, crafts, furniture, antiques, food, and ready-to-eat meals. There are three main mechanisms by which

creative industry players join and showcase their products at GIK. The first mechanism, specifically for food products and ready-to-eat meals, involves direct curation by the Department of Industry (S/AC/170823). Strict criteria apply for food items here, requiring products to be certified by the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority (BPOM) and appropriately packaged (A/AC/170823). For ready-to-eat meals, historical building regulations prohibit open flames, so vendors prepare food offsites and sell them at GIK (B/AC/170823). Additionally, only traditional dishes are allowed, and no two vendors can sell the same items.

The second mechanism applies to fashion and craft artisans, who must be part of a recognized community to undergo a curation process that enables them to exhibit at GIK. Each sector's community oversees the curation process in order to ensure representation and quality. Finally, furniture craftsmen and antique dealers can be set up directly in GIK as they serve as their designated relocation areas.

“These vendors were previously situated along the roads in Pasar Johar and Taman Sri Gunting, Kota Lama” (M/GO/160823), but urban redevelopment efforts required their relocation to provide them with a safer, more permanent space while maximizing the functionality of the surrounding roads.

The transformation of the GIK into the Creative Hub Semarang (CHS) was initiated by Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf). Prior to this, the idea was proposed by the Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism, which aimed to provide gathering space for local creative communities.

“Semarang City ... before there was a creative hub, we had difficulty finding a place to gather, even though the community, especially the creative economy committee, (they) needed a place to gather formally and informally. ... I was looking for information from the Ministry, and there was help in creative spaces ... Before we put in a proposal, it was the Ministry of Tourism who came here to ask me directly, whether there was a place for the creative economy community. ... We were told to make a proposal, and then we got it. The goal is for the community to gather, at least regular meetings from them, so there is no need to rent (space) and so on.” (Y/CT/210823)

However, Kemenparekraf took the lead in realizing this vision, recognizing Semarang's potential, particularly the Kota Lama area, as a strategic hub for supporting the development of Borobudur as a super-priority destination. This initiative underscores the government's commitment to leveraging local creative assets to drive economic growth (Chaloupková et al., 2023) and enhance tourism.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1. Oudetrapp as part of CHS Ecosystem
(a) Oudetrapp building; (b) Oudetrapp theatre

“Semarang Creative Hub, physically occupies Galeri Industri Kreatif (Creative Industry Gallery). In the past, this was actually a request from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. There is a program to build creative hubs in super-priority destination areas. Here, (there is) Borobudur. (Then) the one that was considered the most okay and coincidentally also when they surveyed, the place and so on was (suitable) Semarang. So, then it was placed in Semarang” (GP/K/180823)

This statement emphasizes the strategic positioning of the CHS as more than a local creative hub. By linking its establishment to a national initiative from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy aimed at developing creative

hubs in super-priority destination areas, this statement highlights a dual function for CHS. It operates not only as a collaborative space for fostering creative industries in Semarang but also as a critical node within a broader regional tourism and creative economy ecosystem (Kemenparekraf RI, 2021b). *“By seeing the creative products displayed, it is hoped that the public will be interested in getting to know more about the producing region” (Humas Jateng, 2021).*

Kemenparekraf enhanced the functionality of GIK by transforming it into a CHS and expanding its scope. These updates included the establishment of coworking spaces and a makerspace within the CHS, thus providing a dedicated environment for creative workers to collaborate and produce. The makerspace is equipped with production tools, such as cameras, graphic computers, spotlights, and other supporting equipment to facilitate creative activities, which are stored and maintained in this specialized area. This aligns with the main characteristics of a makerspace, as outlined by Siregar and Sudrajat (2017), emphasizing the provision of tools and resources that enable production and innovation. In addition to the facilities at GIK, Kemenparekraf incorporated Oudetrapp building (Fig. 1) into the broader CHS ecosystem, assigning it a complementary role. Oudetrapp now serves as a venue for large-scale performances and exhibitions. Its renovation included the creation of an Oudetrapp Theatre (Fig. 1.a) open space behind the building, designated for practice sessions for creative economy actors such as dance rehearsals and theatrical performances. This integration of GIK and Oudetrapp under the CHS framework creates a comprehensive creative center, with the aim of supporting a range of activities from production and collaboration to performance and public engagement.

CHS as a Tourism Destination Bridging Creative Economy and Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) decided to situate CHS in the Kota Lama area. This location was selected due to its iconic status within Semarang and its designation as both a National Vital Object and a

National Cultural Heritage site, as recognized by official decrees from the ministry

“During the inauguration of Kota Lama, he was very enthusiastic and amazed by the significant progress in Kota Lama’s development, especially with its iconic buildings ... He said if we are going to create a creative hub, it has to be in a central, bustling location with iconic architecture. Therefore, it was decided that it should be in the Kota Lama. We propose several other locations, such as the Taman Budaya Raden Saleh (TBRS) building. TBRS has a large building and plenty of space, and it could have been developed further. However, both the President and the Minister insisted that it had to be in Kota Lama. The challenge is that Kota Lama’s buildings are relatively small, but that’s what they wanted ... After all, Kota Lama has been designated as a vital national tourism destination and a national cultural heritage site by the Ministry of Education and Culture.” (Y/CT/210823)

The choice of Kota Lama highlights the CHS’s dual function as a nexus between the creative economy and tourism.

“The (CHS) program is actually connected to the Borobudur super priority destination tourism program” (GP/K/180823).

However, despite the strategic positioning in Kota Lama, there is yet to be clear evidence of how the CHS connects with the broader vision of integrating the creative economy with Borobudur. While the CHS’s location in Kota Lama supports local tourism and cultural preservation efforts, its potential to serve as a regional hub linking creative industries across Central Java, particularly Borobudur, remains underdeveloped.

The location of the CHS in Kota Lama, a premier tourist destination in Semarang, holds a significant potential for attracting visitors. As a venue for exhibitions and performances, the CHS plays a vital role in key events such as the Kota Lama Festival and major gatherings such as the 10th National Working Meeting of the Indonesian Heritage Cities Network (Rakernas X JKPI) (Seremonia, 2023). Through its participation in such events, the CHS established itself as a central hub that introduced tourists to local creative products. With its showcase of fashion, crafts, antiques, and local culinary specialties, the CHS provides visitors with an immersive cultural experience.

“With the product showcase in GIK, tourists can easily buy Semarang souvenirs, which of course introduces and supports the local creative economy” (D/AF/170823).

This dual role as a cultural exhibition space and commercial hub positions CHS as an essential link between creative industries and tourism in Semarang, enhancing its appeal and economic contribution to the region.

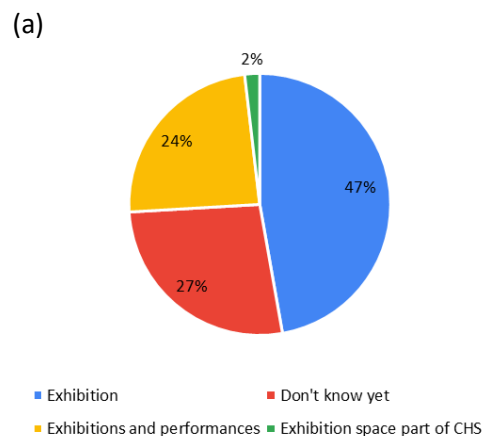
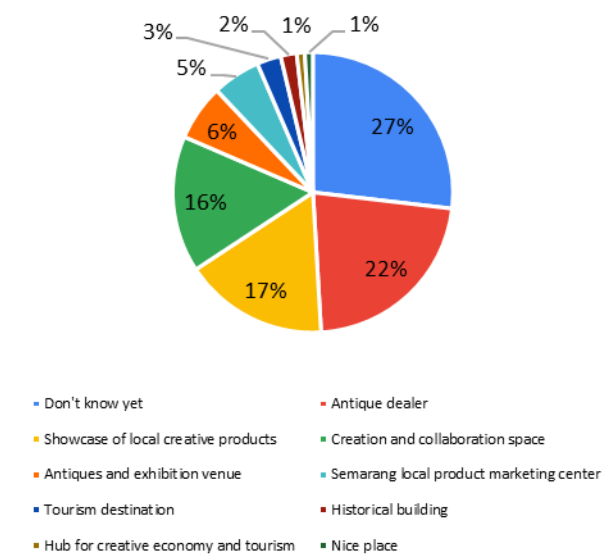


Figure 2. Responden perspective on CHS for (a) GIK building (b) Oudetrapp building

However, the frequent use of CHS buildings-both GIK and Oudetrapp-for exhibitions and performances has led to a lack of public awareness regarding their integration as part of the CHS ecosystem. Most of the sampled visitors perceived Oudetrapp primarily as an exhibition venue, whereas GIK was understood as a place to sell antiques and souvenirs (Fig. 2). The broader

function of these spaces as components of a Creative Hub is not readily apparent, because their daily activities align more closely with these specific roles. This observation highlights a significant disconnect between the intended function of CHS as a creative ecosystem and its public perception. While CHS undeniably contributes to bridging the creative economy and tourism by showcasing local creative products, its identity as a hub for fostering creativity and innovation remains unclear.

At this stage, the CHS can also be categorized as a tourist destination. According to Anshari and Windasari (2022), visitors' perceptions of a tourist destination are shaped by the information they receive and their personal factors. From this perspective, the image of CHS can be analyzed by examining these two aspects. Based on the questionnaire, CHS visitors access information from various sources, including social media, friends, family, and self-discovery, while exploring Kota Lama or engaging in activities nearby. While most respondents appear to possess some prior knowledge about the Oudetrap, which aligns well with its intended purpose, their understanding of the GIK is often incomplete, or in some cases entirely absent. This disparity in awareness highlights a potential communication gap regarding the role and functions of GIK within the Creative Hub ecosystem.

Most visits to the CHS are part of broader tourist trips to Kota Lama, with many respondents citing recreation as their primary motivation. However, 28 respondents (25,93% of total respondents) indicated that their visits were driven by an interest in exploring Semarang's creative products, while 9 (8,3%) stated that they were seeking collaboration opportunities at GIK. This highlights the positive impact that CHS has on its visitors, offering them not only a leisure destination but also a space for networking and learning about local creative industries.

From the perspective of advantages, visitors identified CHS's location in Kota Lama, a prominent tourist destination in Semarang, as the primary strength. This strategic location allows visitors to unintentionally discover CHS while exploring the area. Moreover, its placement in a well-visited

tourist hub ensures easy accessibility, with 15 respondents reporting that they reached the CHS using public transportation. Although a smaller proportion, two respondents expressed satisfaction with CHS as a "one-stop destination," where diverse needs, ranging from leisure to shopping, can be fulfilled in one location. This feedback underscores the CHS's multifaceted appeal, which enhances visitor experiences and provides tangible benefits.

Respondents commonly reported experiencing four key benefits regarding the perceived impact of visiting a CHS. These include access to attractive photo spots, a sense of pride in Semarang to provide a dedicated space for creative actors, free entertainment, and economic benefits. In particular, economic benefits are frequently noted. This could be attributed to visitors building networks with creative industry players or leveraging the antique market to purchase and resell goods. This demonstrates the varied and layered impacts CHS has on its visitors, extending beyond recreation to include economic and social benefits.

CHS as a Collaborative Space for Creative Economy Actors

The Semarang Creative Hub (CHS) was initially planned to provide a gathering space for creative economy actors. With significant budgetary support, the hub was equipped with coworking spaces, performance and exhibition areas, and tools for production, performance, and exhibitions. These features align with the characteristics of a makerspace, as described by Siregar and Sudrajat (2017). The space was constructed to fulfill the fundamental functions of a creative hub, as outlined by Chaloupková et al. (2023).

Activities conducted in the makerspace or within the Galeri Industri Kreatif/GIK (Creative Industry Gallery) building have been classified into five main categories, strongly addressing one out of the three core functions of a creative hub (providing education and training to empower individuals). These activities are predominantly exhibitions and training sessions supplemented by community meetings, outreach events, and performances. The most prominent function of the CHS is its role as a

venue that facilitates education and training to empower individuals. However, it is important to note that the CHS itself does not organize these activities. Instead, their role is to provide a space in which such activities can be hosted.

This operational model aligns with the nature of CHS as a government-owned facility. The government's approach is limited to providing infrastructure, allowing creative economy actors to independently utilize space for their activities.

"For activities, we leave it to the community. If (they) want to do that activity ... it's also okay. So all activities related to the creative economy can be facilitated in these two buildings (GIK and Oudetrap), and it is free (for creative actors)." (Y/CT/210823)

Consequently, CHS lacks independent event planning and does not have dedicated management to oversee its internal operations. This model contrasts with theories on the success of creative hubs, such as those proposed by Kalitova et al. (2019), which emphasize the importance of active management and programming. However, as Pratt (2021) suggested, creative hubs can vary widely depending on their local contexts, making this approach a legitimate adaptation to Semarang's specific circumstances.

Another fundamental function of CH is to identify and support a local innovation system by fostering networks (Chaloupková et al., 2023). In this context, CHS indirectly contributes to strengthening the networking capabilities of creative economy actors in a city. CHS provides a space that can be utilized for free by creative communities, provided they register and coordinate through the Creative Economy Committee (Komekraf). This mechanism inadvertently fosters connections between creative economy actors both within the same sector and across different sectors. A study on the creative industry in Semarang (Hikmah et al., 2021), highlighted that the quality of social networks has a greater impact on business performance than innovation and business orientation. This finding underscores the broader potential impact of CHS in enhancing business performance by improving social network quality.

The process of networking CHS also creates another knock-on effect in the form of opportunities for collaboration, allowing creative actors to exchange knowledge, resources and ideas more efficiently.

"To join GIK, we go through curation ... from there we also know how good packaging is, the quality of the product is also assessed ... here we have a committee too, if for example there is a big event like Dugderan, need to make a lot of Roti Ganjel Rel, we can divide the work." (A/AC/170823)

We run a podcast that dives into the personal side of creative economy players. By joining and collaborating with Komekraf, it is easier for us to invite these players as guests in our podcast. Plus, we get to use the studio and equipment available at creative hub." (D/AFAV/180823)

The provision of a centralized, accessible space not only enhances individual visibility within the creative economy, but also cultivates a sense of community and mutual support (Sandoval & Littler, 2019). This function aligns with the broader objectives of creative hubs as catalysts for innovation and collaboration, as emphasized in studies on creative ecosystems (Boswinkel & van Meerkerk, 2023; Daldanise & Cerreta, 2019; Johnstone et al., 2016; Labbe et al., 2022). However, although this mechanism has the potential to enhance networking, its reliance on indirect processes may limit its impact (Cinelli et al., 2019). The absence of a structured strategy to actively facilitate collaborations could mean that many creative economy actors may not fully leverage the opportunities available through the CHS.

As previously mentioned, the CHS occupies two buildings, which also influences the administrative process for room usage. Makerspace, integrated with the Creative Industry Gallery (GIK), falls under the authority of the Department of Industry, as they had already been utilizing the space prior to CHS's establishment of the CHS. The Oudetrap building is managed by the Department of Culture and Tourism in Semarang City. This division of authority has significant implications for the room-reservation process. Activities must be aligned with the appropriate department and addressed to the appropriate authority. This arrangement

creates confusion and results in lengthy administrative procedures, as applicants must submit a formal request to the department head and wait for approval.

"Many are also wrong, want to borrow space here (GIK), the letter is written borrowing creative hub space to Disbudpar (department of culture and tourism). If (GIK), the authority is the department of the industry. So, the letter will be returned and we ask to make it again accordingly." (M/GO/160823)

Furthermore, borrowing equipment available in Makerspace requires not only departmental approval, but also coordination with the core management team of Komekraf.

"If want to borrow equipment, (they) have to communicate with us because the (level of) responsibility is still lacking ... to avoid frequent damage. In the end, ... if they want to use it, use it on the spot, accompanied." (GP/K/180823)

These layered processes add complexity to the utilization of CHS facilities, potentially hindering their effectiveness as a collaborative space.

On the other hand, there is a noticeable tendency among creative economy actors to avoid establishing connections with the government. They often perceive such relationships as potentially disadvantageous, particularly regarding taxation.

"They (creative industry actors) must be thinking, maybe the tax will be higher" (GP/K/180823).

This sentiment is echoed by a creative industry actor, who remarked,

"Many creative actors operate independently, as the ecosystem between creative economy actors and the government is not very strong" (I/AA/160823).

This reluctance highlights a significant gap in trust and collaboration between the government and creative economy actors. While the government plays a crucial role in facilitating infrastructure, policies, and funding (Boswinkel & van Meerkerk, 2023; Johnstone et al., 2016; Labbe et al., 2022; Virani, 2015), the perception of bureaucracy and regulatory burdens such as taxation can discourage

creative practitioners from engaging (Johnson, 2022). This disconnect not only weakens potential partnerships, but also limits opportunities for creative actors to access government-supported resources and initiatives.

The mechanism for utilizing space at the CHS already imposes limitations on opportunities for daily showcasing of creative products. The space dedicated to displaying creative works is restricted to specific categories, namely, fashion-particularly Semarang's signature batik-crafts, furniture, and food products that serve as souvenirs or local specialties. This selection aligns with the CHS's dual purpose as a hub for tourism and the creative economy. The intention is for the CHS to promote local creative products that can serve as souvenirs for visitors. This arrangement also explains why the Department of Industry retains oversight of the CHS in the GIK building. The selected sectors fall under the direct guidance of this department. However, such limitations can inadvertently exclude other creative sectors, potentially increasing the diversity of the local creative economy.

In terms of space utilization, Kemenparekraf provides a coworking space to serve as a workspace for creative economic actors. This feature represents a significant upgrade from GIK to CHS. The coworking space was located on the upper floor above the fashion showcase and furniture display areas (Fig. 3). It was designed with a fusebox concept, which eliminates the provision of a fixed desk setup for users. Theoretically, fusebox design is intended to create a flexible and dynamic environment in which creative actors can move freely, build networks, and collaborate effectively (Dovey et al., 2017). However, their actual use is minimal. As noted by a security guard who has been employed since CHS's inauguration,

"Since it was built, I have never seen anyone use that space" (MK/GO/170823).

This statement highlights the gap between the intended purpose of a coworking space and its practical implementation.

The underutilization of the coworking space raises questions about whether its design and accessibility align with the needs of creative economic actors. While the provision of such a facility reflects an effort to modernize and enhance CHS's functionality (Dovey et al., 2017; Nurdiani & Azizah, 2023), its lack of adoption could indicate issues such as inadequate promotion, misalignment with user preferences, or logistical barriers such as limited accessibility or high administrative requirements. Additionally, it suggests a potential disconnect between policymakers' intentions and the everyday realities of creative economic practitioners. This underscores the importance of integrating stakeholder input into the planning and operation of spaces intended for community use to ensure their relevance and sustainability (Martinez-Avila & Olander, 2024).



Figure 3. Coworking space in CHS, above furniture showcase

5. CONCLUSION

Creative Hub Semarang (CHS) holds significant potential as a bridge between the creative economy and tourism, leveraging its strategic location in Kota Lama. As a venue to showcase and market products for performances, CHS supports key events, promotes local creative products, and serves as a platform for introducing tourists to Semarang's cultural offerings. Visitors benefit from the economic opportunities, networking, free entertainment, and pride that Semarang has space for creatives, which highlights its multifaceted contributions to the region. However, public perception primarily views Oudetrap and GIK as standalone venues rather than as parts of an integrated creative ecosystem. This

disconnectedness, coupled with limited communication regarding its broader role, hinders its full potential (Kukreja, Puri, & Rahut, 2023; Pratt, 2021). Strengthening integration and aligning with regional creative economy goals could enhance CHS's impact of CHS as a hub for innovation and tourism (Li & Yan, 2024; Panova & Stepanenko, 2022).

On the other hand, the performance of the Creative Hub Semarang (CHS) reflects a mixed outcome in fulfilling its role as a collaborative space for creative economic actors. Initially envisioned as a gathering place for training, exhibitions, and community-building activities, the CHS effectively provides infrastructure such as coworking spaces, performance areas, and tools for creative production. However, its operational model, which relies on creative actors to organize activities independently, limits the hub's capacity to foster innovation and collaboration directly (Lesmana & Hadinata, 2022). While this approach aligns with the government's role in providing infrastructure, the absence of active management and event programming has created gaps in the CHS's ability to fully support creative actors. The division of authority over the two buildings between the Department of Industry and the Department of Culture and Tourism has complicated administrative procedures, deterring efficient space and equipment utilization. Additionally, while CHS has indirectly facilitated networking by providing free access to its facilities, the lack of structured collaboration strategies reduces its potential to strengthen social networks and foster partnerships across creative sectors (Campbell & Hron, 2023; Chaloupková et al., 2023).

Further challenges stem from limited trust and collaboration between government and creative economy actors, with bureaucratic hurdles and concerns about taxation discouraging engagement. This mistrust undermines CHS's broader mission to act as a bridge between government support and the creative community. Restrictions on showcasing creative products to specific categories, such as batik, crafts, furniture, and food, further constrain their inclusivity and impact on diverse creative sectors (Kalitova et al., 2019). Otably, the coworking space, designed to encourage flexibility and collaboration, remains

underutilized, highlighting the disconnect between its intended purpose and the needs of creative practitioners. This underperformance points to a broader issue of misalignment between policy intentions and the practical realities of creative economy actors, underscoring the need for more active stakeholder involvement in CHS planning and management to ensure its sustainability and relevance (Martinez-Avila & Olander, 2024).

However, this study has limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the study did not include input from all representatives of the 17 subsectors within the creative economy, which may have resulted in an incomplete understanding of CHS's impact across the diverse creative landscape. Including a broader range of sectoral perspectives would provide a more comprehensive analysis of CHS's strengths and weaknesses and could help tailor strategies to meet the varied needs of different creative subsectors more effectively. Second, the research did not quantify the economic impact of the CHS, which would have been essential to illustrate the tangible benefits of the hub's core functions. A more quantitative approach, such as assessing revenue generation, job creation, and other economic indicators, could offer a clearer picture of the CHS's contribution to the local economy. Addressing these limitations in future research would not only strengthen the understanding of CHS's overall performance but also inform targeted improvements, making CHS a more effective and sustainable catalyst for Semarang's creative economy and tourism sector.

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