
SOCIAL IMPACTS OF CREATIVE HUBS IN THAILAND



Social Impacts of Creative Hubs in Thailand

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Cover Photo

Participants visit an exhibition at the “Ar Rom Dee” (in a good mood) event organised by Melayu Living creative hub in Pattani, southern Thailand, in 2017.

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FOREWORD

The British Council has worked with over a thousand creative hubs globally since 2014. We see creative hubs as communities of support for artists and creative professionals first and foremost, as well as key contributors to a growing, inclusive and sustainable creative economy.

We focus on nurturing networks of hub leaders who share, learn, innovate and support each other towards strengthening their communities, and when appropriate, we help facilitate platforms for dialogue between these largely grassroots (and sometimes informal) organisations and the relevant policy makers. Big or small, rural or urban, creative hubs almost always respond to a local need, bringing about potential for social and economic advancement in their areas. Nevertheless, they face many challenges, from ensuring sustainability, to effectively communicating their impact.

In Thailand, the Government's 4.0 policy has highlighted the creative economy as a key driver for advancing Thailand's growth, by promoting innovation and creativity in all sectors. At the

same time, the Creative Economy Agency was established in 2018 to lead Thailand's creative economy agenda. This opportune context has sparked increased public and private investments in innovation and creativity agendas, with a recorded emphasis on creative districts and, more recently, creative hubs as catalysts for social and economic changes.

This research exercise was commissioned in 2019 as part of the Hubs for Good programme led by British Council in South-East Asia, and it complements a collection of reports looking at the socio-economic potential of creative hubs and their connection or impact in cultural districts and their communities.

The objective for this report was to highlight cases of palpable social impact generated by creative hubs in their communities across Thailand, analyse on what level this impact is long-term, sustainable and embraced by communities, as well as suggest some potential steps for policy makers to enable structural support to creative hubs that could cascade into more benefits for

their communities. The research team's great efforts are accounted for in the case studies and testimonial of those whose day-to-day lives have been impacted by these creative hubs.

The research was carried out in early 2020, before the COVID-19 crisis, which has not only disturbed the culture and creative sector, but unmeasurably affected many of the communities and audience groups creative hubs in this report work with.

We hope this report would help in the restoration process, by enabling creative hubs to find, share, learn and inspire each other, and by encouraging others, including policy-makers, to see the resilience, innovation and social impact potential these organisations embody.

Patcharawee Tunprawat,
Head of Arts in Thailand

Roxana Apostol,
Creative Economy Programme Manager

April 2022



Hiello World Workshop
Melayu Living

INTRODUCTION

A 'Creative hub' is described by the British Council as: 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 sectors¹.

In addition to its contribution to economic growth and the development of the creative industries in Thailand, the creative hub is considered one of the significant mechanisms that generates social impact at different levels, including individual, communal and national. Each hub is unique, with its own characteristics, roles and ways of working, which correspond to its context and the issues that it aims to tackle. The use of creativity and creative mediums, such as art, design, music and film, is common among these hubs, playing a major role in activities and programmes. This strategy has enabled them to attract audience groups, engage them in the hubs' missions, and prompt social change.

Interestingly, in many areas, creative hubs have become a crucial part of the community in which they are located. Some hubs are perceived as the town hall of the people and a place of hope, while some act as a catalyst and influencer in triggering conversation and initiating new ways of thinking, which ultimately leads to the development of the community. Hubs connect their community with a wide range of stakeholders from different sectors, bringing in new knowledge and useful resources. Unfortunately, these distinct values embodied in creative hubs through years of work are usually overlooked. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to look deeply into six outstanding hubs in different regions as case studies in order to provide insights into how hubs create social impact at different levels, and to propose recommendations on how other stakeholders can better support and collaborate with hubs.

Left: The workshop "Hello, World!" organised by Melayu Living creative hub in Pattani, southern Thailand, in 2016

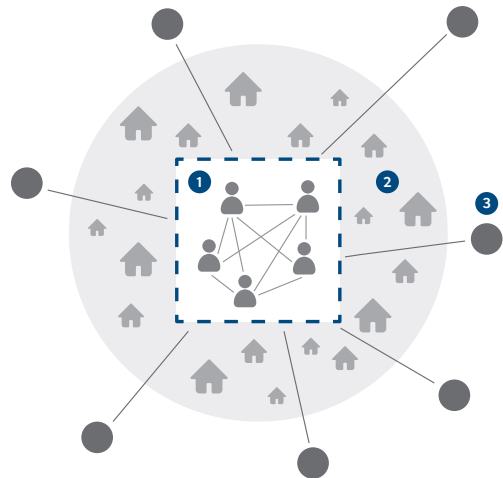
RESEARCH OUTLINE

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

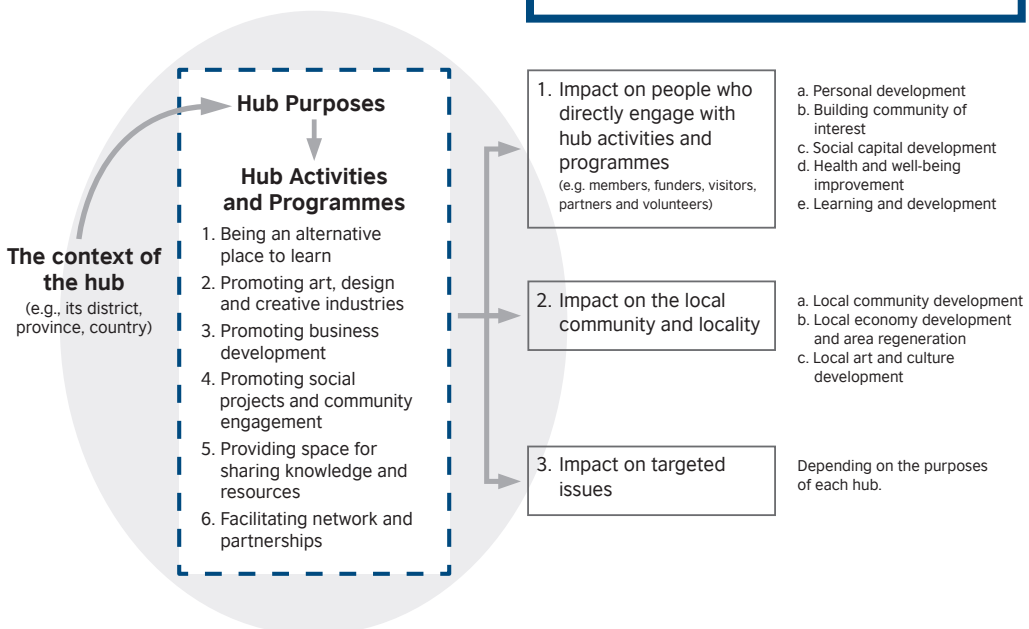
The social impacts of creative hubs in this research have been grouped into three categories:

- 1 Impact on people who directly engage with hub activities and programmes (e.g. members, funders, visitors, partners and volunteers)
- 2 Impact on the local community and locality
- 3 Impact on targeted issues

These categories derive from the findings of the report 'Creative Hubs Mapping: Bangkok²' and a literature review related to the cultural value and social impact of art and culture³.



The literature review includes: (1) Cultural value and the crisis of legitimacy: why culture needs a democratic mandate by John Holden; (2) "The importance of GSOs" by Arts Council England and (3) Social Impacts of Culture and the Arts WA by Dawson D-Huning.



1. Impact on people who directly engage with hub activities and programmes (e.g. members, funders, visitors, partners and volunteers)

- a. Personal development
 - Enabling self-actualisation
 - Promoting self-fulfilment
 - Establishing a sense of belonging
 - Increasing personal confidence and enhancing self-esteem
- b. Building a community of interest
 - Forming of new relationships
 - Increasing social contact / interaction
 - Developing of group identity and pride
- c. Social capital development
 - Promoting social inclusion and diversity
 - Increasing social cohesion
 - Increasing an understanding and tolerance of others
 - Increasing connectedness
- d. Health and well-being improvement
 - Improving mental health and reducing stress
 - Improving physical health
- e. Learning and development
 - Increasing the likelihood of lifelong learning
 - Improving cognitive abilities
 - Developing skills and talent which lead to an increase in employment opportunities (e.g. creativity, critical thinking skills, communication and expressive skills)

Remark: This list of social impacts was translated into Thai and used as content for the social impact cards.

2. Impact on the local community and locality

- a. Local community development
 - Empowering local community and enhancing local capacity
 - Increasing community involvement in public activities (e.g. volunteering, charity work)
 - Increasing local democracy and public participation in local decision-making
 - Promoting local economy and regeneration
 - Improving community safety and reducing crime
 - Increasing a sense of local identity and pride
 - Providing safe, inclusive and trusted public spaces
- b. Local economy development and area regeneration
 - Promoting local economy
 - Increasing tourism
 - Increasing employment
 - Attracting younger generations to return to their hometown
 - Improving quality of life as well as health and well-being
 - Area regeneration
 - Promoting local image and brand
- c. Local art and culture development
 - Development of local art and craft
 - Creating public awareness of preserving local art and culture
 - Redefining public perception towards local art and craft

3) Impact on targeted issues

The impact is varied depending on the purposes of each hub, which often correspond to the following areas:

- a. Business development
- b. Creative industries and creative economy development
- c. Social development
- d. Sustainability

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted from January to March 2020. We began by scanning creative hubs across Thailand in order to select six outstanding hubs from different regions that have demonstrated significant contributions to social change to the area in which they are located or to the issue that they have been working on. We then visited each hub for three to four days in order to take part in their activities and conduct interviews or focus group discussions with various stakeholders, including 1) core members, 2) active members, 3) networks and partners, 4) participants, and 5) sponsors or funders. During the interviews and focus group discussions, a set of social impact cards was used as a data collection tool.

The six selected hubs are as follows:

- 1) Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network (North),
- 2) Songkhla Heritage Trust (South),
- 3) Music Sharing (Central),
- 4) Melayu Living (South),
- 5) Ma:D Esan (Northeast), and
- 6) Fashion Revolution Thailand (Central).

1 Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network Phrae (2006)

Hub Purposes:

- Promote the well-being of Phrae citizens and make Phrae Province a better place to live.
- Raise awareness of local cultural heritage among Phrae citizens and motivate them to preserve it.
- Catalyse and facilitate a network of local change agents and active citizens to take action and do good for the province.

3 Music Sharing Bangkok (2012)

Hub Purposes:

- Provide alternative opportunities for underprivileged children.
- Create a safe space, both emotionally and physically, for children.
- Develop learning tools and courses that correspond with the characters of underprivileged children, which may not be compatible with general State education.

4 Melayu Living Pattani (2016)

Hub Purposes:

- Promote architectural professions.
- Recognise and honour local community members and key individuals who contribute to the development of local creative industries and society at large
- Build a creative space.



5 Ma:D Esan Udon Thani (2016)

Hub Purposes:

- Connect the dots (act as a mediator in facilitating projects that benefit the society).
- Provide a platform for creative entrepreneurs to meet and interact.

6 Fashion Revolution Thailand Bangkok (2018)

Hub Purposes:

- Raise public awareness on the negative impacts of fast fashion.
- Inspire consumers and manufacturers to change their behaviour towards more sustainable models and be more accountable for their actions.
- Promote mindful consumption as a new social norm.
- Act as a connector, promoter and educator that plays a role in standardising sustainable and conscious consumption.

2 Songkhla Heritage Trust Songkhla (2009)

Hub Purposes:

- Accumulate and disseminate knowledge of Songkhla Old Town.
- Monitor physical changes within the Songkhla Old Town area in order to preserve its atmosphere and value.
- Revitalise Songkhla Old Town and promote sustainable tourism.
- Balance a harmonious co-existence between development and preservation.
- Support the process of leading Songkhla to become a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Transform Songkhla into a liveable city for everyone.

CREATIVE HUB PROFILES



LUK LAN MUANG PHRAE NETWORK

PHRAE (2006)



Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network (LLMP) is the unofficial network of creative citizens in Phrae Province who gather to do good for their hometown. For almost 20 years, the hub has concentrated on highlighting the value of local cultural heritage, empowering individuals to take action, and facilitating a series of projects to improve the quality of life in Phrae and make it a better place to live. It has played a significant role in shaping the province into the successful model for community-based creativity and conservation it is today.

Left: Dyeing natural indigo at Kaewwanna Natural Indigo shop in Phrae Province, one of the various community-based activities organised by Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network, a creative hub in northern Thailand

Visitors listen to their guide during a Phrae Bike Sightseeing Tour, which includes many outstanding historical buildings, to learn about the province's history and architectural heritage.

Hub Profiles:

Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network (LLMP) started in 2002 from an informal conversation among three Phrae citizens, namely Mr Wuttikrai Phathong, Mr Prasart Pratedrat and Ms Sunanthana Sanprasert. In the initial aim to do something for their hometown, they began by studying and reconstructing the local history of Phrae through various activities such as participatory talks and symposiums within the community. Mr Phathong shared that the reason for which history was selected as a tool to engage people

was because it has already happened and would not provoke any political issues, which could lead to conflict. As a result of a number of events, the hub published two books about Phrae history: 1) *Sueksa Muang Phrae* (in English: “Study Phrae”) and 2) *Sao Kwam Ruang Muang Phrae* (in English: “Deep dive into Phrae”), which were funded by Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI) in 2005. The books represent significant sources of knowledge on local history which had previously been limited until then.

In 2004, the hub became interested in the cultural heritage of the province and began to work with international partners when it was selected by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA) and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) to be a part of the Living Heritage Sites Programme.

During the same time, Mr Phathong joined the Bangkok Forum network, a group of citizens who facilitate change in society by using the dialogue process to empower the public and promote local appreciation within their own community. He was inspired by one of their works on improving the master plan of an old town in Bangkok, which prompted him to apply the same approach in Phrae to encourage its citizens to rethink their own power.

Between 2005 and 2016, the hub worked with the local community, the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education of Phrae Province, SEAMEO SPAFA and Silpakorn University to excavate Poo Pan Ta Mee cave in the Ban Natong village and set up a local museum that exhibits the archeological artefacts found therein, including a human skeleton dating back to more than 4,500 years ago.



An exhibition on the architectural heritage and history of a 100-year-old missionary house in Phrae Province at the Phrae Christian Hospital, where the missionary house is located (2013)



The Training Workshop on Architectural Preservation for staff of the Department of Heritage, Ministry of Information and Culture, Lao PDR (2014)



“

I want to make Phrae Province better. I still think about transferring power from the government to local citizens. If the locals are fully aware of the power that they have, then they would be able to do anything without having to wait for the government."

– Mr Wuttikrai Phathong,
hub co-founder



One of the 12 artists taking part in the event "Jam: creative space, inspiration to the next day" creates live performance art in front of spectators in Phrae in (2018).

In 2006, the hub was officially named, "Khai Luk Lan Muang Phrae" (Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network) and joined by several new members who wanted to use their expertise to make Phrae a better place. It has since expanded its area of interest to local architecture, art and craft, and has been organising a wider variety of activities and initiated a number of projects, such as the Phrae sightseeing tour, surveying and documenting old buildings, developing a well-known local market called "Kad Kong Kao" and revitalising Phrae craft.

For almost 20 years, LLMP has received funding from both national and international organisations, including Phrae Town Municipality, the Thai Health Organization, the World Health Organization (WHO), the US Embassy in Thailand and the British Council Thailand. The hub has continued to improve the quality of life of Phrae citizens, raise public awareness on local cultural heritage, and engage people of all ages in taking action to preserve it.

Hub Purposes:

- Promote the well-being of Phrae citizens and make Phrae Province a better place to live.
- Raise awareness of local cultural heritage among Phrae citizens and motivate them to preserve it.
- Catalyse and facilitate a network of local change agents and active citizens to take action and do good for the province.

Hub Members:



Shooting a video clip to promote the fundraising event
“Lom Pah, Lom Rak, Lom Hai Jai” (2020)

LLMP consists of members aged between 28 and 60 years who are originally from Phrae Province. They are eminent figures and influencers in the local creative industries, including artists, architects, performers, craftsmen and content creators. Across this diverse group, members share the same belief that changes should be driven by the people themselves.

It is interesting to note that it is not possible to precisely identify the members of the hub as they work together within an informal network, which is flexible and grows organically. Hence, there is no assigned role and responsibility.

Each member has his or her own area of interest and consistently initiates and drives projects in that area, while other members stand by to support and provide assistance. For instance, Mr Chompupan, one of the hub’s core members with a background in architecture, concentrates on preserving old buildings, while Mr Phathong, another core member and the owner of Kaewwanna Indigo, focuses on promoting local craft and the use of natural indigo.

“

We do not know the exact number of the members of the hub and we do not have a members list. However, whenever there is a hub event, people show up. We welcome anyone who would like to do something good for the province. Anyone who loves Muang Phrae is a member of LLMP.”

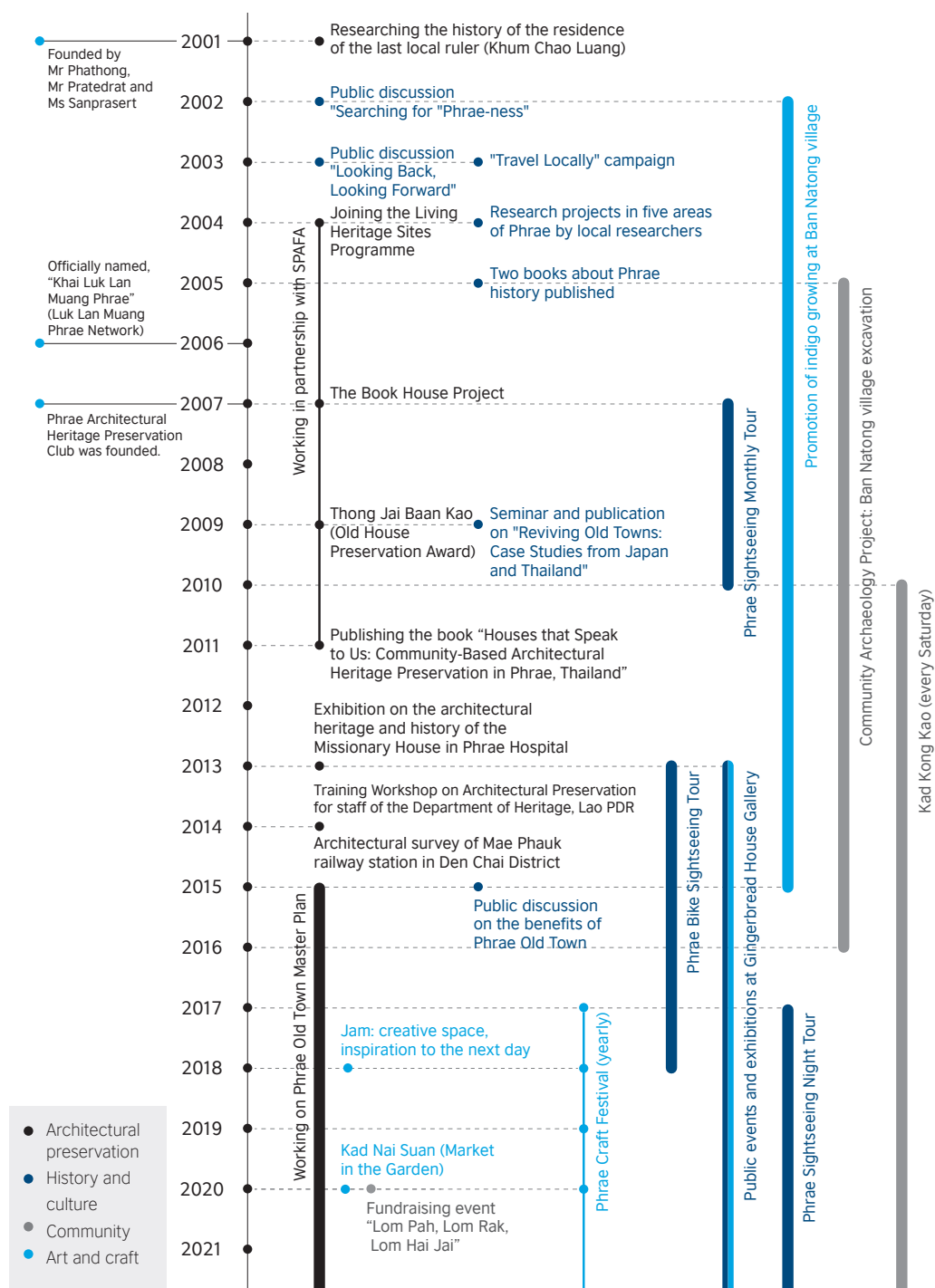
*- Mr Thitipong Wongsane,
a hub member*

Hub Activities and Programmes:

Since 2002, LLMP has been driving changes in many areas. It has used various mediums, including local history, cultural heritage, old buildings, and local art and craft to engage the public and empower them. It has initiated and organised a wide variety of activities and programmes, some of which still continue to this day. The significant ones are as follows:

Hub Timeline

Activities and Programmes Timeline



1. Phrae Sightseeing Tour

The sightseeing tour was first organised in 2007. It was inspired by a question that was raised by a community elder during one of the discussions asking why local tricycles are only used by tourists but not by the locals. Consequently, LLMP designed a sightseeing route that passes through many outstanding sites and historical buildings in the old town area, such as the residence of the last local ruler and other historic houses, and temples, namely Wat Methangrawat and Wat Sa Bo Kaeo, and prepared local tricycles and bicycles as the means of transport. The first 90-minute sightseeing tour was joined by 80 people of all ages. The elderly and children sat on the local tricycles, while others joined the tour by bicycle. As a part of the journey, participants were encouraged to share their own historical narrative at each stop.

“A megaphone was available for people to share their stories. Since there were no experts to monitor the conversation, everyone felt free to talk. There were 80 people, but only one megaphone. They got to know one another and became more confident in their own version of the story of their hometown,” said Mr Phathong, hub co-founder.

After the tour, participants were given a coupon that could be exchanged for a meal from selected local vendors who serve a traditional food. They then sat down and ate together on the floor mats provided for seating. The tour was very well received by the locals. It was organised by the hub on seven occasions and has been continued by the Tourism Authority of Thailand Phrae Office. In 2017, the hub initiated a night sightseeing tour, “Phrae Sightseeing



Visitors on the Phrae Sightseeing Tour during 2007-2008

Night Life”, in collaboration with the TAT Phrae Office. Instead of local tricycles and bicycles, participants can travel around the old town via local tram. The event also features *khantoke*, a traditional Northern dining set, and a traditional music and dance performance.

The sightseeing tour has had a significant impact on both local people and businesses. It allows locals to have a better understanding of Phrae, which in turn increases their sense of pride. For some people and local children, it was their first time travelling in their hometown and learning about its rich history and cultural heritage. Mr Shinnaworn Chompupan, one of the hub's core members, noticed that several local children recognised the characteristics of old buildings and became aware of their value. At the same time, the local tricycle riders and local guides who took part in the event also expanded their knowledge of the old town's history, which can be applied to their respective jobs.

2. Preserving old buildings

LLMP has put a great emphasis on the preservation of old and historical buildings in the old town area since Mr Shinnaworn Chompupan, also founder of the Phrae Architectural Heritage Preservation Club, became one of the hub's core members. The hub consistently surveys and documents information on and the history of the buildings. After the survey, the *Thong Jai Baan Kao*, or the Northern flag that represents a beloved old house, would be put in front of the building as a symbol, so that everyone would help to preserve it. Mr Chompupan mentioned that not every building with the flag has been preserved. Some of them have already been demolished.



The lifting of an old wooden house to add new concrete foundations beneath existing columns to preserve the house (2011).



U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Kristie A. Kenney visits old houses that received the northern flag "Thong Jai Baan Kao" (2015), which marks these houses as part of community-based conservation efforts.

The hub continues to raise awareness on the issue through its activities and events. For instance, it hosted an event to tell the story of the missionaries in Phrae and their two houses that are over hundred years old. Another significant contribution from the hub is the production of a book entitled *Houses that Speak to Us: Community-Based Architectural Heritage Preservation in Phrae, Thailand*⁴, published with SEAMEO SPAFA. The book tells the story of the development of wooden houses in Phrae and the local efforts in preserving these houses. It also gathers information, pictures and drawings of the traditional houses, and provides guidelines for conservation. The publication of the book was supported and funded by the US Embassy in Thailand and SEAMEO SPAFA. It was published in both English and Thai languages with 500 copies each.

An architectural survey of Mae Phauk railway station in Den Chai District, Phrae Province, conducted by instructors and architecture students from Mahasarakham University and King Mongkut Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (2014)

3. Kad Kong Kao (the Saturday Night Market)



Kad Kong Kao (meaning ‘street market in the old town’) is a local Saturday night market in the old town area of Phrae that was initiated in 2010 by LLMP with funding from the Thai Health Organization. Mr Shinnaworn Chompupan, one of the hub’s core members and the co-founder of the market, mentioned that the actual purpose of the market was not to set up a new commercial space, but to create a community space for people in the community, in particular the elderly, to meet and talk to one another.

“When I first received the funding, my aim was to set up an activity space that would allow the elderly to exchange and pass on their knowledge and local wisdom to the next generation. At the beginning, I wanted to organise a market in every neighbourhood in the old town area, one by one. However, due to some difficulties, I decided to set up the market in my neighborhood. Saturday 13 November 2010 was the first day of the Kad Kong Kao Market,” said Mr Chompupan, one of the members of LLPM and one of the co-founders of Kad Kong Kao.

Kad Kong Kao, the Saturday Night Market, on Kham Lue Street in the old town of Phrae Province

Despite facing a rough start at the beginning, the market became widely known to the public after five years. During that time, the market committee, which consists of around 10 people in the community, was formed to manage and operate the market. Together with the hub members, they have set up the rules and development strategy for the market.



The very first Kad Kong Kao market held on Saturday 13 November 2010 in Phrae

Unlike other markets, Kad Kong Kao showcases a wide variety of local cultural heritage. The sellers wear traditional clothing, speak the local dialect, and sell items that they produced themselves or made locally, such as local traditional foods and desserts that are hard to find nowadays. Cigarettes and alcoholic drinks are prohibited in the market. In addition, it features many other activities, such as exhibitions, talks, and all kinds of performances.

“

In the past, it was extremely quiet here. Everyone was alone by themselves. But now, every Friday, we have to prepare items to sell here. I can't really explain my feelings, but I feel that I want to come here to sell something. I want to meet a lot of people. If I were home, I would not have this chance to get to know everyone. In the past, I was sad, but now I get to dress up beautifully in a traditional costume, which I love.”

- One of the older sellers at the market



Various products and activities at Kad Kong Kao market

“

The market allows the elderly to earn more money. Now, a number of people have heard of it. Everyone knows that if they visit Phrae, they have to come to Kad Kong Kao. We are so proud of ourselves. We would not have thought that it could come this far. In the past, no one heard of Phrae, no one would want to visit this province. We are proud that we are a part of those who make Phrae known to the public.”

- One of the older sellers at the market

Nowadays, Kad Kong Kao is one of the major attractions in Phrae Province and also one of the eleven cultural markets in Thailand. A warm and welcoming atmosphere along with friendly sellers attract and impress all kinds of visitors, both locals and tourists, and keep them coming back for more. Not only has the market boosted the local economy, but it has also led to an improvement in the well-being of the local people.

Kad Kong Kao is the heart and soul of the community. It has transformed a previously lifeless and neglected neighbourhood into a lively and engaging community area, where everyone can come and enjoy themselves or meet and talk to one another. In addition, the market also plays a role in promoting local cultural heritage to the public and increasing a sense of pride in local assets and Phrae Province among locals.



Kad Kong Kao market attracts both local people and visitors from other provinces.

4. Phrae Craft Festival

The Phrae Craft Festival is a three-day annual craft event held in Phrae Province on the first weekend of December every year since 2017. It is initiated and organised by some of the hub members who work in craft industries together with a group of creative people and artisans in Phrae Province. The event features shop stalls of various local craft and design products, local food stalls, a series of talks and workshops, fashion shows, traditional music and dance performances. Thus, those who attend the festival have a chance to see, hear, taste, and experience different aspects of Phrae cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, it is very well received among both locals and visitors from other provinces.

More importantly, the event plays a significant role in raising public awareness of various forms of Phrae traditional and contemporary handicrafts, including woodwork, pottery, bamboo woven products, small leather goods and especially *mor hom* (indigo dyed) clothes, which is unique to Phrae. It also acts as a platform for those who are working in the area to showcase their works and connect with other creative people and artisans. In addition, the contemporary style of the works draws the attention of younger generations and inspires them to work in this area.



Local creatives and artisans who took part in the first Phrae Craft Festival in 2017



A fashion show during the Phrae Craft Festival in 2020



Hub Impact on Targeted Issues

1. Reintroducing local culture and traditional ways of life, and connecting people from different generations



Like other provinces in Thailand, the local ways of life of Phrae people have evolved through time and many of these ancient traditions have disappeared along the way. Thus, LLMP has put a great emphasis on reintroducing them in a more subtle way through its activities and programmes. For instance, before setting up Kad Kong Kao, the hub members performed *Suad Berk*, the traditional chants of Lanna, to get rid of bad luck and drive away evil spirits. They also make sure that the local cultural heritage is presented in every aspect of the market, such as the language that the sellers speak, the clothing that they wear, and the products that are available. As for the Phrae sightseeing tour, the hub has introduced the use of local tricycles and the tram as modes of transportation. Furthermore, LLMP also plays an important role in raising public awareness of local *mor hom* (indigo dyed) products and promoting their use in everyday life.

Kad Nai Suan, a craft market, held in a garden in Phrae (2020)

Apart from that, the hub has also concentrated on connecting people from different generations. One of the hub's core members mentioned that there are a number of elderly people in Phrae Province, accounting for approximately 20% of Phrae's population. They are the main group of people with extensive knowledge about the province and have a great love for their hometown, whereas the younger generations have more energy. Therefore, the activities and programmes of the hub usually cater for participants from various generations and provide opportunities for them to bond, which in turn foster a sense of community and a greater love for the province.

2. Engaging and empowering Phrae citizens to take actions for their hometown.

LLMP has focused its efforts on empowering Phrae citizens and engaging them in making Phrae a better place to live. By constantly organising activities and programmes that highlight the value of historical and cultural heritage, the hub is able to develop a sense of collective pride among Phrae citizens and foster their love for these assets. As a result, a number of them are inspired and take action to preserve it. In case of a long-term or an area-based project, the hub would engage the local community throughout the process. Kad Kong Kao, for example, although initiated by hub members, continues to thrive since its inception thanks to the involvement and support of the local community. Later, the responsibility in running the market was fully transferred to the community, while the hub members stepped back and became their advisors.

In addition to initiating and organising the activities and programmes, the hub also helps to facilitate projects that align with the hub's purposes by connecting those who are interested and would like to take part in these projects with those who have the necessary resources (e.g. manpower, funding, knowledge) as well as providing other support. These different approaches enable the hub to engage a wider group of people and foster a number of local agents of change.



An exhibition on Phrae's Old Town featured at Phrae Craft Festival 2020

Conclusion:

In the last two decades, LLMP has contributed greatly to drawing public attention to the historical and cultural heritage of Phrae, bringing these to the fore and interweaving them with contemporary lifestyles. Their work demonstrates how a creative hub can be operated in the form of an informal and flexible network without having a physical space. Nevertheless, the fact that each hub member embraces the hub's purposes as a part of their lives has enabled it to organically grow and continue to make substantial impacts.

SONGKHLA HERITAGE TRUST

SONGKHLA (2009)



The Songkhla Heritage Trust is a creative hub that connects people from different generations and sectors with a common purpose, that is to promote regional culture and bring Songkhla Old Town back to life. For more than 10 years, each stakeholder has been working collaboratively to transform the run down area that once faced a high rate of violent crime and illegal drug use into a lively neighbourhood that blends traditional and cultural heritage with contemporary lifestyles. At the moment, the hub is expanding its work by connecting with regional and international cultural heritage preservation networks.

Hub Ho Hin, the physical space of the Songkhla Heritage Trust, viewed from atop the Songkhla Lake

Hub Profiles:

In 2009, Songkhla Old Town was nothing like what we can experience today.

“Back in 2009, the fishing industry as well as the illegal fishing rate in this region was at its peak. In Songkhla lake alone, there were around 500 ships and most of them were owned by illegal fishermen. Of course, the practice had an impact on the environment, but what affected us [Songkhla Old Town community] most were crime and violence caused by those illegal sailors and fishermen. After weeks or months in the ocean, these men needed entertainment.

At that time, Nakornnok Road [where Songkhla Heritage Trust's office is located now] was a red-light district. In the evening, no one would dare to leave their home since they were afraid of drunks and violent incidents such as shooting and stabbing,” said Mr Rangsi Rattanaprakarn, President of Songkhla Heritage Trust.

These critical conditions along with the research conducted by the National Housing Authority, which demonstrated the value and opportunities of the area, attracted a lot of attention and brought various influencers from different sectors together, including the mayor of Songkhla City Municipality, local professors and scholars, and high-profile corporates. In 2010, the Songkhla City Municipality decided to host the international conference “World Heritage-Shared Heritage: Nomination Values and Management”, in partnership with the Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Thailand. The academic presentations together with fruitful discussions regarding cultural heritage conservation and development, as well as a field trip to the World Heritage Site George Town of Penang, led to the



Members of the Songkhla Heritage Trust discuss the regeneration of Songkhla Old Town with the Mayor and local administrative staff.

official founding of the hub. At this early phase from 2010 to 2011, the hub aimed to raise a public awareness about Songkhla Old Town on both local and international levels.

“The first thing that we did was organise a market in a street in front of the City Pillar Shrine during the city festival, a celebration of the City Pillar Shrine. In addition, we added academic elements by exhibiting the history of the Old Town and hosting a talk that focused on the significance of the area by a local storyteller and a well known Japanese writer. The activities were well received among locals. It could actually draw their attention towards the academic side of Songkhla Old Town.



An exhibition on the history of Songkhla Old Town as a part of the city festival in 2012

The ICOMOS conference in 2011 presented the theme ‘Put Songkhla on the Map’. This meant that, first, Songkhla Old Town needed to be awakened. Then, we could later introduce it to other people. In order to do so, we organised a number of activities to promote the area. One of the major turning points was when the story about Songkhla Old Town and the song “Saneh Songkhla” (the charms of Songkhla) were featured in the “Khun Phra Chuey show”, a cultural variety show on television. After that, many visitors started to visit the area. Street vendors were able to increase their sales and the locals became animated. What used to be a quiet town had become livelier,” said Dr Jaray Suwannachart, one of the Songkhla Heritage Trust’s founders and a lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya.

In 2013, the hub was officially registered as an association and named the ‘Songkhla Heritage Trust’. The hub members decided to ask Mr Rangsi Ratanaprakan, a well respected local man with an engineering background, to become the first president. He then offered to transform his red rice mill into a hub space and office. Nowadays, there are more than 50 core members from different sectors with various backgrounds and more than 800 registered members⁵.



Top: A music performance in front of Hub Ho Hin

Bottom: A hub member presents the history of Songkhla to groups of visitors.



Hub Members:

Unlike other creative hubs that mainly consist of a young generation, the core members of the Songkhla Heritage Trust range from 26 to 85 years of age.

Although they are from different generations and have distinctive interests, most of them are local people and have known each other since they were young. More importantly, many of them are influencers from different fields (e.g. government, business, education, architecture and design) and sectors (private, public and civil).

Their knowledge, experience and connections have complemented one another, which allows the hub to reach out to various groups of participants and broaden the impact.



Hub Purposes:

- Accumulate and disseminate knowledge of Songkhla Old Town.
- Monitor physical changes within Songkhla Old Town area in order to preserve its atmosphere and value.
- Revitalise Songkhla Old Town and promote sustainable tourism.
- Balance a harmonious coexistence between development and preservation.
- Support the process of leading Songkhla to become a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Transform Songkhla into a liveable city for everyone.

Hub Physical Space

Hub Ho Hin, a local rice mill that survived World War II turned creative hub

The big bright red rice mill that can be seen from a distance, also known as Hub Ho Hin (means unity, harmony and prosperity in Hokkien Chinese dialect), serves as a hub's main activity space and office. It is located in the old town area on the edge of the Songkhla lake. The building was constructed in 1914 and is the only one out of six rice mills in the old town area that survived World War II.

"Speaking of this building, I think it was destiny. Before the Second World War, Songkhla had abundant food supplies, including rice. After the Japanese soldiers landed on 6 December 1938, they seized all of the six rice mills in the old town area. This building was the biggest of all, so they used it as a medical supply centre and put a flag with a red cross symbol on top of the roof. This rice mill was able to survive the war because of the Geneva Treaty, according to which it was agreed that any place where medical care was given would not be destroyed, while the other mills were completely destroyed. So, what you see today is an original structure," said Mr Rangsi Rattanaprakarn, President of the Songkhla Heritage Trust.

Not only did the building receive the Architectural Conservation Award from the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA) in 2011, but its outstanding structure has also become a landmark of the area, which can be seen from a distance.



A sculpture of two men carrying a sack of rice in front of Hub Ho Hin

The building has been used to organise all kinds of community activities, including student dance performances, university student fashion shows, weekly elderly singing sessions, and historical talks. Furthermore, a number of national and international events, such as the Southern Architect Expo 2018 and the South Festival 2019, were also held at this building. Since 2011, Hub Ho Hin has become a meeting place, recreation space and the centre of the Old Town community.

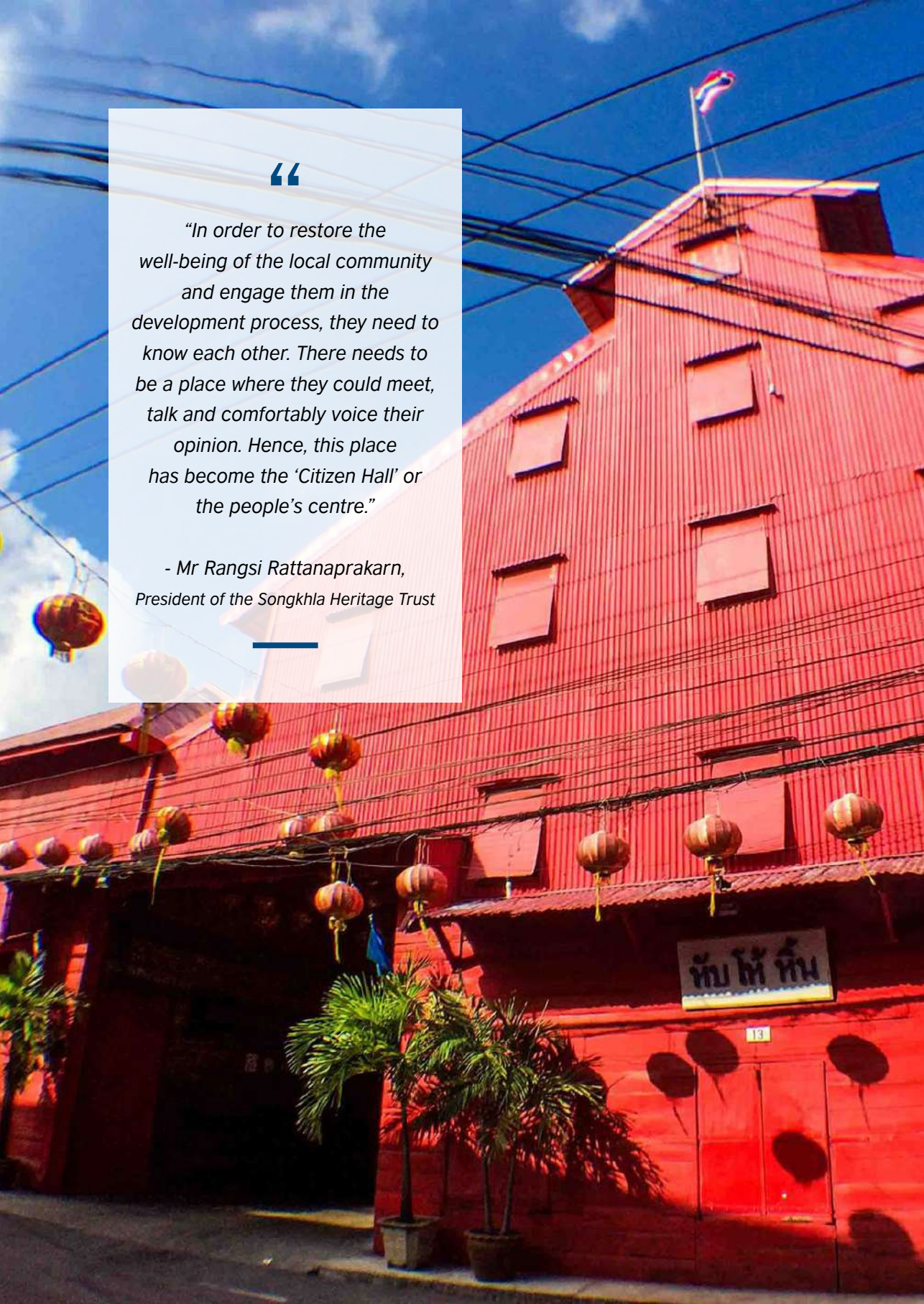
Not surprisingly, the red rice mill has now become the identity of Songkhla Old Town. The refurbishment of the physical appearance along with the adaptation of the space to various new functions does not only reflect the character of the area, but also how the Songkhla Heritage Trust has been integrated with Songkhla Old Town and local communities.

Right: Hub Ho Hin, the physical space of the Songkhla Heritage Trust

“

“In order to restore the well-being of the local community and engage them in the development process, they need to know each other. There needs to be a place where they could meet, talk and comfortably voice their opinion. Hence, this place has become the ‘Citizen Hall’ or the people’s centre.”

*- Mr Rangsi Rattanaprakarn,
President of the Songkhla Heritage Trust*



Hub Activities and Programmes

For more than 10 years, the Songkhla Heritage Trust has been continuously working in the area, initiating and implementing a large number of activities and programmes, ranging from small community activities to international events.

One of the outstanding characteristics of its events is inclusivity. The hub aims to engage and develop a bond between locals from different backgrounds and generations. Furthermore, it has redefined local history and culture from something that had been previously difficult to relate to into becoming a part of everyday life by using various creative media. This has tremendously transformed public perceptions of the Old Town from a dying area into a lively district that harmoniously entwines creative components and cultural roots. Some of their significant events and activities are as follows:

1. Street Art

The Street Art Project, which started in 2015, was one of the early interventions aimed at breathing new life into Songkhla Old Town. The artworks depicted untold stories of the area and the multicultural ways of life of the locals, a Thai – Chinese – Muslim mix, which is unique to the region. By looking at these, one is able to understand how contemporary lifestyle is influenced by this long-rooted culture. The project was the first time that the Songkhla Heritage Trust collaborated with a young generation of artists and art students. This engagement allowed the story of the past to be depicted through various contemporary painting styles.



A group picture of secondary school students posing in front of street art



The street art painting "Three ethnic groups of Songkhla" portrays the friendship between Thai-Buddhist, Thai-Muslim and Thai-Chinese children in the area.



An artist painting "Fu Chao Tea House", the first street artwork made in the Songkhla Old Town

The most famous painting of the series is the Fu Chao Tea House, which was also the first painting. It depicts the story of an old tea house that was once located at this exact location. The painting was painted by a group of professors and art students from the Fine Arts and Design Department, Faculty of Architecture, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya.

Nowadays, Songkhla Old Town street art has become one of the major landmarks and tourist attractions. Since 2017, fifteen artworks have been featured on the tourist map, such as 'Once upon a time in Songkhla', which was published by the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Since then, street art hopping has become one of the must-do activities for those who are visiting the area. The paintings are highly appealing to younger visitors, who, for obvious reasons, play a significant role in revitalising and bringing vibrancy to the neighbourhood.

2. Lard Sang Dao (Starlight Walk: Creative Market 2019)



An evening at Starlight Walk, a creative market in Songkhla Old Town (2019)

The Starlight Walk was a four-day creative market that took place on 22-23 February and 1-2 March 2019 in several streets of the Songkhla Old Town. The event was based on the recommendations provided by the Tourism Development in Songkhla Old Town Research, funded by Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI). It was led by an academic team from the Faculty of Architecture, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, while the Songkhla Heritage Trust, two other universities in the province, Thaksin University and Songkhla Rajabhat University, and the Songkhla City Municipality acted as main partners.

The design of the event aimed to emphasise historical features and physical assets of the district. Unlike other markets in the province that usually focus on food and lifestyle products, the Starlight Walk focused on developing creative learning and cultivating appreciation of local assets such as architecture, food, art and craft. It was divided into five zones, including the Creative Zone, Kids Zone, Heritage Zone, Art Zone and Old Town History Exhibition. More importantly, the event concentrated on engaging children and families through various art and craft workshops.



An art and craft workshop with children at Starlight Walk

In addition, the tourist route that was recommended in the research was piloted during the event by inviting local entrepreneurs in tourism businesses along with 80 tourists from Malaysia to take part.

The Starlight Walk was extremely successful. As a result, the Songkhla Heritage Trust aims to increase the scale of the event from 'Starlight Walk' to 'Starlight City' ('Muang Sang Dao'), and make it an annual festival of the city.

3. IMT-GT 2015 International Symposium on Livable Old Town Tourism



IMT-GT, otherwise known as the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle, is the economic cooperation between three countries in Southeast Asia that share economic interests and geographical proximity, as well as having related histories, cultures and languages. The cooperation aims to encourage private sector investment and trading on a regional level, in order to contribute to regional economic growth. In 2011, Songkhla was designated by the Thai government as an 'Old Town Tourism' city that would be developed under IMT-GT framework⁶.

In 2015, Songkhla was appointed to host the annual IMT-GT 2015 Symposium on Livable Old Town Tourism. The symposium aimed to exchange knowledge and experience in historical old town development between different countries, as well as to elevate the status of Songkhla Old Town to World Heritage Site alongside Melaka, Penang and other cities in the region⁷. For this event, the Songkhla Heritage Trust was responsible for preparing empirical data and coordinating with networks

Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand-Growth-Triangle (IMT-GT) 2015
International Symposium on Livable Old Town Tourism

such as the Penang Heritage Trust, Songkhla City Municipality and the academic sector. They also represented one of five heritage NGOs from different countries, including the Penang Heritage Trust, the Malaysia Heritage and History Club, Palembang Heritage, and Badan Warisan Sumatra. These NGOs, together with the mayors of the member cities, signed the Declaration of Songkhla to launch the collective IMT-GT Old Town community effort that would promote sustainable old town preservation⁸.

The symposium marked the first attempt for a collaborative Old Town tourism development project among the IMT-GT members, which includes the development of a sub-regional tourism management plan and an old town development and preservation plan. As a result, the Songkhla Heritage Trust has expanded its connections and networks to an international level⁹.

4. Weekends Suntaraporn Singing Club



Many neighbourhood elders join evening activities of the Suntaraporn Singing Club every Friday to Sunday at Hub Ho Hin.

Every Friday to Sunday evening, the local elders would gather at Hub Ho Hin to sing Thai songs from the 1940s to 1980s. Apart from being a leisurely activity, the Suntaraporn's Songs¹⁰ Singing Club is intended to build a relationship between the hub and locals, as well as create bonds among them in order to engage them in the future Old Town development activities.

It has been very well received by senior citizens and their families since the beginning. The activity gives the elderly an opportunity to get out of their home to meet, talk, sing and have fun with others in the neighbourhood on a regular basis. It has become something to look forward to every week. Consequently, the mental health and well-being of the local elderly have improved tremendously. Furthermore, the fact that the activity takes place in the district allows the elderly to easily walk there by themselves for the convenience of their families.

In addition, the activity also benefits the hub as it provides an opportunity for hub members to catch up with those who attend about on-going issues of concern regarding the area's development and discuss any new ideas with them after the session. Even though the Suntaraporn's Song Singing Club is a small activity in terms of scale in comparison with the hub's other activities, its consistency enables the Songkhla Heritage Trust to build a deep connection and establish trust with the local community.

5. South Fest (South Festival Thailand): the biggest arts & culture festival in southern Thailand



The opening of the exhibition "Everything New is Old Again"
by American artist Ryan Haley at Ong Art Café

South Festival Thailand is an international arts and culture festival, which took place on 11-13 January 2019. The event was sponsored by Goethe Institute Thailand, the German-Thai cultural exchange organisation, together with local businesses in the Songkhla Old Town area. It featured more than 30 shows and activities, such as dance performances, concerts, a series of art and craft workshops, a street market and an artist-in-residence programme by nine local and international artists.

The local community engaged with international artists for the first time during this festival. In the two-month period prior to the start of the event itself, the group of international artists spent time living within the community as a part of the artist-in-residence programme. It allowed them to immerse themselves in the local ways of life and build bonds within the community, which became a major source of inspiration for them. Furthermore, the fact that their artworks emphasised the value of overlooked local assets led to the development of a sense of pride in and appreciation for these assets among locals.

During the festival, artworks, performances and activities were hosted in various spots throughout the Old Town area, including Hub Ho Hin, which was the main venue, and other spaces owned by locals such as art galleries, museums, and historical buildings. Consequently, the visitors were able to explore the Old Town area and visit different locations while checking out a wide variety of artworks. In addition, the festival also greatly benefited local artists. It gave them a chance to collaborate with international artists, allowed them to learn from one another, expand their horizons and build their portfolios. Following the festival's success among the public, local artists and the community have been asking for more events like this.



Local people take part in the carnival parade. Some of the masks were created in advance by locals during workshops hosted by UK artist Steve Elliott, while others were self-made on the day of the event.

Hub Impact on Targeted Issues

1. Regenerating the area, increasing tourism and improving local economy

After ten years of continuously working in Songkhla Old Town, the hub has tremendously transformed the area in various aspects, including regenerating the area, increasing local tourism, and improving the local economy.

Since the beginning, the hub has concentrated on revitalising the Old Town by breathing new life into old buildings throughout the area. As a consequence, many of the once closed buildings have been refurbished by the hub and its partners, and used as public areas, including Hub Ho Hin and Kid+Dee Historic Center, to support various new types of community activities. In addition, the hub played an important role in coordinating the overall physical appearance and atmosphere of the area. In addition to convincing the City Municipality to enforce building regulations to preserve the original appearance of existing buildings, the hub also designed the signage system and commissioned a series of street art. Furthermore, the hub has organised a wide range of activities and programmes, such as creative markets, an art festival and student field trips, aimed to showcase local cultural heritage, attract visitors to the area, and create a lively atmosphere. As a result, the Old Town has become a popular tourist destination that attracts a number of visitors, especially from the younger generations, throughout the year.



Songkhla Old Town, in front of Heart Made Coffee and Eatery on Nakorn-nai Road (2020)

“In the past, there had never been any tourists from Malaysia, China, or Singapore who rented vans to visit the Old Town, let alone teenagers. As you know, this area used to be very dangerous and was not welcome to anyone. Today, it is obvious that the number of visitors is rising. Not only Chinese tourists, but there are also many teenagers wandering around the area, wearing colourful clothes and taking pictures. I used to see this sort of thing only in Phuket, but now it is happening here in our province. I am very pleased,” said Ms Naree Boonsong, an employee of Chevron Thailand Exploration and Production, Ltd. and a hub member.

The increasing number of visitors to the area has generated new business opportunities. Many property owners have renovated their buildings as commercial spaces, allowing for the growth of new establishments, such as cafés, restaurants, hostels, museums and galleries to thrive in the area, and thereby improving the local economy overall.

2. Bridging cultural heritage with contemporary lifestyle

Prior to the movement of the Songkhla Heritage Trust, the history and cultural heritage of the area were perceived as irrelevant to everyday life. Some of the property owners, for instance, liked to demolish their old buildings and replace them with modern ones due to several issues, such as damaged conditions, old-fashioned architectural style, and functions and spaces not corresponding to contemporary ways of life.

However, the refurbishment of the hub space Hub Ho Hin, which saw the transformation of the old rice mill into a community space, enabled the locals to understand how cultural heritage can be integrated into development opportunities and offer competitive advantages. As a result, the number of businesses in the area that integrate local heritage, such as local museums, boutique hostels and cafés, is rising.



The interior of A.E.Y. space, a refurbished art gallery which received an award from the Architectural Conservation Award from the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA) in 2018



In addition, a series of hub interventions has changed the perception of the people, such as the reinterpretation of past ways of life by a young generation of street artists, and the Starlight Market showcasing local art and craft in a historical setting.

It can be said that the Songkhla Heritage Trust plays a significant role in weaving valuable aspects of the past with the contemporary contexts. Nowadays, Songkhla Old Town is an outstanding example of living heritage, an area where cultural and historical preservation can thrive alongside modern ways of life.

A traditional dance performed by students at “Lard Song Lay” market (meaning “the market between two seas”) (2017)

3. Promoting cultural and heritage tourism in Songkhla Old Town and the South of Thailand

In the past, when people thought about heritage tourism in Thailand, it was either Sukhothai Historical Park in northern Thailand or Ayutthaya Historical Park in the central region that came to mind. Although Songkhla Old Town was one of the earliest settlements in southern Thailand, its long history was not widely recognised in the public sphere. Thus, the image of Songkhla Province has always concentrated on Hat Yai District, which is the business hub of the southern region. In terms of the old towns in the South, people were more familiar with the Old Town of Phuket, which has been transformed into a commercial neighbourhood.

After ten years of work, the hub has introduced the Old Town area as an alternative destination for cultural heritage tourism in Songkhla Province and the South of Thailand. The hub has developed unique characteristics of the district to differentiate it from the old towns of other provinces. While wandering around the Old Town of Songkhla, tourists will find themselves immersed in local ways of life and be introduced to past lifestyles bit by bit through different mediums such as street art, the adaptive reuse of old buildings, a taste of traditional food at family-owned restaurants, and a district tour delivered by local guides.

Nowadays, in addition to becoming more widely known to the public both nationally and internationally, Songkhla Old Town is now acknowledged as significant as other cultural heritage sites in Thailand as a result of its value.





Songkhla Old Town at night during the city festival

Conclusion:

Over the course of ten years, the hub has changed tremendously from a small group of people who were inspired by an academic research project to becoming a registered association with an expansive network across the region. It is a good example of a creative hub that aims to revitalise and develop a specific area by bringing the value of its overlooked local assets to the fore and interweaving cultural heritage with contemporary lifestyle. In addition, its position and strategy, as well as the way it operates and works with different stakeholders, have enabled it to successfully drive change in various aspects simultaneously.



Top: Songkhla Old Town

Bottom: A group picture taken outside of Hub Ho Hin in front of Songkhla Lake

MUSIC SHARING BANGKOK (2012)



A group of five passionate young adults have been using music to cultivate life skills among underprivileged children in the Rong Moo community, Khlong Toei area, and building a network of volunteer music teachers across the country. Since 2012, the hub members have become a part of the community. Furthermore, its endeavours have gradually improved the quality of life of the people as well as the image of the community.

Music performed by local children during the Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival (2018) in the Khlong Toei area of Bangkok

Hub Profiles:

The founding of the hub arose from Ms Siriporn Pomwong's interest in music. A former nurse, she collected second-hand musical instruments and donated them to underprivileged children all over Thailand, including the Khlong Toei community. Her experience in the community started in 2012, when she founded the Khlong Toei Music Programme with a group of friends. The group aimed to teach music lessons to children in the '70 Rai' community, one of the 26 communities in the Khlong Toei area.

"I think it was a coincidence that I came here [to the Khlong Toei community], but it has brought a deep connection with the children. They need love. When we talk with them, pay attention, and listen to what they are saying, they feel that they have someone to rely on. I think this is what they need, even more than knowledge or objects," said Ms Siriporn Pomwong, the hub founder.

She has developed a deep connection with the children in the Khlong Toei community and decided to expand this music education programme to the 'Rong Moo' community, as there were a number of underprivileged children aged between 9 and 12 years old. At the end of 2012, Music Sharing began to work with the children by giving art and music lessons every weekend in various locations within the community (e.g. in the middle of the street, in an empty space in front of someone's house). After a while, the hub decided to focus specifically on the music lessons and changed the schedule to Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

In 2015, the hub organised the first annual community festival, 'Khlong Toei Dee Jung', which was supported by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) as a part of its project 'Pueantee Nee Dee Jung' (meaning 'this area is so good'). The purpose of the festival was to give the local children an opportunity to perform and showcase their music skills.



Music classes are held regularly in Bangkok's Khlong Toei neighbourhood.



A music workshop on tour to Raisom School in Chiang Mai Province in the North of Thailand, one of the organisations within the Music Sharing network (2021)



The 2nd Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival (2016)

Two years later, when the meat slaughter business in the community was shut down and left behind a large slaughterhouse, the hub saw its potential as being the new community learning space and public area. Therefore, it started to negotiate with the landlord and began the renovation process by partnering with other organisations.

After eight years of developing life skills among children through music in the Khlong Toei community, the hub has gained the trust of the parents and developed a connection with the community. Currently, it is extending its work to promoting more income for the people in the community and developing alternative educational courses that are more adapted to the children of Rong Moo. Apart from working with the Khlong Toei community, Music Sharing has also developed a network of those who are interested in using music to improve the life skills of underprivileged children nationwide.



Hub Members:

Music Sharing comprises five passionate young members aged between 25 and 35 years old, most of whom shifted from being volunteers to hub members. Although none of them are from the Khlong Toei community, they share the same interest in improving the quality of life of underprivileged children in the area. Despite coming from different professional backgrounds, e.g. a nurse, a music teacher and a social worker, the team works well together. Tasks are distributed amongst each other depending on their expertise and skill, and they also support each other on a daily basis.



Hub members and volunteers playing music

Hub Purposes:

- Provide alternative opportunities for underprivileged children:
 - The hub aims to cultivate life skills among children through music in order to intervene in a vicious cycle of life in the slum, which often involves lack of education, teenage pregnancy, illegal drug use and violent crime.
- Create a safe space, both emotionally and physically, for children:
 - Providing an emotionally safe space enables the children to express and communicate their feelings and opinions to others and to hub members without fear of being judged.
 - Providing a physically safe space at the hub creates a public access point that is safe, inclusive and accessible for locals and neighbouring communities.
- Develop learning tools and courses that correspond with the characters of underprivileged children, which may not be compatible with general State education.

Hub Physical Space

“Rong Moo”, an old slaughterhouse, is what the community is named after. It is located at the heart of the community and covers an estimated area of 3,200-4,800 square metres and consists of two buildings and outdoor spaces. Since 1979, the slaughter business and its building have shaped the perception of others towards the community. The images, sounds and smell of the mass animal slaughter became the area’s identity.

“In the past, no taxi driver would want to come to the Rong Moo community because they were afraid that the clients would do a runner. Besides that, those who tried to call a taxi often looked like drug addicts. Furthermore, if relatives came to visit and stayed in the community, they might not be able to sleep because of the loud noise of pigs crying out,” said a member of the community committee.



Rong Moo, an old slaughterhouse and the present-day site of Music Sharing, before renovation

The building was abandoned after the business was shut down in 2017. From then on, it had become an ideal place for drug addicts and homeless people, and had been avoided by others in the community. Music Sharing played a major role in negotiating with the space’s landlord, the Port Authority of Thailand, and renovated its structure and physical spaces in collaboration with Allianz Ayudhya and Palang Pandin Volunteer Group, a group of volunteers supported by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth).



Local children work with hub members and volunteers from Allianz Ayudhya and Palang Pandin Volunteer Group to renovate the Rong Moo building.



“

Every day, people in the community would gather at this space (Rong Moo). The children would play sports and music, instead of using drugs or gambling like before. Sometimes it is used to host community events such as an ordination ceremony. It allows us to save money from renting a venue. As for the elderly, some of those who had been unable to walk are getting better now that they have the opportunity to exercise.”

- one member of
the community committee



Various activities at the Rong Moo building
after renovations

Nowadays, the building and its surrounding area serves as a public space and a hub for the community. It is where music classes and the Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival take place, as well as all kinds of community activities. Interestingly, the renovation works changed the image of the Rong Moo community completely, from the noise of pigs crying out to the sounds of children playing music.

Hub Activities and Programmes

Although the hub's members represent a rather small group, its activities and programmes take place both in the Khlong Toei community and other provinces across Thailand through engagement with local communities and

support from partners. They usually feature the use of music as a medium to engage with underprivileged children. The three remarkable activities and programmes are as follows:

1. Music Class

The music classes that take place at Rong Moo, the refurbished slaughterhouse, every Tuesday and Wednesday evening are the hub's main activity. The two-hour class is taught by the hub's core members and volunteer teachers. The class begins with basic music theory before the children are separated into small groups to learn and practise a specific musical instrument based on their interest. After an hour of individual practice, the children would reunite and practise together as a band to end the session.

Unlike other music lessons that would focus on the musical competence and skill of the students, the hub also pays close attention to the development of life skills among the children through different techniques. For instance, before a new semester begins, the children have to collectively come up with the class rules, which requires mutual agreement and respect. Furthermore, the children have to collect ten pieces of rubbish before they attend each class. Consequently, they learn not to throw rubbish in public areas. In addition, the hub provides free dinner for the children so that they would not be hungry during the lesson.



Through Music Sharing's work, children learn to play a musical instrument based on their interest from a volunteer music teacher.

Since 2012, this music class has been taught to many generations of children. It has transformed Nat, an eight-year-old child who was addicted to mobile device games, into a 17-year-old musician who performs at events and ordination ceremonies for a living. Today, he is able to support himself, pay for his own tuition fee, and has bought a new bicycle. In addition, he is in charge of giving music lessons to younger children when the core members are unavailable.

2. Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival (meaning 'Khlong Toei so good')



Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival is an annual community festival which began in 2015. Its early purpose was to create a space and provide an opportunity for the local children to perform and showcase their musical skills.

A music performance at "Soul of Khlong Toei", the 4th Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival, on 3-4 March 2018

The first three events were very small, only the size of a basketball court, and limited to local children and their parents. However, since the renovation of Rong Moo in 2015, the event's audience has increased three-fold, attracting audiences from outside the community. Furthermore, it aimed to change perceptions towards the Khlong Toei community by giving audiences firsthand experience among the community through various engagement activities, such as musical performances by the local children and craft workshops.

One of the most interesting aspects of this event is the fact that the hub members step aside and let the children take the lead. Each child has his/her own role, and is in charge of a certain task, such as stage management, partner relations, project coordination, with a hub member pairing him/herself with a child and acting as a coach.

“We organised the event by separating ourselves into different units, such as public relations, stage and location, activities and food. The hub members would support us. If we were unable to do something, they would come and help out. As for connecting with our networks, we had to first come up with ideas about what we would like them to do before we contacted them. It was a kind of training for us. It was my first time to call 20 people in a day. I was very excited,” said Nat, one of the children at the Rong Moo community.

The local community also engages in the event by helping out with cleaning and setting up the spaces, as well as selling food and products on event days in exchange for small payment from the hub.

Today, Khlong Toei Dee Jung is an annual music and art festival that attracts hundreds of visitors. It usually takes place twice a year: a bigger event held in April and a smaller one in October. The impacts both on the local community and people from other neighbourhoods have been numerous and impressive. It creates a sense of pride in the community among locals and also inspires other communities in Khlong Toei. Furthermore, it allows other people to know that the community is safe to visit, and provides an opportunity to acknowledge the capacity of local children.



A music performance by local children at “Re-art, Trash, Craft”, the 6th Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival, on 1 November 2020

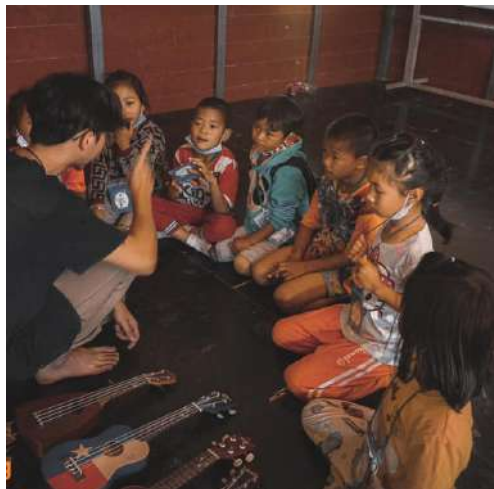


Middle & Bottom: Various activities at “Play and Learn”, the 5th Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival on 6-7 April 2019

3. Music networks throughout Thailand

One of the hub's missions is to build a network of people interested in using music to improve the quality of life of children across Thailand, including marginalised and ethnic groups such as the Hmong and Karen. In doing so, the hub is open to interested individuals and groups who are invited to write a proposal requesting for resources and support, such as musical instruments, funding, music lessons, which would later be provided by the hub.

Those who are in the network would visit each other to share knowledge, experiences and practices. Sometimes, the children in the Rong Moo community would accompany the hub members when visiting other places and take part in their music class. Consequently, the children have a chance to exchange their music knowledge and skills with other children. Through music, they are able to make friends with those who are from different backgrounds or speak different languages. Furthermore, the groups who form the music network and their children participate in each other's events. Many of them took part in and performed at the past Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival.



Top & Middle: A music workshop on tour to Raisom School in Chiang Mai Province in the North of Thailand, one of the organisations within the Music Sharing network (2021)

Bottom: A workshop with volunteered music teachers to train and prepare them for working with children in different areas (2020)



Hub Impact on Targeted Issues

1. Enabling the community to envision the better future



Like many others who are living in slums, most people in the Rong Moo community are unskilled workers who are living without any security in their lives. Their main concern is day-to-day survival. However, Music Sharing has triggered community responses among locals to envisage other possibilities in their lives and inspire them to hope for a better future.

The refurbishment of Rong Moo into a public space for exercise, recreation and community activities that welcomes everyone is a good example. This sort of space had never been experienced by locals before, especially when living illegally without property rights. Furthermore, the transformation has resulted in improved health and well-being for everyone regardless of age. It has enabled locals to see

A music performance by children in the Khlong Toei community at the Rong Moo building after renovations, a part of "Play and Learn Event" (2018)

the prospect of a better quality of life and inspired them to make improvements in other aspects of their lives.

Apart from that, the music lessons spanning more than five years enable the local children to equip themselves with life skills and musical skills that are needed to survive and make a living in the future. It gives these children opportunities to thrive and escape from the vicious cycle of disadvantaged livelihood, as well as provides adults with more confidence to envision a brighter future for the young generation.

2. Promoting experience-based learning

The planning and operating of the Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival is a simulation of work experience that the children would encounter in the future. It is an experience-based learning platform for them to discover their hidden abilities, acquire a vital skill set, and build their confidence.

During the preparation phase of the festival, the children would be responsible for a certain task, which they have never done before, such as designing the stage, organising the show sequence, and contacting a wide range of stakeholders. Although the hub members stood by them as their coaches, the children would take the lead in making decisions and performing the task. After the festival would end, the children would get together with the hub members to reflect on what happened during the event (e.g. problems, solutions, outputs and outcomes), what could be done better next time, and how it could be done. This whole experience of organising the festival can help open up more opportunities for their future careers.



The children help out with preparing and setting up the Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival as work experience assignments.

3. Connecting the Khlong Toei community with others

Prior to the founding of Music Sharing, the Rong Moo community, like other Khlong Toei communities, was notorious for being an unsafe area that was filled with intractable social problems among homeless, drug addicts, criminals, etc. As a result, many perceived the community as a source of problems that should be torn down. However, the hub has changed these perceptions and connected the community with other people and organisations, especially through the Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival.

In the past three years, the festival has attracted many people to the community. It was a chance for them to visit the area, experience the real Khlong Toei first-hand, and interact directly with the local community through all kinds of activities. Furthermore, the music performances by local children allowed them to acknowledge the children's potential and ability. Consequently, visitors started to reduce their prejudice against the Khlong Toei community and disseminate their positive experience with the community to the public.



Top & Bottom: "Soul of Khlong Toei", the 4th Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival on 3-4 March 2018



A music performance by a group of professional musicians "Soul of Khlong Toei", the 4th Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival, on 3-4 March 2018



Conclusion:

Since the beginning, Music Sharing has been taking a new approach to improving the quality of life of people in slums. It has engaged the community in various activities, encouraged them to rely on themselves instead of waiting for help from others, and empowered and equipped them with essential life and music skills from which they can make a living and create a better future. The hub represents a passion-driven creative community that is able to turn passion into a full-time career, as well as demonstrates profound determination and perseverance.

MELAYU LIVING

PATTANI (2016)



Melayu Living is a group of friends, mainly architects and designers, from the Deep South region of Thailand who use creativity to create a better society. Their hip, cool and impressive activities and events speak to the public, especially the young generation. Today, the hub has brought the concept of creative economy closer to the locals, connected creative communities, and fostered creative agents in the region.

A talk at the event “Perd Baan Nai Argone” (meaning “opening the tax collector’s house”) on 1 April 2017

Hub Profiles:

The hub was founded in October 2016 when Mr Rachit Radenahmad was elected as the head of “ASA Taksin: the Deep South Committee”, a subdivision of the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA) in charge of the Deep South area. He began his work by recruiting core team members, most of whom are his fellows, and established a hub. Then, they decided on “Melayu Living”, a living room of the Deep South, would be the hub’s name.

Although nearly all core members are architects, the hub decided not to limit its focus on the profession but instead promote the creative industries as a whole through a wide range of activities and programmes, such as talks by famous designers and architects, a walking tour, and a design festival. Despite the ongoing unrest that the Deep South region has been facing¹², these events did not refer to peace, justice, or reconciliation. Instead, the hub concentrates on using all kinds of creative tools (e.g. film, music) to respond to the needs of locals as well as reflect the Deep South as the region of possibility.

“Why do we need to talk about the situation [the insurgency]? We would not say that the purpose of these activities was to reduce the violence. They did not, and it is undeniable that the violence is still ongoing. But these activities would inspire the public and the younger generation. I think it is better to think about the future,” said Mr Radenahmad.

It is also interesting to note that these media (e.g. film, music) are controversial in the context of the region as conservative Muslims may believe that they are forbidden by their religion. Nevertheless, the events managed to attract a number of participants regardless of their religion.



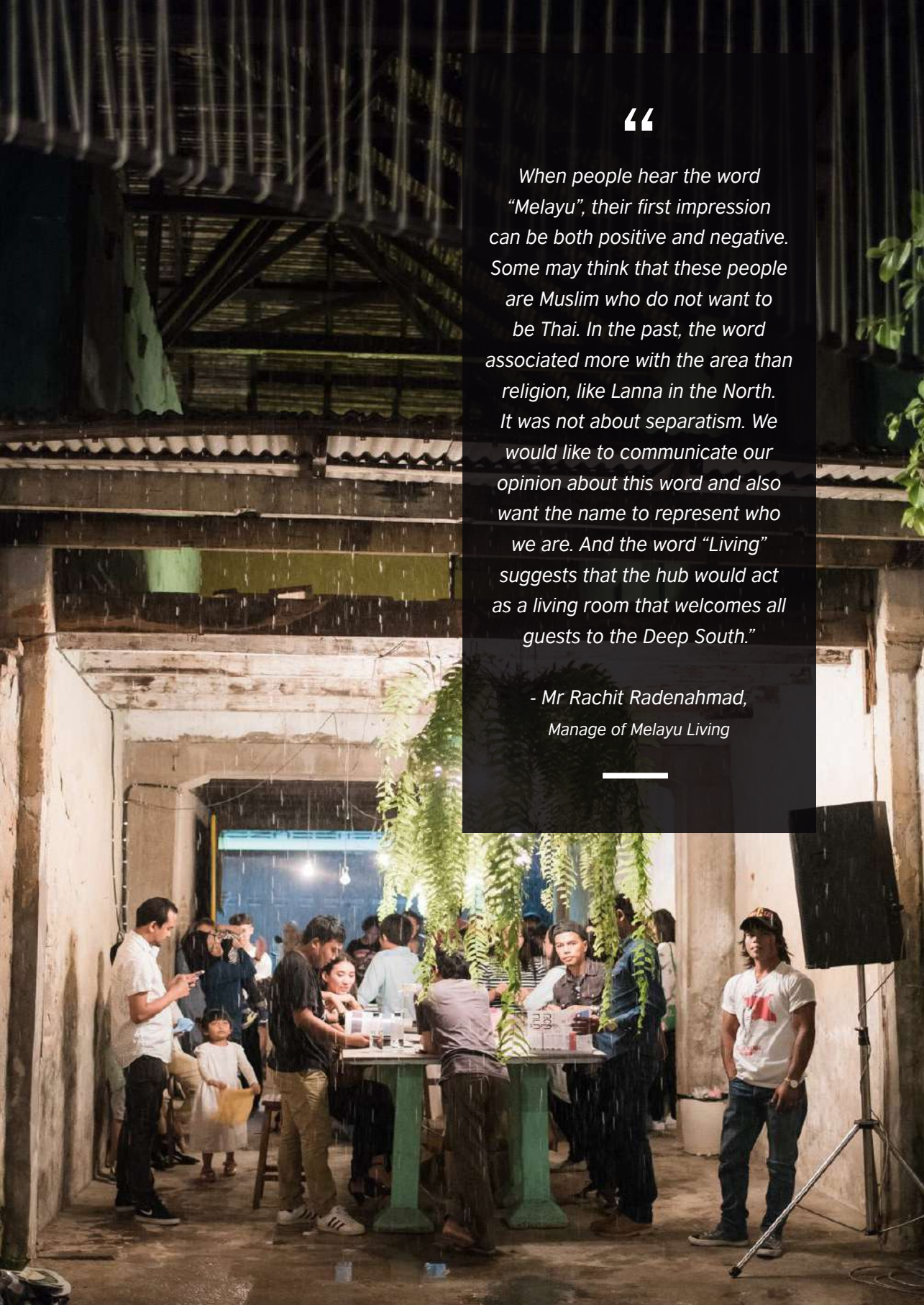
A calligraphy of the hub's name “Melayu Living” being produced by local artist Adnan Tayeh (2016)

Hub Members:

There are ten members in the core team, most of whom are architects and designers who have known each other for years. They are all Muslim, aged between 35 and 45 years old, and from the Deep South region. Their collaboration is based on friendship, which drives the hub forwards.

Hub Purposes:

- Promote architectural professions
- Recognise and honour local community members and key individuals who contribute to the development of local creative industries and society at large
- Build a creative space

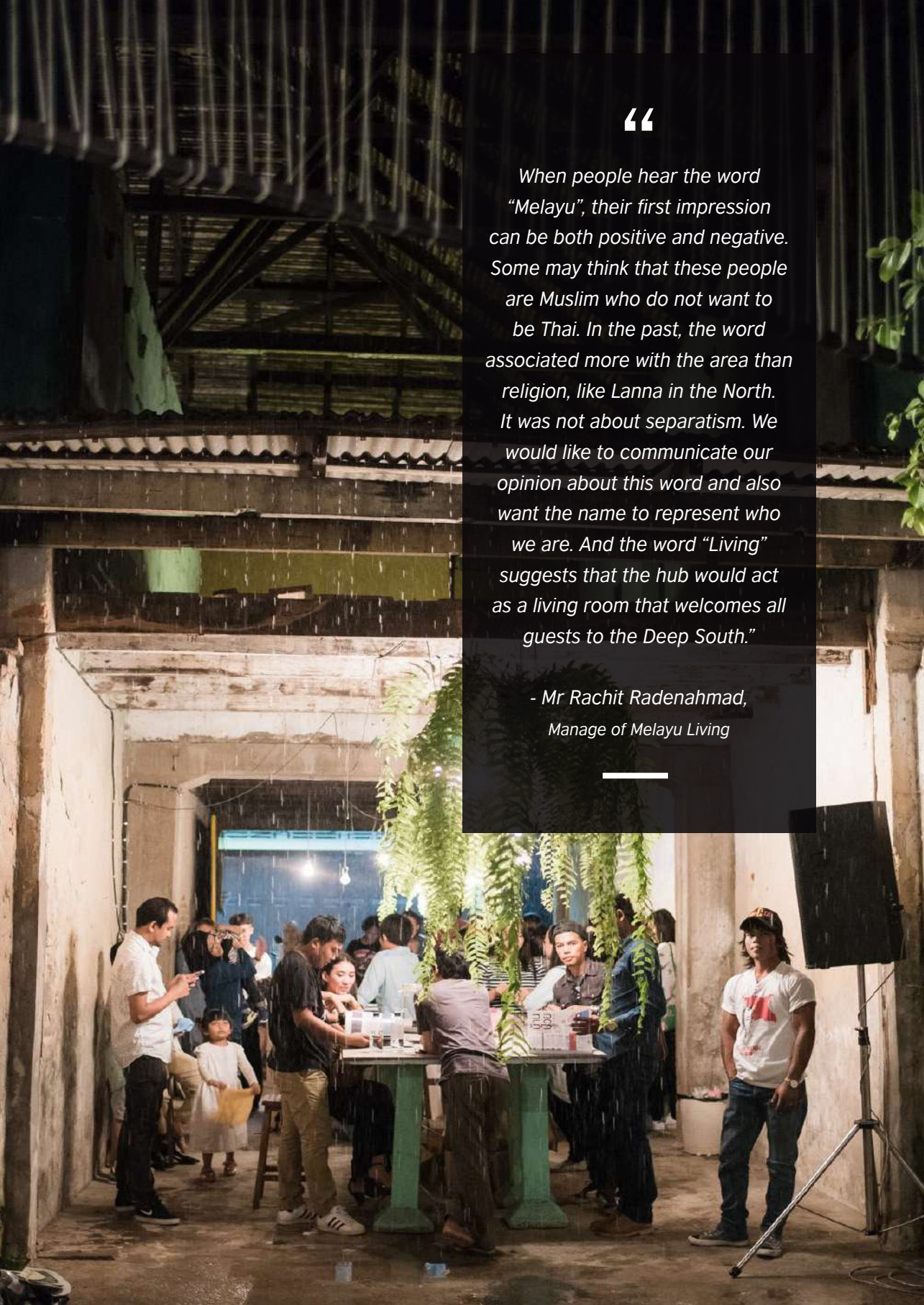


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When people hear the word “Melayu”, their first impression can be both positive and negative. Some may think that these people are Muslim who do not want to be Thai. In the past, the word associated more with the area than religion, like Lanna in the North. It was not about separatism. We would like to communicate our opinion about this word and also want the name to represent who we are. And the word “Living” suggests that the hub would act as a living room that welcomes all guests to the Deep South.”

*- Mr Rachit Radenahmad,
Manage of Melayu Living*

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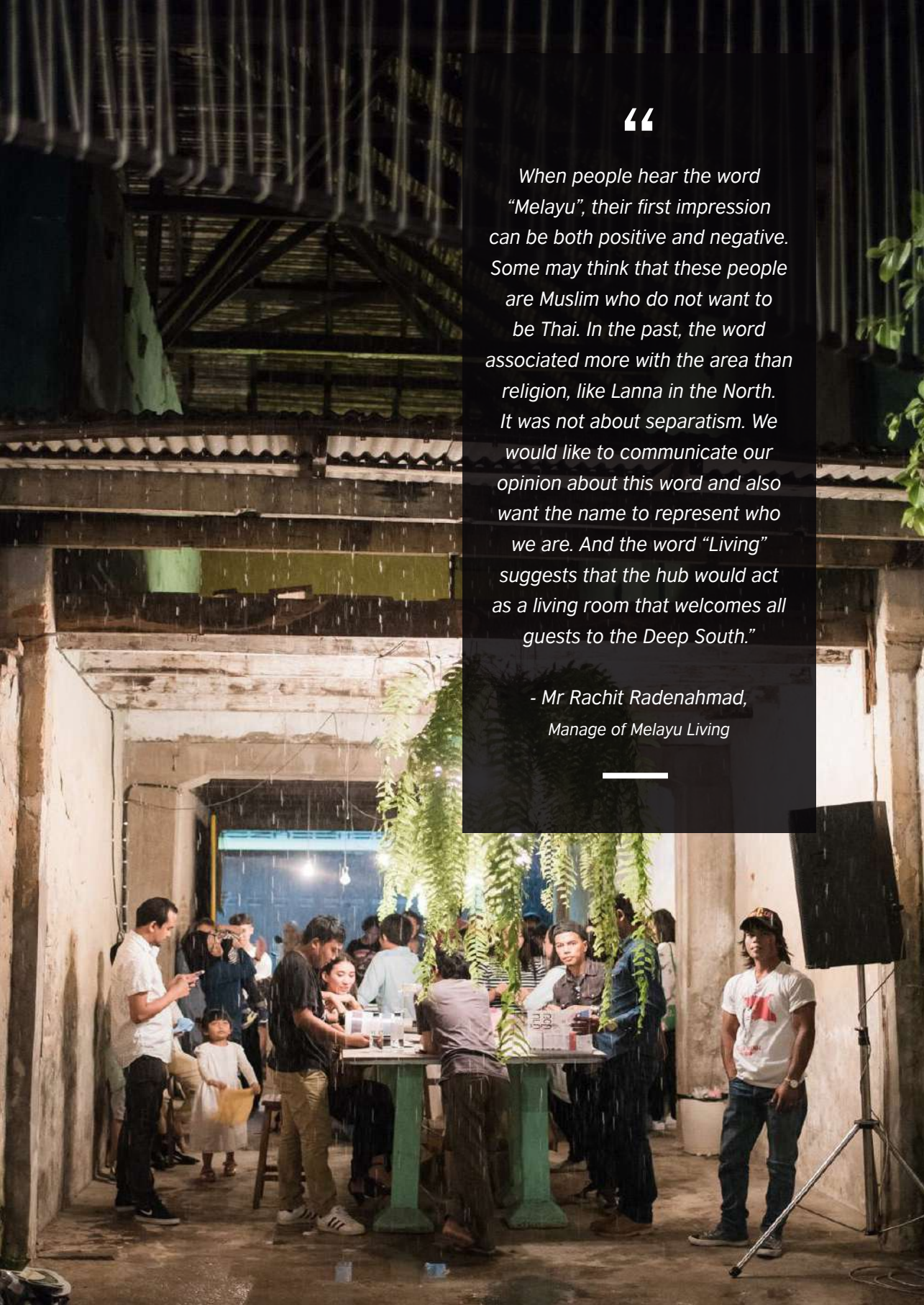


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Manage of Melayu Living*

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Hub Physical Space

Transforming a dilapidated house into a contemporary creative space

A tax collector's residence dating back to more than 100 years ago, located in the Old Town of Pattani on the left bank of the Pattani River, is where one can find Melayu Living. Despite the fact that all core members are Muslim, they decided to settle in the Chinese neighbourhood, which used to be the commercial district of the city.

"Two of our members had already opened a teahouse in this area and they told me that there was an empty house next to their place. When we saw the house, we knew that this was it. We like the building and its space. In addition, the fact that it was located in a Chinese neighbourhood was very tempting, especially since our team are all Muslim. If we could make anything happen here it must be great. We just love to go against the norm," said Mr Radenahmad.

The team had applied their architectural knowledge to transform this dilapidated house into a functional space that still maintains its original spirit and unique character. The house has two floors. The first floor is divided into two areas: 1) 'Bloom' showcase, where selected local craft and design products are displayed and available for purchase 2) indoor- and outdoor-multipurpose spaces, where most events take place. The second floor serves as an office and a storage space.

Left: The event "Perd Baan Nai Argone" (meaning "opening the tax collector's house") on 1 April 2017



A physical space for the hub on Pattani Pirom Road in the Old Town of Pattani before renovation (2016)



Cleaning the hub space before hosting the first event (2016)

Although the building is still under renovation and only open to the public on the day of events, it is available for anyone to use upon request. One of the hub members mentioned that she would like university students to come and use the space, especially to showcase their works, since it would allow more people to attend the event and appreciate their works. In the future, Melayu Living plans to turn the house into a creative space, where creative people can come and work on a regular basis.

Hub Activities and Programmes

Since 2015, Melayu Living has hosted a number of activities and programmes both in their neighbourhood and in other communities. The use of creativity and creative tools (e.g. music, film, design, craft) has become the signature of their events.

Their activities and programmes convey stories of local creative and notable people, as well as bring overlooked assets of the Deep South region to the fore by using new media and simple but impactful messages. In addition, the hub always engages with different stakeholders throughout the region, especially local communities, and invites people from other parts of Thailand to visit the region. One of their regular activities is a series of talks that features famous guest speakers from different fields in the creative industries such as architects, product designers, graphic designers and writers. One of the participants mentioned that although he did not have a background in creative fields and did not understand some of the special terms, he was able to adapt some of the ideas and learn new concepts for his benefit. Apart from that, the other two outstanding activities are Terima Kresek and Pattani Decoded:

“

What Melayu Living has done, the locals have never seen before. They have introduced new ways of doing things. This old house [Melayu Living space], for example, instead of knocking it down, like what others would do, they kept everything and somehow turned it into a venue. Many of their activities are unconventional. In the case of a talk, it might be normal, but instead of hosting the event in a hotel, they host it here, at an old house with a view of kolek boats and the Pattani River. Sometimes, we even sit in a circle to discuss issues together. For me this is different.”

- one of the participants

1. Terima Kresek



Kresek is one of the towns in Pattani Province where Krue Se Mosque (Masjid Kerisek), a historical site dating back to the 15th century is located. After the tragic insurgent incident in 2004¹³, the area was marked red and became the symbol of violence. In 2018, Melayu Living was commissioned by the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC)¹⁴ to host a three-day event (Friday-Sunday) over three consecutive months from July to September, as a part of Halal Tourism programmes. The name 'Terima Kresek', which means 'Bring Kresek back' is similar to this phrase 'Terima kasih', which means 'thank you' or 'it is accepted with love' in Kelantan-Pattani Malay language.

"Klub su patom-poom (back to the origin)", Part 3 of the event "Terima Kresek", held in September 2018

“

For others, Kresek might represent violence, but for us it signifies ancient prosperity. We would like to communicate its flourishing past through people in the present. Thus, we aim to engage the local community as much as possible and also to reintroduce cultural assets in the area.”

- Mr Rachit Radenahmad,
Manager of the hub

TERIMA
KRESEK



The event was divided into three parts: Part 1 (July 2018), dubbed ‘Wan wayla tee suay ngam’ (beautiful days), focused on the recent past by storytelling through the memories of elders; Part 2 (August 2018), ‘Na craft’ (local craft), went further back in time to describe the prosperous period; Part 3 (September 2018), ‘Klub su patom-poom’ (back to the origin), discussed history in order to start a new chapter. Each part would feature talks, exhibitions, performances (e.g. music, dance, local martial art) and workshops that corresponded with the theme, as well as an array of food stalls and local crafts for sale.



“The food sold on the day, both savoury and sweet, were prepared by the local community. These authentic traditional foods are unique and rare. Some still follow the recipe from the Pattani Kingdom period, while some recipes cannot be found elsewhere. We were hoping that the community would be able to make a living from selling their food even when the event was over,” said Mr Radenahmad.



The event was very successful, and the number of participants increased each month. The reception was so positive and enthusiastic that the normally out of commission Kresek Museum was open to the public on an exclusive basis for the first and only time during Part 3 of the event in September 2018. Undoubtedly, it was packed with people. The event aroused local pride and sparked hope for the future of Kresek.

Top: Painting activities at “Na Craft (local craft)”, Part 2 of the event in August 2018

Middle: Local food sold at the event

Bottom: A traditional music performance in front of the Krue Se Mosque (Masjid Kerisek)

2. Pattani Decoded



Pattani Decoded was not only the first ever design festival that was held in the Deep South region, but also the first one that was hosted by civilians rather than a government organisation. The four-day event took place from 29 August to 1 September 2019 in the Old Town area of Pattani Province, the neighbourhood where the hub is located.

“The name ‘Pattani Decoded’, for us, means a search for the essence of Pattani art and craft. We could think and talk about them in a traditional way or use an alternative language to communicate its core and create the work of our time. “Decoded” also has a similar pronunciation to the words “Dee Kote”, meaning “extremely good” in Thai, which suggests that we have many remarkable things here in Pattani. There were various activities and programmes featured in the event, such as talk, workshop, exhibition and club, that represented the concept. For example, the performance in the event was not

A musical performance at the opening of the design festival “Pattani Decoded”

a Ronggeng dance, but instead, we selected artists who decoded the traditional elements and created a contemporary sound, such as Stu do vol., the band that mixes traditional local sound with jazz music,” said Mr Radenahmad.

Unlike many design festivals which are mainly attended by people from the creative industries, Melayu Living aimed to attract the general public from the Deep South region. The team introduced the ‘12 industries of the Creative Economy’ as the main theme of the event, and concentrated on communicating how they could benefit locals and improve the local economy. The event featured a wide variety of activities and programmes ranging from showcase, exhibition, workshop, performance, design competition and club (a space for the younger generations to showcase and sell products).



One of the most outstanding aspects of the event was the engagement of other stakeholders in hosting the event. Melayu Living had made it clear from day one that it was not the only host, but instead the event belonged to everyone involved. Saiburi Looker, another creative hub in Pattani Province, was one of the main workforces, while local artists and designers came together to exhibit their work, conduct workshops, and perform on the day for free. The event was operated by more than 50 volunteer staff, mainly high school and university students. Most importantly, the exhibitions and showcases were held in various old buildings that belonged to people in the community. Some of them were open to the public for the first time on the day of the event.

Pattani Decoded was attended by a large number of people of all ages both local and from other provinces. It brought the area back to life, put Pattani back on the map, and sent a signal that the Deep South region is safe and welcomes everyone.

A late evening at Club, where many musical performances took place and where younger generations showcased and sold various products

“

I really like the concept of the event. It highlighted how art could improve the local economy, not just for aesthetic purposes. It could genuinely support local communities. In the event, there were all kinds of art related activities such as exhibition, workshop and market. What I liked the most was jazz music performance at night. After my volunteered friends and I finished our tasks, we were there dancing and singing.”

- one of the volunteer students

Hub Impact on Targeted Issues

1. Promoting new possibilities for the future of the Deep South region



The fact that Melayu Living has never mentioned the ongoing violent unrest nor referred to peace and justice resonates with locals, especially the younger generation. Through their activities and programmes, the locals were inspired to re-imagine a preferable future for the city and shifted their attention to other possibilities, rather than repeatedly talk about the situation. Unsurprisingly, the events were well received by people of all ages and backgrounds.

In addition, the creative media (e.g. design, music and film) that were featured in the events enabled the locals to genuinely express themselves and address sensitive issues in a softer but more impactful way. These tools, together with an

The workshop "Calligraphy th", one of the activities organised at the design festival Pattani Decoded

easy-going atmosphere, allowed the audiences to feel free to communicate with one another on a deeper level. Apart from that, the events, such as the talks, walking tours, exhibitions and design festival, which aimed to promote and showcase local assets as well as local talents, triggered audiences to be more aware of the potential of the region's people and competitiveness. Thus, not only did it generate a sense of pride and allowed locals to regain their confidence in the region, but it also inspired them to take action towards shaping the future.

2. Connecting creative communities, fostering new creative agents in the region and promoting development in local art and craft



Melayu Living has a distinct focus on promoting creative people, industries and economy. The fact that their activities and programmes are very well in line with their purposes have drawn the attention of those who are already in these fields along with those who would like to work in these fields. Thus, the hub becomes a platform that connects these two together. One of the art student volunteers mentioned that he is aware of the fact that it was not easy organising any creative events in the region since they require a lot of effort, and many locals may not fully understand their value. Therefore, he would like to be a part of the team to promote the works of the creative community and communicate their value to wider audiences.

In addition to connecting creative communities, Melayu Living fosters new creative agents. University students and recent graduates are very welcome to work with the hub. There, they are able to explore their interests and

The workshop “Hello, World!” by Techit Noncitizen and PeaceNow Artist Group, a collaboration between groups of artists in Pattani and Bangkok on 19-20 November 2016

experiment with their tools and skills. One of the recent graduates from a local university had the opportunity to produce a series of illustrations and an animation for the Terima Kresek event. His outstanding talent caught the attention of a famous Thai graphic designer and landed him a job in his company. Furthermore, art and design students who would like to discuss their works with the hub can easily contact the members via social media or walk in on the day of an event.

In addition, the hub constantly promotes local art and craft, and provides opportunities for local talent to showcase their abilities and skills. The hub is planning to open a shop called “Bloom” at its space in the old town area, which aims to be a showcase of products by local artists and designers that are also available for purchase.

3. Reconnecting the Deep South region with the rest of the country



Since the insurgency in 2004, the Deep South region has been marked a “red” zone, which stands for high levels of violence. It prompted distrust among people from different religions, prevented locals from going out, and, most importantly, isolated the region from the rest of the country.

Melayu Living managed to reconnect the Deep South by bringing in people from other regions to Pattani Province. A number of established creative people from different fields (e.g. architects, graphic designers, illustrators and writers), mainly from Bangkok, were invited to the hub as guest speakers. The opportunity to meet these influencers, who had never visited the city before, inspired the local community. Furthermore, the fact that they were able to participate in the conversation and discuss current issues that are often discussed

The event “A design for life”, a special talk by Nontawat Charoenchasri, founder and lead designer of DUCTSTORE THE DESIGN GURU, held on 15 March 2018

elsewhere elicited the feeling that Pattani Province is walking at the same pace as the rest of the country again.

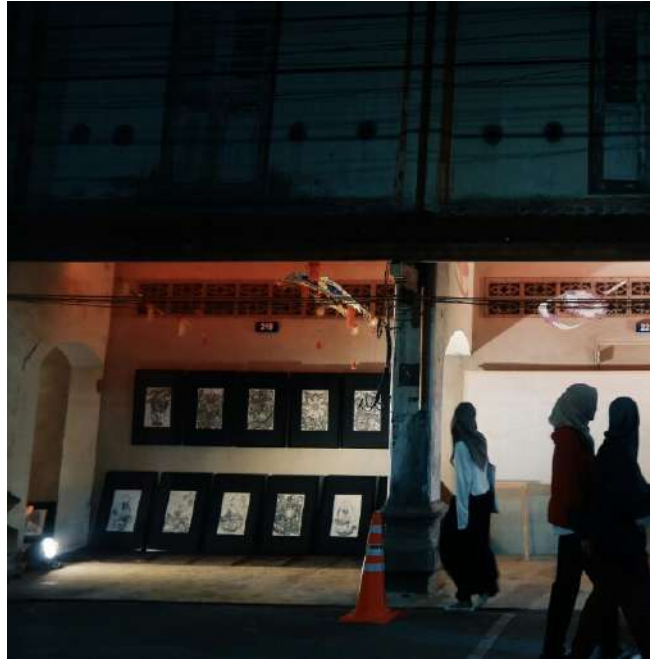
In addition, the design festival, “Pattani Decoded”, attracted a number of visitors nationwide. Those who attended the event acknowledged that the current situation in the Deep South is nothing like what is portrayed in the media. The region is actually safe and ready to welcome everyone. More importantly, the festival could also be perceived as a gateway to the region. It showcased the rich culture as well as the potential and capacity of local talent, which had been overlooked.

4. Connecting the concept of creative economy with the local context

Melayu Living is able to connect the concept of creative economy to the context of the Deep South, and communicate its value to the public through their activities, in particular the design festival “Pattani Decoded”.

Unlike other design events that put the spotlight on the artists and designers together with their works, Pattani Decoded focused on the economic aspect of design. The team looked closely into the local assets of the region (e.g traditional handicraft, architecture, local food), and decoded their identities and unique characteristics. Then, they curated a number of creative works in the Deep South region that demonstrated how these elements could be used to add more value and clustered them into 12 creative industries. Furthermore, the team carefully designed how each piece of work would be presented in order to best communicate the concept to audiences. While many were featured in the exhibition and showcase with simple and straightforward contents, some were presented in a form of experience-based activities, such as a chef’s table and workshop.

One of the student volunteers reported that, after volunteering at the event, she could understand how art and design can be applied to improve the economy and support local communities. In addition, one of Pattani Decoded’s workforce with a background in social science mentioned that the creative economy could be one of the mechanisms that could put an end to the insurgency. He sees it as one of a tool that could allow locals to thrive, earn more income, and have a better quality of life, which is fundamental to creating change.





Furthermore, he added that since the creative economy has a direct link to culture and identity, locals would discover that different ethnicities (e.g. Malay, Thai, Chinese) once lived in harmony. For example, *keropok*, a famous Malay dish that is a deep-fried fish cracker, actually originated from Chinese people, as in the past the use of oil and the deep-frying method were not a part of Malay cuisine. These two conversations represent how the concept of creative economy can be understood and interpreted in the local context.

Top & Bottom: The design festival Pattani Decoded held on 29 August - 1 September 2019



Conclusion:

Despite the fact that Melayu Living mainly concentrates on promoting the creative industries and creative people and spaces, its impact has extended far beyond. Besides connecting creative communities and fostering new creative agents of change, the hub has empowered the local community, and enabled them to express their genuine opinions and take pride in their region through its activities and programmes. The hub has demonstrated how creative media and the creative economy can be applied to inspire and drive the locals, especially the younger generation and creative communities, to take action to shape the future of the Deep South region.

MA:D ESAN

UDON THANI (2016)



Ma:D Esan is a gathering of five local people who share a common goal to do good for society. Since day one, it has been connecting people and organisations from various fields and facilitating many social projects. The hub has raised awareness on the social enterprise (SE) concept in the northeastern region and built a network among those who share the same goal.

The event "10/10", a series of ten talks by ten social entrepreneurs (2016)

Hub Profiles:

Ma:D Esan was founded in 2016 by a group of five people: one lecturer and four graduate students who knew each other during their master's degree studies in Social Entrepreneurship at Udon Thani Rajabhat University. During one of their field trips to Ma:D, a social hub in Bangkok, the group met the hub managers and were inspired by the concept and model of the hub. Later, they decided to set up a similar hub in their hometown and named it Ma:D Esan, meaning Ma:D of the northeastern region.



Ms Preekamol Chantaranijakorn, co-founder of Ma:D Bangkok, spoke at the third talk in the 10/10 event series (2016).

“The physical space of Ma:D Bangkok was very well thought out. I was very impressed when I got to listen to the hub managers talk about the concept of the hub. They wanted to make the hub a space for anyone with good ideas to come and connect with those who share the same interest. I asked myself, “why don’t we have this kind of space in Udon Thani Province?” said Ms Patawan Yuthagasemson, one of the hub co-founder.

Unlike Ma:D Bangkok that aims to make a better society, Ma:D Esan aims to “connect the dots”, or be a mediator in facilitating projects that would benefit society. Mr Pichai Uamturapojn, one of the hub members, mentioned that there are a number of activists who have great ideas, but the reason those ideas were not implemented or did not last was because they were doing it alone. So, he wanted to connect them with other like-minded people. He believes that Ma:D Esan would be a good facilitator since a hub is impartial as it does not relate to acting as either a public or private organisation.

The first year of the hub was experimental. It hosted a number of events almost every week, including talks and workshops by social entrepreneurs, which aimed to provide a fundamental understanding about SE in the region and in Thailand. The hub became known to local people who are interested in the region’s development and was able to gradually build an SE network.

Each year, Ma:D Esan would focus on different issues depending on the interests of its members and the opportunities that are available. In the second year, the hub concentrated on the younger generation and organised a series of guidance activities, while its focus shifted to urban planning in the third year. The hub became more widely known to the public through its project “Udon Thani Walkable City”, also known as “Shibuya Udon”, which aimed to prototype and test a diagonal pedestrian crossing at Thong Yai junction, in the city centre of Udon Thani Province.



The project “Udon Thani Walkable City”, also known as “Shibuya Udon” (2018)



The kinds of activities and programmes that were hosted by Ma:D Esan were quite new and not so common in the province. Thus, the hub has been perceived by the locals as an alternative as well as a community space where they can meet like-minded people. Participants who have worked with hub members or taken part in its activities and projects mentioned that they were then inspired by the hub to do something for society.

Although the hub has been less active since 2019, it still pursues its goal of promoting social projects and connecting those who would like to be agents of change.

The event "Tree for Good Business" in collaboration with UNDP (2020)

“

Ma:D Esan has encouraged me to take action. When I meet people at Ma:D, I feel that I broaden my horizons. When I listen to their stories, I am inspired to do something. Then I tell myself, if I have an opportunity, I will do it"

*- Ms Phanyaporn Jaemwutthipreecha,
one of the participants*

Hub Members:

Ma:D Esan consists of five Udon Thani citizens who have a common interest in social enterprise (SE) and would like to do good for their hometown. The members are between 30 and 55 years old, and most of them have a background in architecture. Each member has their own business, so they gather when the hub hosts activities and events.

Hub Purposes:

- Connect the dots (act as a mediator facilitating projects that benefit the society)
- Provide a platform for creative entrepreneurs to meet and interact

Hub Activities and Programmes

Since 2016, Ma:D Esan has organised a number of activities that touch upon various issues. Apart from working independently, the hub has partnered with both local and international organisations, such as UNDP, Udon Thani Rajabhat University, School of Changemakers, as well as individuals to host events and foster projects that would benefit society and Udon Thani Province. Some of the significant activities are as follows:



The event "Do Showcase" showcases eight social projects presented by eight groups of people in Udon Thani (2018).

1. Run2gether Udon Thani



Run2gether Udon Thani is a part of the Run2gether event that takes place in seven provinces across Thailand. Ma:D Esan partnered with Klongdinsor Co., Ltd., the founder of the Run2gether community and the organiser of the main event in Bangkok, to host the first event in Udon Thani Province on 24 December 2017. It is a special running event that partners disabled runners with non-disabled “guide runners”, to run together in order to promote exercise among people with disabilities as well as a more inclusive society. In the beginning, the event in Udon Thani took place on the first Saturday of each month, but it has now changed to one major event every year.

Run2gether Udon Thani at Nongprajak public park (2018)

Ma:D Esan invites people with disabilities of all ages in Udon Thani to take part. On the day of the event, they would be randomly paired with a guide runner. They have to look for their partner, learn how to run with one another, and start running together. The goal of the run is not to win, but to be even. One of the members mentioned that she felt that disabled children were very excited and looked forward to the event. For some, it was not often they had the chance to be outside of their schools. Although it was only a half-day event, it promoted a better understanding between non-disabled and disabled people and brought the two closer together.

“

“When I was a guide runner, I was paired with a transgender woman who used to work as a make-up artist. She told me her story while we were running. I felt that our worlds were moving closer together. In the past, the only moment that I would associate with the blind was when I would buy a lottery ticket. But after running with her, I started to realise that people with disabilities are just like us. We should not think of them as people who need help. They may not need help from us after all. I felt that we are actually equal.”

- Ms Patawan Yuthagasemson,
one of the hub co-founder



Run2gether Udon Thani from 2017 to present

2. Book Club



The “Book Club” was an event that brought together those interested in discussing books. It was organised by the hub members from 2016 to 2019 at SET a day café in the first three years, before changing the venue to CMYK printing and café. In each session, one to three people from different generations and occupations, such as doctor, architect, teacher, business owner, chef and university student, would be invited to be a “Book Teller”, a specific name that was given to people who lead the discussion on the book they selected.

The event was usually attended by approximately 10-15 participants. It would begin with an ice breaking session, which allowed participants to get to know each other and the Book Teller through the use of cards with a set of questions (e.g. What was the last movie you watched? What were your favourite childhood books?). Then, the Book Teller would talk about this/her

The “Book Club” at SET a day café (2016-2019)

selected book, which would be followed by a group discussion and a Q&A session. Since the first event in October 2016, a wide variety of books, both Thai and international, had been selected, including picture books (e.g. *Mamuang*, *Starry Starry Night*), young fiction (e.g. *The Little Prince*), fiction (e.g. *The Reader*, *Love at First Read*) and non-fiction (e.g. *Silence in the Age of Noise*, *The Little Book of Ikigai*).

Interestingly, the main purpose of the event was not to encourage people to read more, but instead the hub aimed to use books as a medium to connect people together. Thus, the participants were encouraged by moderators to join the conversation and were welcome to discuss anything. One of the participants mentioned that she was able to express her opinion freely without fear of being judged.

3. The Idol

The Idol was a one-day guidance activity for local students in the last year of their junior high school (equivalent to Year 10 in the UK system) for them to choose a study plan for the next year. The aim of the activity was to introduce alternative careers, so that the students would be able to look for and decide on what is right for them. Ma:D Esan was commissioned to organise the event in partnership with A-chieve, a social enterprise, in 2017 and 2018.

In the first year of the event, the hub invited ten entrepreneurs, “the idols”, to talk to the students about their careers to broaden the students’ horizon. The selected idols were from different businesses. Some of them studied and worked in the same field, while some switched to a completely different area. There were also several workshops available for the students to try out new skills. The event was held at the auditorium and was attended by 700 students.



Participating students visit different career booths at The Idols event.



The “The Idol” event during which students learn from entrepreneurs (2017)

In the second year, the location of the event was changed to a water park. Although the core activities remained the same, they were more animated. Instead of sitting and listening to the idols, the students would take turns to visit different career booths where they would meet the idol, participate in a workshop, and get hands-on experience, including growing melons, spray painting a car and selling sandwiches.

In 2019, Ma:D Esan has passed on its responsibility to a group of students at Udonpittayanukoon School, a local secondary school. However, the hub still supports them on some issues, such as looking for a location for the event and connecting the students with speakers.

Hub Impact on Targeted Issues

1. Creating awareness on social enterprise (SE) in the northeastern region



In the year 2016, the concept of social enterprise (SE) was very new in the context of provincial Thailand. Businesses and organisations that did practise and promote it were still concentrated in Bangkok. The members of Ma:D Esan noticed this problem and wanted to create an awareness of SE in their hometown.

Since the beginning, the hub has organised a number of activities, such as seminars, talks and showcases, to draw the attention of local people and businesses to the practice of SE. It invited leading social entrepreneurs in Thailand to share their experiences and also partnered with both local and national organisations, such as the Udon Thani Chamber of Commerce, Udon Thani Rajabhat University, School of Changemakers and UNDP, to promote the practice of SE and provide knowledge, support and funding for

The Arms Lab, one of the eight groups that took part in the activity "Do Showcase", focuses on developing a robotic hand for disabled people (2018).

those who are working in the area or would like to become agents of change.

The hub did not limit its target beneficiaries to business owners, but also communicated to younger generations across the region. It hosted a programme that showcased eight social projects designed by groups of local university students to promote and support their work, as well as inspire others among the younger generation. As a result of the hub's initiatives, Udon Thani citizens and others in the northeastern region have a better understanding of what SE is. In addition, many social projects and businesses in the region have emerged in the past five years.

2. Creating a community and a network of those interested in doing good for society

Since the beginning, Ma:D Esan has put a great emphasis on initiating and facilitating projects that benefit their hometown. Their determination, openness and impartial quality have drawn people from different generations, backgrounds and sectors across regions as well as organisations that would like to initiate similar projects in the region. The events and projects hosted by the hub bring together those who share the same vision. Consequently, participants mentioned that they met new people and even started social projects together. Those who work in the social field also added that they have connected with many working in the same area through the hub.



Volunteers making temporary toilets to donate to flood victims in Ubon Ratchathani, another province in the northeastern region of Thailand (2019)



Conclusion:

Ma:D Esan is an example of a creative hub that aims to do good for the society and their home province of Udon Thani. It is an entry point and a centre for social projects and enterprises in the northeastern region. For almost five years, the hub has been an alternative and a community space that connects people from different generations and backgrounds. More importantly, it has acted as a catalyst inspiring locals to take action and played a role in many social projects.

The workshop "City_Walker: Co-Creation Workshop", in partnership with the Association of Siamese Architects: Community Act Network (ASA CAN); "UMDVD", a group of local designers; and "CROSSs", a group of architects, to walk around the city and collaboratively redesign it (2018)

FASHION REVOLUTION THAILAND

BANGKOK (2018)



Fashion Revolution Thailand is a group of young people who share the same interest in sustainable fashion that aim to promote the practice of mindful consumption as a new norm. The hub operates freely under the umbrella of Fashion Revolution Global in the UK. For almost three years, it has been exploring different ways to communicate the environmental and social impacts of fast fashion to the public, especially the young generation, and created a community of stakeholders who would like to make an impact in the local fashion industry.

Clothes Swap Party: The Year-end Edition (2019)

Hub Profiles:

Fashion Revolution (FashRev) Thailand is a part of a global movement, “Fashion Revolution¹⁵”, which demands a fair and safe fashion industry. The movement originated in the UK in 2013 as a response to the Rana Plaza incident in Bangladesh.

FashRev Thailand was officially launched in 2018 by two passionate women in the textile industry: Ms Kamonnart Ongwandee, the country

coordinator, and Ms Passawee T. Kodaka, the founder of FolkCharm Co., Ltd.¹⁶. Its mission is to standardise sustainable and conscious consumption and ensure that sustainability becomes the socially practical norm¹⁷. However, Ms Ongwandee mentioned that her journey with Fashion Revolution Global began long ago since she was a student ambassador responsible for organising events at her university the Royal College of Art in the UK. She added that working for FashRev Thailand is nothing like working in the UK, as the culture, behaviours, and level of knowledge regarding this issue are different.

“The major challenge was the fact that the spirit of Fashion Revolution Global is rebellious. For them, consumers need to speak out, raise their hands and hold signs up. That is too provocative for Thai people and that is not our nature. Also, the word, “revolution”, is very aggressive. So, I first asked myself, how can I adapt the practice to the Thai context,” said Ms Ongwandee, the country coordinator.



Fash Rev Thailand encourages the public to question the transparency of the fashion industry during Fashion Revolution Week 2018. The campaign “Who made my clothes?” is an initiative under Fashion Revolution Global.



Fashion Revolution June Meetup (2019)

Consequently, instead of sticking with the rebellious approach of Fashion Revolution Global, the hub decided to soften the tone and act as an educational platform that organises events, workshops and talks related to the issue. In addition, it had to adapt the strategies that were created each year by Fashion Revolution Global to the Thai context for these to resonate with locals. As a result, the Thailand chapter’s mission is to raise public awareness on sustainable and conscious fashion consumption through activities, such as movie screenings, talks, clothes swaps, and its main annual event held in April and entitled “Fashion Revolution Week”.

In 2019, FashRev Thailand began to connect fashion consumption with individual mindfulness, as it became apparent to them that a lack of understanding one's own identity, value and self-expression was the actual reason preventing people from consuming consciously.

"At that time, people became more aware of the environmental impacts of fast fashion. However, there were only a few of them that took action. I asked myself why there was such a big gap between knowing and actually doing. There were many excuses, such as the difficulty in changing usual behaviours and the high price of slow fashion items. So, we began to look at this issue from their perspective. Then, we realised that if they are able to make connections with who they really are, it would not be such an endeavour. They just have to choose what they really like without fear of external pressure, then it will be sustained," said Ms Ongwande, the country coordinator.

The hub has hosted various activities and programmes, ranging from art and craft workshops to trips to rural communities that allow participants to connect with craftspeople and natural resources. The activities were very well received by participants and helped to drive behavioural change from within.



Mindful Consumer 101 Workshop (2019)

In addition, Fash Rev Thailand speaks to a wide range of audiences, including individuals, especially younger generations, fashion influencers, brand owners, social entrepreneurs, manufacturers, experts and NGOs. In the near future, it aims to be a centre of sustainable fashion that connects various stakeholders with one another; for example, matching ethical fashion brands and social enterprises with conscious consumers.



Hub Members:

Fashion Revolution Thailand consists of ten members, mostly women, aged between 20 and 40 years old who live in Bangkok. While the first two members, Ms Ongwandee and Ms Kodaka, are experts in the field of fashion and textile, the rest of the team have different backgrounds, such as finance, communication and marketing. Interestingly, most of them used to take part in the hub's activities either as participants or volunteers before becoming dedicated members.

FashRev Thailand is a passion-driven and a volunteer-based hub. The members would meet once a month to plan an upcoming activity together. They each have their own area of expertise. However, they all support one another, especially when organising activities and events.



Fashion Revolution Expedition #1:
FolkCharm Journey (2020)

Hub Purposes:

- Raise public awareness on the negative impacts of fast fashion.
- Inspire consumers and manufacturers to change their behaviour towards more sustainable models and be more accountable for their actions.
- Promote mindful consumption as a new social norm.
- Act as a connector, promoter and educator that plays a role in standardising sustainable and conscious consumption.

Hub Activities and Programmes

The main event of the year for the Fashion Revolution movement around the world is “Fashion Revolution Week”, which takes place annually in the week of 24 April, the date when Rana Plaza collapsed in 2013. This event was first organised in Thailand in 2018. Since then, the hub has been organising many events, which communicate to a wide variety of audiences, ranging from those with an interest in the issue but no prior experience to experts in the industry.

Although several of the events were inspired by the guide “How to Host an Event: Your guide to getting involved in Fashion Revolution Week 2021¹⁸” published by Fashion Revolution Global, the hub has had to adapt the guidelines to the local context. As a result, the hub has designed its own activities that are unique to the nature, behaviours and practices of Thai participants, and focuses on experience-based learning to drive sustainable behavioural change, such as mindfulness workshops and expeditions to local communities. In addition, it works with influencers and celebrities to spread the word wider through social media, which enables the hub to be known among younger generations.



Participants drop off their clothes with staff in exchange for buying credit.

1. Clothes Swap

Clothes Swaps are one of the flagship activities that take place in most Fashion Revolution country chapters. It has been hosted in Thailand more than four times since 2019. The event aims to raise public awareness, attract new audiences and engage them in taking action on reducing clothing waste.

The steps are simple. Participants have to bring at least one item of clothing, accessories, pieces of jewellery and footwear that are clean, ready to use and in good condition, regardless of shapes and sizes. Then, they browse, and try on and select items that were brought by others. The numbers of new-to-them items depends on the number of items brought in and the item's recommended retail price. Each piece of clothing put on the racks would have a label called the "clothes passport", which provides information on the item, such as materials used and weight. This information allows the hub members to calculate the amount of water, energy and carbon footprint reduced by each action. As a part of the event, the hub also displays a small information board that explains the impact of fast fashion, as well as memorable quotes,



A special talk by four influencers on conscious fashion consumption



A set of infographics explains how the clothes swap works: step 1 - sort; step 2 - drop; step 3 - swap; step 4 - check out.

such as "I swapped my ~~clothes~~ mindset" and "buy less, choose well, make it last", that trigger participants to stop and think. It also features music, free snacks, and talks by conscious fashion influencers.

Clothes Swap is a straightforward event but has a great impact. One of the hub members felt the event attracted many participants as it did not require them to change their consumption behaviour. It also allowed them to take action on reducing clothing waste right away, without having to be informed or be educated in advance. The event can be perceived as an alternative way to extend the life of clothes, while reducing the purchase of new ones. In addition, it changed the perception of most Thai people towards second-hand clothes, from dirty and stinky products that might belong to dead people, to stylish clothes that once belonged to someone in this crowd. It was also a fun and enjoyable experience for the participants as they had the opportunity to try on various items

2. Fashion Revolution Expedition #1: FolkCharm Journey

In 2020, Fashion Revolution Thailand hosted a three-day trip to Loei Province in the North of Thailand in partnership with FolkCharm, a natural cotton fashion brand that utilizes ethical production processes from start to finish. The trip touched upon three main areas: (1) farm-to-fabric, (2) fair fashion, and (3) mindful living. It aimed to provide a better understanding of how natural products are made, draw attention to the people behind each handicraft, and connect urban people with rural ways of life through experience-based learning.

During the three days, from 28 February to 1 March 2020, the participants stayed within the rural community who produce the textile products for FolkCharm, took part in the entire process of making cotton from fluff to fabric by hand (e.g. cotton picking, natural dyeing, weaving), enjoyed homemade tasty local food, and connected with nature. There were also a



Participants enjoying a home-made dinner with the rural community during the field trip organised by FashRev Thailand and hosted by FolkCharm Co., Ltd.



Participants experience picking cotton by hands during the field trip to a textile community organised by FashRev Thailand in collaboration with FolkCharm Co., Ltd.

series of discussions with community leaders, the owner of FolkCharm, and among participants themselves. As a result, participants were able to connect with the community and become more self-aware. The trip also triggered them to think more about sustainable living and become aware of the negative impacts of their consumption behaviour and the fast fashion industry.

In addition, Ms Ongwandee noted that although there were only 15 people who joined the trip, which is much fewer than the number of participants who attended the other Fash Rev Thailand events (e.g. talks and clothes swaps), the learning was deeply rooted in them. She added that it was a wake-up call for them to make changes in order to create a more sustainable urban way of life.

Right: The craftswomen discuss textiles with Ms Passawee T. Kodaka, the founder of FolkCharm Co., Ltd..



“

I really like the trip. It allowed me to be another version of myself. I got to connect with the community. I was happy and the food was tasty.

Usually, I live in an urban area, which is highly connected and accessible. But when I was there, I had the chance to connect with other issues that were happening at the same time. Then, I asked myself “What are the causes of repeated wildfire incidents in the province?” and “Is what I am doing in my daily life somehow or somehow contributing to the incident?”. I think it made me more conscious about my actions and how I live my life.”

- one of the participants

FASHION
REVOLUTION

×

folk
Ethical · Natural

3. The Panel Discussion: Shifting Mindsets



The panel discussion “Shifting Mindsets” was a main event in the 2nd Fashion Revolution Week in 2019. It was sponsored by WeWork Bangkok, Global Shaper Bangkok and the restaurant Broccoli Revolution. The event aimed to address the importance of sustainable and ethical fashion and the concept of circular economy as alternatives to fast fashion and preferable solutions for the future of the industry. There were two sessions on two different but related topics: “Circular Fashion” and “Ethical Fashion”.

The former was joined by a panel of experts, Ms Janet Salem from UNEP, and local entrepreneurs from three sustainable fashion brands who put a great emphasis on sustainable fashion and circular economy, namely Moreloop, Madmatter and SSAP. They discussed what circular economy means, gave examples of circular economy

The Ethical Fashion panel, one of the two sessions in the panel discussion on “Shifting Mindsets” held in 2019

business models, and shared their experiences of working in this field. The latter focused on fair fashion, in particular fair employment and women empowerment. It was joined by five panelists from global and local organisations, as well as individuals who have been working extensively in the field, including representatives from the World Fair Trade Organisation Asia, Akamae (an ethical fashion brand), Go Went Gone (a group of artists who aim to create social impact through art), Dr Patcharawee Tunprawat from the British Council Thailand, and local female artist Ms Kawita Vatanajyankur who has created outstanding art pieces depicting the story of labour and women’s rights.

The event was a gathering of people in the fashion industry. It was attended by more than 100 participants from different organisations and sectors, such as designers, entrepreneurs, consultants and activists. The two discussions were very fruitful, at times intense yet enjoyable, and filled the audiences with inspiration and positive energy. More importantly, the event became a platform that connected people in the industry together. Ms Ongwandee noted that many participants who met at the event continued to collaborate with one another. She added that she also received good feedback from both the panelists and audiences.

“

They told me that they were very happy since they have not had a platform to share their experiences.

I felt that I have empowered everyone involved. One of the designers who attended the event told me that she has learned a lot. It triggered her to think about what she could do for her brand.”

- Ms Kamonnart Ongwandee,
the country coordinator



The Circular Fashion panel, one of the two sessions in the panel discussion on “Shifting Mindsets” held in 2019



Mr Amorpol Huvanandana (left), the founder of Moreloop, a sustainable fashion brand, explains his products and services to participants.



A showcase of sustainable fashion brands at Fashion Revolution Week

4. Mindful Consumer 101 Workshop



Each participant creates a collage to represent oneself during the Mindfulness 101 Workshop.

A Mindful Consumer 101 Workshop is a three-hour workshop that allows participants to explore their inner-self and their consumption behaviour through art. It was organised in partnership with the Art of Living 101 as a part of a Wellness Day at The Commons Thonglor in 2019. There were two repeated sessions, which attracted approximately 30 participants in total.

The event is unique to FashRev Thailand. Ms Ongwandee came up with the idea after hosting many activities, such as talks and documentary screenings. She mentioned that she started to realise that she has been imposing information and knowledge on the participants, instead of letting them acknowledge and learn by themselves, which would be a more locally effective and sustainable approach to behavioural change. This led her to initiate this experience-based learning workshop.

The workshop involves the creation of collage to represent “oneself”. By using visual representation as a communication method in

a calm setting, participants were able to get to know themselves in a way that they never had before. Another method used during the workshop is deep listening, which allows participants to listen to oneself and others. Consequently, the participants were able to connect how they dress with their identity and their inner-self.

“

While we were working on our collage, one of the tasks was to select visuals that “represent ourselves”. I think this practice could be applied to every aspect in our daily life: when we select what we would like to consume, or who we would like to be a part of our lives. It made us more mindful of our consumption. At the end of the day, it all starts with being aware of oneself.”

- one of the workshop participants

As a result of the workshop, most participants realised that they had to find a balance between external and internal drive. While the former, the materialistic world we are living in, keeps telling us to continue consuming in order to fill in what is missing, the other tells us to stop, be ourselves, and express who we truly are.

Hub Impact on Targeted Issues

1. Becoming a platform for younger generations interested in sustainable fashion

Fashion Revolution Thailand is one of the first organisations to have spoken out on the environmental and social impacts of fast fashion by connecting these issues with mindful consumption. Interestingly, their approach and messages have caught the attention of young generations. They constitute the main audience groups who take part in the hub's activities and programmes, either as participants or volunteers. Some even joined the hub later as members. In addition, many young fashion influencers and celebrities support the hub's campaign voluntarily.



A workshop to explore the landscape and ecosystem of the fashion industry in Thailand (2019)

Nowadays, the hub has become a platform for the young generation who are interested in the issue to meet and share their ideas and experiences with others in the industry. More importantly, it provides opportunities for them to simply take action in various ways.

“

I was very excited when I first heard of the hub and its events on social media. I felt that it was the place for me since a hub that focuses on sustainable fashion did not exist before.”

- Ms Natkritta Narapornpipath, one of the participants who later became a hub member.



Making placards to urge the government to provide more funding to support Thai fashion brands and local communities (2020)

2. Creating public awareness on sustainable fashion, mindful consumption and circular economy

Since 2018, Fashion Revolution Thailand has been providing a better understanding about sustainable fashion and mindful consumption through various activities and programmes, such as documentary screenings, Mindful Consumer 101 workshops and a trip to a craft village.

Furthermore, it has created a community and network of those interested in the issues at hand and provided an effective space for them to meet, share and discuss. As a result, the public becomes more aware of these issues, and many of them are inspired to change their behaviour to more sustainable ways of life. They were also able to take action by participating in activities such as clothes swaps and an upcycling workshop.



Top: Ethical Fashion Forum & Film (2018)

Middle: A discussion after the screening of the documentary "River Blue" (2019)

Bottom: A t-shirt block printing and painting workshop to recreate old clothes with primary school children from international schools in Bangkok. The activity was a part of the "Eco Beasts Sustainability and Well Being Market" (2019).

3. Facilitating an ecosystem of sustainable fashion

Since 2018, Fashion Revolution Thailand has been communicating not only to consumers but also to other stakeholders in the fashion industry, including designers, brand owners, social entrepreneurs, fashion influencers, suppliers, manufacturers, experts and non-profit organisations. It has also acted as a mediator in connecting them together within a network of sustainable fashion, where they can share their experiences, collaboratively create new ideas, and find partners to work with.



The campaigns “Who made my clothes” and “I made your clothes” are attended by various people from different sectors. Top left – Ms Kamolned Ruengsri, a Thai actor; top right – Women who produce clothes for Folkcharm, an ethical fashion brand; bottom – workers at Apparel Creations Co., Ltd., a garment maker

In addition, the hub plays a role in fostering ethical fashion designers. Since Ms Ongwandee is also a guest lecturer in fashion and textile design at Chulalongkorn University, she has integrated the concept of sustainable fashion into her course. As a part of her course, students exhibit their works in one of the venues of Fashion Revolution Week. Thus, the students are able to meet and discuss with audiences who are concerned with these issues. Ms Ongwandee noticed that, in the first year, the students were put off as they did not understand the reason why they had to learn about such issues. However, their attitude has since changed following the exhibition. They became more engaged and most of them decided to work on topics that are related to sustainable fashion for their thesis.

Conclusion:

For almost three years, Fashion Revolution Thailand has been a platform for the young generation to make positive changes in society in the area they are interested in or passionate about. It demonstrates how a creative hub can bring global issues to a local context, and integrate them into the everyday life of consumers and into the practice of other stakeholders in the fashion industry. The hub has completely changed the way people think of fashion and consume it.

SOCIAL IMPACTS OF CREATIVE HUBS IN THAILAND



- Dinner Talk Nanyu Nanyu
Melayu Living

THREE CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL IMPACTS GENERATED BY CREATIVE HUBS IN THAILAND

1. Impact on people who directly engage with hub activities and programmes

1.1 Impact on those working for and with hubs: core members and partners

- a. Promoting self-fulfillment
- b. Establishing a sense of belonging, and developing group identity and pride
- c. Forming new relationships
- d. Developing a deep connection with the local community
- e. Increasing mutual understanding between people with different backgrounds
- f. Broadening one's horizon and outlook
- g. Acquiring knowledge, skills and traits that can be applied to their careers
- h. Prompting an enthusiasm for knowledge and lifelong learning

1.2 Impact on participants and volunteers

- a. Discovering oneself
- b. Increasing self-confidence and self-esteem
- c. Promoting cultural exchange and shifting perception toward people with different backgrounds
- d. Increasing understanding and tolerance of others
- e. Forming new relationships
- f. Cultivating life skills and improving cognitive ability
- g. Creating a safe space to voice their opinions
- h. Prompting eagerness for new knowledge and initiating personal projects

2. Impact on the local community and locality

2.1 Impact on local communities

- a. Creating public awareness and engagement in preserving local art and culture
- b. Increasing sense of pride in local assets and their province
- c. Redefine the perception of younger generations towards local art and craft
- d. Increasing involvement in public activity
- e. Empowering the local community and enhancing their capacity
- f. Improving health and well-being among the elderly
- g. Increasing number of young adults returning to their hometown

2.2 Impact on the area where each creative hub is located

- a. Catalysing and regenerating the area
- b. Promoting local tourism
- c. Improving the local economy
- d. Developing local branding

3. Impact on targeted issues (mentioned as a part of each hub profile)

Depending on the purposes of each hub.

Left: The photography exhibition entitled "Nayu Nayu" by a local photographer Soray Deng and hosted by Melayu Living (2017).

1. IMPACT ON PEOPLE WHO DIRECTLY ENGAGE WITH HUB ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES

1.1 Impact on those working for and with hubs: core members and partners

a. Promoting self-fulfillment



Working for and with creative hubs allows core members to fulfil their hopes and dreams, since these hubs provide them with opportunities to do things they could not do on their own.

The founder of **Music Sharing**, Ms Siriporn Pomwong, mentioned that founding the hub allowed her to pursue her dream as she always had a strong passion for music since she was

Fashion Revolution Expedition #1:
FolkCharm Journey (2020)

young, despite her background as a nurse. As for Mr Nattapol Plapho, another hub member who is a trained musician, he explained that teaching music to underprivileged children in slums fulfils him in a way he had never felt in his past work

experiences. *“In the beginning I used to dream to be able to play all kinds of instruments and perform a wide range of musical styles in order to earn a lot of money. After performing for a while, it was not as fun as before. But when I am here [at the Rong Moo community], I am very happy and having more fun than teaching a rich kid,”* said Mr Plapho, one of the hub members.

Fashion Revolution Thailand was one of the first organisations to communicate the negative impacts of fast fashion on society and the environment, and promote mindful consumption in the country. From being an

issue that no one talked about in 2018, today the sustainable fashion movement is widely joined by the public and various stakeholders in the fashion industry. Ms Kamonnart Ongwandee, the country coordinator, mentioned that she was extremely happy and an empty part of her was filled. *“We started to talk about another side of fashion and connected it with who the person is. We were able to convey the delicate and artistic process of textile making and enabled the public to comprehend another side of fashion, the side that we see and experience. This made me feel fulfilled,”* said Ms Ongwandee, the country coordinator of Fashion Revolution Thailand.

b. Establishing a sense of belonging, and developing group identity and pride

The creative hub often attracts like-minded people or those who share similar interests. When they work together on the issue they are passionate about, the bonds between them are developed and strengthened. They become a part of a group, and as a group develops a distinctive hub identity, it in turn attracts more people.

One of the designers who owns a ceramic studio in Phrae mentioned that joining **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network** allowed him to meet and work with many other designers who are interested in crafts.



Local creatives and artisans who took part in the first Phrae Craft Festival (2017)

“

Being a part of this group makes me feel that there are people who always listen to me and tend to be interested in my project.”

*- Mr Touchapong Pattanasarin,
a founder of Kummee Studio,
Ceramics pottery and a LLMP member.*

As for **Fashion Revolution Thailand**, although the hub was recently formed, several hub members mentioned that they were proud of being a part of a hub with a unique characteristic, especially in terms of sustainability. Unlike existing eco-conscious groups that are perceived as being serious and extreme, the hub has created a community of conscious customers that is in trend, fashionable and cool to be a part of. *“We have made it clear that people do not have to choose between being sustainable and being themselves. It is actually the same thing. This message attracted a number of people because they perceive that we are being progressive. Also, others who were a part of the crowd became early adopters of the creative community, which makes it even more interesting. Thus, a distinct tribe has been created. We found our own tribe,”* said Ms Kamonnart Ongwandee, the country coordinator of Fashion Revolution Thailand.



Fashion Revolution Week (2019)

In addition, a creative hub also enables those from other areas to develop a bond and connect with the area and local communities through organising and participating in a series of activities and programmes. One of the **Songkhla Heritage Trust**'s members who is from another province mentioned that although the work of the hub mainly concentrates on the development of Songkhla Old Town area, he has never felt like an outcast. Instead, the fact that he has been working with the hub since the Old Town area was still a red-light district rife with crimes and illegal drugs allowed him to understand the nature of Songkhla people and their differences, which in turn fostered a deep connection and created a sense of belonging as if he were one of them.

“

When we understand the differences, we start to blend in with the society that once used to be unfamiliar,”

*- Mr Khomsan Oynasuan,
an employee of Chevron Thailand
Exploration and Production, Ltd.
and a hub member*

c. Forming new relationships



A number of hub members mentioned that they have made many new friends and become very close with other hub members, partners and volunteers through years of working together.

The core members of **Fashion Revolution Thailand** noted that they have developed deep connections among the team since most of them have similar lifestyles and share a common concern that others may not be able to fully comprehend.

One of the speakers, Mr Pitupong Chaowakul, an architect and the founder of Supermachine Studio, joins the members of Melayu Living on a bike trip to various fascinating places in Pattani Province (2016).

Furthermore, the Hub Manager of **Melayu Living**, Mr Rachit Radenahmad, mentioned that he has got to know many interesting people he might not have met otherwise. While some of them collaborate with the hub on a project-by-project basis, some have since become a hub member or advocate. In many cases, these start as work related relationships that later become more personal. As for guest speakers, hub members still stay in touch with many of them, and visit their offices when they are in Bangkok.

d. Developing a deep connection with the local community



Many creative hubs have been working closely with the local community and engaging them in their activities and programmes. Consequently, the bond between them has developed and strengthened.

Members of Music Sharing and volunteers visit homes in the Khlong Toei community to distribute “play kits” for different age groups (blue bag) to children and talk to their parents about child development (2020).

Despite resistance in the beginning, the members of **Music Sharing** have been consistently visiting the area and getting to know everyone in the Rong Moo community. They have been giving music lessons to underprivileged children twice a week for more than five years until the community have seen improvements in the children and acknowledged positive changes that resulted from the hub’s work. Since then, the community have become advocates for the hub and been supporting all kinds of activities. The hub members are also invited to take part in the decision-making process of various community matters. They are given the opportunity to propose and initiate

ideas regarding community management as if they were a part of the community committee. Furthermore, the local children perceive the hub members as their role models. They always want to be around them and follow their lead.

Similarly, **Melayu Living** has started to build a relationship with the local community since they moved into the space at the end of 2016. From newcomers with different backgrounds, they later become a part of the community. Mr Radenahmad, the manager of the hub, mentioned that it took the hub members quite some time to prove themselves and develop mutual trust with the local community. The



major turning point was when the hub had to organise 'Pattani Decoded'. Since the event would be taking place in the neighbourhood for four consecutive days, the hub members had to thoroughly discuss the matter with the local community. *"When we organised Pattani Decoded, we talked with the local community and asked for their support. Without their support, the event would be over before it even began. Those who knew us said 'yes' right away. That was a relief. Some of them also let us use their spaces. They even helped us to negotiate with the owner of the large house in the middle of the road that had never been open to the public before,"* said Mr Radenahmad, the Hub Manager of Melayu Living.

The walking tour through the Old Town district of Pattani Province, called "Ar Rom Dee" (meaning "in a good mood"), visits many old houses in the neighbourhood and counts several locals among its tour guides (2017).

“

Prior to this event, although we have never had any disagreement, there were no real connection between us. But when they started helping us, I knew that we were truly connected with them."

*- Mr Rachit Radenahmad,
the Manager of Melayu Living*

e. Increasing mutual understanding between people with different backgrounds

The creative hub often consists of members from diverse backgrounds or requires its members to work with various stakeholders from different sectors. As a result, the members have learned to accept differences and empathise with others.

Mr Chaidan Satian, one of the core members of the **Songkhla Heritage Trust** and a senior architect at Songkhla City Municipality, mentioned that by frequently engaging and discussing with the local community and other public organisations about the development of the district, he is able to better understand their situations and work with them more effectively.

Some hub members added that they have learned to put themselves in other people's shoes and listen to their reasons before forming opinions, which lead to an acceptance of other people's decisions. *"There was one time, an elderly put a chair in front of her house to prevent others from parking there. When we went to talk to her, she explained that while tourists were walking, shopping and eating, the drivers of the tourist vans would leave the engine running and a large amount of exhaust would blow into her house. And this happens quite often, in particular when you live very close to tourist attractions. If we had not had the chance to ask, we would have made the wrong judgment about her,"* said Dr Suwannachart, one of the hub members.



Run2gether Udon Thani (2017 - present)

In the case of **Ma:D Esan**, the Run2gether Udon Thani event, which partnered disabled runners with non-disabled guides, required the hub members to work closely with disabled people and the organisations that support them. This has led to a change in their personal preconceived views towards this group of people. *"I used to think of disabled people as marginal people. But when I had the chance to organise the Run2gether Udon Thani event, I met them and talked to teachers who took care of children with disabilities. That was when I realised that although we were living in the same province, I felt as if we were extremely far from one another. However, this event allowed me to talk to them and get to know them better,"* said Ms Patawan Yuthagasemson, one of the co-founders of Ma:D Esan.

f. Broadening one's horizon and outlook

Dealing with unfamiliar and complex issues often requires members of creative hubs to develop new ways of working, which in turn broadens their horizon or changes their point of view.

The fact that **Music Sharing** mainly focuses its attention on improving the quality of life of children and others living in slums has demanded that its members, who are not from the area, immerse themselves in the community. As a result, they have slowly come to understand the nature and needs of underprivileged children as well as comprehend the complexity of social and economic problems in the area. This understanding has allowed them to adjust the way they work with the children and come up with new projects that are well received by the community, and at the same time lead to an improvement in their lives.



As for **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network**, it has been working on empowering local citizens and engaging them in improving various aspects of Phrae Province for almost twenty years. Mr Wuttikrai Phathong, one of the co-founders of the hub, noted that he has connected with experts and become a part of various networks working on similar issues (e.g. Bangkok Forum, ICCROM conservation network, SEAMEO SPAFA heritage practitioners). Consequently, he has visited different groups and their neighbourhoods as case studies, taken part in meetings and learned various methods and tools (e.g. dialogue process) to engage citizens in taking action, which were completely new to him at the time.

Mr Shinnaworn Chompupan, one of the hub members, added that working with the hub enables him to have a better understanding of how he can play a role as a mediator who connects locals and the government to create a better society. *“After a while, I became aware that we do not need to rely entirely on the government to make changes. Any citizen, like I am, can also facilitate a project. Nowadays, Thailand is facing a number of challenges. As one of the citizens, I think we all need to take action and then later the government would come to support. Like what has happened with Kad Kong Kao,”* said Mr Chompupan, one of the hub members.

An opinion board at the Kad Kong Kao market in its early days, which allowed visitors to express their thoughts, give comments and share suggestions on how to improve the market (2010)

Another hub member, who spent half of his life in Bangkok before returning to his hometown, applied what he has learned from the hub to the community where he lives. He noted that LLMP has triggered him to genuinely comprehend not only what it means by public participation, but also how to do it. *"I live in Baan Thung Suai in Chohae District. Earlier, there was no such thing as public participation. But when I started to work with LLMP, I learned how to conduct a brainstorming session to create a mapping. So, when the people in our community came to me and my father for advice, we engaged them in the mapping process to come up with ideas how we could best utilise the community fund and solve existing problems. They had to mark where each family lives on to the map, label what each of them does for a living, and select what can be improved or developed to create more value, such as locally weaving baskets and quilts,"* said Mr Thitipong Wongsane, one of the hub members.

“

After a while, I became aware that we do not need to rely entirely on the government to make changes. Any citizen, like I am, can also facilitate a project."

*- Mr Shinnaworn Chompupan,
one of the core members of LLMP*



The event "Melayurama x DS Young Filmmaker" shows ten short films made by ten groups of local youths who took part in the Deep South Young Filmmaker workshop (2020).

In addition, those who do not have backgrounds in art and design fields are often inspired by the ways that creative hub works. One of the partners of **Melayu Living**, who has a background in social science, mentioned specifically that he was inspired by the use of creativity and creative media to address social issues. Furthermore, another member who works in human development mentioned that working with the hub gave him an opportunity to look at the same issue from different perspectives,

which totally changed the way he works. *“I did not have a background in any creative field. Therefore, working with Melayu Living allows me to see different aspects and hear people talk about things other than my field. The hub’s way of working might be perceived by my friends, who work in the development field, as not being critical or serious enough. But I think it is action-oriented and very practical,”* said Mr Hadi Wijaya, one of the hub members.

g. Acquiring knowledge, skills and traits that can be applied to their careers

From engaging with creative hubs, many hub members and partners have acquired new knowledge and useful skills, as well as developed traits, that are applicable to their work.

One of the members of the **Songkhla Heritage Trust** who has a full-time career in a related field mentioned that she has developed vital soft skills, such as negotiation, motivation and persuasion, from others with more experience, and picked up their exceptional techniques. Furthermore, after attending many hub meetings and working collaboratively with various stakeholders, she has become competent in adjusting herself to work successfully with different groups of people in different conditions with many limitations. To her, it is a more effective and immersive way of learning in comparison to participating in a typical training workshop.



The workshop “Local Designer” aims to improve the design capacity of locals. It is hosted by Songkhla Heritage Co., Ltd. in collaboration with designers in Songkhla Province (2020).

Ms Duangjai Nanthawong, a community architect and the founder of Songkhla Heritage Co., Ltd., added that she has changed quite a lot since she has been engaging with the hub, from being a quiet person who liked to work alone to being more outgoing. She has gained more confidence in interacting with people, which is a useful trait especially when working as a community architect.

h. Prompting an enthusiasm for knowledge and lifelong learning

Working for creative hubs often inspires hub members to gain more knowledge regarding the issue that the hub is tackling, especially when working in an area that is not their expertise.

With one of the aims being to lead Songkhla Province towards becoming a UNESCO World Heritage site, the **Songkhla Heritage Trust** has engaged a number of experts from related fields in researching, reviewing and disseminating local history. Mr Chaidan Satian, one of the core members of the hub, mentioned that it has encouraged him to read more about local history. *“I used to know little stories about the history of Songkhla, but now I know a lot more. After I have learned that the province has long been established since the Ayutthaya period. I am eager to read more about it as it has left its mark throughout history. I also want to be connected with where I live,”* said Mr Satian.



A talk on the history of Songkhla during the city festival (2012)



Practical sessions promoting alternative future careers for the children in the Khlong Toei community (2021)

As for **Music Sharing**, its members regularly acquire knowledge regarding child psychology and development in order to better engage with underprivileged children. *“We try to find new ways and methods and acquire new knowledge and skills. For example, we would read about child development theories and life skills, and integrate what we have read with our understanding of the local children. We try to discuss more about these things together. It gives us more confidence when we have theoretical knowledge to support us, especially when we are faced with problems. It gives us a framework when we have to make decisions, unlike before when we often based our reasoning on our gut feelings,”* said Ms Pomwong, the hub’s founder.

One of the hub members also mentioned that he would like to further his studies in child education since the hub’s upcoming project is to design a new curriculum that is suitable for children living in slums. In addition, the member without musical skills added that he would like to learn and practice music so that he can support others in the team.

1.2 Impact on participants and volunteers

a. Discovering oneself

The creative hub provides an opportunity for participants to try and take part in something different in order to find out what they like, passionate about, or good at.

Mr Nataphol Sathanat, a **Music Sharing** member, mentioned that taking part in the hub activities as a volunteer when he was a high school student made him realise that he enjoyed spending time with children in slums. He would like to help them break away from the vicious cycle and have a better quality of life. This inspired him to study the social science profession and later join the hub as one of the full-time core members.



A workshop with volunteer music teachers to train and prepare them for working with children in different areas (2020)



Members of Ma:D Esan and volunteers participates in making temporary toilets to donate to flood victims in Ubon Ratchathani, another province in the northeastern region of Thailand (2019).

Ms Piyamon Jaemwutthipreecha, one of the participants of **Ma:D Esan** with a background in communications, mentioned that joining several Ma:D activities allowed her to recognise how she can apply her expertise in social projects to help those in need. *“When I met Ma:D, I started to see a few missing pieces. I thought the whole picture was almost complete and my skill in communication could help. Sometimes people are willing to support but they just have not heard about the project,”* said Ms Jaemwutthipreecha. Furthermore, she also added that Mr Pichai Uamturapojn, a hub core member, was the first person to acknowledge her ability and encouraged her to write something that would help improve the city.

It is noteworthy to add that this group of people often continue to work in related areas or later join the hub as members.

b. Increasing self-confidence and self-esteem

The creative hub occasionally encourages participants to play a new role and repeatedly practice it in a safe space, which in turn boosts their self-confidence.

An introvert participant of **Ma:D Esan** explained that she has gained more self-confidence after joining a “Book Club” event as a Book Teller, the person designated to lead the discussion on his/her selected book. She started to feel more comfortable when speaking in public. Also, the fact that Mr Pichai Uamturapojn, a hub’s founder, always introduces her to new people allows her to become more relaxed when meeting strangers and feel more comfortable to talk to them.

“

“Before, I was an introverted person. I think it was because of the people that I was surrounded with. I felt that I was judged by my group of friends therefore I rarely expressed my opinions. I have never had a space in which I can question and freely express myself. But at Ma:D Esan, it is that kind of space. So, I am more confident to speak out,”

*- Ms Phanyaporn Jaemwutthipreecha,
one of the participants of Ma:D Esan*



The Book Club event initiated by Ma:D Esan (2016-2019)

As for **Music Sharing**, several adults who are involved in the hub’s activities also have the chance to perform various unfamiliar tasks such as organising an event and public speaking. Despite a little anxiety felt at the beginning, they were given many chances to practice until they owned those skills and felt confident. “I once had to support the hub’s work by being a coordinator. My role involved speaking to audiences via a public address system. At the beginning I was afraid, but now I am getting better at it. I feel more confident. I am able to manage and organise events and I have built my courage to do so,” said one member of the community committee.

Nowadays, many locals are able to organise events by themselves. One of the local people mentioned that even though she has increased her capacities and acquired leadership skills, she would still engage with the hub to continuously improve herself and boost her self-confidence.

In addition, underprivileged children who have taken music lessons from **Music Sharing** acquire music skills that can help them make a living, which in turn increases their self-esteem. One of the parents of a 17 year old teenager who used to participate in the music class when he was young noticed that her son has gained more confidence after earning money and supporting himself from performing music at local events.



Mini Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival in 2018

c. Promoting cultural exchange and shifting perceptions towards people from different backgrounds



The creative hub plays an important role in increasing social interaction between people with different backgrounds, which challenges their preconceived ideas and leads to a better understanding among them.

A discussion after the walking tour in the Old Town district of Pattani Province, a part of the "Ar Rom Dee" (meaning "in a good mood") event (2017)

Melayu Living is a good example. Despite its name, its events that feature the use of creativity and creative mediums speak to all kinds of audiences regardless of their religion. Furthermore, the friendly and relaxed atmosphere encourages them to make new friends and participate in genuine discussions, which in turn influences them to change their prejudice. For instance, the event “Ar Rom Dee” (meaning “in a good mood”), a walking tour in the Old Town district of Pattani Province, aims to tell the rich history of how Thai, Chinese, and Malay people used to live together in harmony, and to inspire participants to discover the possible future of the district through talks, group discussions and exhibitions.

In terms of promoting cultural exchange, **Music Sharing** has been building a network of those who are interested in using music to improve the quality of life of children across Thailand, including marginalised and ethnic groups. As a result, the children in the network have a chance to meet each other, experience cultural differences, and become friends through music. “Whenever I participated in music camp, there was always one person in my group who was a Karen. I felt “wow”, when I got to be friends with him. We talked non-stop about music because we both played an instrument. Besides that, we also exchanged about things in our daily life,” said one of the participants of Music Sharing.



“

Through activities in a series of music camps, I have met many people across the country. This experience of going outside of the Khlong Toei community has broadened my horizon. I now know that we can be friends with anyone from anywhere, without being limited to just those in the community.”

- one of the participants of Music Sharing

Various activities at the Youth Music Sharing camp, which aims to connect youths within the Music Sharing network (2019)

d. Increasing understanding and tolerance of others

The activities and programmes of creative hubs are often participated by a wide range of audiences. The participants, therefore, are able to exchange their opinions and interact with diverse groups of people, which lead to a better understanding and tolerance of others.

One of the participants of **Ma:D Esan** mentioned that after attending several events she has become more tolerant and open-minded. Since the events often feature a discussion and an expression of personal opinions, she has learned to listen and better understand the reasoning of others. Another participant also added that he felt more connected with diverse groups of people. *“I have met a wide variety of people, including those who are from urban areas, rural areas, and also other cities. Sometimes they are talking about the same thing, but they have different ways of thinking and focus on different aspects. For instance, urban people usually like convenience and want to modernise everything, while those who live in rural areas would like to develop only parts of it and preserve some of their traditions,”* said one of the participants.



The 10/10 event, a series of ten talks by ten social entrepreneurs (2016)

e. Forming new relationships

Attending the hubs' events allows participants to meet like-minded people or those who share common interests.

Many from the younger generations who recently returned to their hometown noted that **Ma:D Esan** has reintroduced them to the city of Udon Thani, and connected them with other people who are interested in tackling social issues or currently working on social projects. Some of them even decided to form a group to work in this area. *"I used to live here [in Udon Thani] when I was a child for seven years, before I left to study in other provinces. When I returned, I knew no one. However, the reason I attended Ma:D's events was not to make new friends but to acquire knowledge about social enterprise, because I was interested in it. But since then, I have got to know many people and also be friends with them, in particular those who are working in this area,"* Mr Settapol Parinyapol Polset, one of the participants.



A networking session after the event
"Tree for Good Business" (2020)

Another participant added that Ma:D Esan has connected her with a new community consisting of individuals with similar personalities and attitudes, which subsequently led to the forming of new friendships. *"I always felt that I did not belong to any group because my mindset was different from the majority. But at Ma:D Esan I have got to meet people who think like me. Of course, not exactly the same, but at least we are interested in the same issue. It is a group of friends who would listen to me and try to comprehend,"* said one of the participants.

Moreover, some participants and volunteers form bonds with hub members. One of the student volunteers of 'Pattani Decoded', a design festival organised by **Melayu Living**, mentioned that she felt connected with the hub members, who are much older than she is, since all of them are local people and share a common interest in art. Since the event, she and her friends have been regularly participating in the hub's events and help out whenever they can.

Pattani Decoded volunteers (2019)

f. Cultivating life skills and improving cognitive ability

Taking part in activities and programmes organised by creative hubs allows participants to develop life skills and their cognitive ability.

Music Sharing is an experience-based learning platform that equips underprivileged children in slums with the life skills and cognitive development that are necessary for the future. By attending the weekly music lessons and organising the Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival, the children are able to develop various traits and qualities such as being on time, taking responsibility for tasks to which they were assigned, working in teams, and reflecting on their actions.



Music classes are held every Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at the Rong Moo community in Bangkok's Khlong Toei slum area.

g. Creating a safe space to voice their opinions

The creative hub and its events are often perceived as a safe space for everyone to express themselves.

Ma:D Esan, for example, is a platform for anyone who is interested in doing good for society to speak out. One of the participants mentioned that the hub provides opportunities for and creates the right atmosphere to encourage participants to express themselves, but still within certain boundaries.



Sometimes the discussion turns extremely intense, but people in the group always try to ease it off. This is good because it means that everyone has a chance to share even though they have different opinions. Clearly, the participants are from different sectors and various organisations. Some think this way while others may not agree. But Ma:D Esan is able to manage and balance the atmosphere of the discussion until the end without a fight,”

*- Mr Settapol Parinyapol Polset,
one of the participants*

h. Prompting eagerness for new knowledge and initiating personal projects

After taking part in the hub's events or talking to hub members, many participants were inspired and continued to explore the issue further.

Mr Sangad Rattanachomsakul, or Kru Jack, is one such example. Despite his background in music, he always has had an interest in history, especially Christianity in Phrae Province. In 2012, during an event organised by **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network** at Phrae Christian Hospital, Mr Rattanachomsakul mentioned that he was moved by the talk about the role of missionaries in the history of the province, which inspired him to do further research on the topic.



The Charoen Rat School History Hall where one can learn about the history of missionary work in northern Thailand

“During the talk, I took note about the work of missionaries, and later started to gather more information about the topic online. I read blogs about missionaries, about the house, and started to save that information. Later, I went to the National Archives of Thailand in Bangkok and spent 4-5 days there to search for more details. I also visited Chiang Mai to look for other related information,” said Mr Rattanachomsakul.

Since the event, Mr Rattanachomsakul, a schoolteacher, has been working with the community and Phrae Christian Hospital in initiating a number of activities to raise awareness on the importance of the work of missionaries as well as the preservation of their house. He has engaged students as local guides for a walking tour of the missionary house, and trained them in historical knowledge. Nowadays, he is the president of the Charoen Rat School History Hall, a place of great significance in the North of Thailand, which collects and exhibits documents and artefacts that tell the story of the work of missionaries in the area.

Another example is one of the participants of **Ma:D Esan**, Ms Piyamon Jaemwutthipreecha. She noted that Mr Pichai Uamturapojn, a hub core member, always urges her to join various meetings and events related to social innovation and social enterprise, which in turn inspired her to form a group who works on this issue. *“Without him, I would not have joined those events because I already had a lot to do. But when I tagged along with him, I realised that there is much more to learn. I felt that I was able to go across a border where I had long been stuck,”* said Ms Jaemwutthipreecha.

2. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND LOCALITY

2.1 Impact on local communities

a. Creating public awareness and engagement in preserving local art and culture



The creative hub concentrates on bringing the value of previously overlooked local assets to the fore, promoting appreciation in local art, culture and history through a wide range of interventions, which generate public awareness and engagement in preservation.

For almost twenty years, **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network** has been conducting extensive work on gathering local history, preserving historical buildings, as well as promoting local art and craft. Its series of talks and four publications

The Phrae bike sightseeing tour visits many outstanding historical buildings to learn about the province's history and architectural heritage (2011).

about Phrae history and cultural heritage have influenced many local people as well as the local government to take more of an interest in the topic. In addition, the Phrae sightseeing tour and the Phrae Architectural Heritage Preservation Club, which were initiated by the members of the hub, have been raising awareness on the importance of historical architecture in the area and engaged locals in its preservation.

In terms of local art and craft, Mr Wutthikai Phathong, the founder of LLMP, has played an important role in reintroducing the cultivation of indigo in Phrae, forming a group of local craftspeople and designers, as well as adding Phrae indigo to the Geographical Indication (GI) list. Nowadays, the use of indigo products has become a part of the locals' everyday life. Furthermore, "Phrae Craft", an annual craft festival, has been participated by a number of local designers and attracted a number of people from across the country.



Booths featuring works by local creatives and artisans at the Phrae Craft Festival (2019)

As for the **Songkhla Heritage Trust**, it has demonstrated how cultural heritage can be seamlessly interwoven with a contemporary lifestyle, which has inspired locals to follow its footsteps. It has started several adaptive reuse and renovation projects, and influenced the City Municipality to enforce building regulations to

preserve the original appearance of existing buildings. Furthermore, it regularly identifies and communicates the shared benefits of cultural heritage tourism to local property owners and entrepreneurs.



The Baan Nakorn Nai Museum in Songkhla, an example of local adaptive reuse initiatives inspired by the work of the Songkhla Heritage Trust

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Nowadays, we can see that many abandoned buildings, both houses and shops, are being restored and renovated. When they are being used, they come back to life. There are obviously an increasing number of these buildings, which are very beautiful. Furthermore, religious places, such as temples and shrines, are being restored by the local community without waiting for the municipality to take action. The community formed themselves into a group and proposed ideas on how to preserve them. I think the awareness in local art and culture preservation resulted from their appreciation. If they did not perceive their value, they would not look after them.”

- Ms Duangjai Nanthawong,
founder of Songkhla Heritage Co., Ltd., and
a member of the Songkhla Heritage Trust

Today, many locals have started to renovate their old buildings and are turning them into commercial spaces that highlight local art, culture and history. One of the interesting examples is “Baan Nakorn Nai”, an old renovated Sino-Portuguese house that has been turned into a local museum, which exhibits private antique collections and historical pictures. There are several adaptive reuse local galleries such as A.E.Y Space and Titan Project Space. In addition, the local community formed a small group and gathered to come up with ideas and mechanisms to preserve historical sites and religious places without relying on support from the government. This is an outstanding example of community-based conservation that originated from the creative hub.



Top: A.E.Y Space, an example of adaptive reuse from old shophouse to art gallery and artist-in-residence space in Songkhla, southern Thailand

Bottom: Titan Project Space, another example of adaptive reuse from old shophouse to art gallery and teahouse in Songkhla, southern Thailand

b. Increasing sense of pride in local assets and their province



The workshop “Calligraphy th” at ONYX Café and Studio, a part of the design festival Pattani Decoded (2019)

The creative hub has been cultivating a sense of local pride by emphasising the significance of notable local people and valuable assets through several outstanding interventions, which resulted in changing the locals’ point of view towards their assets from something that is not relevant to their life to something valuable and be proud of. Furthermore, some remarkable big scale events that drew the attention of both locals and people from across the country have put the province where the hub is located on the map.

One of the partners of **Melayu Living**, Mr Anas Pongprasert, mentioned that he has noticed an increase in the sense of pride in their hometown among the younger generation due to many events that have been taking place in the area along with recently open trendy restaurants and cafés.

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When I was young, people of my generation often told others that they were from Hat Yai, a town in Songkhla Province. They were embarrassed to say they were from Pattani because it was uncool. But now, the young generation are saying out loud that they are from Pattani, Yala or the Deep South region. They are proud of their hometown. I think because of the hip and cool events such as Pattani Decoded and Bara Trail Running that happened in the region as well as many trendy coffee shops and art galleries that have recently opened,

*- Mr Anas Pongprasert,
a hub partner and a founder of
Saiburi Looker*

Furthermore, Dr Nattapong Nithi-Uthai, one of the advisors of Melayu Living, added that he noticed an increase in the works done by local designers that feature an interpretation of local identity.

In addition, creative hubs usually engage the local community in their interventions. Therefore, the success of their events often result in an increase in community sense of pride. One of the examples is “Kad Kong Kao”, a Saturday night market that has been managed and operated by the local community along with the members of **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network** for more than ten years. Together, they have transformed a small local market with less than ten sellers to one of the major tourist attractions of the province that genuinely represents Phrae’s identity and attracts visitors from across the country. Without a doubt, everyone who has been involved throughout the process is extremely proud of their community and what the market has accomplished.



The Kad Kong Kao Saturday market in Phrae, northern Thailand, a hub-driven project which is now under the responsibility of the local community



Another example is “Khlong Toei Dee Jung”, an annual festival organised by **Music Sharing** together with the Rong Moo community, to showcase the capacity of local children and invite others to the area. The positive outcomes of the event have changed the attitude of others towards the Khlong Toei community, inspired other communities in the Khlong Toei area to do the same, and also made the people of Rong Moo feel proud of their own community.

Music performed by local children at Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival (2018)

c. Redefine the perception of younger generations towards local art and craft



Younger generations in Thailand show little interest in local art and craft as they consider these to be old-fashioned and suitable only for older people. Nevertheless, the contemporary reinterpretation of art and craft through activities and programmes hosted by creative hubs has played a significant role in changing these preconceived notions.

The art exhibition “Art Core” by Chestha Suwannasa, a member of Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network (2016)

As a part of the activities organised by the hub, **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network** has been integrating various kinds of local art and craft, both traditional and contemporary. Mr Wuttikrai Phathong, the founder of the hub, pointed out that many of them started to notice that local art and craft can be presented in many different forms, and that their production may not only be restricted to art related institutions. Consequently, local art and craft came to be a part of their daily lives and some of them have even started to make a living out of it.

Similarly, the design festival “Pattani Decoded” organised by **Melayu Living** has demonstrated how the essence of local art and craft can be reinterpreted to create new forms of art that are more accessible and appealing to the younger generations, such as a combination of traditional sound and jazz music, a redesign of products that feature local stories. The event also showcased a wide variety of outstanding works by local artists and designers from the Deep South region. The result of the event along with other activities and programmes organised by the hub have enabled young people to recognise the previously overlooked value of local art and craft and perceive the possibilities it offers in a way that is relevant to them.

In addition to introducing and promoting local slow fashion brands, **Fashion Revolution Thailand** has engaged the younger generations in the entire process of producing ethical clothing from fluff to fabric. It hosted a three-day trip to a rural craft village in Loei Province in the North of Thailand in partnership with FolkCharm. The trip enabled participants to have a hands-on experience and immerse themselves in rural ways of life. One of the hub members mentioned that the trip allowed these young people who grew up in different environments to understand how a piece of ethical clothes is made and prompted them to appreciate its value. Furthermore, one of the participants added that she has changed her perception after joining the trip. *“Earlier, I thought that slow fashion clothing is more suited to my mom because it is old-fashioned. But actually, many things can be done to make it more interesting and fashionable,”* said one of the participants.



Showcase of artworks and design products by local designers and artists in the design festival Pattani Decoded (2019)



Fashion Revolution Expedition #1:
FolkCharm Journey (2020)

d. Increasing involvement in public activity

The creative hub plays two major roles in increasing involvement in public activities. First, it hosts a number of events that aim to benefit the local community and is open to anyone to join as volunteers.

Music Sharing, for example, has been organising many activities in the Khlong Toei community such as weekly music classes, the renovation of Rong Moo and the Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival. The hub welcomes any individual and also partners with several companies as a part of their CSR programmes. Most importantly, the activities and programmes are usually participated by both adults and children in the community. Ms Pomwong, the hub's founder, and one of the teenagers in the community noted that there has been an increasing number of people in the community volunteering to help organise community activities.

“

When there is an event taking place in the community, everyone, not only the teachers [hub members] and the children but also the people in the community would help out.

Everyone supports one another. My mother, for example, would be in charge of cleaning. Everyone knows what they are good at and are always on standby. It is clear that more and more people join us.”

- one of the teenagers in the Rong Moo community



Volunteers and staff from Allianz Ayudhya participate in the renovation of the Rong Moo building (2019).

Another role of the creative hub is acting as a facilitator that connects those who are interested in creating public projects with one another. **Ma:D Esan**'s events attract those who are interested in making a change in their society. Thus, it is perceived as a platform where like-minded people can meet, discuss their ideas, and initiate any social project of their interest together. In some cases, the hub core members would match individuals or parties with common needs with one another.

e. Empowering the local community and enhancing their capacity



Women of the Kresek community sell their homemade food at the event “Terima Kresek” (2018).

The creative hub often engages local communities in their activities. Through this engagement, the communities have enhanced their capacities and skills, which in turn contributes to their empowerment.

“The Kad Kong Kao” market is a good example. It was initiated and operated by **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network** during its early stages. After five years, the market committee, which consists of local people, was formed and later were conferred the responsibility of managing and operating the market, while the hub members stepped back and only provided support when needed.

Another example is the Kresek community in Pattani Province. The Manager of **Melayu Living** noticed the change after engaging them in the “Terima Kresek” event, under the umbrella of Halal Tourism programmes. The community was proud of themselves and felt empowered when they were able to sell their homemade food and earn extra income.

“

Prior to the event “Terima Kresek”, the people there just lived from day to day. They thought that they did not have any particular strength or ability and the products that they sell are typical, nothing special. They only waited for help from the local government. When we went there, we did not tell them to change anything, instead we pointed out their overlooked abilities and assets then made them more tangible. I think that the people were proud of themselves when they were able to sell their products. An increased income was the solid proof. Consequently, the community felt that they wanted to continue with the activity.”

*- Mr Rachit Radenahmad,
the Manager of Melayu Living*

f. Improving health and well-being among the elderly

The creative hub engages directly with the elderly in the local community by organising activities that cater especially to them in order to improve their quality of life.

The **Songkhla Heritage Trust**, for instance, hosts a weekly singing session called “Suntraporn’s Song Singing Club”, which gives the elderly a chance to get out of their homes to sing and have fun with others in the neighbourhood on a regular basis.

As for **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network**, Mr Shinnaworn Chompupan, one of its members, noted that although Phrae is one of several provinces with a large elderly population, there is still a lack of activity spaces for this group of people. Thus, the aim of “Kad Kong Kao” market is to serve as an activity space where they could connect to the past, meet and talk with others. The elderly could visit the market, enjoy various performances as well as sell any homemade products, such as traditional food and dessert, and home-grown fruits and vegetables. Those who are sellers and members of the market committee, most of whom are over the age of 50, mentioned that the market is more than a place to earn some extra money; it is where they can relax, have a good time, have a small talk with visitors from all over the country and connect with the society instead of staying home by themselves.



Elderly locals participate in weekly singing sessions during “Suntraporn’s Song Singing Club” organized by the Songkhla Heritage Trust every Friday to Sunday evening.



Middle & Bottom:

The first year of the Kad Kong Kao Saturday market in Phrae, northern Thailand, first initiated by Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network creative hub and the responsibility of which has been transferred to the local community (2011).

“

*Saturday is our time to relax.
I always look forward to the market,
so I can meet them [other people],
and we can hang out together.
It is fun. This feeling is indescribable,
and I have never experienced this
anywhere else. It has become
a part of my life.”*

- one of the sellers and the members of
the market committee

Mr Chompupan also added that the market has been very well received by the elderly in the local community. “Earlier, there were several elderly citizens aged between 70 and 80 years old in the community. Around 3pm, when the market was about to open, they would ask their family to help them get ready for the market. Every week, they would look forward to Saturday, so they could visit the market and meet other people. As a result, Kad Kong Kao implicitly became a meeting place of Phrae people,” said Mr Chompupan, one of the co-founders of the market.

The Kad Kong Kao Saturday market nowadays,
now under the responsibility of the local community
after the creative hub initiated the project



g. Increasing number of young adults returning to their hometown

One of the major social problems facing many provinces in Thailand has been the migration of younger generations to metropolises such as Bangkok or Chiang Mai in search of better education, more job opportunities, or a contemporary lifestyle. However, the work of creative hubs along with their positive impacts have been gradually changing the perception of these young people and attracting them back home.

Melayu Living has been organising hip and trendy events, promoting careers in the creative industries, and demonstrated various possibilities for the future. Mr Pongprasert, the founder of Saiburi Looker, mentioned in the interview that the activities and events organised by the hub were recognised as a platform for local teenagers to express themselves. It provides them with a space to think, act and speak out, which might not be accessible for them in big cities.

Mr Rachit Radenahmad, the hub's manager, also added that besides not having the lifestyle that they long for, most of the younger generation are concerned with lack of job opportunities, especially in the creative industries. For that reason, the hub consistently raises awareness and promotes the development of local art and design. Furthermore, its members act as a model for others regarding how to make a living as designers and architects as well as how to use creativity to bring uniqueness to other businesses. As a result of the work of Melayu Living, young people have been able to see themselves living the province and playing a part in making it a better place.

“

I don't know if the young generation is really returning home. But I think what is happening now in Pattani has sparked a new conversation about how cool Pattani is. People are starting to imagine a future in returning home and doing something here. Whenever there is an event, there are always comments on social media about how they miss their hometown. This tells us that they will come back whenever they are ready.”

*- Dr. Nattapong Nithi-Uthai,
one of the advisors of Melayu Living*



Youths who participated in the event “A design for life” posing for a group photo (2018), organised by Melayu Living creative hub



A ceramic workshop at Kummee Studio-Ceramics Pottery
in Phrae Province

Likewise, one of the members of **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network** noticed that he has seen an increasing number of young adults returning to Phrae Province and starting careers in the craft sector. He added that one of the reasons behind this was that the hub has been playing a significant role in paving the way for the sector. It has highlighted the value of local materials, local wisdom, and craft making skills, as well as created public awareness and established a network of craft related stakeholders (e.g. suppliers, craftspeople, buyers). As a result, it has become less difficult for people interested in craft to make a living, and they are able to sell their works at a higher price in comparison with the last decade.

Similarly, the work of **Songkhla Heritage Trust** has led to many new business opportunities, especially those that support local heritage tourism. In addition, the hub several new possibilities in the creative domain. Its activities and programmes that featured the use of various

creative media have inspired many to perceive Songkhla Old Town as a creativity-driven area for development. This perception has attracted younger generations back to their hometown, in particular those who are interested in art and culture or working in the creative industries. As a result, there have been a growing number of new businesses run by young adults, which in turn has added brand new vibes to the area.

The hub has also contributed to building a sense of pride in the province. One of the recent graduates who just returned home, Ms Pimpakarn Patjantawiwat, mentioned that the work of the hub has influenced those who had left Songkhla like herself to rethink the town's local assets as well as their potential role as a part of the community, and how they can contribute to the development of the area.

2.2 Impact on the area where each creative hub is located

a. Catalysing and regenerating the area



The creative hub plays various roles in catalysing and regenerating the area where it is located, including breathing in new life into old buildings, organising events that attract a number of visitors, and even influencing the enactment of building regulations.

Music Sharing took the lead in renovating an abandoned slaughterhouse in the Rong Moo community, where drug addicts and homeless people would gather, into a public space and made it the hub of the community. It played a major role in negotiating with the landlord and renovating the space.

Likewise, the members of **Melayu Living**, who are mainly architects, have been played an

The photo exhibition “Klub-Baan” held at an old shipyard during the design festival Pattani Decoded (2019)

important role in breathing new life into an abandoned old building in the old town of Pattani by turning it into a physical space for the hub and a café. Furthermore, its activities and programmes, which consistently take place in the neighbourhood, particularly “Pattani Decoded”, are considered one of the magnets that attract visitors from other provinces, as well as people from the creative industries from across the country. During Pattani Decoded, many unused old houses in the area were refurbished and transformed into venue spaces. Not only did this revitalise the area, but it also became one of the event’s signature.



The **Songkhla Heritage Trust** has completely changed the Old Town area of Songkhla from being a red-light district to a tourist destination. The hub and its partners have transformed several old buildings into public areas that support various new types of community activities, and are also persuading local entrepreneurs and landlords to renovate their properties instead of demolishing them. In addition, the hub played an important role in coordinating the overall physical appearance and atmosphere of the area. In addition to influencing the City Municipality to enforce building regulations to preserve existing buildings, the hub also designed the signage system and commissioned a series of street art.

The “Fun street art” activity among students from Mahavajiravudh Songkhla School on the opening day of the “Lard Song Lay” market (meaning, “the market between two seas”) (2016)

Like many other hubs, the Songkhla Heritage Trust has organised a wide range of activities and programmes, such as creative markets, an art festival and student field trips, aimed at showcasing local cultural heritage, attracting visitors to the area, and generating a lively atmosphere. As a result, the Old Town has become a popular tourist destination attracting a number of visitors, especially younger generations, throughout the year.

b. Promoting local tourism

The activities and programmes that have been organised by these creative hubs are usually context specific. They are built on local assets and reflect local ways of life, and for this reason, they were very well received and have been carried on by the local communities. Many of them have gradually re-embedded local ways of life into their habits, which in turn attracts the attention of visitors.

Although local markets can be found in almost every province in Thailand, the Kad Kong Kao Market in Phrae Province is like no other. This ten-year-old market, which was initiated by **Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network**, is a cultural market that reflects local ways of life well. Most of the sellers are local people who know each other. Every week, locals would look forward to the day of the market in order to meet and catch up with one another. As a visitor, walking through the market is a moment of simple joy. Every aspect of the market, including the scenery of old buildings along the street, the sound of local music, friendly sellers, home-made local desserts, and savoury food that would usually be hard to find otherwise, perfectly combine to create a unique experience. Its success has led to the emergence of three consecutive markets next to it, which have attracted a larger number of tourists to the Old Town area. Consequently, instead of only visiting the famous Wat Phra That Cho Hae temple, and the Pae Muang Pee Forest Park natural site, the two most famous attractions of the province located outside the main town, an increasing number of tourists are also spending time in the Old Town to visit the market and other historical places in the area.



Tourists visit Songkhla Old Town during the event "Portrait of Songkhla" (2021).

In addition to initiating an activity that later turns into a major tourist attraction, creative hubs can play a role in promoting new types of local tourism. As a result of the work done by the **Songkhla Heritage Trust**, Songkhla Old Town has become a destination for those that would like to immerse themselves in local ways of life, experience local history and culture, as well as local art and architecture. Nowadays, it is recognised as a destination for cultural heritage tourism and visited by a number of Thai people across the country and foreigners.



The Starlight Walk, a creative market in Songkhla Old Town (2019)

c. Improving the local economy

The establishment of a physical space for a creative hub as well as its activities and programmes have brought a number of visitors to the area, which in turn has boosted local businesses and prompted new business opportunities.

Members of the **Songkhla Heritage Trust** noticed that some local businesses in the Old Town area that were about to close down were able to bounce back, while some have expanded. There have been a rising number of local businesses initiated by both older and younger generations. Furthermore, many property owners have renovated their buildings as commercial spaces, which has allowed for new businesses, such as cafés, restaurants, hostels, museums and galleries, to thrive. *“The rising number of tourists prompted a better local economy. Those who stay home now have an opportunity to sell something at their places. The local businesses have also grown. For instance, “Kiad Fung”, a local steamed bun shop that has never had branches or sold at any flea market, can now be seen everywhere since it has become famous. What I am trying to say is that the shop doesn’t produce pork nor flour by themselves. This means that the whole food supply chain in the area is also improving,”* said Mr Khomsan Oynasuan and Miss Naree Boonsong, employees of Chevron Thailand Exploration and Production, Ltd. and members of the hub.

d. Developing local branding

The continued and consistent work of these creative hubs often create awareness, change preconceived notions, and promote a new image of the community and the province. In many cases, these new images are becoming widely recognised by both locals and the public, contributing to the development of local “branding”.

Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network has played a role in reintroducing the cultivation of indigo in Phrae and promoting the use of indigo products in daily life. Today, the products are commonly used by locals and the province is recognised as the City of Indigo.



Natural Indigo products for sale at
Kaewwanna Natural Indigo shop in Phrae Province



Khlong Toei Dee Jung Festival (2019)

The **Songkhla Heritage Trust** has been promoting cultural heritage preservation, renovation and adaptive reuse of old architecture in Songkhla Old Town. The hub profoundly concentrates on revitalising the area as well as improving the quality of life of local people. It ensures that locals are happy and benefit from the area’s development. Nowadays, Songkhla Old Town is widely known as a living heritage site and a destination for cultural heritage tourism.

Music Sharing has contributed greatly to changing preconceived perceptions towards the Khlong Toei community, in particular the Rong Moo community. The annual festival event “Khlong Toei Dee Jung” has drawn a number of people from across the country to the community. It has allowed them to acknowledge the capacity of Khong Toei children and realise that Khlong Toei is safe to visit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

The findings from this research along with the case studies presented demonstrate the significant role of creative hubs in the social domain in the context of Thailand. Regardless of the problems that the creative hubs are aiming to solve, they have both direct and indirect impacts on people and the community in the geographical areas where they are located. Without a doubt, hubs are important mechanisms for improving the quality of life and well-being of the people. In fact, the purposes of creative hubs and their values are in line with the responsibilities of the government, despite having different approaches. Hence, the government should play a role in supporting and promoting creative hubs in order to broaden their impact.

This section aims to provide recommendations for policy makers based on the study of the six selected hubs. By looking closely into the challenges that the hubs are facing and their success factors, the below recommendations show actions that can be taken by the government in order to facilitate an emergence of new hubs and sustain the existing ones.

- 01

Recognising the importance of creative hubs
- 02

Opening dialogue avenues to inform adequate policies
- 03

Designing support frameworks for creative hubs
- 04

Partnering with creative hubs

01

Recognising the importance of creative hubs to local communities

Creative hubs are often overlooked by the public and private sectors, especially when they are organised by individuals, due to a lack of understanding of who they are, what they do and what their intended impacts are. Thus, the first step for policy makers is to recognise the various strengths of creative hubs, as follows:

- Creative hubs tackle issues that are specific to the local communities or group interests, which are likely not priorities for the government, such as improving the living conditions and wellbeing of underprivileged children and marginalised communities, promoting local cultural heritage preservation, and raising awareness on sustainable fashion. This means that hubs are more agile, localised, focused, and effective to work on targeted issues.
- Most members of creative hubs are local people and experts in the areas in which they work. Therefore, they have a better understanding of needs and insights into

problems, and are able to initiate activities and programmes that are well suited to the local context.

- Creative hubs act as convenors, bringing their targeted audiences together and bridging them with the government and the private sectors using creative means. Since they are more connected to their targeted audiences, their communications are effective and attract more interest, especially from younger audiences.
- Creative hubs are central to their communities and engage local community members in their programming. As a result, hubs have developed deep connections and strong bonds with communities and stakeholders, both from the private and public sectors, where they are located. This prompts a sense of ownership among the local communities which enables hub initiatives to be sustained.

02

Opening dialogue avenues to inform adequate policies which would support the ecosystem

In order to develop policies that would support and foster the ecosystem of creative hubs, policy makers need to open dialogue avenues for creative hub leaders and related stakeholders in different sectors (e.g. government, private organisations, NGOs, education institutions), both local and international, as well as the public. This would allow voices from creative hubs and their stakeholders to be heard, especially on their challenges and impacts, while facilitating and broadening collaboration, which will inform policies for the future development of the hub ecosystem.

Since the notion of the creative hub is still relatively new in the context of Thailand, policy makers need to begin by raising public awareness of creative hubs, commissioning more research on Thai creative hubs for ecosystem development, and building a network of creative hubs locally and internationally.

- Raising public awareness of creative hubs – Most Thai people are still unaware of the existence of creative hubs, let alone their impacts. Thus, it is crucial for policy makers to put a great emphasis on communicating the significance of creative hubs to wider audiences through different interventions and campaigns, such as promoting pioneering hubs and their impacts.
- Commissioning more research on Thai creative hubs for ecosystem development – Until today, there are only a few studies and publications on local creative hubs available. More research on different aspects of hubs needs to be conducted, so as to generate a better understanding of the development of an effective hub ecosystem. The topics can include operating and sustaining creative hubs in Thailand, needs and challenges of hubs, hub models, hub roles and unique qualities, as well as success factors and impacts. In addition, the government should gather best practices on creative hubs

across the country to explore and survey the wider landscape.

- Building a network of creative hubs locally and internationally – Many creative hubs in Thailand work independently. The lack of connections with other local hubs and related stakeholders makes it difficult for hubs to survive and make an impact. At the same time, local hubs can benefit more from connecting with hubs in other countries and international hub networks, which would enable members of local hubs to broaden their horizons and have access to more opportunities. In this case, different approaches that can be taken by the government are as follows:
 1. Creating an active online creative hub database, listing the profile of hubs across the country, which is accessible to the public
 2. Building a community of local creative hubs and inviting public and private organisations with similar areas of interests to join the community where responsible government bodies act as facilitators and enablers
 3. Creating platforms both online and offline for hubs to exchange their knowledge and experiences as well as to showcase themselves and be more present
 4. Connecting local hubs with global ones by utilising existing platforms such as *Mereka Connect*¹⁹ or by creating pathways for local hubs to exchange with other international hubs. This will enable them to take part in global programmes and reach out for available support from international organisations.

03

Designing support frameworks for creative hubs playing an active role in their communities

In order to sustain existing hubs and encourage more people to establish creative hubs, the government needs to provide essential support frameworks, in particular during the early phase in the hub's development and when it aims to scale up. Policy makers can either directly support hubs or incentivise other organisations to do so. The recommended support frameworks are as follows:

- Endorsing creative hubs and enabling them to be registered as an official entity – Many challenges that hubs are facing today result from being an unauthorised entity. Consequently, they are not eligible to partner with public and private organisations, nor to receive any form of support or apply for funding. Though there are currently a number of legal statuses that creative hubs can apply for, such as social enterprise, community enterprise, and foundation, the application process requires support and facilitation in terms of technical knowledge and finance. Having a recognition system
- for hubs will allow hubs to be formally recognised, and therefore increase their opportunities in receiving further support and generating more impact.
- Providing financial support - Creative hubs often lack funding and do not have a profitable business model since they are passion-driven and have limited experience in business. Certain financial support policies can address this issue, including seed funding grants, a lower interest and tax rate (tax break), and loans from state-owned banks. Similar offers may also be applied to private organisations in order to incentivise their sponsoring of and partnering with hubs.
- Providing technical and practical knowledge – Establishing and developing a creative hub is a challenging task, which requires knowledge in several areas. According to “Creative HubKit: Made by hubs for emerging hubs”¹, the knowledge and skills required include planning, business development,

networking and partnership building, community building, hub programming, communications, as well as impact monitoring and evaluation. However, hubs are generally lacking resources to upskill. Hence, the government should promote knowledge sharing and upskilling for hubs. This can include capacity building, training and mentoring programmes, and knowledge sharing activities, such as seminars and forums.

- Providing space – In many cases creative hubs need physical spaces to set up their offices or host activities and programmes. Nevertheless, most hubs struggle to find one due to the lack of funding. In this case, the government should provide dedicated spaces for creative hubs and subsidise the rent.

04

Partnering with creative hubs in area regeneration projects and community support/development projects

It is evident that, when working on area-based issues, hubs are more agile than the government and have unique and more focused approaches. Therefore, one of the initiatives that should be put into action immediately is to promote collaboration between government agencies and creative hubs. When having the same goals, the strength of creative hubs can complement and benefit government initiatives and allow for greater impact.

Local governments can also benefit from working with creative hubs in area-based development projects. Since creative hubs have insights into real problems and connections with local communities across generations, their activities and programmes aim directly at tackling the root causes and are implemented with respect to local ways of life. Local active hubs should, therefore, be identified and included in the planning and project implementation, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation phases, as one of the key actors and stakeholders, which will generate sustainability and a more inclusive approach to the projects.

In addition, private organisations should be encouraged to work with hubs to broaden the impact of hubs and facilitate further development and collaboration in related areas. This can be done by offering incentives, such as tax rebates to private organisations.

DIRECTORY

1 Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network

- **Activities and Programmes:** Talks, Seminars, Exhibitions, Festival, Community Market, Sightseeing Tours, Community Engagement and Empowerment Activities, Research, Content Creation
- f **Facebook Page:** Luk Lan Muang Phrae Network (@Phrae.fam)
- ✉ **Email:** t_klomlaew@hotmail.com
- 📍 **Address:** 94/1 Charoenmuang Road, Tambon Nai Vieang, Muang Phrae, Phrae 54000 Thailand (Gingerbread House Gallery)

3 Music Sharing

- **Activities and Programmes:** Music Classes, Music Camps, Training Workshops, Volunteer Activities, Fundraising Activities, Festivals, Research
- 🌐 **Website:** www.musicsharing.or.th
- f **Facebook Page:** Music Sharing (@MusicSharingTH)
- ✉ **Email:** musicsharing1234@gmail.com
- 📍 **Address:** 2 Sukhumvit 62 Alley, Lane 8, Bang Chak, Phra Khanong, Bangkok 10260

5 Ma:D Esan

- **Activities and Programmes:** Talks, Seminars, Training Workshops, Exhibitions, Volunteer Activities, Fundraising Activities, District Walk, Networking Events
- f **Facebook Page:** Ma:D Esan (@MaDESANThailand)
- ✉ **Email:** poabegin@gmail.com

2 Songkhla Heritage Trust

- **Activities and Programmes:** Talks, Seminars, Symposium, Festivals, Street Art, Local Market, Research, Content Creation, Singing Club
- 🌐 **Website:** www.songkhla-ht.org
- f **Facebook Page:** Songkhla Heritage Society (@SongkhlaHeritage); Songkhla Heritage Trust (@SongkhlaHeritage)
- ✉ **Email:** skht1313@gmail.com
- 📍 **Address:** Hub Ho Hin, 13 Nakorn-nork Road, Tambon Bo Yang, Mueang Songkhla District, Songkhla, 90000

4 Melayu Living

- **Activities and Programmes:** Talks, Seminars, Exhibitions, District Walk, Movie Screenings, Festival, Training Workshops, Research, Community Engagement Activities
- f **Facebook Page:** Melayu Living (@MelayuLiving)
- ✉ **Email:** melayuliving@gmail.com
- 📍 **Address:** Pattani Pirom Road, Mueang Pattani District, Pattani, Thailand 94000

6 Fashion Revolution Thailand

- **Activities and Programmes:** Talks, Seminars, Symposium, Clothes Swaps, Movie Screenings, Workshops, Field Trips, Content Creation, Networking Events
- 🌐 **Website:** www.fashionrevolution.org/asia/thailand/
- f **Facebook Page:** Fashion Revolution Thailand (@fashrevThailand)
- ✉ **Email:** thailand@fashionrevolution.org

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- 10 The old songs from Thailand's first Western music band during the 1940s-1980s.
- 11 The Khlong Toei community is the largest slum situated in the heart of Bangkok for more than 60 years. Its total area is approximately 0.32 square kilometres with a population of around 90,000 to 100,000 residents. There are 31 communities, including the Rong Moo community, which consists of 789 households. The majority of the population in this high-density area are unskilled workers with low income and limited education. As a consequence, the community is facing a number of social problems such as homelessness, high rates of crime and violence, illegal drug use, and teenage pregnancy.

- 12 Since the 1990s, four provinces in the Deep South region, namely Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla (only this province's southernmost area), have been facing the South Thailand separatist insurgency which stems from long-running tensions between the Thai State and local Malay Muslims. Although the Muslim population represents only 5.4 percent of the total population nationwide, which is approximately 3,639,231 people, more than 2 million of them reside in the affected area. From 2004 to 2013, a number of brutal incidents, such shootings, bombings and attacks, have been taking place on a daily basis, and the region has since been marked a "red" zone. Despite the fact that the situation is getting better nowadays, the incidents have left an indelible mark on everyone, resulting in distrust among people from different religions and isolating the region from the rest of the country. Burke, Adam, Pauline Tweedie, and Ora-orn Poocharoen. **The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance: The Case of Southern Thailand**. Asia Foundation, 2013.
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- 19 <https://mereka.io/> - a Southeast Asia - UK online hub community and learning space supported by the British Council

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Members of the Kad Kong Kao market committee and sellers at the Kad Kong Kao market

Photo Credit:

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Website: http://rms.rdi.tsu.ac.th:82/rdi/th/gallery2/580529_28/index.php

3 Music Sharing

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Children and adults of the Rong Moo community

Photo Credits:

Facebook page: Music Sharing (@MusicSharingTH); Khlong Toei Dee Jung (@khlongtoeydeejung)

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High school and university student volunteers

Photo Credit:

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