

# Chapter 1

## Introduction: The Right to the 'Creative City'

### 1.1 The Hype around the 'Creative City'

Who doesn't want to be called creative? Creativity bears in its interpretation a very positive, optimistic, and exclusive connotation. The positive connotation invites many to want to get the title, including cities. Creative City is a concept first introduced by Charles Landry & Franco Bianchini (1995) in *The Creative City* which was a response to the decreasing economy of British cities after the recession in the 1990s. Landry and Bianchini offer creative-based services such as culture, sport, entertainment, and education to revive the urban economy. Similarly, Richard Florida (2005) in his book *Cities and The Creative Class* emphasizes the economic value of human creativity in a city. He proposes the 3T's formula for economic growth: technology, talent, and tolerance. Furthermore, he stresses on the critical role a city plays in bringing together these factors. Both Charles Landry and Richard Florida developed indicators and measurements related to the creative city concept and have been actively consulting municipalities worldwide to utilize their creativity to achieve development targets since then.

Global development agencies like UNESCO and the British Council have also taken up the concept and successfully propagated the idea to cities in developing countries, for them to also join the buzz. UNESCO Creative Cities Network, launched in 2004, aims to connect cities for them to share their creative experiences and best practices in seven categories: literature, film, music, crafts and folk art, design, media arts, and gastronomy. The network has grown from only Edinburgh as a creative literature city, in 2004, into 246 member cities in 2019. This consistent expansion has contributed to the hype about branding cities worldwide as 'the creative' ones. The British Council positions the creative city as the place where creative economy takes place. It supports government institutions and municipalities in the Global South to develop the creative economy in their cities through funding and cultural exchange programs.

Practically speaking, the various municipalities of those creative cities allocate significant budgets, or apply for development grants, to fund their creative programs, in the hope of attracting more capital for infrastructural development and the tackling of common urban problems such as job scarcity and poverty. They use the funding to execute long lists of actions in the conceptual toolkits developed by experts on the creative city concept, as exemplified by the creative cities in the Global North. They also form special task forces to ensure the fulfillment of indicators provided by creative city experts, which include the building of impressive city icons, the holding of annual festivals, and the provision of entrepreneurship training for the ‘creative class’—those who are being compensated monetarily for their creative output (Florida, 2005, p. 4).

Academically, several scholars study creative cities from different disciplines and perspectives. Some of them position the creative city within the discourses of creative economy and creative industry viewpoints (in addition to Florida, among them are Fahmi et al., 2016; Pratt & Hutton, 2013; Simatupang et al., 2008; Vanolo, 2013). Others review the use of the creative city concept from a cultural production perspective (Byrne, 2013; Gibson & Kong, 2005; Kong, 2012); as policy practice (K. Anderson et al., 2008; Aritenang, 2014); and as a city branding strategy (Sevin, 2014; Vanolo, 2008). Other scholars also promote some creative cities (Arandelovic, 2015; Reis & Kageyama, 2009; Stolarick et al., 2005) and write about how the creative city can contribute to society, for example, by providing employment (Stolarick & Currid-Halkett, 2013) and by transforming an area into a better condition (Sasajima, 2013). They also offer recommendations on how to develop creative cities, for example, through networking (Sasaki, 2008) and the improvement of technology infrastructure (Das, 2016).

Nevertheless, several scholars are questioning the consequences of adopting the concept, by providing an objective review of the reality in some. They use case studies from different cities to investigate the gap between theory and the actual policy taken by the government (D. Cohen, 2014; Scott, 2006; Trip & Romein, 2014). Some pose bold critiques on implementation of the creative city concept (Chatterton, 2010; Mould, 2015) and warn cities to look more critically at the concept, before making significant investments and planning arrangements.

The creative city concept is an excellent example of what Jeremy Seekings (2013) calls “infectious northern enthusiasm”; this refers to

the act of always orienting urban planning and practices (everywhere) towards the approach of northern cities. Seeking believes that the existing knowledge production scheme in urban development has made specific megacities in the "Global North" (e.g., London, Paris, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, among other cities) profoundly sound within modern urban theory. The concentration of resources and influences (hence, power) in those cities makes it possible for them to be the presiding role models and sources of learning for urban development elsewhere. Seeking states that it is tough to push 'alternative' and authentic narratives of emerging cities from the Global South into urban studies debates. He refers to it as the phenomena of 'silent cities'; that is, cities that have little to no impact on urban theory, despite their population growth and development challenges. Theoretically, the ubiquitous adoption of the creative city concept by (silent) cities worldwide is the result of the dominance of Global North cities in the field of urban studies.

As further elaborated in chapter 2, I refrain from the question posed by Susan Luckman, Chris Gibson, and Tess Lea (2009) about the transferability of the creative city concept. Many scholars critique the mass adoption of the idea by cities in various countries (Chatterton, 2010; Peck, 2005, 2011; Vanolo, 2015). Their works show that although the idea of being globally recognized as a creative city is appealing for cities, without careful consideration and solid theoretical grounds on the local context, the enforcement of the concept can be potentially a trap for these cities. Landry (2012) even mentioned that the notion has become overused (p. 7).

It can worsen prevailing urban problems (such as inequalities and vulnerabilities) and inadvertently hide the issues behind impressive urban façades. Moreover, Sharon Zukin (2012) warns cities of the competition found in urban branding that often leads to aesthetic homogenization, ignoring local needs and culture. Cities, particularly those with limited budgets and capabilities, should cautiously read those critiques – especially when they intend to become creative cities. Otherwise, they will be confronted with the dilemma of the need to become visible and gain wider recognition, while replicating urban development strategies (from a few reference cities) that may not comply with the requirements and characteristics of their local people.

My concern about the above is similar with those of Jennifer Robinson (2006) Abdou Maliq Simone (2011), and Edgar Pieterse (2011). It

is that any solution to urban problems in cities “can only be sensed through a strong theoretical grounding in the social and philosophical perspectives on the emergent sociocultural dynamics of these places” (Pieterse, 2011, para 2). Moreover, in her extensive work on discourses of knowledge, Anna-Katharina Hornidge (2007a, 2007b, 2012, 2013, 2014) shows that despite the fact that knowledge (with its normative, factual, and hegemonic character) is a necessity in any context of development, it only progresses development when there is local adaptation of meaning and implementation. This being particularly in places where social, cultural, political, and/or economic development is happening with the intervention of discourses of global development knowledge.

John Hannigan and Greg Richards (2017) encourage us to view the city as “a field of experience that its inhabitants socially construct” (p. 2). According to Seekings (2013), many urban scholars recognize that cities of the Global South—the silent cities—also have as much of a theoretical voice as cities from the Global North. In the same line, Robinson (2006), in her book *Ordinary Cities*, encourages urban scholars to avoid the epistemic privileging of selective Northern cities. Instead of categorizing cities based on only a few reference cities, Robinson urges urban scholars and policymakers to view all cities as a repertoire of different forms of urban living; thus, making any ordinary city a source of learning and theory building in urban studies. Pieterse et al. (2013) in *Rogue Urbanism: Emergent African Cities* and Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong (2011) in *Worlding Cities* exemplify the fact that non-reference cities have the same right to shape global urban studies. They need to be heard and not to remain silent.

Concerning the creative city concept, Andy C. Pratt (2011) urges researchers worldwide, working on the creative city concept, to look for “a more nuanced and subtle approach of creativity, culture, and cities, one that is situated and not universal” (p. 123). In addition, he highlights the need to define creativity in local interpretation that is unique and specific for the local context. Similarly, Thomas Borén and Craig Young (2013) also encourage researchers to investigate how creativity is adopted in urban areas that are beyond the world’s capital cities.

## 1.2 Contextual Background: Bandung

Bandung, the capital city of West Java Province in Indonesia, is also one of the cities that got caught up in the hype of the creative city. Ahmad Rida Soemardi and Irendra Radjawali (2004) envision the creative city as the ideal planning policy for Bandung due to its historical creative culture, strategic geographical location, and the abundance of knowledge and cultural institutions in Bandung.

As shown in figure 1-1 below, Bandung is located in the middle of West Java and is only 140 km away from Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. The city's geographical position has become an essential factor for development in Bandung (Tarigan et al., 2016; Voskuill, 1996). The topographical location (768 meters above sea level, surrounded by mountains) has a stable temperature of around 22-25 degrees Celsius throughout the year. The city also has less tendency towards natural disaster, as compared to other areas in Indonesia. In colonial times, the city also attracted tea planters, who eventually established residential areas, entertainment venues, education institutions, and related infrastructure.

The infrastructure, along with the convenient climate for both indoor and outdoor activities, any time of the year, has attracted migrants and visitors. The city has also attracted young people, from all over Indonesia, to pursue higher education in Bandung. This has affected the demographic situation in the city, making Bandung the fourth most populous city in Indonesia, with approximately two and a half million inhabitants in 2016. Among the inhabitants, seventy percent are still below the age of 40 (based on data published by the Statistic Bureau of Bandung City, 2015), and possess what Koentjaraningrat (2009) calls "youth characteristics", such as being full of spirit and vitality, idealist, and having great power to reform and contribute to society (p. 122). These educated, energetic youth are the ones who revive creative and cultural activities in Bandung; in particular, from the beginning of the early 1990s (Iskandar et al., 2006; Soemardi, 2006; Soemardi & Radjawali, 2004). Additionally, its proximity to the capital makes Bandung a perfect place for relatively safe capital investment in the commercial, tourism, industrial, and educational sectors, which contribute to the cities economic boost and urban expansion, as confirmed by Ari K.M. Tarigan et al. (2016).

Figure 1-1 Map of Bandung



(source: developed by author, 2015)

Recognizing the potential of Bandung, in 2007, the British Council appointed this Indonesian city as its pilot project of a creative city in Asia. Five consultation projects followed in 2008, as launched by BAPPEDA, the Regional Development Planning Agency of Bandung municipality. They developed the concept, plan, and programs of Bandung as a creative city. Then, in the same year, there was the formation of Bandung Creative City Forum (BCCF), a forum that unites various parties interested in the activation of Bandung as a creative city. The creative city policies, however, were not implemented by the Bandung municipality until 2013. Instead, the city chose to position itself as a service city (Ghazali & Martini, 2012) but failed to deliver their promise to provide a clean, prosperous, obedient, and friendly service city. In 2013, a prominent creative local figure, Ridwan Kamil, took over from them and, since then, the city has seriously taken up the creative city concept with the support of BCCF. Consequently, in 2015, Bandung successfully joined the UNESCO Creative City Network as a design city.

Previous literature investigates the case of Bandung as a creative city in the framework of transfer policy or mobile policy (Anderson et al., 2008; Aritenang, 2012, 2013, 2014; Cohen, 2014, among other research).

Adiwan Aritenang (2014) highlights Ridwan Kamil and BCCF as important actors in the transfer of creative economy policy from the British Council to Bandung. Yudo Anggoro (2009) and Freska Fitriyana (2012), in their research on the creative industry in Bandung, also confirm the involvement of BCCF in the making of the creative city discourse in Bandung. Dan Cohen (2014) details the efforts and lobbying done by the British Council from 2007, to ensure that Bandung municipality eventually took up the creative city concept and prioritized its particular interpretation of creative economy and creative sector (e.g., adopting similar creative sector categorizations, as in Britain). Cohen finds that the British Council's strategy to make Bandung a role model creative city in Indonesia and Asia is "not only as the mobility of a best practice but also an explicit action by the British government to expand its economic reach" (p. 28).

Outside the interpretation of Bandung's creative city in the framework of the creative economy, as adopted from the British Council, Kristin Anderson et al. (2008) also recognize a potential alternative role in the early adoption of the creative city concept in Bandung to empower local grassroots, creative groups. The research of Gustaff H. Iskandar, R. E. Hartanto, and Tarlen Handayani (2006) attempts to trace the existence of various creative communities in Bandung. The study indicates that at least since the early 1990s, before adopting the creative city concept, these communities have been shaping urban development in Bandung with their creativity, but not as profit-oriented activities.

As a native researcher, I observe that these communities are still actively organizing performances, workshops, and creative events in Bandung. Additionally, I also notice the emergence of communities in Bandung that are working creatively to solve urban problems happening in their surroundings, to do with basic service fulfillment, urban settlement, and environmental issues. In Bahasa Indonesia, people refer to these grassroots communities as *komunitas*, I will further explain in the next chapter the conceptualization of the term "knowledge communities" as one of the types of this *komunitas*. For this research, I define knowledge community as a group that bridges people from various backgrounds to share knowledge in a more informal gathering, to learn from each other's experiences, and—if possible—to add value to their everyday lives. These communities organize periodic and free knowledge-sharing events, for which they invite experts who voluntarily share their knowledge with the public. Thus, they provide urban dwellers with more options of activities and subsequently also add to

the already vibrant urban life in Bandung. Basically, they strengthen the image of Bandung as a creative city.

Previous research on Bandung as a creative city has failed to respect and identify local interpretations of creativity and the role of these grass-roots communities in creative city making in Bandung. All discussions were boiled down into a single model creative city concept; i.e., a global approach imported from the Global North (from the U.K. in particular). The concept was imposed onto Bandung by the national and local government authorities, without any adjustment and/or adaptation period or practices. Bandung and other silent cities<sup>1</sup> have the right to define their unique interpretations of creativity and the creative city concept. Therefore, I argue that it is important to look for the local interpretation and activation of the creative city concept in Bandung, beyond that understood and enacted by the Bandung municipality and BCCF.

### 1.3 Research Objective

This research aims to understand the interplay between knowledge communities and the creative city concept within urban development in Bandung, Indonesia. I would like to unravel the motives, directions, and patterns of interplay between knowledge communities and the creative city concept in constructing the day-to-day reality and the knowledge related to the urban development in Bandung. The key research question for this research is: How are knowledge communities and the creative city concept dynamically interacting within urban development in Bandung, Indonesia? Consequently, to answer that question, I need to understand: How is “creativity” understood and enacted in Bandung? How are knowledge communities constituted and enacted in Bandung? How is the creative city concept understood and enacted in Bandung? And finally, in what types of interaction do knowledge communities and the creative city concept interplay in Bandung?

The objective of the study, on a societal level, is to provide findings and evidence on the constitution and understanding of the creative city concept in Bandung; on the characteristics and practices of knowledge communities, especially concerning the creative city concept; on the interplays between knowledge communities and the creative city concept; and on the effect of the interplays on understanding urban devel-

<sup>1</sup> Silent cities as referred to Seekings (2013).



opment in Bandung. The dialectical relation between people and their city in Bandung, regarding creativity, can be a useful example (or reference) for urban planners and related decision-makers in Indonesia and other emerging creative cities in any part of the world. Also, they are seen as useful insights for knowledge community activists who want to escalate their importance from local to national, or even global, levels.

Providing Bandung's definition of urban development and its translation of the creative city concept, scientifically, this study intends to contribute to urban development literature as one voice of a silent city. Concomitantly, the study wants to further contribute to discussions within the sociology of knowledge, by offering empirical insights into knowledge communities and their influences on Bandung and its people. As I shall explain in the next section, the study uses the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) to analyze the role of knowledge in society and vice versa. SKAD (Keller, 2005, 2006, 2011, 2012, 2013; Keller et al., 2018) allows me to analyze urban development, the creative city concept, knowledge communities, and their interplay as political phenomena laden with interests, power, contestation, conflicts, dependencies, collaborations, and other dynamic forms of interaction.

On a personal level, I expect to produce knowledge on the discourse of the creative city concept and knowledge construction in a particular Asian society and to experience a learning journey through literature review, fieldwork, and doctorate dissertation writing. I am trying to answer the call of "teaching to transgress" from Epifania Amoo-Adare (2017) which aims to decolonize the structures of knowledge production in academic institutions. The result of the research should hopefully bridge the gap between theories and concepts and the everyday reality expressed in the practices. Being conscious and reflective of the positionality of this research and my position as the researcher, I hope to contribute to on-going epistemological critique and commit myself to join the movement for radically transforming the politics of the power-knowledge system into a more heterogenous and pluriversal one; that is, one which acknowledges the voice of an ordinary scholar who voices the story of an ordinary city.

Writing about Bandung as a creative city and its knowledge communities is a political act. The case of Bandung as a non-capital city positioned in the Global South voices the effort to deal with the dominance of megacities in urban theory. Katja Mielke and Andreas Wilde (2017) recently illustrate the potential of Area Studies (outside Euro-American

regions) for generating theories and concepts within the social science disciplines. They argue that through the use of “mid-range concepts”, such as Clifford Geertz’s concept of “theatre state” (1980), Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities” (1983), or Edward Said’s notion of “Orientalism” (1978), any source of empirical findings can contribute to the concept and theory development in social science and humanity disciplines. Mielke and Hornidge (2017) also say that Eurocentric dominance in ontological and epistemological scientific worldviews is responsible for the “homogenizing project of globalization” (p. 7). Their argument is strongly related to the fact that in urban studies, these non-reference cities are prone to follow mainly Northern urban theory for explaining what is happening in cities such as Bandung and other cities in the Global South. The dominant discourse constructs a simplistic interpretation and representation of what comprises a “good” city.

From that very limited, and particular, point of view, the situation in cities in the Global South mainly talks around problems that have resulted from poor governance or lack of infrastructure development. The narratives of these cities produced so far, is a view on discrepancy, failure, and troubles, as reflected in the report of UN Habitat (2003, 2015) and elsewhere (Davis, 2004, 2006; Hardoy et al., 2006; Koonings & Kruijt, 2007; Liu et al., 2017) and examples of flood mitigation, traffic congestion, housing issues, and criminal investigations from Tokyo, Jakarta, Seoul, Mumbai, Karachi, and Shanghai, among other cities, are entering the global conversation within urban studies. Similarly, the portraits of ordinary cities suffer from their association with problems of people living in dirty and poor slum areas built using illegal infrastructures under corrupted municipalities.

Contrary to this, Christoph Antweiler (1998) writes about the potential of local knowledge for development based on empirical grounding. Antweiler values citizens as experts whose knowledge is crucially important for the success of urban development, especially because the knowledge is dynamically responding to the changing social and natural environment (p. 15) and thus always relevant to the real needs and challenges that are faced by the people. Following Antweiler’s thesis, this research intends to show how Bandung is using the creative city notions in its own specific interpretation, to solve its urban problems. Hence, the research wants to enrich the understanding of what a creative (and eventually) a good city is, from the point of view of Bandung, an ordinary city.

With regards to research limitations, this study will only investigate the dynamic interaction between knowledge communities and the creative city concept between 2008 and 2017. Most occurred during Ridwan Kamil's leadership, as the Mayor of Bandung (2013–2017), when discourse on this topic gained the most attention and highly affected the city's development.

#### **1.4 Outline of the Book**

The overview of the outline is provided in figure 1-2 below. The endeavour starts in this chapter with the above explanation on the hype of "creative city" as the research topic and the importance of investigating the right to the creative city for ordinary, non-reference cities. Then, the introduction chapter justifies the selection of Bandung as a research context that fits the central question of interplay between the global circulating development concept (e.g., the creative city concept) and the bottom-up movement (e.g., knowledge communities), and explains the research objectives.

The introduction is then followed by discourse on the creative city concept and knowledge communities and from previous literature provides the basis for discussion and analysis on how the interaction might take form and its possible consequences. In part one, I will discuss the discourse on the creative city concept from three perspectives, namely urban planning, creative economy, and cultural production and policy. In this section, I take a critical stand on some of the main ideas on the creative city concept and juxtapose it to contradictory findings from previous case studies, in order to highlight the critiques on the creative city concept. In part two, I will compare the terms community of practice (CoP), knowledge society, and knowledge community. This will be followed by a literature review on knowledge sharing as the main activity of the knowledge community. Then, I will explain the position of this study among the existing research.

In chapter three, I will explain the research design and operationalization for this study. The chapter will start with an explanation about the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD), which I chose because it can accommodate the requirements of this study. This chapter will also explain the conceptual framework utilized for this study, my positionality, and the data compilation and analysis process. Chapter four will illustrate that creativity is not something new for

Bandung and that it is related to different features, namely entertainment culture, intellectual inquiry, counterculture, and entrepreneurialism.

Chapters five and six will answer the first two sub-research questions of the study. Chapter five will introduce the reader to knowledge communities as one among four types of *komunitas* in Bandung. This chapter explains the emergence, knowledge sharing activities, characteristics, and role of knowledge communities for Bandung people. Chapter six will describe Bandung as a creative city. The chapter will start with a detailed description of the adoption of the creative city concept in Bandung. It then continues with the elaboration of Ridwan Kamil, an influential figure in Bandung, who brought in the globalized creative city interpretation and shaped the dominant discourse of creativity in the city. The chapter also describes the three most dominant understandings of Bandung as a creative city: as economic driver, city branding, and social identity.

The pinnacle of the research, the dynamic relationship between the creative city concept and the knowledge communities, will be elaborated upon in chapters seven and eight. Within this, I explain the four most apparent forms of interactions: legitimation, contestation, delegitimization, and negotiation. Chapter seven will elaborate on the legitimation from below at the grassroot level that is done by knowledge communities and various creative actors joining BCCF. Within this chapter, I will also elaborate on the contestation on the narrowed interpretation of creativity in the city.

Chapter eight starts with concerns from knowledge communities that the creative city concept is only being used as a political vehicle, resulting from a typical short-term decision to jump on the bandwagon of popular urban development fads. The chapter will be followed by an explanation of the apparent negative consequences of the creative city concept for knowledge communities: basically, exploitation of creative workers and gentrification. Knowledge communities react to delegitimize the creative city concept through public discussion and engaging in discourse wars in the media. In this chapter, I will also show how some knowledge communities try to negotiate with the government and, thus, make the creative city concept a means to demand a more liveable city through the declaration of the ten principles of the Indonesian creative city. The chapter will conclude with the shared practices of knowledge communities regardless of their views on the creative city concept.

# Introduction: The Right to the 'Creative City'

Figure 1-2 Outline of the Book



Chapter nine provides a summary of research findings that show how knowledge communities have significantly shaped the construction of knowledge related to urban development in Bandung through its involvement in the dynamic process of making Bandung a creative city. The empirical findings support my central argument that every city has the right to define its unique and localized understanding of a “creative city”. City people are the key to urban development, and they should be able to also exercise their right to shape the development of their cities. The interpretation of a creative city for Bandung and its consequences (both negative and positive) contribute to the global discourse on creative cities; thus, it can potentially be a learning source for other ordinary cities. Within this concluding chapter, I also try to provide recommendations on policy implementation and insights for further research.