

INDONESIA

Semarang

Cultural Cities Profile
East Asia



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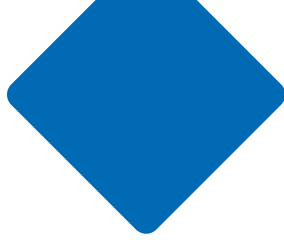
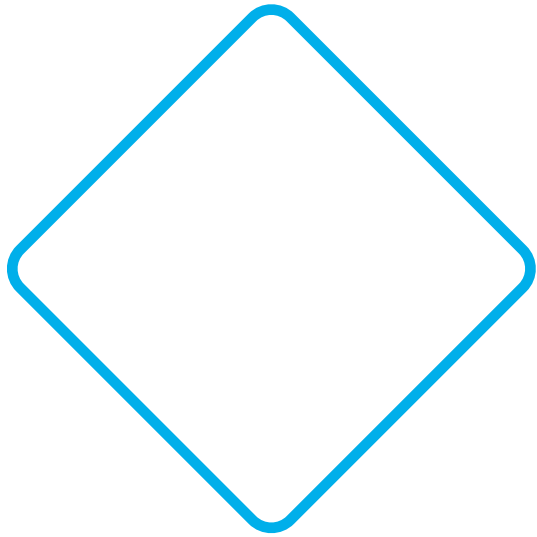
The **British Council** builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>

Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy is the leading international consultancy for culture and the creative economy. We offer research, strategy and policy leadership across the creative, cultural and arts sectors. We offer technical expertise, strategic thinking and the tools to position creativity to the heart of society. With offices in London and Porto and associates in 12 countries, we are an international agency operating in every region. <http://tfconsultancy.co.uk/>

Indonesia Creative Cities Network (ICCN) is a hub organisation for cross-communities forum, connecting 200+ cities/regencies from all over Indonesia that are committed to implement the 10 Principles of Indonesia Creative Cities that was declared in 2015. ICCN published the White Book of Indonesia Creative Cities (2017) that adapts the 10 Principles to the Indonesian government's KPI, and is developing a dashboard of Creative Cities Index as a tool for local governments to make policies/ regulations based on the real time creative economy data of their respective regions. <https://iccn.or.id/>

Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance (CIPG) is a research-based advisory group which aspires to excel in the area of innovation, policy and governance. Considered to be among the first research-based advisory groups, CIPG grows to be an open-minded and multicultural think tank with keen interest in building Indonesian research capacities across many sectors. <https://cipg.or.id/en/>

Tanahindie was established in 1999, composed of personnel from various backgrounds (researchers, authors, advocates, craftspeople, lecturers, students, social workers, and housewives). Exploring urban social development from the perspective of arts and culture, the organisation's activities include research, seminars, exhibitions, reviews, and publication. <https://tanahindie.org/>



Lawang Sewu Building

Photo © 99.co



Introducing Semarang

Semarang, the capital city of Central Java Province, had the reputation as 'The Venice of Java' in the Dutch colonial era, due to the many rivers that run within the city. It was also known as The Port of Java: all ships journeying between Jakarta or Central Java and Surabaya or East Java would pass the Tanjung Emas Harbour in Semarang.

With a population of 1.8 million, Semarang City is the fifth largest metropolitan city in Indonesia after Jakarta, Surabaya (East Java), Medan (North Sumatera) and Bandung (West Java). It is a young city, with 71.62% of the population aged 15 to 39 years.

Semarang has a rich social and cultural life, due to the range of ethnicities and religions represented by Javanese, Chinese, Arabic and Malay communities. This diversity is presented through cuisine, cultural events, architecture, visual arts, dance, music and design.

Kawasan Kota Semarang Lama, or Old Semarang City Area, is home to four historic sites that represent the city's urban and cultural development between the 15th century to the beginning of the 20th century. This is a city built on the trade and exchange between Arab, Malay, Chinese, and Dutch. Home to the Semarang Old City Festival (Festival Kota Lama/FKL), this area was officially designated as a National Cultural Heritage Area in August 2020.

As a provincial capital that houses several universities, Semarang has also become a city of choice for young people to study, live, and work. Institutions include Diponegoro University (or UNDIP, established in 1957), Semarang State University (Universitas Negeri Semarang or UNNES), Sultan Agung Islamic University (Universitas Islam Sultan Agung/ UNISSULA), a private university, and Soegijapranata Catholic University, a popular private Catholic university, named after the first native Indonesian bishop.

This gives Semarang a youthful and creative energy. Collectives and artistic communities such as Hysteria and PekaKota work at a social level to provide events and creative spaces, and to advocate for public engagement in urban development, arts and creativity.

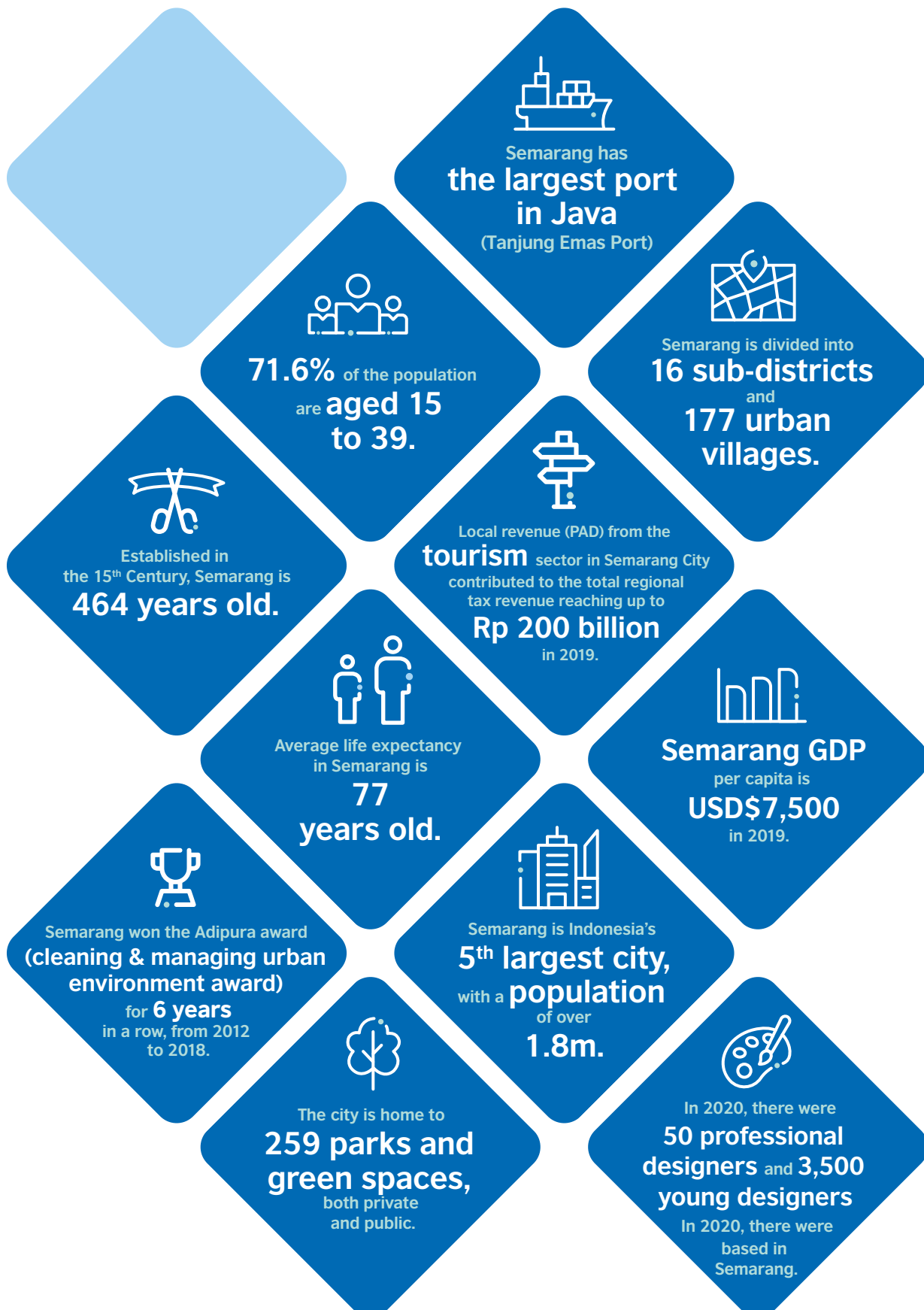
In partial recognition of this, in May 2020, Semarang was nominated as one of the 10 creative cities in Indonesia by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. In particular, the city was noted for its fashion and design industry: Semarang has produced a great number of young designers, and in 2020 was home to at least 50 professional designers and 3,500 young designers. In 2018, the fashion industry employed 3,500 employees with a total revenue of 100 billion rupiah.



The realisation of Semarang as a great trading and service city, working towards a more prosperous society.

Semarang City Development Agency (BAPPEDA)

Semarang in numbers



Old City of Semarang

Photo © 99.co



1. Context

Location / region

Semarang is the capital city of Central Java Province, located on Java's north coast and surrounded by lowlands and hills. Directly adjacent to the Java Sea, the city has a tropical climate with a wet and a dry season, which cycle alternately within a period of approximately six months each. Rain in Semarang generally falls between December and May.

Ethnic Diversity

As a city of transit and trade, various ethnic groups have historically settled in Semarang. The largest ethnic groups in modern Semarang are the Javanese, plus large Chinese communities. In addition, as the capital of Central Java, Semarang has more than 30 universities, drawing students from across Indonesia and contributing to the city's multi-ethnic profile.

Heritage assets and activation

At 464 years old, Semarang is among the oldest cities in Indonesia. Since 2016, Semarang has been developing a proposal for obtaining UNESCO World Heritage status for the Old Town.

Semarang's cultural diversity can easily be seen in the architecture of its buildings across different city neighbourhoods. Kauman and Kampung are influenced by Islamic culture, in the form of mosques, tombs, houses and ancient scripts. Chinatown was historically home to the Chinese community which settled in Semarang before the Dutch came to Indonesia. For example, Sam Poo Kong Pagoda, located in Simongan Hill area, is both a cultural artifact and a centre for cultural activities. Sam Poo Kong also regularly holds the Cheng Ho festival, a festival to commemorate the anniversary of Sam Poo Kong and the arrival of Cheng Ho in Semarang.

The Old City also provides glimpses of European culture. Blenduk Church, a Protestant church which was built by the Dutch in 1753, is a landmark of the Old City area, which was once the European commercial and cultural district. Additionally, Tanjung Emas Port in Semarang, which is the largest in Java, was constructed by the Dutch colonial government in the 19th century for use in exporting sugar and various agricultural products coming from rural Central Java.

Javanese architecture is less visible in central Semarang. It can primarily be seen in the city's outlying rural settlements and also at Puri Maerokoco, a heritage park located in a central recreation area of the city. This park was built in the 1980s by Governor Ismail.

Port of Tanjung Emas

Photo © flickr





A New Voice in the Provincial MUSRENBANG

Governments at any level in Indonesia commonly disseminate their development plans to the general public through the representatives of society segments (professional association, academia, etc.) in an annual event called Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Regional Discussion on Development Planning), or shortened as MUSRENBANG.

In 2020, the Governor of Central Java Province Ganjar Pranowo (GP) invited a group of young people to speak about their concerns, aspirations, and ideas, particularly in the creative economy sector.



I invite these young people to attend our Musrenbang with the purpose to listen to their fresh ideas. It happened just now that one of them gave new suggestions about creative industries. It is inspiring, and indicating that there are many things to be done in order to increase our economic growth.

Ganjar Pranowo (GP),
Governor of Central Java Province,
March 2020

2. Culture, arts and civic policy

At a civic level, Semarang Municipality works towards two main missions: to create a 'civilised and high quality of life for its citizens'; and to 'strengthen the local economy based on its potential and building a conducive business climate'.

- The first mission includes the development of a proposal for Kota Lama (Old City) to become a UNESCO World Heritage site, integrating arts festivals, heritage tours, and cultural community festivals, and fostering the development of local culture.
- The second mission aims to increase the capacity of the regional economy by focusing on the potential of tourism and human-centred design. With a tourism tagline "Ayo Wisata ke Semarang", or "Let's Visit Semarang", local revenue from the tourism sector in Semarang City contributes significantly to the total regional tax revenue, reaching around Rp 200 billion in 2019.

Cultural strategic planning within the city focuses on two main themes: **tourism** and the **new creative economy**.

In terms of tourism, in 2018, the total budget allocated to Semarang's tourism and culture programme was 20 billion rupiahs. According to Semarang's Medium Term Regional Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah / RPJMD) the priority of urban development, particularly at the Department of Culture and Tourism, is to strengthen regional economic competitiveness, with a focus on increasing the number of visitors. This includes through development of tourist destinations and activities, and the development of tourism 'cities' in the form of tourism areas and ecotourism sites. Beyond this, there is a thematic focus on three main aspects of tourism: religious, cultural, and culinary.

In terms of the creative economy, based on an assessment carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2019, Semarang's creative economy has the greatest potential within in the fashion sub-sector. However, in order to escalate the overall potential of the creative economy in Semarang, the municipal government formed the Semarang Creative Economy Committee in 2019, with key tasks to:

- Act as intermediaries among policy makers, creative economy actors, and interested third parties seeking to develop Semarang's creative economy;
- Strengthen networks and coordination among the city's national and international creative communities;
- Develop and implement strategic programmes to accelerate the development of the city's creative economy.

In terms of further support to foster the creative economy, Semarang municipality has built a number of hubs and centres, including the Semarang Digital Creative Centre, the Small & Medium Enterprise (SME) Gallery, and the Creative Industry Gallery, each of which are located in Kota Lama (Old City).

**Bloomery Patisserie
at Semarang Gallery
in 2020**

Photo © Semarang Gallery



Semarang smart city – shifting arts to digital format

Since 2013, Semarang has sought to implement an urban development approach based around the Smart City concept. The six indicators of Semarang Smart City are Smart Governance, Smart Branding, Smart Economy, Smart Living, Smart Society and Smart Environment.

Under this, Semarang is now supported by 4G network. There is also public Wi-Fi in government buildings and museums. The facilities include the installation of free Wi-Fi areas, an online licensing system, an integrated city-wide control system in the Situation Room at Semarang City Hall, and series of digital mechanisms for direct public liaison with city authorities, including the “Lapor Hendri” (Report to Hendri) mechanism for communicating directly with the city mayor.



We keep encouraging collaboration; Semarang has proven the importance and benefit of partnership through Smart City programme with Batang, Rembang, Klaten in Central Java, and even with Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan.

Hendrar Prihadi,
Mayor of Semarang

To support tourism, the government released two digital applications: Lunpia, a digital platform developed by Semarang City Department of Culture and Tourism that can be used by domestic and foreign visitors to navigate and travel around Semarang; and BRT Trans Semarang that can be used to show estimated time of arrival, or to direct to the nearest Trans Semarang bus station.



Innovation in streaming services and marketplaces is the most feasible in the recent times, especially for creative industries activities, which have been happening from home anyway. However, the effort to shift the delivery of arts and cultural products into digital medium, such as virtual exhibitions, face the challenge of monetisation, or gaining real income. Therefore, the role of local governments is quite significant, particularly in encouraging Corporate Social Responsibility to direct its support to art and cultural events and activities.

Akhmad ‘Adin’ Horidin,
founder of Kolektif Hysteria and former Chair of Central Java Creative Economy Committee

Culture and environment

Semarang is particularly active in terms of environmental management. For example, there are ongoing initiatives for the renovation or restoration of green open space, turning unused land into city parks or revitalising neglected parks into active parks: in 2018 there were 29 such projects underway in Semarang, and the city is home to 259 parks and green spaces, both private and public.

Between 2012 and 2018, Semarang won the Adipura Award for 6 years in a row: an award for cities in Indonesia which are successful in cleaning and managing the urban environment.

In 2020, the city won the South-East Asia-wide ACTCS (ASEAN Clean Tourist City Standard) award for 2020-2022. Semarang earned the title due to a number of programmes such as Semarang Won't Litter Movement, reducing vehicle emissions, and increasing the amount of green public space.¹

The Thematic Village programme is an innovative programme of Semarang municipality to improve basic housing provision. It aims to address issues of urban slums by improving the basic housing infrastructure and environmental quality of these settlements, actively involving local communities in maintaining their environment and raising social and economic potential.

Examples of Thematic Villages in Semarang

“Miroto, The Lungs of Semarang (Miroto Paru-Parune Kutho)” Thematic Village²

Miroto is one of the 15 sub-districts in Central Semarang. Kampung Miroto was a slum area which has been reconstructed

as a ‘thematic village’. Interventions include a maintained gardens and allotments with various plants for a ‘living pharmacy’. In 2016, Miroto was given the nickname “The Lungs of Semarang”

- Other than its environmentally-related activities, Miroto is actually known as “Kampung Barongsai” (Lion Dance Kampong), since there is a house of a Barongsai and Barongsai costume maker who has been living in the area since 1978 and bringing income to the local communities.



This area is the centrepiece of Semarang City, therefore its cleanliness should always be maintained.

Sri Ananingsih,
Head of Miroto Sub-District

De Jamoer Thematic Village³

Sumurboto village is well known for its oyster mushroom cultivation and cuisine. The “thematic village” status has motivated De Jamoer’s inhabitants to increase agro-industry-based entrepreneurship, thereby reducing unemployment and increasing local wellbeing, income, and prosperity.

¹ <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/01/20/semarang-named-cleanest-tourist-destination-in-southeast-asia.html>

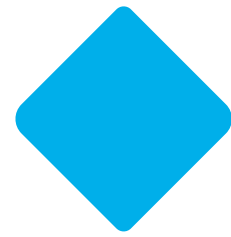
² <http://miroto.semarangkota.go.id>

³ <http://sumurboto.semarangkota.go.id/kampung-tematik/kampung-tematik>



The Community Wellness Movement at Miroto, The Lungs of Semarang (Miroto Paru-Parune Kutho)” Thematic Village

Photo © Miroto Semarang



3. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Semarang's Old Town has a rich mix of tangible and intangible heritage assets, many of which have been refurbished to operate as hubs for contemporary cultural activities. The city's suburbs are also home to a range of platforms and spaces for culture, including a number of community-led collectives and collaborative hubs whose activities are central to Semarang's emerging cultural life.



In the midst of its economic and technological development, the city has been able to maintain a heterogeneous culture. A harmony between Javanese, Chinese, Arabic and Dutch culture can be felt in the city.

Semarang,
The Multicultural City⁴

Cultural institutions (selected)

Kota Lama area (Old City area)⁵

Known as "Little Netherlands", the Old City is one of the main tourist destinations in Semarang.

Led by the Oen Foundation, dozens of ancient Dutch heritage buildings have been renovated since 2012, including Emmanuel Church or Blenduk Church which is one of the area's icons.

In recognition of the Old City's role within Semarang's cultural life, it is also host to a number of civic-built cultural hubs and centres, including the Semarang Digital Creative Centre, the Small & Medium Enterprise (SME) Gallery, and the Creative Industry Gallery.

Semarang Contemporary Art Gallery⁶, est. 2001

Established in 2001, Semarang Gallery is situated in the heart of the city. Focusing on the artworks of contemporary Asian artists, especially those from Indonesia. In 2008, the gallery moved to a new location, Taman Srigunting Street in Semarang's old city, linking it with the city's heritage of Dutch colonial architecture as well as contemporary cultural tourism. The gallery owner, Chris Dharmawan, is a collector and art philanthropist strongly associated with Semarang's cultural life.

Museum Lawang Sewu⁷

Lawang Sewu is a colonial-era heritage building. Previously, the initial function was for office administration activities. Today it operates as a museum and visitor attraction.

Museum Jamu Nyonya Meneer⁸, est 1984

The Nyonya Meneer Jamu Museum is the first herbal medicine museum in Indonesia. Established in 1984, this museum is intended as a cultural heritage to preserve ancestral knowledge and traditions for younger generations.

⁴ <http://www.obgolf.co.id/>

⁵ https://youtu.be/00wp_xcfzso

⁶ <https://www.semaranggallery.com>

⁷ <https://idetrips.com/lawang-sewu-en/>

⁸ <http://kemuseum.org/museum/museum-jamu-nyonya-meneer/>

Museum Ranggawarsita⁹

As the largest provincial museum in Indonesia, the Ranggawarsito Museum of Central Java has a collection of over 50,000 artifacts, focusing particularly on traditional and contemporary arts and culture of Java. The facilities include four permanent exhibition buildings, each consisting of 2 floors, and one 'gold collection' room.

Klenteng Sam Poo Kong¹⁰

The uniquely-designed Klenteng Sam Poo Kong is considered as one of the oldest Chinese temples in Semarang. The temple, which is located on Jalan Simongan Raya, is open to the public. In addition to religious events, the temple complex also hosts regular cultural events

Lingkar Theatre¹¹

Founded in 1980, Linkar Theatre is based within the Faculty of Cultural Studies at the Universitas Brawijaya (UB). It is seen as pioneering in the establishment of contemporary arts performance and theatre in Semarang.

⁹ http://museumindonesia.com/museum/34/1/Museum_Ranggawarsito_Semarang

¹⁰ <http://sampoongong.co.id>

¹¹ <https://fib.ub.ac.id/lingkar-theatre-cabuh/>



EMPU exhibition with a fashion show on a train was launched at co-working space Collabox Creative Hub, celebrating natural dyed fiber fabrics.

Photo © Collabox Creative Hub

Creative hubs and marketplaces

Semarang is home to a number of creative hubs and collective creative bodies. This includes recent civic-sponsored institutions such as the Semarang Creative Hub, the Semarang Digital Creative Centre, and the Creative Industry Gallery. The most longstanding and influential platforms include independent organisations such as Kolektif Hysteria and PekaKota.

Kolektif Hysteria¹²/ Grobak Hysteria

Kolektif Hysteria call themselves a “collaboratorium and creative impact hub”. It established in 2004 with the goal of establishing a healthy, empowering, and sustainable ecosystem for arts and creativity within Semarang. In addition to facilitating art projects, Hysteria also coordinates interdisciplinary exchange at local, national and global levels on issues of creativity, art, community, youth and urban-social development. The core team currently consists of 10 people with backgrounds in fine arts, graphic design, Indonesian and English literature,

- In 2008, Hysteria established the Grobak Art Kos¹³ art space, which functions as a hub and a place of discourse. Grobak Hysteria organises exhibitions, workshops, print zines, film screenings, festivals and archiving. In 2011, Hysteria attained a legal status that strengthened its position as a hub for many urban activities in Semarang.
- In February 2020, Kolektif Hysteria won the Grand Prize at the Youfab Awards in Tokyo, Japan, a global competition supporting technological innovation from artists, innovators and makers. Kolektif Hysteria’s entry was a proposal for Penta K Labs, a site-specific art project incorporating artificial intelligence, big data analysis, and the internet of things as a means to present organisational works that directly touch reality rather than rely solely on advanced technology.



Our works are platforms and festivals. Artwork is network, and the task of art is social engineering. We are using technology to connect the complex networks of individuals, campuses, communities and cities in a festival that responds to the specific issues in a particular space.

Akhmad ‘Adin’ Horidin,
Director of Hysteria¹⁴

PekaKota¹⁵

PekaKota describes itself as a ‘citizen urbanism’ project, encouraging an individual sense of ownership towards the city by involving residents in identifying and designing solutions. PekaKota was initiated in 2012 as a collaboration between Hysteria and British Council Indonesia, where a gathering of various urban thinkers (journalists, researchers, academics, and related NGOs) was followed up with the creation of a new platform, “Unidentified Group Discussion”. This new platform focuses on strengthening individual and community capacity for urban improvement through the identification, distribution and application of knowledge. After a series of pilot projects, and following the Future Cities Festival in 2014, the group adopted the format of the PekaKota platform, based on the principle that building the basis of urban knowledge and empowering its internal hubs serve as a better means for change.

¹² <https://www.instagram.com/grobakhysteria/?hl=en>

¹³ <https://grobakhysteria.or.id/en/>

¹⁴ Interview with CIPG

¹⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/pekakota/?hl=en>



Particularly in Semarang, we'd like to further explore both the government's and the people's plans and efforts to create a comprehensive image of our city, before interpreting it into an official city branding.

Rizkiana,
PekaKota team¹⁶

Semarang Creative Hub, est 2019¹⁷

Semarang Creative Hub is a recently-established initiative by the Semarang City Government to support the creative economy within the city. It primarily operates as a co-workspace and resource centre, while also providing seminars and networking events for creative enterprises.

Semarang Creative Industry Gallery, est 2019¹⁸

The Semarang Creative Industry Gallery is a city-sponsored gallery space in Old Town which enables creative SMEs to present their activities and display and sell their products. Curated by the gallery itself, and aligned with the tourism market, products include fashion, culinary, furniture, and handcrafted goods.

Semarang Digital Kreatif (Semarang Digital Creative), est 2016¹⁹

Established in 2016 by the civic authorities working with private sector partners, Semarang Digital Kreatif is a hub and co-working space for digital creatives and start-ups. In addition to work space and resources, the hub provides events and activities to support creation, connection, and collaboration between digital communities.

Hetero Space Semarang, est 2021²⁰

A collaboration between Central Java Province, Semarang city authorities and private sector enterprise Impala Space, Hetero Space is a coworking space for the development of creative SMEs in Central Java.

Collabox Creative Hub²¹

Collabox is the first creative hub and co-working space in Semarang for entrepreneurs, freelancers and business people engaged in the creative industries. With a particular focus on textiles and fashion, the hub offers office and workshop space, events, training and a marketplace.

Impala Space²²

Impala Space is a collaborative co-working space for creatives based in the Old City. Along with facilities and rooms for conferences and meetings, the space organises programmes of events associated with SMEs, start-ups and the digital economy.

Bunker Coffee and Bistro²³

A café hosting informal creative hub and co-working events in Castle Bar Semarang.

3/4 Coworking space²⁴

A co-working space for students, freelancers, communities and startups, focusing on collaboration and mutual support.

¹⁶ Interview with CIPG

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vap-v1A42E>

¹⁸ <https://www.bankjateng.co.id/en/creative-industry-galleries-in-the-old-city-of-semarang/>

¹⁹ <https://sdk.semarangkota.go.id/web/>

²⁰ <https://hetero.space/>

²¹ <https://en.collabox.id/>

²² <http://www.impala.space/>

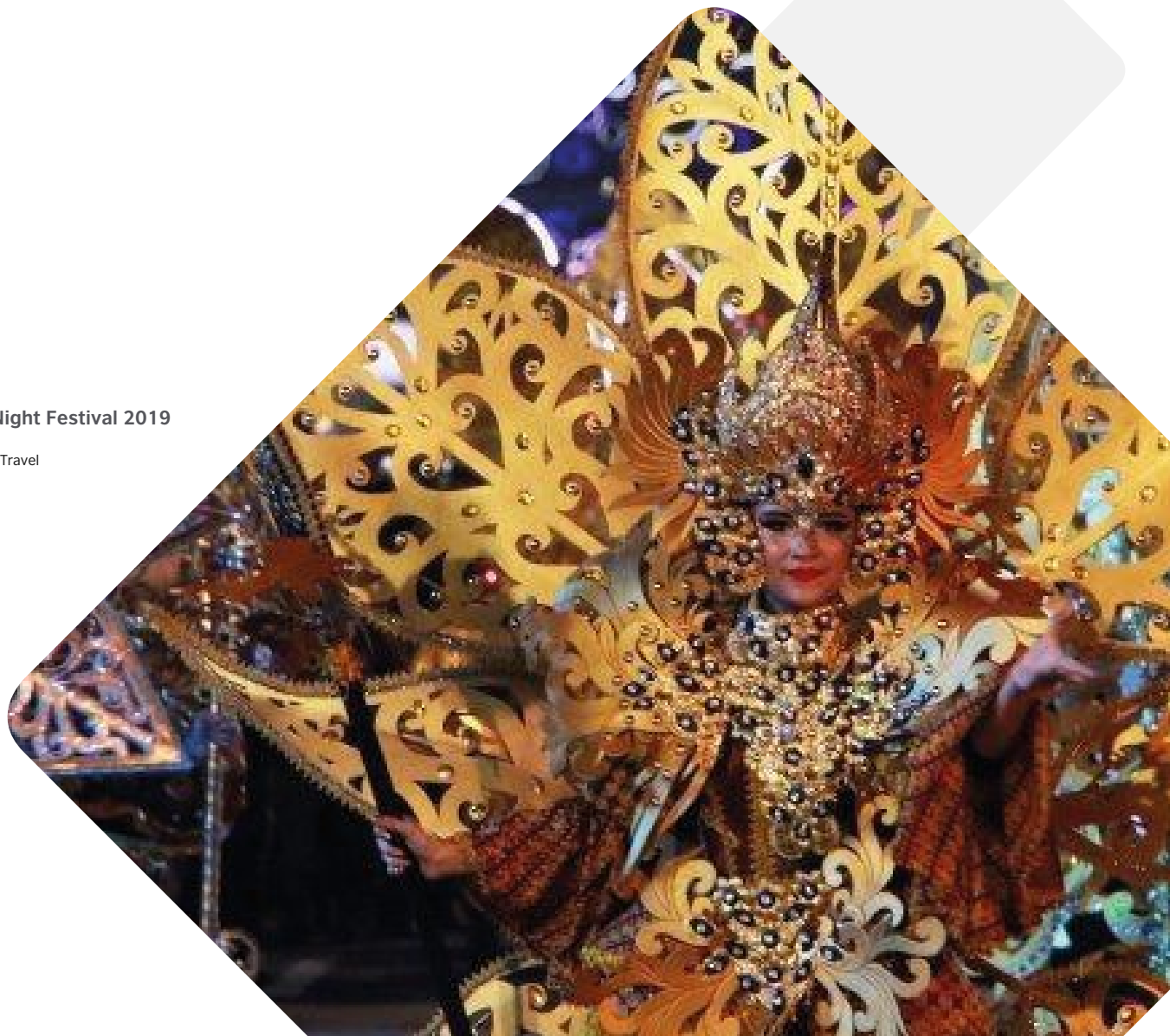
²³ <https://bunker.castlesemarang.com>

²⁴ <https://www.tigaperempat.space/>



Semarang Night Festival 2019

Photo © Hipwee Travel



Creative enterprises (selected)

Semarang's leading creative enterprises reflect the city's reputation as a centre for textile and fashion design, with young and emerging designers working with established brands, or collaborating with others in forming their own enterprises. Semarang has produced a great number of young designers, and in 2020 was home to at least 50 professional designers and 3,500 young designers. In addition to online 'distro' stores and clothing lines, Semarang's couture is also associated with the emergence of a contemporary form of Semarang Batik, where traditional Batik patterning and folkloric motifs have been adapted into contemporary visual design.²⁵

Ina Priyono, fashion designer²⁶

Ina Priyono is a Semarang-based fashion designer specialising in women's modest wear. Having studied in the field of economics, Ina learned how to design clothes by herself. In 2012 she joined the Indonesian Fashion Entrepreneurs Designer Association. As the owner of the boutique Ina Priyono Muslim Wear, she has often participated in fashion events, both at home and overseas.

Dea Valencia, designer and entrepreneur, Batik Kultur²⁷

Dea Valencia is a young fashion entrepreneur and founder of Batik Kultur. Dea, born 1994, started her journey by trading her mother's old Batik, and then started Batik Kultur by working with one tailor in a corner of his house. This Batik enterprise now employs over 150 staff, with a dedicated workshop and an international profile, selling to Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and more.

Agied Derta, fashion designer²⁸

Agied Derta is fashion designer and former geologist. While he has attained prominence for his GYD collections²⁹, he is a relative newcomer to the fashion industry, winning the Sakura Collection Asia Students Award in 2015.

Plangtown.co clothing line³⁰

Plangtown.co is a Semarang-based fashion collective, focussing on streetwear and skatewear. Working exclusively with local designers for their own product, Plangtown.co also supports and cooperates with other local fashion labels, both in terms of design and product placement.

Smith clothing line³¹

Smith is an Indonesian fashion label located in Semarang, established in 2010. Focusing on streetwear, they also work with local designers to provide shirts, belts, bags and wallets.

Angela Chung, fashion designer³²

Angela Chung is an Australian designer based in Semarang. With a workshop and boutique, her work focuses on contemporary style, craftsmanship and couture-led detail. She has an international clientele, and her designs have been exhibited at Hong Kong Fashion Week and Indonesia Fashion Week.

²⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336889917_Semarang%27s_Batik_Folklore_and_Its_Application_in_Contemporary_Fashion

²⁶ <https://www.genpi.co/gaya-hidup/9928/desainer-ina-priyono-hadirkan-tren-busana-ramadhan-2019?page=3>

²⁷ <https://www.batikkultur.com>

²⁸ <https://www.instagram.com/agieddertagafar/?hl=en>

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/GYD-by-agied-derta-114006180392413/>

³⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/plangtownstore.id/?hl=en>

³¹ https://www.instagram.com/houseofsmith_smg

³² <https://angela-chung.com/>

**Chengho
Festival**

Photo ©
vegaviditama



Festivals

Semarang is home to a number of contemporary and traditional festivals that are gaining in popularity and are highly anticipated by both locals and visitors. Most prominent in terms of the city's heritage and tourism industries, is Semarang Old City festival and Chengho Festival.

Among the traditional festivals that are growing in popularity are *Dugderan*, held in the month of Ramadhan and featuring parades, percussion shows and fireworks, as well as presenting *Warak Ngendhog*, an imaginative creature that represents all cultures and ethnicities in Semarang.

Popokan is an event held in August, where people throw mud at each other, a symbol of throwing away misfortune, expressing gratitude for the abundant harvest, and of eliminating bad things without violence.

Megengan, meaning “holding back” in Javanese, is a community event held to curb bad deeds, where special food is served: “telur mimi” (stingray eggs that can only be found once a year) and “ketupat sumpil” (a variety of rice cake).

A more recent festival that is also widely popular is *Cap Go Meh*, celebrated 15 days after the Chinese New Year, or Imlek.



The name Cap Go Meh is known only in Indonesia, since it is derived from Hokkien language; while in other places the 15-days-after Imlek is known internationally as the Lantern Festival.

Dwi Susanto,
a lecturer in Indonesian Literature

The open celebration of this festival in Semarang is noteworthy because until 2000 such an open expression of Chinese tradition was officially prohibited. Particularly for Semarang, this has provided an opportunity for a city-scale festival with positive community benefits.

Festivals (selected)

Semarang Old City Festival (Festival Kota Lama/FKL)³³

Established by the Oen Foundation and held since 2012, this festival has attracted people from all over Indonesia, but has also gained popularity in The Netherlands. Developed primarily as a means of raising awareness of and preserving Semarang's Old Town heritage, FKL involves diverse activities including presentations of Dutch-Semarang art and cultural performances, fashion shows and exhibitions, parades, cuisine, tours, books and movies discussions, dancing competitions, and much more.

- In 2020, the festival was held virtually with the theme Kuna, Kini, Nanti (Ancient, Now, Upcoming) with support from Central Java Provincial Government, Semarang Municipality, Semarang Old City Area Management Institution (Badan Pengelola Kawasan Kota Lama/ BP2KL Semarang), The Indonesian Embassy in The Hague, and The Indonesian Ministry for Tourism and Creative Economy.

Chengho Festival³⁴

This civic-organised annual festival commemorates Admiral Cheng Ho's arrival in Semarang more than six centuries ago. Focusing particularly on Semarang's heritage and tourist profile, the festival presents a variety of events, including lion and hand dance performances, light shows, drumlek shows, art exhibitions and performances, culinary bazaars and fireworks.

Semarang Writers' Week³⁵

Semarang Writers' Week is an annual city-sponsored festival of literature and publishing, focusing on the development of local authors through events, readings, seminars and workshops.

³³ <https://festivalkotalama.com>

³⁴ <https://www.flynesia.com/cheng-ho-festival/>

³⁵ https://semarangkota.go.id/p/1450/semarang_writers_week_

Gebyur Bustaman³⁶

Designated by the government as a piece of intangible heritage, Gebyuran is a community ritual held a week before Ramadhan involving all residents in Bustaman village, where residents parade through the streets in order to throw water at each other.

Semarang Idecraft³⁷

Semarang Idecraft is an industry-facing event which aims to provide a platform for SMEs to strengthen their capacity, enable networking and expand their market access to various regions in Indonesia and the wider AEC (Asean Economic Community). The festival itself seeks to create a vehicle for direct business interaction between entrepreneurs, managers and SMEs.

Semarang Night Carnival³⁸

Semarang Night Carnival was initiated by the Semarang City Government in 2011. Celebrating the city's anniversary, Semarang Night Carnival actively involves the creative and cultural scene within Semarang, as well as cultural and community groups. Themed costume parades and performances are the main event.

Movers and shakers (selected)**Adam Muda³⁹**

Born in Semarang, Adam Muda is an advertising, communications and design specialist at Semarang's Design Clinic design studio, founded in 2003. With a broad portfolio of design undertaken for cities across Indonesia, he is particularly associated with the development and promotion of Semarang's creative profile.

Eko Ariwibowo⁴⁰

Eko Ariwibowo is Chairman of the Semarang Creative Economy Committee, and is currently working with city authorities and the creative industries in the development of a proposed Creative Semarang Festival. The festival would operate as a forum for collaborative work across sub-sectors, taking in performing arts, visual communication design, fashion, interior design, applications, games and other activities.

Ade Bakti⁴¹

Ade Bakti is Head of the Department of Arts at the Semarang Government Municipality for Arts and Tourism.

Yenny Megaputri

Yenny Megaputri is an architect and activist, strongly associated with the preservation and revitalisation of Old Town. Founder and chair of the Oen Foundation, she spearheaded the annual Old Town Festival and campaigned for the restoration of its buildings.

Anne Avantie⁴²

Anne Avantie is one of Indonesia's leading fashion designers. Born in Semarang in 1965, she is seen as having a key influence on the emergence of Semarang's fashion industry.

Chris Darmawan⁴³

Chris Darmawan is an art collector and philanthropist. Trained as an architect, he has a particular passion for contemporary art. He is the founder and owner of Semarang Contemporary Gallery, and works to develop young and emerging artists in Semarang.

Akhmad 'Adin' Horidin⁴⁴

Akhmad Horidin, better known as Adin Hysteria, is the founder of the Semarang collective Hysteria. A multidisciplinary media artist and social activist, as well as former Chair of Semarang's Creative Economy Committee, he is a key driver and advocate for Semarang's social and cultural development.

³⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_mip-soxZY

³⁷ <https://jadwalevent.web.id/semarang-ide-craft-2020>

³⁸ <https://jatengprov.go.id/beritadaerah/semarang-night-carnival-snc-kembali-hibur-warga-kota-semarang/>

³⁹ <https://impactive.id/profile-detail/member/adam-muda-37>

⁴⁰ <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/smcetak/baca/219220/beranda-ultima>

⁴¹ <https://www.instagram.com/disbudparkotasemarang/?hl=en>

⁴² <https://anneavantiemall.com>

⁴³ <https://www.instagram.com/chrisdarmawan/?hl=en>

⁴⁴ <https://www.britishcouncil.id/en/uk-indonesia-2016-18/our-stories/hysteria>



Earnight 2016 at Impala
Space organised by
endahNrhesa

Photo © Semarevent

Harjanto Halim⁴⁵

Halim is a businessman and philanthropist. He is CEO of food and drink company Marimas Putera Kencana, formed as an SME in Semarang and now a national brand. He is heavily involved in promoting and developing Semarang's cultural and tourist industries. As the Leader of the Semarang Chinatown Community for Tourism, Halim has built the Chinatown area as a tourist destination.

Hengki Koentjoro⁴⁶

Hengki Koentjoro is an accomplished and internationally-recognised photographer, specialising in black and white imagery and fine art photography. Born in Semarang, he studied in Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California.

Lina Soeratman⁴⁷

Lina Soeratman is the owner and founder of the Collabox Creative Hub, Semarang's first creative hub and co-working space for the creative industries. As such, he is a key enabler of Semarang's creative SMEs and cultural economy.

Anastasia Dwirahmi⁴⁸

Anastasia Dwirahmi is an author, researcher, archivist and activist involved in the preservation of Semarang's Old City.

Ina Priyono⁴⁹

Ina Priyono is an Indonesian fashion designer, owner of the Ina Priyono boutique, with a global profile in Muslim fashion. She is currently Head of the civic Chamber of Fashion, Semarang.

Revano Satria⁵⁰

Revano Satria is an architect, designer, restaurateur academic and creative entrepreneur. Owner and designer of Semarang's Ohana restaurant, he is known for providing services for design and construction down to furniture design and fabrication. RevaStudio has been recognised as one of Indonesia's top 50 Interior design companies. Revano's career has been marked with an extensive number of national and international awards.

⁴⁵ https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harjanto_Halim

⁴⁶ <https://theartling.com/en/artists/hengki-koentjoro/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.direktorijateng.com/2020/02/mengintip-collabox-creative-hub.html>

⁴⁸ <https://infotembalang.com/2020/05/07/podcast-dari-semarang-yang-wajib-masuk-playlist-kamu/>

⁴⁹ <https://stylo.grid.id/read/142033652/muslim-fashion-festi-val-2020-ina-priyono-hadirkan-koleksi-busana-muslim-etnik-the-guard-limit-20?page=all>

⁵⁰ <http://designers.org/profile.php?ID=221580>

Kid Fun programme,
teaching children the craft of
making wayang suket at Semarang
Old City Festival
(Festival Kota Lama/FKL)
in 2019

Photo © Semarevent



4. Other future trends, opportunities and links

At a general level, Semarang engages in a broad range of national and regional outward missions, including the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative, the Citynet urban development network, and the healthy cities summit by WHO.

In creative terms, particular opportunities arise from the increased support for Semarang's creative industries, emerging in part from the advocacy and successes of independent organisations and initiatives such as Hysteria and PekaKota. Semarang's Creative Economy Committee was formed in 2019 to escalate the partnerships between creative economy and cultural actors in Semarang. This has been followed by increased civic investment in supporting the city's creative economy through various cultural and creative hubs, as well as engagement with the private sector. Further to this, Semarang has also recently formed an intergovernmental partnership in tourism with Surakarta.

However, it remains the case that Old City of Semarang is still the centre of creative and cultural activities, where numerous cultural spaces and activities currently take place. As such, this area is the focus of the city's historic and contemporary cultural profile.



Semarang's cultural icons are mostly recent, formed from the influence of many cultures. Since the city is not founded on a single solid historical culture, it can therefore incarnate anything. Its position as a hub in Central Java should be utilized to form not just a city brand, but, more importantly, a distinctive and fluid cultural strategy.

Akhmad 'Adin' Horidin,
founder of Hysteria⁵¹

⁵¹ Interview with CIPG, 2021

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