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Jinju Samcheonpo Nongak  
(photo courtesy of Jinju Samcheonpo Nongak Preservation Society)

## DISCUSSION

# Arts and Cultural Activities under the Pandemic: Problems and How to Solve Them

## Discussants

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## Introduction

The “post-Covid-19 discourse” refers to the discussion of new conditions and circumstances of human life caused by Covid-19 and the directions for the future. Post-Covid-19 does not simply have the temporal meaning of “after coronavirus.” It assumes that the situation brought about by Covid-19 will last for a considerable period of time, and it means how we will adjust our lives to the new conditions of life. Furthermore, the discourse includes a phenomenon in which slowbalization, deglobalization or localization occur, rather than a continuous expansion of



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One topic we cannot forget in the post-Covid-19 discourse is “arts and cultural activities during the pandemic.” Prior to the pandemic, we thought most forms of artistic activities had to take place face-to-face, and arts and cultural activities were only made possible based on direct interaction between arts and the audience who come to enjoy them. This applied not only to the performing arts such as music, theater and dance, but also to visual arts such as painting, sculpture and design. Contact-free or “untact”—a new term coined in Korea that combines the prefix “un” and the word “contact”—situations in folk arts and crafts had hardly been considered.

Because of Covid-19, however, digital untact that minimizes human contact at work, at school and in daily life has become the norm and such trend cannot be undone. What used to be done face-to-face is now considered exceptional or abnormal, and it has become a common practice to communicate and live through digital media. This is the so-called “New Normal.” Arts and cultural activities are no exception. New York Philharmonic and Metropolitan Opera performs with no live audience, and we have no choice but to appreciate their performances through the digital media.

In such a situation, how arts and cultural activities in the field of crafts and folk art are carried out and will be continued has become a matter of great concern. The *International Journal of Crafts and Folk Arts* hopes to reflect this current situation in its inaugural issue under the theme “Arts and Cultural Activities under the Pandemic: Problems and How to Solve Them.”

**Q1** Economic and social activities have been hugely impacted by the pandemic, and arts and cultural activities have been hit the hardest. How can we continue to organize and run such activities while living under the pandemic? Please explain with particular emphasis on crafts and folk arts activities.

**JEONG** Switching to digital has helped people endure social distancing, quarantine and lockdown in order to stop the spread of Covid-19. Dramatic changes we are facing today due to the invention of computers and the Internet, the emergence of smartphones, and the development of AI are called the Fourth Industrial Revolution. I believe that the Revolution serves as a great breakwater for humanity to constantly produce culture and maintain civilization in the coronavirus situation.

I think folk arts and crafts are forced to adapt to the New Normal brought about by Covid-19 and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In addition, the Revolution allows us to experience new realities such as virtual, augmented and mixed reality, hologram technology, as well as various sensor technologies and touch sensitive devices. As the contact-free situation intensifies, we need to adjust ourselves to this new reality and make series of efforts.

First, we need to understand the significance and content of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and learn how to utilize the media and digital technologies that are at the center of the Revolution. Indeed, this is the sector that has been most neglected by the artists in the field of crafts and folk art.

Second, it is necessary to digitize various cultural activities, including crafts and folk arts. Systemizing and digitizing craft activities, as well as recording and digitizing the education and transmission of folk arts should be preceded. Furthermore, it is necessary to try to converge folk arts and media arts, crafts and media arts.

Third, every city needs to install media labs with digital equipment that can be shared between artists. In particular, given that there are many elderly artists in folk arts and crafts who are not good at using digital devices, there is a strong need to educate these professionals to teach the skills to satisfy their desire for expression.

**PASCUAL** This reply includes considerations to the first three initial questions. They are all very difficult, because of the fact that crafts and folk art activities very often rely on the collective, sharing spaces and creating unique moments.

First, it is important that the recommendations of the Health authorities are followed, and that the principles of physical distancing, use of time as well as hygiene are implemented very seriously.

Second, we need to keep our values and principles. Crafts and folk arts, as well as intangible heritage in general, are the best examples of “localisation” of development, that is, a close relationship between people, meaning and place. The pandemic illustrates that this connection today is more important than ever, and that our cycles of “production” and “consumption” need to become closer to the place we live, in social, economic, environmental and also cultural terms.

Third, the cycle of annual festivities that normally shape the calendar of the organisations and the individuals must be maintained. This cycle is very important for people, not only the actors of crafts and folk art activities, but also for all the community members. These activities are very important to keep the spirits high, to understand the long cycles of development, and to make people be sure that we can win the battle against the virus, as we always did in the past.

## BOONYASURAT

Arts and cultural activities have been impacted by the pandemic inevitably, but the relevant groups who earn their livelihoods from this field, for example, artisans, enterprises, and young entrepreneurs, still intend to create their artworks or crafts continuously. Instead of gathering, they have turned their own habitats into workplaces and now work there individually. The online communication and distribution have been developed for their elaborate crafts such as textiles, wood carvings, lacquerwares, silverwares, and Buddhist arts. The online distribution is currently an important solution to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. That being said, this new creative approach might be difficult to adopt for some elders, because of the lack of skills and knowledge of technology. Hence these individuals should be assisted by new generation or teenagers who can teach them how to use this new platform effectively.

Hmong hill tribe village, located near Suthep Temple, has always been a popular tourist attraction in Chiang Mai. Their well-known handicrafts help generate a lot of income, especially for ladies. The reduced number of visitors due to the pandemic restrictions has impacted their ways to earn for living, but villagers still keep creating their crafts. Chiang Mai Provincial Administration Organization and Chiang Mai University, as the main operation team for city development, have encouraged these villagers by developing creative online distribution for their products. This operation leads to knowledge integration and collaboration between local people, related specialists, and teenagers in the village. The teenagers, particularly, have been assigned to play a role as supporters of online distribution. This operation also contributes to the interaction between different generations,

indigenous knowledge transmission, and cultural heritage recognized by the youth.

**Q2** The current situation is making it difficult for each city to maintain the transmission of its intangible cultural heritage. How can each city continue to do this under the pandemic? What are creative and alternative methods that will enable cities to continue to educate and foster new talent in the field of intangible cultural heritage? Please explain in relation to crafts and folk arts.

**MINTY** Covid-19, despite its significant difficulties, has emphasised the potential of digital media in the documentation and transmission of knowledge. For some time, the digitisation of heritage objects and their availability on-line has been growing, led by museums and institutions like Google Culture. As technology becomes cheaper, there has been a proliferation of broadcast quality video making, as well as powerful online database programmes. Online tours and talks have also become more commonplace since Covid. Social media has made it possible to market to larger groups of people. These all create an opportunity to work with intangible heritage, through storytelling, using a multitude of platforms. People are increasingly interested not just in end products (craft works or performance), but are interested in hearing about the process of the making of art. They are interested to know about the maker. Short videos which address such interests are useful for a multitude of reasons, more especially as it develops an archive of intangible culture. Such an archive content can be categorised and made searchable, and the content can be drawn on over again. Makers can express themselves in their own language, thus ensuring authenticity. Captions and transcripts in other languages can ensure the traditions are shared beyond the region they come from.

**JEONG** One method of transmitting traditional arts in Korea is called *gujeon simsu* 口傳心授, which means communicating with words and teaching with a heart between a teacher and a disciple. It also implies the need to spend a long time together as partners. However, Covid-19 has made this kind of relationship difficult or even impossible. When the coronavirus worsened in Korea, public health emergency response system intensified, and many places like traditional arts center or preservation hall were closed. In such situations where face-to-face meetings were difficult, transmission was still possible thanks to the digital media.

From this spring, Jinju City has been developing an educational programme to teach traditional dances, mask dances, folk music and traditional music to the elderly, aged 60 or older, under the title “How About a Dance, Jinju?” However, these classes were soon closed and facilities were not available due to the spread

of the Covid-19. Instead of the face-to-face training, the instructors in charge of the classes produced videos of their lectures and distributed them to each student. They also conducted video lectures using Zoom. By regularly meeting the instructor through Zoom, and making videos of their own practices and sending them back to the instructors for feedbacks, the students' dance and musical instrument performance skills improved significantly. In this regard, I think we would still be able to achieve a level of success that is similar to actually attending classes, if we are suitably trained to utilize the digital media and technologies effectively.

### BOONYASURAT

The pandemic is changing the way cultural events are organized. To reduce the risk of COVID-19, we have decided to cancel some events or change their arrangement which are compatible with current situations. Songkran Festival was cancelled due to the pandemic, and a research was conducted questioning what people think if Songkran Festival is cancelled this year. The research found 80 percent of respondents to agree with this decision because the most important thing is to save lives and stay healthy; however, the festival can be held again next year if we can control the pandemic efficiently. Some of octogenarian respondents mentioned that the issue is acceptable because they have experienced this situation when Songkran Festival was cancelled due to political conflict, but after that it still has been held until present.

Inthakin Festival, the Buddhist event held in May, was formerly planned to be held during May 18-25, 2020. The festival should have been cancelled, but we decided to hold it by transforming the arrangement of the ceremony under the disease control measures and guidelines, because of its importance and our strong belief towards it. All traditional oblations were set up and original Buddhist rituals were performed perfectly by the main related stakeholders. The general public was not allowed to participate in the ceremonies due to the social distancing policy, but we provided a live broadcast of all the rituals to disseminate our sacred and auspicious event.

The project "Chiang Mai City of Crafts and Folk Art" has shown how the pandemic can have an impact on indigenous knowledge transmission, because people could not participate in cultural activities physically. Online crafts workshops have been operating to promote local wisdom and craftsman skills, such as basketworks, gold leaf crafts, and Akha tribe's embroideries. We have launched online call for registration and sent materials through postal service. Skillful artisans were invited to perform and their methods for the workshops were recorded. The videos have been broadcasted online, so people could watch them and create their own crafts. Moreover, people also have exchanged their useful technical knowledge by leaving comments online.

**Q3** The pandemic is inevitably changing the way culture is produced and consumed. Different ways to provide cultural services, such as performances with no live audience, video shooting and posting on YouTube, have emerged rapidly. However, these new communication methods are one-way rather than being two-way between cultural producers and consumers. What kind of issues can this cause and how can we solve them?

### MINTY

While it is true that there is a potential for online material to become one-way communication, this is not necessarily the case. A body of material online can be activated in various forms and requires an additional process to ensure that such mediation happens. Organisation and design are needed to ensure the material is activated. Mediation can take place through video conferencing platforms as well as through instant messaging. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Chat are among the many programmes providing ways to ensure communication through online conferencing. Some platforms allow for simultaneous translation in several languages, making them useful to reach different targeted audiences. A mediated online programme could take the form of a master class for example. This could include a blend of pre-recorded video materials followed by the master crafter/musician/performer speaking directly to the audience, or being filmed doing a small online group engagement. Successful examples exist, such as interaction online which include not just speaking, but actually having participants engage in a creative exercise, showing that online can indeed foster interactions. In addition, recent advances in virtual reality allow such sessions to be more immersive with several people involved, though this has certain motion limitations at present. Ideally, a specialised team is needed to ensure mediation if required. Ultimately however, any mediated online session needs to be carefully planned with the roles of the team clearly identified. Teams need a variety of skills, including specialised pedagogical, research and transmedia production skills to ensure an effective programme. There are also tech implications to ensure good sound and visuals.

### JEONG

The threat of Covid-19 has been a great stimulus for us to digitize the nation and its industry in line with the smart revolution. With the accelerated introduction of digital technology in the cultural sector, the nature and meaning of cultural activities have changed significantly. In fact, with the spread of Covid-19, non-contact or non-audience performances have increased dramatically in the field of arts and culture.

I believe that digital untacts might be a chosen trend that does not really disconnect or isolate individuals from one another; rather, it is a new way of connecting individuals that can sometimes create an even closer relationship than before. The younger generation, particularly, have

adapted well to the current untact situation caused by the Covid-19, and is now dubbed as “Corona generation.” They do not care much about the depressing reality of the frequent closure of cultural spaces in the aftermath of the coronavirus. This is because they have a new, open virtual reality that permits them to communicate and exchange their cultural capital.

They have overcome the coronavirus, for example, with the digital twin technology. This technology simulates situations that can occur in reality by creating twin models of objects in reality on a computer. This is a technology that replicates reality onto the digital world, but the Corona generation feels closer to this digital world created by cultural technology. What is more, they feel more empathetic toward such art forms that show a high level of aesthetic sensibility through this technology. Therefore, it is quite possible that artists who have control over various digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram will secure both artistry and success in the cultural sector.

In this regard, it is a kind of prejudice to think that cultural services and communication using digital technology are one-sided. Rather, we might be able to overcome the one-sidedness of existing art by effectively utilizing digital technology. Through smartphones, we can immediately appreciate artistic activities, present our opinions on and evaluate them, as well as participate in art projects on our own.

**BOONYASURAT** Disseminating arts and cultures through YouTube might be one-way communication; however, the process of making each video is also important and should not be overlooked. The videos are made from brainstorming concepts between specialists and related persons to find creative ways for interpretation. This kind of operation could strengthen the network of people who devote themselves to preserve their valuable arts and cultures. It might also be said that disseminating arts and cultures through YouTube is one of the effective ways to transmit methods of making crafts or choreography, even though teachers and practitioners are unable to meet each other physically. The practitioners can learn from the videos and practice by themselves for an unlimited time. Moreover, they can pause the videos and go over some parts whenever they wish to.

Chiang Mai currently has been operating online crafts workshops, by sharing videos of traditional crafts making for people who are interested. This operation, however, is just small part of art and culture transmission process, not the whole. When the situation with the pandemic withers or when we can control it efficiently, all of the practitioners should assemble to share their experiences, improve their skills by product expansion, and develop crafts network in more sustainable ways.

**4** Has your city introduced any public support systems in order to preserve and maintain the arts and cultural ecosystem during the pandemic? If so, please provide some examples.

**PASCUAL** I live in Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. The City Council has launched three “packages of measures” to support the arts and cultural ecosystem—the first in March, the second in May, and the third a few days ago (on 15 October 2020).

The first package included an extraordinary fund of one million euros aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis, by paying special attention to those weaker structures linked to grassroots culture in all its variants and sectors (local theatres, spaces creation, cultural cooperatives and other entities in the sector, including intangible heritage) as well as the reorganization of the calendar of major cultural events and music festivals that take place in Barcelona. Other measures included flexibility or cancellation of fees and tributes.

The second package included 11 measures to support the cultural sectors and to strengthen support for the local cultural networks with direct aid. These measures included a fund of 500,000 euros allocated to fund new innovative cultural projects and to adapt cultural spaces in the post-COVID stage, a fund of 1,670,000 euros for direct support to artists and groups, plus an additional one million euros to strengthen all planned communication actions. The package also included the organisation of the Summer festival (the Grec 2020 Festival) with all adaptation and mitigation measures, and a programme that included 80 productions in response to the need to revitalize the local arts sector. Also, the package included a new Citizen’s Office of Culture, a new clearing house and welcoming space to support and advise the cultural fabric of the city.

The third package includes: (a) 225 exceptional grants devoted to creation, research and innovation projects in the field of culture, science and education; (b) a fund of 600,000 euros to the acquisition of works of art through the MACBA—Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art—with the aim of recognizing a generation of artists that have not yet been acknowledged and that needs to be recognised as valuable; this fund is also a way to send resources to the whole fabric linked to art in Barcelona; (c) there will be a joint programme for city’s three major musical facilities: the Auditorium, the Palau de la Música and the Liceu Opera House to promote a system of grants for the artistic promotion of musicians in the field of contemporary music and opera; (d) the online activities of the municipal museums and heritage centres will be strengthened, promoting the generation of digital content and the technological equipment of the spaces; and (e) Barcelona libraries will acquire tablets worth 825,000 euros for access to digital educational resources for vulnerable students.

It is also important to note that the UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) Culture Committee published the report “Culture, Cities and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Part 1: Documenting the Initial Measures and Drafting Challenges Ahead” with examples of similar measures adopted by the cities from all around the world.

continuously support arts and cultural activities. This project aimed to provide local arts and culture organizations with opportunities to perform and bring vitality back to citizens through appreciation of arts and culture.

The city also provided a total of two billion won to five projects: Traditional Arts and Culture Performing Organizations Activity Support Project; Young Artist Support Project; Life Culture Festival; Yeongnam-Honam Region Master Dancer and Singer Support Project; and Local Arts and Culture Support Project. For example, the “Traditional Arts and Culture Performing Organizations Support Project” selected and supported 29 artists and organizations that have transmitted Jinju’s traditional arts and culture with a budget of about 300 million won. The selected groups held no-audience performances, and they were also aired on local broadcasters or uploaded on YouTube. Through this project, about 40 local cultural assets in the crafts and folk art field have been digitized, which will contribute to the establishment of local arts and culture archives.

## BOONYASURAT

Arts and cultural resources have contributed to the generation of higher income and well-being status for local people, but the pandemic has inevitably impacted on the way they are produced and consumed. To maintain the arts and cultural ecosystem, we have introduced public support project with reskill and upskill concepts which inspire people to realize their valuable indigenous knowledge and revise their potentials to the fullest. Baan Tawai, the biggest and well-known wood carving village in Chiang Mai, has been chosen as a case study for “Commemoration Museum Establishment Project,” under the cooperation between communities, Tawai Temple, Ton Kaew Phadung Pittayalai School, Chiang Mai Provincial Administration Organization, and Chiang Mai Cultural Office. The project has encouraged local people to revise their original craftsman skills and seek sustainable ways to preserve them. Buddha wooden carving and Rak Samuk sculpting are good examples. Rak Samuk is the material made from the mixture of Samuk, black lacquer, wood, oil and lime neutralized by turmeric. The material can be shaped into the desired sculpture, and when dried, it becomes hard and durable. These exceptional skills have been improved under the brainstorming between artisans and specialists which led to the expansion of its product types. Moreover, a local museum has been established, in order to gather all indigenous knowledge and craftsman skills of the community and to raise awareness of local wisdom. The museum is located in the area of Tawai Temple, which is the center of community and also a place for knowledge exchange, creativity, and best sustainable practices for dissemination. Chiang Mai actually has been operating various public support activities to preserve and maintain arts and cultural ecosystem since the beginning of the initiative project. Cultural capital is always a driving force for city development.

## 5 What are the social values and public roles of arts and culture we need to pay more attention to in the pandemic era? In particular, how can arts and culture contribute to overcoming social disconnection and isolation?

### JEONG

New viruses may continue to threaten our lives even after Covid-19. We therefore need to think about the fundamental cause of the Covid-19 pandemic. I think the main cause lies in the destruction of nature for mass production and consumption, and the invasion of wildlife habitats such as bats in the process of urbanization. In other words, the current situation that we face and will continue to face stems from the view that regards nature as an object of exploitation and use for human convenience. Here, it is necessary to recognize the value of arts and culture anew.

First, traditional arts contain wisdom and knowledge about the appropriate relationship between humans and nature. Korean farmers’ performance, mask dance and shamanistic ritual, for example, show us how humans and nature should have a co-existing relationship. The same goes for crafts. Most traditional crafts use wood and other natural materials and show how precious such natural objects should be dealt with.

Second, arts and culture, including traditional arts, have played a role in seeking and imagining new ways of life based on reflection on the way we have lived so far. If there is anything we have gained from the pandemic is that we have the opportunity to reflect on the way of life we have lived, and have the courage to seek a new way of life. It is thought that it is the value of arts and culture that makes such reflection and search possible.

Third, arts and culture can contribute to healing psychological phenomena

### JEONG

Jinju holds major festivals in spring and autumn: Jinju Nongae Festival in spring and Jinju Namgang Yudeung Festival and Gaecheon Art Festival in autumn. This year, however, all of these festivals have been cancelled due to Covid-19. The cancellation of the festivals not only shrinks the city’s arts and cultural activities, but also makes the livelihood of artists’ organizations and individual artists very difficult. Indeed, many artists are currently going through economic hardships.

The city of Jinju has implemented a public competition project three times this year to solve the difficulties of artists caused by Covid-19 and

such as “Corona blue” (depression) and “Corona red” (anger) in pandemic situation. Arts and culture can help alleviate unstable emotional states such as anxiety, depression, distrust, suspicion and aggressiveness, by establishing a sense of community based on shared cultural experience. Also, the paradox and satire found in traditional arts like mask dance can awaken people to an attitude of life that does not stick to any ideology, perspective, or way of life.

**6** The pandemic has disproportionately impacted the vulnerable groups and individuals. What kind of cultural policy should we introduce in order to address the risk of such groups becoming socially polarized?

**PASCUAL** Let me take together questions 5 and 6. This crisis shows that arts and culture contribute to overcoming social disconnection and isolation, but also that (mainly in big cities) there are still many obstacles that prevent people to participate in cultural life. I understand that cultural activities need to be based on human rights. Let me be explicit (I am sure that readers will share with me this fact): only if we acknowledge that the participation in cultural life is a right, and then we can build policies, programmes and projects to locally guarantee, protect and promote this right or (if not) the arguments for public policies become very weak. Well, then, if we are all convinced that the participation in cultural life is a right, then we need to seriously consider the obstacles that prevent participation.

Obstacles are very diverse, and include issues related to distance (not everybody can access the cultural practices and events), gender (still, the narratives of many cultural activities exclude women), education or class (not everybody has the possibility to participate); sometimes there are obstacles related to language and also to cultural exclusion (indigenous peoples are still excluded from the range of cultural activities that are recognised as such).

Certainly, the analysis of obstacles are more urgent in big cities than in small and intermediary cities (where access to information is easier, both formally and informally), but an in-depth analysis of obstacles is something important. We need to guarantee that overcoming social disconnection and isolation is a priority for all cultural organisations.

**JEONG** One group of people who has faced greatest difficulties due to the pandemic is professional artists who make living by their performances. I will take Keundeul, one of Jinju’s professional artists groups as an example. Keundeul is a group that usually performs madanggeuk, created

by combining traditional mask dance with modern theater techniques, and bringing together traditional arts such as pungmul (folk music), pansori (epic chant) and gutnori (performance by shamans). As the name suggests, madanggeuk is an open-air performance that traditionally takes place in a yard. This particular group performs about 100 times a year in order to maintain the group, and pay adequate wages to its members. After the breakout of Covid-19, however, any indoor or outdoor performances were almost impossible due to regulations on social distancing. The long-planned festivals were also cancelled, and Keundeul lost many opportunities to perform. As such, during the pandemic, artists are one of the most vulnerable groups, representing the poorer end of the social polarization. Therefore, I would like to suggest the following measures to help those in the arts and culture sector.

First, digitization is the way for artists to continue their artistic activities during the current non face-to-face situation. The most urgent task is to provide them with equipment that will allow shooting and recording their works and performances, as well as training them to use the equipment effectively and adequately. To this end, a media lab should be built so that various art groups can share and utilize its equipment and manpower.

Second, unemployment benefits and relief funds should be paid to the artists. Based on the number of performances and income in recent years, the welfare system for artists should be established so they can maintain the standard of living they had before the pandemic.

Third, programmes should be developed and provided so that artists can focus on improving their skills while they cannot perform. It would be ideal to offer online courses (non-face-to-face) such as directing technique, theater theory, traditional arts, aesthetics, and art and English.

Fourth, as implemented by Jinju City, non-face-to-face and non-audience performances should be digitized by using the highest level of equipment and manpower to establish an archive of local arts and culture, and make them available for continuous use even after the current situation abates. In the case of Jinju, if the exclusive use of festival budget is properly secured when the festival cannot be held, the city would then be able to support and implement a significant part of aforementioned measures and programmes.

**MINTY** For people who are aged, disabled or financially challenged, there are additional hurdles in using online materials. Cultural policy can allow more digital enablement by providing, at its basic level, access to data and to devices such as tablets. However, to reach those who are not comfortable with the technology, additional support is needed, including training and support to ensure that engagement is possible. This requires municipal services which could be based in, for example, libraries that provide a

mobile service to reach those needing support of some kind. These can also store and ensure the sanitisation of loaned devices. Supportive teams, who are empathetic, understand the limitations of the targeted audiences, and have good pedagogical skills are also needed. Despite the pandemic, small groups with safe distancing and masks are also possible, especially for older people who need and benefit from such interaction. Where protocols are maintained, it should not prevent carefully managed programmes from being produced. Cultural policies that enable such services need to identify the shifts in textual form and be linked to appropriate budgets. This requires conducting a study covering the nature of the vulnerability in an area, the extent of the need, and the intervention to address the need. Ideally, before a major cultural policy shift is made, possible interventions need to be tested with local people to assess if it is indeed appropriate for the audience. A pilot intervention would allow for a more nuanced and locally specific response which would influence the written policy.

#### BOONYASURAT

Chiang Mai has been developing policies and implementing projects for vulnerable groups and individuals, especially in under-represented areas. Women Entrepreneur, the concept that empowers the roles of the youth and women in society, has been adapted with the projects to promote wider participation in cultural life for these groups. The projects have developed with initiative approaches which provide them more social space for better interaction with others. Arts and crafts have been brought as a driver for these approaches, which in turn leads to the recognition of cultural diversity by the general public. The projects can help reduce social inequality and mitigate the risks of experiencing social polarization between these groups.

Recently, we have operated our public support project that provides tablet for people in Hmong hill tribe village, under the cooperation between UNESCO, Samsung Electronics Thailand, and related sectors, since the pandemic has impacted their ways to earn for living. The specific orientation was held for them to build understanding and share knowledge about online distribution and effective marketing. Most importantly, the online distribution helps to promote not only their traditional arts and crafts, but also remarkable ways of life to be recognized widely. Furthermore, the project can foster the extension of network, vulnerable groups and other sectors that mutually depend on each other.

**Q7** The creative tourism industry will be one of the hardest hit during the pandemic. How could this industry find a way out if people have difficulties visiting tourist sites physically to have hands-on experience and satisfy their senses?

#### MINTY

Interest in cultural tourism, the culture of others, was high before the pandemic, with many visiting sites, festivals and places of culture. Creative tourism, a more participatory form of tourism, where visitors take courses such as art/craft making/cooking/performance, was also growing.

Cultural tourism was also facing challenges in some places, overrun by mass tourism (eg. Angkor Watt), or where traditional life was being negatively impacted (eg. Barcelona). As a result, for these places, the pandemic has been a chance to reassess its strategies in positive ways, even if it has meant a decrease in the number of visitors. Virtual tours have become popular during the pandemic.

Niche cultural tourism was also impacted. This is a type of tourism of which smaller groups of people pay a premium to have quality experiences, such as eating home meals at local people's houses, or meeting interesting artists in their studios. These tours usually have strong narratives attached to them and take longer to develop, adding to their costs. It is likely that such niche cultural tourism will continue to grow, as fewer people may travel for a while. This creates an opportunity for places to grow low impact, high value tours that can be more costly, but ultimately provide unique experiences not only for the tourists, but also for the locals who host. These also preserve the authenticity of places.

Similarly for creative tourism, which normally also caters for small groups, the pandemic may be an opportunity to develop more unique small group interactions. Both niche cultural as well as creative tourism provide opportunities for online interactions, which can serve as a first phase for a later contact visit. For example, introductions can be made online, and some experiences such as workshops can be held where by using mail/courier one can allow people to engage with traditional materials in their own places, and create a level of uniqueness in itself.

#### PASCUAL

Let me quote Lucina Jiménez in her article "Culture in times of COVID-19: Nature claimed her kingdom" to introduce this issue. She says: "The planet, suffering from global warming, shook humanity until it stopped the frenetic rhythm of millions of people. The global society designed for production and consumption suddenly had to work to stop doing so, to enter a period of slowness or inactivity." The redesign of the production, exhibition and enjoyment of arts and culture is already taking place as the economy acquires a less frenetic rhythm.



The pandemic has challenged social and urban models that concentrate wealth

and spread inequalities. The industry of tourism (not all of it, but a good portion of it) has been based in non-sustainable foundations. To reverse this situation, some cities and local governments are encouraging the change of the current urban model through the lens of culture and innovation, and creative tourism can be one of the answers. There is a good opportunity for new programmes that foster cultural proximity projects enabling access to culture, and with this view participatory projects that involve people and enable them to practice, co-create, participate, co-direct and co-curate must be reinforced.

The tourism industry should be encouraged to seek alternative cultural, environmental, social and economic models based on sustainability, with a more accurate analysis of the carrying capacity of sites, a better way to enjoy natural and cultural heritage sites together again, the digitalisation and, of course, the aim to empower local communities. Heritage assets and organisations are now in a vulnerable position and creativity is key to better cope with societal changes.

**Q8** The pandemic is leading to drastic reductions in international exchange and cooperation programs in the field of arts and culture. Various biennales, exhibitions, residence programs and international academic conferences are being cancelled or postponed. How can we mitigate this situation and maintain our cultural networks?

**JEONG** Jinju World Crafts and Folk Arts Biennale has been postponed to next year, and the artiste-in-residence programmes and international conferences in the craft field have been canceled. The situation in other cities will not be much different from us. In addition, the role of pre-existing network is shrinking. I think the following steps need to be taken in order to maintain the solid and functioning network between the cities.

First, we need to maximize the use of virtual space and virtual reality. For instance, the city of Jinju was scheduled to visit Linz, Creative City of Media Arts in Austria, and several other cities last September. However, these visits could not take place as the countries went into lockdown stages. Instead, two virtual visits to Austrian cities in November were made and webinars were held with the presenters from these cities under the same topic.

Second, the International Journal of Crafts and Folk Arts that we are currently preparing together is a true form of digilog media based on how and which we can cooperate and communicate despite the pandemic. We

have been in contact with numerous creative cities to invite and select papers for this journal. The journal will be published first in print, and soon after, more content will be included in the form of webzine.

Third, I suggest that cities develop more systematically websites that introduce their unique cultural assets. Also, I hope that the creative cultural activities of each city can be introduced in the virtual space. Artists from each city will be able to visit each other's virtual space, share experiments and experiences in digital spaces, and encourage creativity with each other.

Finally, I suggest that cities in the crafts and folk art sub-network hold an annual webinar with common topics. For example, it would be interesting and useful to hold forums on topics such as "culture and creativity," "culture and education", and "cultural governance." If each city can take turns to hold such forums for the next few years, it will be of great help in the development of the creative city sub-network.

**MINTY** Since the beginning of the pandemic, many events around the globe have been cancelled. Biennales, exhibitions, exchange programs, conferences, performing arts and film festivals have all gone online. This has created opportunities as well as challenges. Suddenly there are a plethora of options to attend from one's home, placing pressure on the limited time of audiences. For those who have not yet taken advantage of moving their events online, there is a unique opportunity to review the different ways of online attempts in the past months. This will allow the next generation of event organisers to learn from the experiences of others and to adapt models that have been successful for themselves. Visual arts-based programmes, for example, have been using platforms such as Instagram for festival formats. Performing arts events have seen performers trying new ways of performing together while being separate. There certainly have been challenges, but new forms of art have also emerged in this process.

A number of online events have been free, but have built their programmes on booking systems that allow them to collect user data. This will give these providers an advantage to fine-tune their programmes in the future. It will also allow them to repeat the exercise at an appropriate cost for users at a later stage.

There have also been examples of blended live and online events. These follow strict protocols, but create an opportunity for a limited amount of live interaction. Such blended events create a greater demand for more effective technology set ups, placing great pressure on event coordinators.

Thus, the pandemic has forced us to attempt new ways of engaging, which will also be helpful for us at a later stage. It has forced us to push the digital boundaries, create new tech and new forms. It also allows us to reach new

audiences, making connections across boundaries and areas that we have not reached before.

**PASCUAL** It is our responsibility to struggle for cultural networks to become more active than ever. But we also need to understand that the pre-pandemic conditions for cultural actors to play an important role in international cooperation, development and exchanges were, in fact, very weak. The global debates about development, citizenship and democracy provide a marginal space to culture, human rights and cities. More concretely, the global frame for development, that is the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has very scarce references to the place of culture in sustainable development: there is no “Culture Goal” and very few targets explicitly refer to cultural actors, initiatives or programmes. The SDGs do not explicitly empower the cultural systems of our cities, although there have been important efforts to raise awareness on the need to include a cultural component in the localisation of the SDGs, as (a) the document “Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals: A Guide for Local Action,” with specific guidance on the relation between culture and each one of the 17 SDGs, and (b) the “OBS” database of good practices on “Culture in Sustainable Cities,” with more than 220 examples of cities all around the world.

In this light, the statement on culture and the COVID-19 pandemic “Ensuring culture fulfils its potential in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic,” officially launched on 21 May 2020—the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development—by the #culture2030goal campaign, aims at promoting the place of culture within the UN 2030 Agenda framework. The Culture 2030 Goal movement advocates for culture to be explicitly present in the expected reconfiguration of the UN 2030 Agenda due to the global crisis, and calls on UN agencies, governments and all other stakeholders to act, ensuring culture is at the heart of the UN Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals as a key element to achieve core priorities like climate ambition, gender equality and fighting inequalities.

During the crisis, culture has become a strand of global solidarity, but the potential of culture has yet to be fully acknowledged. It would be interesting that the “long-term recovery,” once we have efficient treatments and vaccines, continues to keep the principles of low density, improve the protection of workers and visitors, and increased hygiene and cleaning measures. Also, it is likely the recovery leads to the “localisation” of the cultural productions and offer. This trend, if accompanied by policies and programmes to involve citizens (especially vulnerable groups), could lead to a renewed connection between cultural institutions and citizens, and therefore cultural empowerment of communities could happen. It would be highly positive if this trend does not lead to a decrease in international

cultural cooperation and exchange. On the contrary, it is perfectly possible that a boost in local cultural participation in cultural life, or a focus on “locally-sourced” culture, goes hand-in-hand with an increased awareness of the protection and promotion of cultural diversity and the importance of co-operation and solidarity. Let’s go even further: the first pandemic experienced at the same time by all citizens on Earth could unite us all in our fragility as human beings, and in our determination to overcome together the challenges we have.