

## **Making Links: Crafting Creativity and Collaboration.**

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# Making Links: Crafting Creativity and Collaboration

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## *The Abstract*

As unemployment figures continue to rise in Indonesia, the 8th United Nations' SDG, which promotes inclusive and economic growth, employment, and decent work for all remains relevant today. The creative industry is one of the most influential sectors, where creativity and innovation play an important role as key drivers to economic development. In Indonesian contexts, the strategy is to develop and increase the number of SMEs by connecting communities and promoting local products rich with identity and culture. However, in order to mitigate against the exploitation of local culture, a critical, and democratic approach to creative initiatives must consider the context and those who work within it. This paper explores how the economic livelihoods of craft-makers in Indonesia can be improved by developing appropriate collaborations, promoting co-creative design thinking and fair-trade principles as important aspects for export trade. The Making Links 5 project was initiated to collectively build power together with the craft-makers by facilitating design thinking through making workshops. The collaborative team of five women from the UK and Indonesia brought a wealth of knowledge about design thinking, jewellery-making, fair trade, collaborative learning, craft cooperatives and international export. Initial workshops took place in 2019 in Jombang, East Java, a rural area famous for its recycled glass bead making. Unfortunately, further physical workshops were prevented due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to stay connected the Making Links team experimented and tested methods, toolkits and resources, developed to train trainers in Indonesia through organized activities virtually.

**Keywords:** *Collaboration, Creative Design-Thinking, Craft, Fair-trade*

## 1. Introduction

Craft and Craft-making has the capacity to empower. It inhabits everyday life through both action and object, manifesting itself in functional, decorative and symbolic objects that reveal stories of cultures, identity and place. The idea of craft-making is seen as a way to reconnect the mind and body; with the buying of craft often signifying a desire for authenticity, for experiences, and for ethical and sustainable consumption. Within the socio-economic landscape of emerging and developing countries, Craft is one of the significant employment categories after agriculture, with a great deal of activity existing within the informal economy (ILO 2018).

*The economically marginalised are people or communities who are restricted to the lower or peripheral edge of the economy, who are prevented from participation in mainstream economic activity by factors beyond their control. (WFTO 2020)*

Although many craft-makers (also referred to as craft producer / workers / artisans) within these contexts have specialist craft-making skills they do not often have creative design, marketing and

entrepreneurial skills and as a consequence remain in a marginalized position within the craft value chain.

Craft-Makers, based on the employment relationship, can be classified as Craft Workers and Craft Producers. Craft Workers are all those who have an employment relationship with another party or an enterprise. It's called an employment relationship when the worker does not own the product, receives materials and work instructions, and does not bear financial risks of production, whilst Craft Producers are those who make, grow or process products for the buyers. They own the product and directly sell to the buyers with no employment relationship with another party or an enterprise (WFTO 2020). Despite the employment relationship difference, in cultural contexts where rote methods of teaching are the norm, artisans often rely on copying existing products because of a lack of confidence and inability to integrate ideas with market needs. Creative design skills supported by market knowledge are needed to generate new product ideas. In order to depart from the issue that imitating or making minor changes to others products is not ethical, even for business survival reasons, there is a need to develop initiatives that introduce and discuss 'Design' as a process and not an end product. When everyone imitates, then the space for business development is limited, with the selling price being the only competitive point, which often leads to inferior quality. The solution to this problem requires craft-makers to develop creative thinking skills that will enable them to generate original design ideas that can be realized through their craft-making knowledge.

There have been many social-craft initiatives situated within emerging economies, often instigated by government development agencies, NGOs, and charities which aim to enhance opportunities for communities. The social-craft initiative activities are ranging from one-day technical skills workshops to marketing strategy training. The majority of these initiatives has great intentions but do not always provide sustainable futures for the craft-makers. The reasons for this can be very complex and not in the scope of this paper to discuss.

The Craft industry in rural areas of East Java, Indonesia has its own complexity and heterogeneity from socio-economic landscape to cultural context. To sustain craft futures in this area, with the envisioned concept of sustainable partnerships through capacity-building workshops that open up wider market opportunities it is important to understand and surface both contexts; the context creative-making happens and the context the products of that creative-making will be situated and consumed. As solidarity is our common concern which emphasizes mutual empowerment, self-determination, and emancipation (Hales, et al. 2013), so that the interventions become successful, collaboration and partnership must ensure that hierarchical power dynamics are mitigated against and that activities undertaken are done with participants and not for them (Spinuzzi 2005).

The *Making Links 5* research project, discussed in this paper, situates these key factors at the center of its methodology and creative activities in order to create a democratic and meaningful framework.

## 2. Making Links 5: Craft Value Chain

The *Making Links 5: craft value chains* research project is set within the context of the United Nations eighth sustainable development goal, which promotes inclusive and economic growth, employment and decent work for all (United Nations 2015). It responds to the specific targets which support entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation in order to encourage the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises in the promotion of local culture and products.

### 2.1. Project Overview

The overarching aim of this project, supported by Research England's, Global Challenge Research Fund, (Global Challenge Research Fund 2018) is to improve the cultural and economic livelihoods of craft -makers within specific development contexts where strong links have already been established. Through the application of co-creative participatory design thinking activities, which have been undertaken both as physical events and through virtual online digital methods the ambition is to

establish a sustainable model /system for a long-term route to market (including export) in the development of new artisan craft products.

Initial research work was undertaken in Jombang, East Java, a rural area famous for its well-established recycled glass bead making. However, since 2000, this industry has been decreasing, leaving two-thirds of the community with precarious lives and uncertain business continuity. Design innovation and new markets can be used as a strategy for long-term sustainability of the community (Zulaikha and Brereton 2011). With a prepared methodology and structure, an intensive 3-day collaborative workshop with 18 artisans was successfully facilitated. In order to ignite individual creative agency, collaborative and democratic knowledge sharing was established, resulting in four prototype collections of new jewellery products combining glass beads and metalwork suitable for exhibiting with international export potential.

The collaborative team of five women from the UK and Indonesia bring a wealth of knowledge about design thinking, jewellery-making, fair trade, collaborative learning, craft cooperatives and International export. The outcomes from the physical activities in East Java undertaken in the first year of the project will not be discussed in this paper but can be accessed in the previously published Making Futures VI journal paper (Hanson, Cave and Zulaikha 2020). What is important to note here is that through reflecting on the outcomes of the field work carried out in Jombang, East Java, the team recognized that if a sustainable system was to be achievable that future development of the project depended on ways that workshop facilitators could train others who then train others to create a snowball effect. The project team was successful in securing a further 2 years of funding, which provided the opportunity to explore ways to do this. Subsequent activities and initial findings are provided in the case study section of this paper.

## **2.2. Responding to the Global pandemic**

The project is now in its third year and although initial work was situated within East Java in Indonesia, the need to respond to the global pandemic through digital online activities, provided the opportunity to expand the reach with current activities also taking place in Ecuador and Peru.

The core team of researchers and collaborators first connected in 2017 through an earlier Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project (Dearden 2018) and have had the opportunity to work together physically both in Indonesia and the UK. Having established strong professional and personal relationships enabled them to work effectively through the expanded virtual platforms that have become the norm since the start of the pandemic. The diversity of experiences and working practices that team members bring made it possible to deliver meaningful activities to craft-makers through cumulative testing and refining of resources and toolkits. How this was done will be the focus of the case study section of this paper. What became very apparent is how the situation imposed by the pandemic required a new approach to ways of working, which has provided opportunities to extend networks and increase participation in a way that just working physically would not be possible.

## **3. Methodology**

In the field of craft and design, in developing countries, specifically in a rural area, craft -makers are often seen subjugated as only technical workers for designers.

*In contrast to this, within countries with greater developed economies 'Design' is seen as a process which is inextricably linked to craft making. The term Designer/(Craft)maker is established and understood to mean someone who has the creative agency to generate ideas, innovate, make decisions and utilise craft skills in the realisation of end products. (Hanson, Cave and Zulaikha 2020)*

This project aims to provoke the creative agency of craft-makers, to ignite their confidence to think creatively and understand that everyone can design. Rather than using a top-down approach, we

choose participatory action research methods (Swantz 2008) through collective based design thinking and making workshops with collaborative approach. We want to propose an approach where knowledge production is more decentralized, different from the common capacity-building workshop, where participants only act as passive learners where they absorb information exposed by people who are considered experts.

### ***3.1. Collaborative Approach in Collective Learning***

Participatory research has long held within its implicit notion of the relations between power and knowledge (Gaventa and Cornwall 2006). This method enables people to empower themselves by the knowledge construction gained through the action and reflection process (Gaventa and Cornwall 2006). Acknowledgement of power relation in this method is fundamental, not only for participants but also the facilitator. In the context of Indonesia's education system, where participants are often positioned as passive learners or as Freire said, submerge in the culture of silence, the main characteristics are powerlessness and fear to express one's own thoughts and feelings (Freire 1986). As an effort to transform into a better learning method, the relation of knowledge and power between the facilitator and participants must be established equally and in a dialogical manner. Collective learning with a collaborative approach devised with appropriate toolkits is fundamental, so that the participants are actively involved in the activities, have the confidence to express their feelings, and communicate their ideas.

To achieve the aims of the Making Links 5 project, effective and mindful communication is important so that everyone involved in the activities can build trust and meaningful relationships with each other. Another key element of this workshop is ensuring this is a safe space where everyone can comfortably share their thoughts and feelings. Participants were encouraged to share ideas without being afraid to be judged. The diverse ideas generated through lateral thinking are emphasized more in this workshop. For facilitators it is also important to acknowledge local context (geographical, economic, political, social, and cultural) and their positionality (refers to how power and social position shape one's identities and access in society). All parts of our identities are shaped by socially constructed positions and memberships to which we belong and which are embedded in our society as a system (Misawa 2010). With this deeper and critical understanding when we work together with different communities and contexts, we can create a more democratic learning environment.

### ***3.2. Design Thinking through Making***

Design thinking provides a methodology to think 'outside of the box' through frameworks that ask questions and challenge assumptions. The definition of Design Thinking here refers to applying a designer's sensibility and methods to problem solving, no matter what the problem. It is not a substitute for professional design or the art and craft of designing, but rather a methodology for innovation and enablement (Lockwood 2010). It starts by understanding the context as inspiration, followed by ideation, then implementation. (Brown, T 2008) Design Thinking also enables us to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success harmoniously (Brown 2008). We naturally develop thinking patterns based on our experience and knowledge we're exposed to. As Jean Piaget proposed about learning theory (Piaget 1964) where knowledge is composed of schemas, (basic units of knowledge) used to organize past experiences and serve as a basis for understanding new ones, if repetitive activities become embedded, it can potentially limit us from developing new ways of seeing, understanding, and solving problems. With design thinking established as a framework, we are able to provoke the participants about new ways of generating ideas.

Thinking is not only expressed by text, it can also be expressed through everything we make (Raijmakers and Arets 2015). By facilitating participants in design thinking through making in a co-creative environment, participants can create, express, and disseminate thinking and translate it into various media and it's carried out alternately in a rapid iterative process. To avoid making decisions too early and allowing a non-sequential and holistic way of exploring concepts and ideas through the use of experimental sketching, material testing, and prototyping, that can lead to unexpected outcomes (Norman 2013), facilitator act in assisting them by asking further questions so that participants can identify more alternative possibilities and solutions.

### **3.3. Training Trainers**

In the first year of the Making Links 5 project the two project leads and 3 collaborators worked with 18 artisans in a physical space in East Java. Prototypes for the basis of four jewellery collections combining glass beads and metal components suitable for the export market were developed and through continued remote collaboration, product refinement has been undertaken. Final samples and marketing materials are in production for launching at the International Top Drawer Trade Show, London, UK in September 2021. However when the whole team reflected on the workshop outcomes during the post-workshop discussion in relation to the ambition to create a sustainable model, it was clear this couldn't be achieved only by the activities facilitated by 2 individuals that had travelled halfway across the globe. This stimulated the initial discussion about ways that workshop facilitators could train others, who would then train others to create a snowball effect. By developing this approach we envisaged being able to build capacity and give greater representation and power to those who would both participate and facilitate in future initiatives.

The Making Links 5 team began to explore ways they could actively embrace this strategy, identifying different groups, organizations and networks that could be recruited to participate in training workshops. At this stage it was still envisaged that activities would be done physically within the identified contexts. Early in 2020, initial development of resources and toolkits began that would be used to train trainers when the world was catapulted into the Covid-19 pandemic, momentarily bringing everything to a halt.

## **4. Case Study**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic that affected the whole world from early 2020, further physical workshops were prevented. Staying connected in these uncertain times, the team continued to initiate and organize activities virtually; experimenting and testing methods, toolkits and resources. With totally different landscapes—physical and virtual, different approaches, structure, and methods for workshops were formulated. Although the delivery mode was different, these two types of workshops basically focus on several things, including: brainstorming, exploring ideas from existing products, idea development, and iterative idea development. In the physical workshop where a democratic environment through the group dynamic is immediate in the way participants work and discuss collectively, the virtual workshop differs because participants exist in their own physical environment and with collective sharing more difficult to achieve. A democratic approach was more emphasized during the brainstorming and sharing session where everyone is embraced to share their thought and story behind their work with other participants asking questions and giving critical feedback and compliments. The virtual workshop utilized the tools provided on digital platforms—from mind brainstorming (using Simple Mind, Google Jam-board and Miro) with screen sharing (ZOOM), giving everyone access to each other's thoughts and ideas simultaneously. These activities, distributed power, allow us to collectively build power together in the context of creativity where everyone is brave and empowered in expressing their creative thinking without fear and feeling inferior.

### **4.1. Access, Experience, and Knowledge in Virtual Activities**

COVID-19 has been recognized as a global pandemic as it has spread in most of every country in the world with almost 173 million confirmed cases (WHO 2021). This pandemic makes human interaction limited. Shared spaces including public places, companies, and schools have to be closed to prevent the massive spread of the virus. Current situation has suddenly and abruptly forced education to engage in such a digital transformation. Since then, most activities have to be carried out at home and transformed into online meetings and classes that can be accessed online. Devised with the innovation of technology, virtual learning brings new possibilities and solutions in the world of education. However, so that it can run optimally, virtual learning must be supported by supporting devices such as software (applications that facilitate teleconferences like ZOOM, Google meet, or Whatsapp) and hardware (cell phone, computer, webcams, microphones, and internet networks). This

condition makes many online meeting or video conference applications vital as almost all of the world population uses them as tools so that they can communicate virtually (Pratama, Kassymova and Duisenbayeva 2020).

As an adaptive response to the current pandemic situation where we were forced to stay at home, the team has been experimenting with a virtual design thinking workshop. The team started to change the whole concept of the workshop into a virtual framework. The idea of creating and planning the virtual workshop was possible because all team members have the privileges of having sufficient prior knowledge, experience, and access to digital platforms so that the shifting from physical to virtual workshops is not that difficult. In terms of infrastructure, team members have met the requirements of both hardware and software. On a daily basis team members have been familiar with using devices such as cell phones and computers. Also in terms of internet connection, team members are privileged as they live in urban areas with relatively good internet access networks so they can subscribe to internet providers with good network speed. In addition, in terms of software, almost all team members have experienced remote work so we are quite familiar with teleconference applications. For the interactive tools used for group brainstorming activities, the team tried different tools based on team members' experience.

In running this virtual workshop, access, prior experience, and knowledge are very important aspects because we have to find tools that are suitable and able to accommodate the needs of activities in design thinking workshops ranging from material presentation, brainstorming, to iterative idea development. In looking for tools that exist in the digital platform, workshop planners/facilitators must be able to imagine how to optimize these tools so that they can facilitate the activities optimally. Besides all of those aspects explained before, other aspects that must be considered when choosing tools in running virtual workshop include:

- User friendliness which affect how everyone involved in the workshop can operate the tools
- Accessibility of tools where all tools used should be free of charge/open source so that everyone can access.
- Facilities available in the tools such as meeting room capacity, screen share mode, recording tools, chat rooms, unlimited time, multimedia sharing (audio, video, or image)
- Cost effectiveness – related to internet data

This collectively collected experience and knowledge combined with available access lead into a great collaboration between team members so that they were able to formulate the workshop structure and toolkits. In practice, even though the team is already quite familiar with these virtual learning supporting tools, before delivering the workshop, a simulation and trial process is necessary as technical problems such as internet connection and difficulties in operating applications will inevitably still happen.

## 5. Virtual Online Workshop

The starting point for the development of toolkits and resources to be used within a virtual learning space began with an analysis of the analogue resources used in the physical workshop in Jombang, East Java in 2019. By deconstructing these we were able to identify and classify component parts of the 'Design' process and explore creative activities that would be understandable within the artisan communities we were ultimately trying to reach. A project website would be used as a learning platform to access resources and to facilitate sharing, exhibiting and documenting research ( Making Links 5 2020). Although this is still a work in progress, the design toolkits form an important part and are catalogued under the following headings:

- Introduction to Design as a process
- Idea generation and Research

- Model making and prototypes
- Recognizing trends
- Quality control and Final presentation

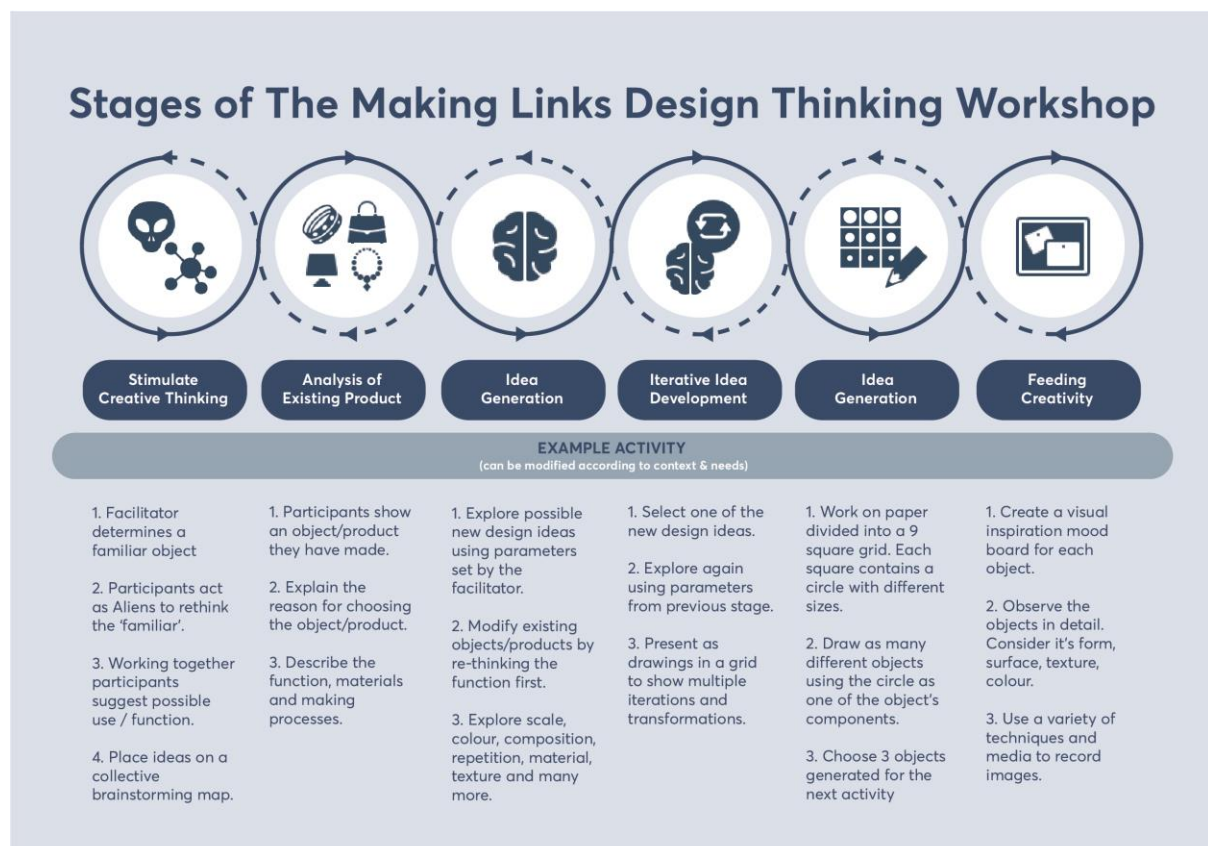
When working in the field it is crucial to prepare and structure content, however it is also important to be agile during the workshop and to respond appropriately, making changes and adjustments to the flow and content if the situation and response of participants require (Hanson, Cave and Zulaikha 2020). Within the virtual workshop landscape, being agile in the moment is much more difficult to achieve and therefore iterative testing of the structure, content, delivery platforms and technology was required in order to gain knowledge and refine content.

## 5.1. Making Links 5 – Design Thinking Workshop Activities

Design is a process that needs practice, but does not have a singular, linear or finite set of rules. It requires idea generation, research, making prototypes/samples, problem-solving, testing materials, and final production. By presenting creative activities using design toolkits, craft-makers are provided with a framework which enables them to explore their own creativity and develop design skills that will help them generate original ideas for new products.

In the series of virtual workshops discussed in this paper the activities devised and delivered are illustrated in Figure 1, and are situated within the following sub categories.

1. Stimulate Creative Thinking
2. Analysis of Existing Product
3. Idea Generation
4. Iterative Idea Development
5. Idea Generation
6. Feeding Creativity



Within the workshop delivery structure, each activity involved 3 stages:

- Activity Explanation
- Active participation and execution
- Feedback and discussion

### 5.1.1. Workshop 1 : Family Members

Before the virtual design thinking workshop was conducted and launched with a wider audience, the team held several trials. The main objectives were to test structure, time scale and flow, clarity of presentation of toolkits and digital technology. It also provided the opportunity to make improvements and facilitated the training of the first workshop trainers. The UK team developed the first set of toolkits and tested elements of these with family members early in June 2020. ZOOM was used as the virtual platform with 2 facilitators and 2 participants joining the session from 4 different locations. This first trial highlighted the need to make a workshop schedule that listed each stage of the activity, how long was needed, who would lead, screen share, monitor time and record session.

### 5.1.2. Workshop 2 : Making Links Members

The UK team facilitated the first full trial with the 3 women from the Indonesian team acting as the participants. They had no knowledge of the content prior to participating, experiencing in the way subsequent artisans might. The different backgrounds of participants, Zulaikha (Academic and Researcher from ITS), Febryanti (Co-ordinator and translator for the Tunggung Women's Creative Project), and Larasati (Graduate Designer) allowed multiple positions and perspectives to be acknowledged. Held in June 2020, the workshop was delivered in 3 x 2 hour blocks over 3 separate days. At the end of each session, facilitators asked the participant to share their impressions and insights from the session.

### 5.1.3. Participants' Observations

*Participants' observations included:*

- Time Scale
  - Time needed to participate in workshops required considerable commitment. This might be a challenge for future participants.
  - Some activities would require more time in order for all participants to contribute to discussions.
  - There must be contingency in the schedule to accommodate any problems with digital technology.
  - Time keeping is vital so that the workshops run efficiently and to planned schedules.
- Facilitators
  - The workshop concept created an ambience that embraced all participants and provided opportunity for everyone to express their thoughts and ideas.
  - It was delivered with enthusiasm and fun so that the participants didn't feel intimidated or pressured but engaged in every process with excitement.
  - Facilitators participated in a co-creative way throughout the activities. This removed hierarchical barriers creating more equal power dynamics.
  - Facilitators gave appreciation and constructive criticism with consideration of participants' background and context so that the participants felt valued and motivated to improve their work.

- Toolkits
  - The toolkits stimulate participants' creative potential so that they can explore new ideas rapidly.
  - Visual resources are easy to understand and accommodate participants with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
  - The toolkits enable participants to connect with things around them as creative inspiration for developing new ideas.

#### *5.1.4. Workshop 3 : Design Alumni and Lecturer-ITS*

Workshop 3 was undertaken with Design Alumni from the Institut Teknologi Sepuluh (ITS) in Surabaya, East Java and was held in July 2020. Two of the participants from workshop 2 became the trainers/facilitators for this third workshop. This training was attended by two design alumni and one design lecturer, so all had a design education background. The training was split into 2 x 2 hour sessions on separate days with two weeks between the first and second meeting.

As in the previous workshop, the six activities illustrated in Figure 1 were undertaken. The facilitators used Google Jamboard for the Stimulate Creative Thinking activity to replace the 'Simple minds' mapping tool used in the trial. This open source application allowed collective group brainstorming / mind-mapping using post-it stickers. Facilitators participated co-creatively, reinforcing a democratic environment, and strengthening the message of collective learning. Despite having a design background, in the participants' workshop evaluation they stated that the ideas generated as a result of the activities were ideas that they had never thought of before.

#### *5.1.5. Workshop 4 : 45 Design Students and Lectures (ITS)*

Workshop 4 was organised by ITS in Surabaya, Indonesia and was hosted in May 2021. Forty-five participants attended the workshop, consisting of undergraduate design students, design lecturers, and a few non-design students. The facilitators/trainers consisted of 2 participants from workshop 2 and 1 participant of workshop 3. Unlike the previous workshops this one was delivered in 1x3 hours and 1x1 hour sessions. Activities 1, 2, 3, and 5 were held in the first session, while activities 4 and 6 were undertaken as 'homework' and then reviewed and discussed through a 1 hour feedback and discussion session a week later.

Although delivering the creative activities with 15 times more participants was a challenge, it allowed the team to test accelerating the online strategy for greater capacity building. Having more people resulted in less opportunity for verbal discussion and therefore additional digital tools was introduced. As this event was delivered more than a year after the pandemic had begun, new interactive tools had been tested and the team had greater experience in using breakout rooms in video conferencing software. To ensure that every participant had the opportunity to share ideas, the MIRO interactive whiteboard application was used so everyone could see each other's ideas visually. The advantage of using MIRO in this workshop was the reduction of time allocated for the verbal sharing of participants' work. However, the ZOOM break-out room feature was applied to several stages to allow more intimate discussions with other participants. The breakout rooms were supported by volunteer design students who had been briefed earlier. They played crucial roles in helping participants upload images to MIRO, provided explanations of the workshop instructions, and moderated the discussion sessions.

#### *5.1.6. Workshop 5 : The Hybrid Workshop with Rural Craft-Maker*

Workshop 5 was held in June 2021 with rural craft-makers in the village of Plumbon Gombang, Gudo District, Jombang Regency, Indonesia. This 2 day workshop was conducted in a hybrid mode; both online and offline. Participation was limited to ten people because of the pandemic, with 5 hours allocated to activities on Day 1 and a single hour on Day 2. Participants were divided into small groups of 3-4 and joined the workshop through ZOOM from 2 separate places. Each group was supported by design students who had attended workshop 4, to assist with clarification of workshop instructions and operating the digital technology.

The facilitators were located in Sidoarjo and Surabaya, Indonesia, and in Sheffield and London, UK. It was the first time all participants had experienced a hybrid workshop. The introduction of ZOOM and MIRO in this context provided opportunities for participants to develop digital skills and understand how this mode of communication could be positively applied to other contexts.

As in previous workshops, all stages of Making Links Design Thinking were undertaken. The Team observed the following:

- The sessions allowed participants to confidently express their opinions and present unique ideas without worrying about being criticized.
- Facilitators assisted them by giving provocative questions so the participants explored diverse ideas by examining the characteristics of objects.
- The circle activity enabled the participants to think and generate ideas in a short time. The images that were created reflected familiar daily objects seen by the craft-makers.
- Initial ideas generated for the mood board activity were based on the interesting things they liked. However, the facilitator reiterated the importance of visual research to observe detailed qualities in form, colour and texture. This enabled participants to choose images not just based on what they liked but in response to other criteria.

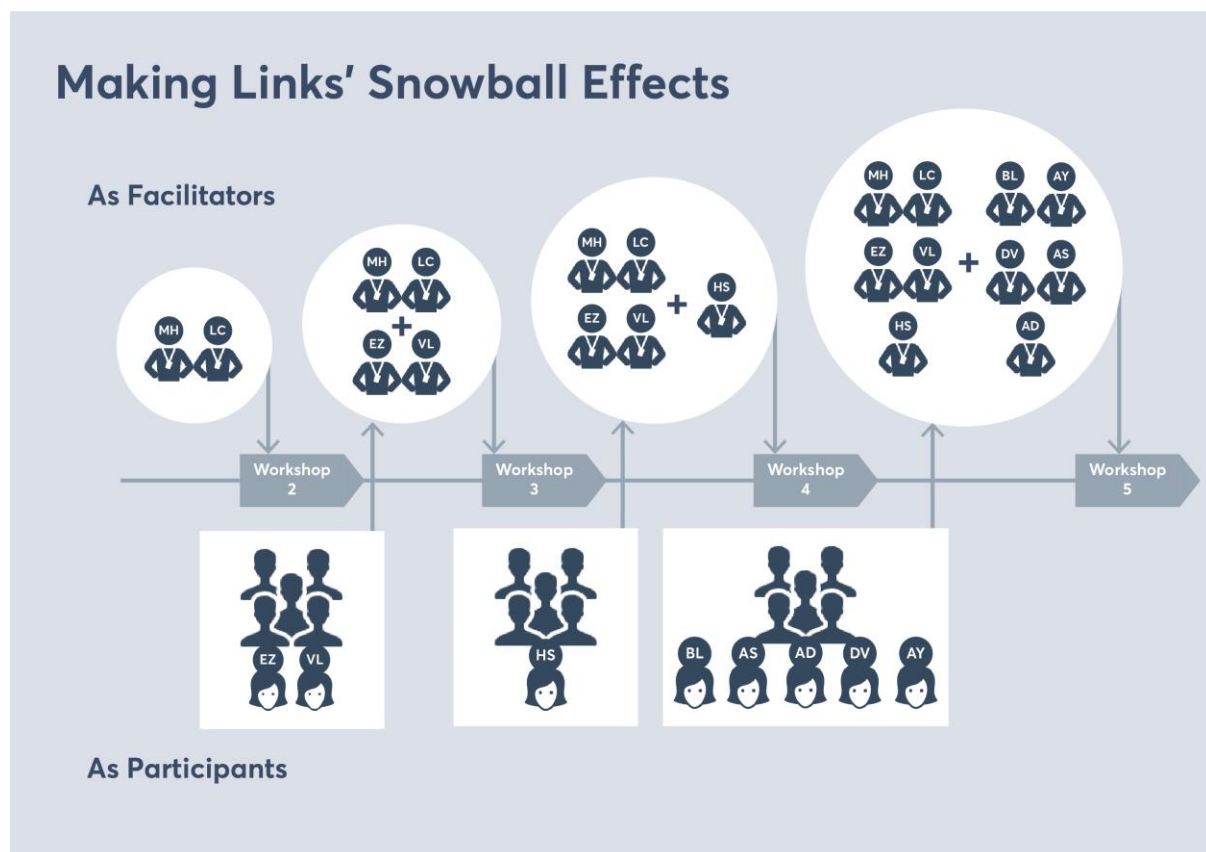


Figure 2 Making Links' Snowball Effects source: Making Links 2021

## 6. Conclusion

Given the unprecedented global pandemic the activities undertaken by the Making Links project team have engaged a variety of participants (Figure 3) from different social and economic backgrounds, providing new creative learning experiences through both online and hybrid modes of delivery.

Key insights from participant evaluation feedback highlighted the following positives:

- Creative activities provided new insights, experiences and ways of thinking.
- The workshops were engaging and had a positive atmosphere.
- Participation was not dependent on having any previous design training.
- The review and discussion stage following each activity was essential.
- The ideas from other participants were really important and helpful.
- Gaining appreciation and understanding of how idea generation leads to the emergence of new potential products.
- Feedback from facilitators was crucial in widening understanding and individual perspectives.
- Positive feedback increased self-confidence in participants helping them to optimize design potential based on their own experience and context.

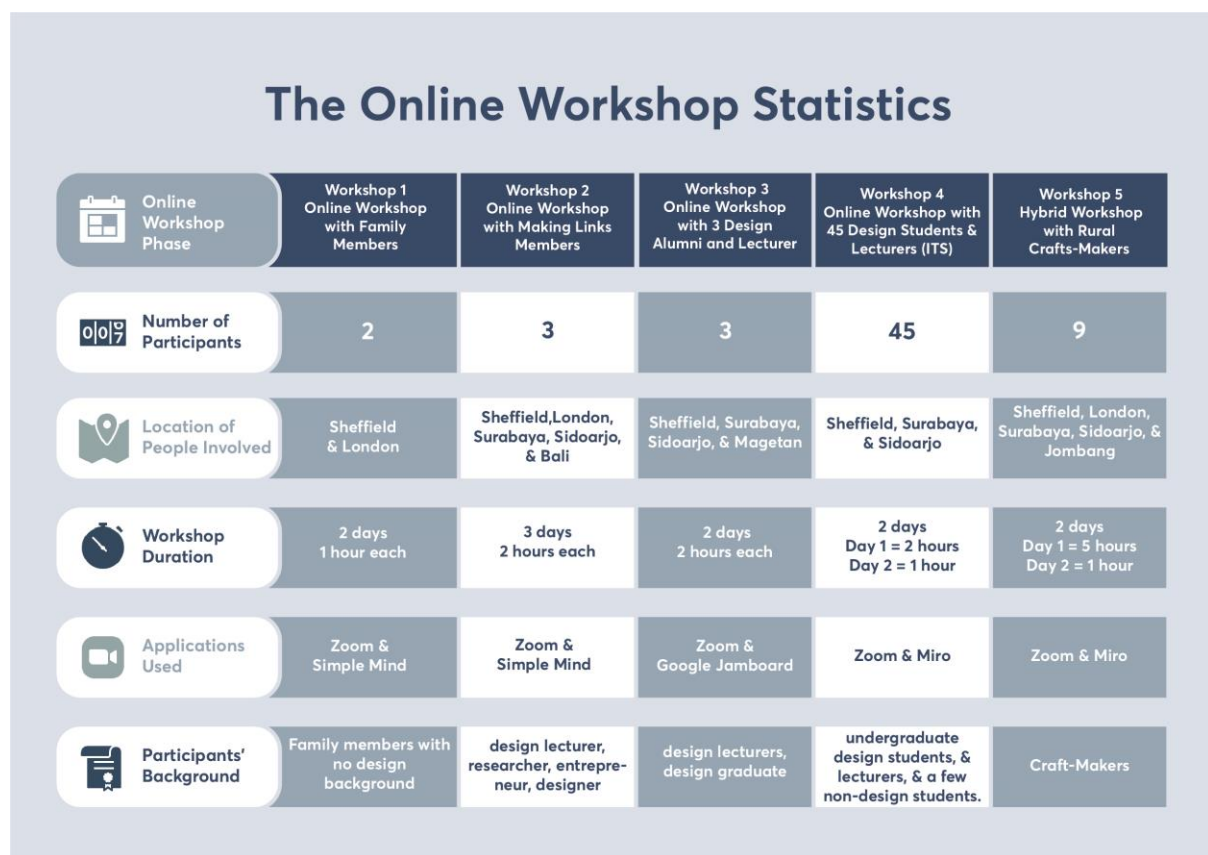


Figure 3 The Online Workshop Statistics. source: Making Links 2021

One of the main obstacles in organizing online workshops, especially in rural areas, is the availability and stability of internet infrastructures and mobile data. Workshops can only run smoothly and effectively if a good internet connection and adequate hardware is available or provided. Using a laptop or PC is recommended above cell phones as it provides greater flexibility when uploading and viewing multiple images. Familiarity and testing of digital interfaces by facilitators prior to workshop sessions is essential. Inevitably, delayed response due to technological constraints occurred during the workshops because of unstable Wi-Fi connections and participants or facilitators needing to run several digital applications simultaneously.

Feedback and Discussion time is essential at every stage, regardless of participant numbers. This was the most significant thing highlighted in evaluation feedback forms, and was linked specifically to feelings of being encouraged to generate new ideas without worrying about being judged and criticized. Therefore, future facilitators need to focus on giving appreciation and constructive feedback for participants' work whilst thinking about the potential for increasing the value of an idea, as well as building a productive and discursive atmosphere for everyone. There is great value in bringing together participants from different backgrounds and experiences in order to maximise learning opportunities. The co-creative strategy enables the amplification of knowledge-sharing through peer-to-peer feedback and discussion.

The team is fully aware that these workshops only serve a small part of the entire design process and acknowledge it is only the starting point. Additional stages of design thinking and the design development process need to be implemented into a series of continuous workshops with the same strategy. The team will expand structures, methods, and toolkits so that collective knowledge sharing and creative development can have wider scope and reach diverse audiences from multiple contexts and backgrounds.

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