

Participatory design approach in mapping creative economic potential: A case study of Bojongmalaka Village

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Abstract

This study evaluates the application of a Participatory Design (PD) approach to map the creative economic potential of Bojongmalaka Village, a peri-urban community in Bandung Regency, during the 2025 calendar year. Funded by Telkom University, the research utilizes a qualitative framework—comprising in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations—to identify latent creative assets and catalyze community agency. The findings reveal a robust foundation of traditional handicrafts (bamboo and loom weaving), performing arts, and culinary traditions, supported by a significant skill base where 60% of residents possess traditional craft expertise and 40% express strong interest in contemporary design. The significance of the participatory methodology is evidenced by a transformative shift in local ownership: 75% of participants reported a heightened sense of accountability for their local economy following the process. By moving beyond extractive data collection to a co-creation model, the study demonstrates that PD ensures higher data accuracy and fosters the long-term sustainability of economic outcomes. This approach bridges the critical gap between traditional heritage and modern market demands, transforming undocumented cultural capital into a structured driver of growth. This synthesis of community expertise and strategic mapping provides the necessary empirical foundation for the situational analysis and strategic imperatives that follow.

Keywords

Creative economy mapping, Participatory design approach, Community development

Introduction

The strategic mapping of local creative industries is increasingly recognized as a fundamental driver for sustainable community development. By systematically identifying and analyzing a community's cultural and creative assets, stakeholders can formulate evidence-based strategies that foster economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance social well-being. This research report presents the findings of a comprehensive study aimed at mapping the existing and potential creative industries

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within Bojongmalaka village, a village in Bandung Regency, with the goal of creating a roadmap for its sustainable development.

Bojongmalaka village, the locus of this study, is situated in Kabupaten Bandung. An analysis of its geographical context reveals a diverse landscape, characterized by a mix of organized residential areas, such as Perum Bojong Malaka Indah, and significant tracts of green agricultural land. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for Bandung Regency, the village is home to approximately 5,000 residents whose primary professions are in agriculture and various small businesses. This demographic and geographic profile suggests a community deeply connected to its natural environment and local economic activities, providing a rich context for the development of place-based creative industries.

The primary hurdle to growth in Bojongmalaka Village is the undocumented and fragmented state of its creative assets. While the village maintains significant traditions in bamboo weaving (*anyaman bambu*), loom weaving (*tenun*), and unique culinary practices, these remain “economically invisible” due to the absence of a systematic database. This data gap prevents the local government and potential investors from implementing evidence-based strategies, an urgent concern given that the creative economy contributes approximately 7.44% to Indonesia’s national GDP (BPS 2021). Without a comprehensive mapping throughout the 2025 research period, the village risks further marginalization despite its inherent cultural wealth. To rectify this, the research was guided by four central objectives:

- a. To systematically map the existing and potential creative industries within Bojongmalaka village.
- b. To analyze the socio-economic impact of these industries on the local community.
- c. To develop a comprehensive database of creative assets for use by government, businesses, and the community.
- d. To formulate strategic recommendations for the sustainable development of the village’s creative economy.

The scope of the research was geographically confined to the administrative and social boundaries of Bojongmalaka village and was conducted throughout the 2025 calendar year. The study adopted a community-centric approach, ensuring that local residents were active participants in the research process. This report details the theoretical framework that underpins this participatory methodology.

Method

The selection of Participatory Design (PD) as the core theoretical framework for this study was a deliberate choice, grounded in the methodology’s alignment with the goals of sustainable and community-driven development. PD offers more than just a set of

tools for collaboration; its principles of empowerment, mutual learning, and social justice provide a robust foundation for fostering a creative economy that is owned and valued by the community it serves. This approach ensures that development is not imposed from the outside but is co-created from within, reflecting local values and aspirations.

Core Principles of Participatory Design

Participatory Design is a democratic, value-centered methodology that involves end-users and other stakeholders as active co-designers in the entire development process [1, 2]. It is distinguished from broader co-design practices by its explicit focus on political engagement and the redistribution of power, aiming to create more equitable relationships between researchers, designers, and community members [1, 2, 3, 4]. A key concept within PD is Handlungsspielraum, or “room for maneuver,” which describes the creation of a balanced space that provides both structure and freedom. This framework enables participants to explore unique creative pathways and unlock their full potential, adapting the process to their specific context [1].

Addressing Power Dynamics and Fostering Inclusivity

A central tenet of PD is its proactive approach to addressing the inherent power imbalances often present in community-based research. The methodology draws on Foucault-inspired and Freirean approaches, which provide conceptual and practical tools for establishing horizontal, power-balanced collaborations between researchers and participants [5, 6]. This requires a conscious effort to challenge traditional hierarchies and create an environment of mutual respect and learning. Furthermore, effective PD necessitates the use of tailored facilitation methods to ensure that marginalized or less vocal groups—such as those with lower literacy or different linguistic backgrounds—are meaningfully included in the co-design process [7, 8, 9].

Relevance to Creative Industries

The principles of PD are particularly relevant to the mapping and development of creative economies. PD conceptualizes creativity not as the domain of an individual genius but as a distributed and collective process that emerges from complex social and material systems [10, 11]. This perspective is invaluable for leveraging local cultural assets and traditional knowledge to build unique creative niches [12]. By treating community members as experts in their own culture and craft, PD facilitates the integration of traditional practices with contemporary design, leading to sustainable and culturally authentic product innovation. This approach has been successfully applied in regions like Southeast Asia to merge traditional craft knowledge with modern design sensibilities, creating products with significant economic and social benefits [13]. This theoretical foundation directly informed the Research and Development methodology employed in Bojongmalaka village.

Research Methodology

To achieve the study's objectives, this research implemented a multi-stage Research and Development (R&D) methodology. This approach was chosen for its capacity to produce practical and applicable outcomes directly relevant to community needs. Crucially, the entire R&D process was deeply informed by the principles of Participatory Design, ensuring that community members were not merely subjects of the research but active collaborators in identifying, analyzing, and developing their creative potential.

Research Stages

The research was structured into four sequential stages, each building upon the insights of the previous one:

- a. **Stage 1: Potential Identification and Community Observation:** The initial phase involved intensive fieldwork to gather baseline data. Researchers conducted surveys and direct observations of the social, economic, and environmental conditions in Bojongmalaka village. This stage focused on identifying all existing creative activities, including handicrafts, performing arts, and culinary traditions, to form an initial inventory of community assets.
- b. **Stage 2: In-depth Analysis (SWOT):** Following the initial mapping, a comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted for each identified creative sub-sector. This analytical phase was critical for understanding the internal capabilities and external challenges facing the village's creative economy, providing a solid foundation for strategic planning.
- c. **Stage 3: Participatory Development and Prototyping:** This stage marked the deepest level of community engagement. The research team facilitated a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), workshops, and hands-on training sessions. These activities were co-designed with community members and focused on practical skills in modern product design, marketing, and business management. This collaborative environment fostered experimentation and led directly to the creation of new product prototypes.
- d. **Stage 4: Evaluation and Strategy Formulation:** In the final phase, the developed prototypes and collaborative processes were evaluated by both the research team and community participants. The insights gathered from this evaluation, combined with the data from all previous stages, were synthesized to formulate the comprehensive database and strategic recommendations presented in this report

Results and discussion

This section presents a synthesis of the data collected through extensive fieldwork, participatory workshops, and collaborative analysis with the community of Bojongmalaka village. The findings offer a detailed map of the village's creative assets, an analysis of its strategic position, and the tangible outcomes of the community-centered development process.

Profile of Community Creative Assets

The initial mapping stage confirmed that Bojongmalaka village is rich in both human and cultural capital. The primary creative sub-sectors identified were traditional handicrafts, notably anyaman bambu (bamboo weaving) and tenun (loom weaving), alongside a vibrant local culinary tradition with unique recipes and products. In terms of human capital, initial survey data revealed a significant skill base within the community: approximately 60% of residents reported possessing skills in traditional handicrafts, while 40% expressed a strong interest in learning more about contemporary arts and design.

Beyond tangible products, the research also identified a key cultural asset: the village's annual local festival. This event serves as a powerful platform for cultural expression and has significant, yet under-realized, potential for promoting local creative products and boosting the local economy, a finding consistent with research by Prasetyo (2020) [14].

SWOT Analysis of Bojongmalaka's Creative Industry Potential

A robust SWOT analysis identifies the strategic "room for maneuver" for Bojongmalaka Village, determining how internal strengths can be leveraged to capture external opportunities while mitigating existential threats.

Strengths: The village possesses an extraordinary concentration of innate human capital, with 60% of residents skilled in traditional weaving. This is complemented by a high readiness for innovation, as 40% of the community expresses interest in contemporary arts and design. These skills are anchored by the local availability of sustainable raw materials, particularly bamboo. So what? This combination of cultural authenticity and material abundance creates a unique competitive advantage in the "slow craft" market, providing a storytelling foundation that mass production cannot replicate.

Weaknesses: Significant gaps exist in contemporary product design, digital marketing, and formal business management. Current sales are largely restricted to hyper-local markets due to a lack of brand presence. So what? Without digital literacy and modern design sensibilities, Bojongmalaka's artisans remain "economically invisible" to the burgeoning peri-urban middle class in the Bandung Regency, capping their income potential at subsistence levels.

Opportunities: There is a rising global and regional demand for ethically produced, handmade goods and authentic cultural experiences. Bojongmalaka is well-positioned to pivot into eco-tourism and craft-based workshops. Ongoing support from Telkom University offers a pipeline for technological integration and professional mentorship. So what? Capitalizing on these external resources can transform traditional crafts from domestic chores into a sophisticated export-ready creative industry.

Threats: The industry faces intense competition from low-cost, mass-produced imitations of traditional designs. Furthermore, uncontrolled industrial development in the region poses a risk to environmental resources. So what? If bamboo groves are lost to factory expansion, the village loses its primary raw material advantage; simultaneously, if younger generations continue to view crafts as obsolete, the community faces a permanent loss of its cultural and economic identity.

This analysis directly informs the architecture of the village's knowledge management system and the strategic imperatives required for long-term viability.

3.3. Outcomes of Participatory Development Workshops

The participatory workshops, designed to address the weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis, produced significant and empowering outcomes. The training sessions in product design, digital marketing, and basic business management were met with high engagement from local artisans. Tangible results included the development of several new product prototypes that skillfully blend traditional weaving techniques with contemporary aesthetics, making them more appealing to a wider market. Furthermore, several groups of artisans collaborated to formulate basic business plans, outlining production goals, pricing strategies, and potential sales channels. This process not only generated new products but also built confidence and a sense of ownership among the participants.

These findings collectively point to a community with a strong creative foundation that is ready for sustainable growth, which will be supported by the development of a dedicated creative industry database.

A Proposed Database for Creative Industry Development

A primary and practical output of this research is the conceptual framework and initial population of an integrated database for Bojongmalaka village's creative industries. This database is designed not as a static repository of information but as a dynamic tool to support evidence-based decision-making, foster collaboration, and connect local creators with new opportunities.

Database Structure and Content

The database is structured to capture a holistic view of the village's creative ecosystem. Its key data categories include:

- a. Artisan & Entrepreneur Profiles: Comprehensive profiles of local creators, including contact information, area of expertise (e.g., bamboo weaving, culinary), documented skill level, and estimated production capacity.
- b. Product Catalog: A visual and descriptive catalog of creative products, detailing materials used, production techniques, cultural significance, and potential applications or markets.
- c. Raw Material Sources: Geographic and contact information for local suppliers of key raw materials, such as bamboo, textile fibers, and natural dyes, to support supply chain development.
- d. Market Potential Analysis: Collated data on identified target markets, viable pricing strategies, and potential distribution channels (e.g., local tourist spots, online platforms, regional craft markets).
- e. Cultural Assets Inventory: A detailed inventory of intangible cultural assets, including information on local traditions, festival schedules, and folklore that can be woven into product narratives and marketing campaigns to enhance their authenticity and appeal.

Strategic Utility for Stakeholders

This centralized database is designed to provide distinct value to each key stakeholder group, creating a virtuous cycle of information and opportunity.

- a. For the Local Government: The database serves as a vital tool for evidence-based policymaking, enabling the targeted allocation of resources, the design of relevant support programs (e.g., training, subsidies), and the effective promotion of the village's creative sector.
- b. For Business Actors/Entrepreneurs: It acts as a resource for networking, allowing local artisans to find collaborators, identify suppliers, and gain a clearer understanding of market trends and opportunities beyond their immediate vicinity.
- c. For the Community: The database provides a platform for community members to showcase their skills and products to a wider audience, thereby attracting new customers and partners. It also functions as an important tool for preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge to future generations.

This database provides the informational backbone for the implementation of the strategic recommendations that follow.

Strategic Recommendations for Sustainable Growth

The culmination of this research is a set of actionable recommendations designed to create a supportive ecosystem for the sustainable growth of Bojongmalaka village's creative economy. These strategies are directly grounded in the SWOT analysis and the insights gained through the participatory development process. They offer a clear,

multi-stakeholder roadmap for transforming creative potential into tangible community benefits.

1. For the Local Government

- a. **Policy & Infrastructure:** It is recommended that the local government develop policies specifically aimed at supporting creative micro-enterprises. This could include simplifying the business registration process, offering tax incentives for new creative startups, and improving vital infrastructure such as public internet access and clear road signage directing visitors to artisan workshops.
- b. **Promotion & Marketing:** The government should formally integrate the annual local cultural festival into the official regional tourism calendar. Furthermore, we recommend facilitating the development and promotion of a “Bojongmalaka Kreatif” (Creative Bojongmalaka) brand to build regional and national recognition.

2. For Creative Entrepreneurs and the Community

- a. **Capacity Building:** The formation of a local creative cooperative is strongly recommended. Such a body would empower artisans by enabling collective marketing efforts, facilitating bulk purchasing of raw materials at lower costs, and creating a formal structure for knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer training.
- b. **Product Innovation:** To remain competitive and relevant, local creators should pursue continuous collaboration with designers and academic institutions like Telkom University. This partnership can help innovate new products that meet contemporary market demands while preserving the cultural authenticity and traditional techniques that make them unique.
- c. **Digital Literacy:** A program of ongoing training in digital marketing, social media management, and e-commerce should be established. This is critical for expanding market reach beyond the immediate geographical area and connecting with a global audience of consumers interested in authentic craft.

3. For Academic and Private Sector Partners

- a. **Sustained Collaboration:** Academic institutions should establish long-term partnership programs with the community. These programs could include student internships, collaborative research projects, and mentorship opportunities where students and faculty share expertise in design, technology, and business.
- b. **Investment:** Private sector partners and philanthropic organizations are encouraged to explore the creation of a micro-finance or venture philanthropy fund. Such a fund could provide crucial seed capital for promising local creative startups that lack access to traditional financing.

The integrated implementation of these interconnected strategies can create a self-reinforcing cycle of economic growth, cultural preservation, and community empowerment in Bojongmalaka village.

Conclusion

This research systematically mapped the creative industry potential of Bojongmalaka Village through a participatory Research and Development (R&D) approach that positioned community members as active partners in identifying local assets and shaping development strategies. The findings show that the village has strong human and cultural capital, especially in traditional bamboo crafts and loom weaving, supported by skilled artisans and available raw materials, but still faces challenges in modern design, marketing, and market access. Through workshops and training, the participatory approach proved effective in building capacity, encouraging innovation, and empowering artisans to adapt their cultural heritage to modern market demands. The study contributes by producing the village's first systematic creative economy database and strategic roadmap, which can guide evidence-based decision-making by local government, communities, and external partners. Although limited to one village and a one-year timeframe, the research offers a useful model for community-centered creative economy development in Indonesia and suggests future studies on scalable participatory design measures, circular economy indicators, and long-term sustainability strategies.

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