

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Today's societies face increasingly complex challenges that often span multiple disciplines (Wang et al., 2022). Issues such as climate change, urban development, and other socio-technical problems require coordinated responses, in which public policy plays a central role and demands interdisciplinary approaches (Creutzig et al., 2024). Many governments have therefore encouraged participatory approaches in policymaking by involving stakeholders such as citizens, experts, and community groups in policy discussions. Such participation can help produce policies that better reflect the needs and experiences of society and respond more effectively to complex societal challenges (Voorberg et al., 2014).

In Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, policymaking is still largely characterized by top-down approaches, dominated by central government institutions and political actors (Amirullah & Batti, 2023). Although mechanisms for public participation are formally established such as *musrenbang*, an annual public forum for citizen participation in development planning (Akbar et al., 2020), studies have noted that these mechanisms often function as procedural or ceremonial requirements rather than spaces where public input substantially influences policy outcomes. In addition, marginalized groups are often underrepresented in these processes, resulting in participation that tends to be compliance-driven rather than genuinely deliberative (Blomkamp et al., 2017). This gap between policy formulation and stakeholder knowledge can limit the ability of policies to address real-world problems comprehensively.

To address these challenges, one approach that has gained growing attention is co-design, which integrates diverse stakeholder knowledge in addressing complex problems (Walker et al., 2023). Originating from participatory design traditions in Northern Europe, co-design has been widely applied in Western contexts to tackle societal challenges through collaborative processes (Simonsen,

2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013). Several governments have implemented co-design in policy development, including the United Kingdom's natural resource and land use policies (Urquhart et al., 2023; Tsouvalis et al., 2024), the NSW Carers Strategy in Australia (McFarlane & Turvey, 2017), and the Ara Toi Ōtepoti - Our Creative Future cultural strategy in New Zealand (Cattermole, 2018).

However, co-design practices in Indonesia are mostly applied within community-based initiatives rather than formal policy development processes. Examples include the development of the Jakarta Community Center (Permanasari, 2020), the regeneration of sustainable urban *kampongs* (Irwandi et al., 2024), and the creation of inclusive public spaces in Surakarta (NH & Purnamasari, 2018). While these initiatives demonstrate the potential of collaborative approaches to generate new insights and perspectives, their connection to formal policymaking processes remains limited.

The Indonesian comic ecosystem represents a relevant context for examining co-design in policymaking. Comics fall under the publishing subsector, formally recognized within Indonesia's national creative economy regulatory framework (Kementerian Ekonomi Kreatif, 2025, p. 7). However, the subsector has remained stagnant, contributing only 3% of total creative industry output between 2011 and 2015 while other subsectors grew (Ichsan & Verena, 2020, p. 181). The government's own Strategic Plan 2025-2029 acknowledges that creative economy data remains scattered, hindering effective policy formulation, and proposes a *heksaheliks* collaboration framework (involving government, academia, business, communities, media, and financial institutions) as one of its solutions (Kementerian Ekonomi Kreatif, 2025, pp. 20, 42-43). Yet despite this ambition, Indonesian policymaking has lacked a culture of stakeholder engagement, with practitioners, experts, universities, business communities, and civil society rarely consulted in policy formulation (Blomkamp et al., 2017). Therefore, this research aims to explore how co-design can support informed policymaking in Indonesia by examining how co-design processes are conducted, what ideas and insights emerge, and how they facilitate dialogue among diverse stakeholders, through the case study of the Indonesian Comic Ecosystem Co-Design initiative.

1.2 Scope and Limitations

This research focuses on examining how co-design practices can contribute to more informed policymaking in Indonesia, specifically within the context of Indonesia's creative economy. The study uses the Indonesian Comic Ecosystem Co-Design initiative as a case study, and approaches the creative economy from a policy and ecosystem strengthening perspective, examining the conditions, knowledge, and collaborative processes needed for the comic ecosystem to develop sustainably.

Through this case, the research seeks to understand how co-design processes are conducted, what ideas and insights emerged in relation to policymaking, and how co-design facilitates dialogue and knowledge exchange among diverse stakeholders. The findings are therefore situated at the intersection of participatory design, creative economy policy, and ecosystem development, hoping to answer how practitioner-grounded knowledge can inform more responsive and inclusive policy for Indonesia's creative economy.

This study primarily relies on qualitative case study analysis and does not attempt to directly evaluate policy outcomes or measure the long-term effectiveness of co-design interventions. Instead, the research focuses on identifying patterns, practices, and insights emerging from the co-design process that could potentially inform policymaking approaches within Indonesia's creative economy sector.

1.3 Problem Formulation

Based on the background described above, the author formulates the following hypotheses:

- a) Policymaking processes in Indonesia are still largely characterized by top-down approaches, with limited meaningful public participation.
- b) Co-design practices have begun to emerge in Indonesia, primarily within community and sector-based initiatives rather than formal

policymaking processes, especially within the creative economy sector.

- c) The potential of co-design to generate insights that could inform creative economy policymaking in Indonesia remains underexplored.

From these hypotheses, the following research question is formulated: “How can co-design support informed policymaking in Indonesia?”

1.4 Aims and Objectives

With the background described above, this research aims to analyze how co-design can support informed policymaking in Indonesia. The objectives of this research are as follows:

- a) To contribute to the understanding of how co-design practices can generate insights that may support more informed and participatory policymaking processes in Indonesia, specifically within the context of Indonesia’s creative economy sector.
- b) To fulfill the academic requirements for the completion of the PRO-STEP Research Cluster program in the even semester of the 2026/2027 academic year.

1.5 Urgency of the Research

The urgency of this research lies in the growing complexity of societal challenges that require collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to policymaking. Issues such as urban development, cultural sustainability, and social innovation increasingly demand inclusive decision-making processes that incorporate diverse perspectives and stakeholder knowledge.

In Indonesia, policymaking processes are still largely characterized by top-down approaches, where public participation often occurs through formal consultation mechanisms that may not fully integrate stakeholder insights into policy decisions. At the same time, participatory design approaches such as co-design have begun to emerge across various sectors in Indonesia, particularly in community-based initiatives addressing social and cultural challenges.

Despite these developments, the potential role of co-design in informing policymaking processes in Indonesia remains underexplored. Understanding how collaborative design practices can generate insights relevant to policy development in Indonesia's creative economy sector is therefore important for improving participatory governance and fostering more inclusive and context-sensitive policymaking.

1.6 Expected Outputs

The expected outputs of program include:

- a) A research report analyzing the role of co-design practices in supporting informed policymaking in Indonesia.
- b) Academic writing that contributes to scholarly discussions on participatory design, co-design, and policymaking.
- c) Documentation and analysis of the Indonesian comic ecosystem co-design initiative as a case study of participatory design practice.

1.7 Benefits of Implementation

1. For the Author

This research provides an opportunity for the author to deepen their understanding of participatory design approaches, co-design methodologies, and their potential applications in policymaking and social innovation contexts.

2. For Others (e.g., community, industry, or stakeholders)

The findings of this research may offer insights for practitioners, policymakers, and community organizations interested in applying collaborative design approaches to address complex social and policy challenges. It may also contribute to discussions on strengthening participatory processes within governance and development initiatives.

3. For the University

This research contributes to the academic development of design research within the university by exploring interdisciplinary approaches that

connect design practices with policymaking and governance. It may also support future research initiatives related to participatory design, social innovation, and creative ecosystems.

1.8 Timeline and Procedures

The implementation of the PRO-STEP Research and Technology Program is equivalent to 640 working hours, or approximately 18-20 weeks within one semester, and is valued at 20 academic credits. The following table presents the timeline of the program implementation:

Table 1.1 Research and Technology Program Timeline

No.	Event	Description	Date
1.	PRO-STEP Cluster Socialization	Introduction session providing an overview of the PRO-STEP program and its overall activities.	10 November 2025
2.	PRO-STEP Registration	Registration for the PRO-STEP program based on the selected cluster.	15 November 2025
3.	PRO-STEP Website Registration	Registration on the PRO-STEP website used throughout the PRO-STEP program activities.	28 January 2026
4.	Beginning of PRO-STEP Classes	Start of the PRO-STEP program activities. In the research cluster, this stage begins with a kick-off meeting with the external supervisor.	2 Feb 2026
5.	PRO-STEP Cluster Evaluation 1	The first evaluation of the PRO-STEP research program implementation.	9-13 March 2026
6.	PRO-STEP Guidance Phase 2	Period of PRO-STEP supervision, including filling in the Supervisor and Advisor Daily Task logs and conducting counselling meetings.	16 March – 22 May 2026

7.	PRO-STEP Cluster Evaluation 2	The second evaluation of the PRO-STEP research program implementation.	25-29 May 2026
8.	PRO-STEP Evaluation Report & Document Check	Review of report documents to ensure they follow the required template and meet the program standards.	25-26 May
9.	PRO-STEP Evaluation Defense 2	On-site presentation and defense of the research report.	4-5 June 2026
10.	Submission of Final PRO-STEP Evaluation Report	Revising and finalizing the evaluation report, then submitting the final version.	11-12 June 2026

