

Research Article

Institutional Arrangements for the Creative Economy and Empowerment of Business Actors: A Study in Malang City**Azna Abrory Wardana¹, Lintang Edityastono²**Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia ^{1,2}
Corresponding Author, Email: aznaabrory@ub.ac.id**Abstract**

This study examines the institutional arrangements governing the creative economy in Malang City and their implications for the empowerment and performance of creative business actors. Supported nationally by Law No. 24/2019 and Government Regulation No. 24/2022, Malang has adopted the Creative Economy Development Action Plan 2023–2027 and established the Malang Creative Center (MCC) to facilitate 17 creative subsectors. Using a qualitative policy case study and socio-legal approach, the analysis draws on regulatory documents and semi-structured interviews with government officials, MCC managers, and creative actors. Findings show that although Malang has a strong normative framework, institutional implementation remains fragmented due to overlapping mandates and weak coordination. MCC provides training, mentoring, and promotional facilities that enhance networks, digital skills, and business growth, though benefits are uneven across subsectors. Institutional quality directly influences business strategy: well-connected actors adopt innovative models and expand markets, while those with limited support remain traditional. The study underscores the need for clearer institutional roles, inclusive empowerment programs, and integrated digital and financing initiatives.

Keywords: Creative Economy, Institutional Governance, Business Empowerment.**INTRODUCTION**

The creative economy has increasingly been recognized in recent years as one of the main drivers of global economic growth and transformation. The Creative Economy



Outlook 2024 reports that cultural and creative industries worldwide generate approximately USD 2.3 trillion in annual revenue, contribute around 3.1% to global GDP, and account for about 6.2% of global employment, with considerable variation across countries (UNCTAD, 2024). Recognition of the strategic importance of the creative economy was further reinforced by United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/198, which designated 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, explicitly encouraging member states to strengthen policies, institutions, and cross-sectoral support for creative economy actors (United Nations General Assembly, 2020). Thus, the development of a creative economy ecosystem and institutional arrangements is no longer a peripheral concern but an integral part of the sustainable development agenda.

In Indonesia, the creative economy has been positioned as one of the national priority sectors in the post-pandemic era. Data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) indicate that in 2022 the creative economy contributed approximately IDR 1,134.9 trillion to the national GDP, continuing its upward trend after being impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf, 2023a; Katadata, 2024). The Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy also noted that Indonesia ranks among the top three countries with the highest contribution of the creative economy to national GDP, supported by tens of millions of workers across subsectors such as culinary arts, fashion, and crafts (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf, 2023b). An input-output based study affirms that the creative economy has the potential to become a new source of growth during and after the pandemic, yet its development heavily depends on the quality of sectoral data, policy clarity, and institutional readiness supporting the creative ecosystem (Bernika & Monika, 2025). This condition underscores the urgency of strengthening creative economy governance and institutional arrangements, including at the local level.

The normative basis for creative economy development in Indonesia is built upon Law No. 24 of 2019 on the Creative Economy, which is further operationalized by Government Regulation No. 24 of 2022 on the Implementation of Law No. 24 of 2019. This regulation emphasizes the roles of national and local governments in providing infrastructure, financing schemes, intellectual property-based ecosystem development, and facilitation of collaboration with educational institutions, businesses, and creative communities (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). From a governance and

regulatory perspective, this framework situates local governments as crucial nodes in institutional design, public service provision, and empowerment of creative economy actors through policies and programs aligned with local needs.

Malang City is one of the regions that explicitly articulates its commitment to creative economy development through the Malang City Creative Economy Development Action Plan 2023–2027 (Bappeda Kota Malang, 2023). The document notes that Malang has significant potential through thousands of MSMEs and diverse creative subsectors, yet the existing creative ecosystem is considered suboptimal despite the city's long-standing identity as a "creative city." The action plan targets the creation of a synergistic and collaborative creative economy ecosystem, including through programs that strengthen cross-agency coordination and activate creative economy institutions. At the same time, studies on creative economy development strategies in Malang emphasize the need for collaboration between government, communities, and academia to foster an environment that supports innovation, promotion, and sustainability of creative enterprises (Bimantara et al., 2021). However, various institutional and physical initiatives—such as the Malang Creative Center and the establishment of creative industry associations—still leave open questions regarding the effectiveness of governance mechanisms and public services as experienced by business actors.

Recent studies show that the primary challenge in creative economy development across regions is not the lack of business ideas but the weakness of institutions and public services underpinning creative ecosystems. Nationally, the creative economy has been identified as a sector capable of accelerating economic recovery, yet its development remains constrained by limited data, non-innovative financing schemes, and weak policy coordination across actors (Bernika & Monika, 2025; Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf, 2023a). Other studies highlight the creative economy's role as an instrument of community empowerment, particularly through capacity building, new job creation, and the utilization of local wisdom in the digital transformation era (Firnanda et al., 2024; Rahman & Hakim, 2024). However, many empowerment programs—such as training, business mentoring, or digital platform facilitation—are still executed in a fragmented manner and not always supported by clear institutional design or sustainable service mechanisms.

Theoretically, this article draws on a combination of institutional theory, public

service management frameworks, and empowerment theory. Contemporary institutional theory emphasizes that the performance of public organizations is strongly shaped by the configuration of formal institutions (regulations, organizational structures, procedures) and informal institutions (norms, values, networks), as well as gradual institutional change (Silva et al., 2024). This perspective helps explain why creative economy institutions in a region may appear comprehensive on paper but do not automatically produce responsive and empowering services. Meanwhile, public service management literature highlights the need for user-centered service orientation, cross-actor collaboration, and effective managerial practices to improve public service quality (Andhika, 2025). Empowerment theory sees empowerment as a multidimensional process to enhance capacities, participation, and control of target groups over decisions affecting their lives; in the creative economy context, empowerment involves not only training but also ensuring access to information, financing, markets, and policy dialogue spaces for business actors (Firnanda et al., 2024; Rahman & Hakim, 2024).

The literature review identifies at least three clusters of studies relevant to this article's focus. First, macro-level studies on the creative economy's contribution to national and regional economic development, which show that the creative economy is an emerging source of growth—including during crises—but requires stronger institutions and more mature policy frameworks (Bernika & Monika, 2025; UNCTAD, 2024). Second, studies on creative economy development in Malang and other cities, emphasizing the importance of penta-/hexa-helix collaboration, prioritization of leading subsectors, and the development of creative hubs as instruments to strengthen creative ecosystems (Bappeda Kota Malang, 2023; Bimantara et al., 2021). Third, studies on empowerment of creative economy actors and MSMEs that highlight the roles of training, mentoring, and community- or technology-based interventions, although these studies generally treat regulatory and institutional aspects as background context rather than primary analytical objects (Firnanda et al., 2024; Rahman & Hakim, 2024; Judijanto, 2025). Meanwhile, the literature on good governance and public service reform in Indonesia frequently discusses transparency, accountability, participation, and responsiveness, but rarely links these specifically to the institutional design of the creative economy at the city level (Ikhsan et al., 2024).

From this review, several research gaps can be identified. First, studies on the

creative economy in Malang City largely focus on development strategies, subsector prioritization, or actor collaboration, but few systematically analyze institutional arrangements (structures, mandates, and inter-agency relations) from both legal and business administration perspectives (Bappeda Kota Malang, 2023; Bimantara et al., 2021). Second, empowerment studies often emphasize training and mentoring programs without assessing the extent to which existing institutional designs and public services actually support—or hinder—the empowerment process (Firnanda et al., 2024; Rahman & Hakim, 2024). Third, there is a lack of research integrating institutional theory, public service management, and empowerment frameworks to examine the relationship between creative economy institutional arrangements, service quality, and empowerment capacities of business actors at the city level (Andhika, 2025; Silva et al., 2024). Accordingly, there is significant room for research that bridges legal studies and business administration within a unified institutional and empowerment analysis.

Based on these gaps, this article titled “Institutional Arrangements for the Creative Economy and Empowerment of Business Actors: A Study in Malang City” aims to address two core questions: (1) How are the institutional arrangements for the creative economy configured in Malang City, both in terms of vertical alignment with the national legal framework and horizontal relations among local institutions? and (2) To what extent do these institutional arrangements and service design contribute to the empowerment of creative economy business actors in Malang City, assessed through access to services, participation in policymaking, and perceptions of service quality received? Theoretically, this study seeks to enrich the discourse on institutional theory and public service management in the context of the creative economy by demonstrating how institutional and service design in this sector can be analyzed simultaneously from legal and business administration perspectives. Practically, the findings are expected to offer concrete recommendations for the Malang City Government and relevant stakeholders regarding institutional structuring, service improvement, and the design of more targeted and sustainable empowerment programs. Thus, the article aims to provide a state-of-the-art contribution to the study of creative economy institutional arrangements based on local law, explicitly linking legal aspects, service governance, and business actor empowerment.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a policy case study design, focusing on the institutional arrangements of the creative economy and the practices of business actor empowerment in Malang City. From a legal studies perspective, this research adopts a normative–empirical (socio-legal) approach, combining an analysis of norms contained in legislation and policy documents with an examination of their implementation in practice. From a business administration perspective, the study utilizes public service management and business actor empowerment frameworks to understand how legally regulated institutional designs are translated into concrete services and programs.

Data were collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The document study includes Law No. 24/2019, Government Regulation No. 24/2022, relevant regional and mayoral regulations, mayoral circulars, the Malang City Creative Economy Development Action Plan, planning and institutional documents, service SOPs, and empowerment program reports. Interviews were conducted with purposively selected key informants, including officials from Bappeda, local government units related to the creative economy and MSMEs, managers of the Malang Creative Center or similar institutions, as well as representatives of communities and business actors from several creative subsectors, until data saturation was reached.

Data analysis was conducted through content analysis of legal and policy documents to map institutional configurations, mandates, and types of services. This was then combined with thematic analysis of interview transcripts and field notes to identify business actors' experiences related to access, service quality, and the degree of empowerment. The normative and empirical findings were subsequently triangulated to identify alignments and gaps between the institutional design on paper and actual practices in the field. Validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as by maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities in accordance with research ethics principles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Configuration and Governance of the Creative Economy in Malang City

The findings indicate that the institutional arrangement of the creative economy in Malang City has developed in line with global policy trends that position the creative

economy as a driver of growth, employment, and social inclusion. Recent reports highlight its rising contribution to GDP and employment, with institutional governance identified as a key determinant of sustainability (UNCTAD, 2024). At the local level, the Rencana Aksi Pengembangan Ekonomi Kreatif Kota Malang 2023–2027 portrays Malang as an education-based city with approximately 8,000 MSMEs and diverse creative subsectors. Although designated as a “creative city” by Kemenparekraf in 2021, the document notes that Malang has yet to reach its full potential, requiring stronger institutional structures, activation programs, and systematic infrastructure utilization (Bappeda Kota Malang, 2023). This study confirms that existing regulations—such as mayoral circulars prioritizing local creative products in procurement, the formation of creative economy forums, and the establishment of MCC as a service hub—mirror developments in other regions linking creative economy policy with MSME and local economic agendas (Mas et al., 2025; Handini, 2025).

Malang’s recent admission into the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in media arts (2025) further emphasizes the need for integrated, accountable regulatory and institutional frameworks, particularly in planning, monitoring, and evaluation (UNESCO, 2025). The Malang Creative Center (MCC) is positioned as a flagship facility offering coworking spaces, incubation, and performance venues for 17 creative subsectors (Malang City Government, 2023; Kominfo Jawa Timur, 2023; Binus University, 2023). While conceptually designed as an open and collaborative creative hub, studies note gaps between design and implementation that may affect public perception and usability (Yusran et al., 2024). Other research highlights MCC’s role in facilitating training, promotion, and networking, though it still faces management and service-capacity constraints (Rahmawati, 2024).

From a collaborative governance perspective, Malang’s action plan adopts a hexahelix model involving government, business, academia, community, media, and financial institutions. However, prior studies show that collaboration remains suboptimal due to uneven actor contributions, inconsistent cross-agency coordination, and forums that have yet to function as strategic decision-making spaces (Anisykurlillah, 2024). Field findings reinforce this: creative actors often struggle to identify the appropriate institutional “entry point”—whether MCC, the tourism office, the MSME office, or Bappeda—indicating fragmented information and overlapping mandates, consistent with earlier assessments of Malang’s digital creative ecosystem

(Malang City Government, 2022; 2021a; Malangpariwara, 2021; Anisykurlillah, 2024).

In terms of good governance, Malang demonstrates policy innovation—such as procurement prioritization for creative products, multi-year action plans, and integration of creative economy goals into city development visions. Yet these advances are not fully matched by strengthened organizational capacity or service accountability mechanisms. Comparative studies, such as in Probolinggo, show that policy success depends heavily on institutional clarity, implementor capacity, and consistent involvement of creative actors (Pradana, 2025). Broader governance literature similarly underscores the necessity of transparency, participation, accountability, and cross-sector coordination in achieving equitable and effective creative economy governance (Ikhsan, 2025; Suwanda et al., 2025; Rahmawati, 2025). Overall, Malang possesses an advanced normative framework but remains in a consolidation phase: rule-making has progressed faster than rule-implementation and capacity building.

These findings reinforce the relevance of institutional theory and collaborative governance in analyzing Malang's creative economy. Local regulations function not only as normative frameworks but also as instruments governing actor behavior and resource distribution (UNCTAD, 2024; Bappeda Kota Malang, 2023). However, from a public administration perspective, this configuration represents an enabling environment rather than a fully performing institutional system. Strengthening MCC's role as a measurable service hub, improving cross-agency coordination, and developing participatory monitoring mechanisms are needed to ensure that norms translate into concrete services for creative actors. The core issue, therefore, lies not in the absence of regulation but in inconsistent operationalization of institutional design and service procedures.

Implementation of Public Services and Empowerment of Creative Economy Actors

Findings show that MCC and related units function as the frontline institutions for service delivery and empowerment of creative economy actors in Malang City. Entrepreneurs use MCC for training, exhibitions, product curation, and networking with other creators and potential investors. These findings align with studies identifying MCC as a venue for capacity building, promotion, and product-quality enhancement (Rahmawati, 2024). Community engagement programs also indicate MCC's emerging

role as an innovation laboratory providing branding assistance, product design, and business model development (Kurniawati & Tim EduAbdimas, 2025). MCC's communication strategy—especially through Instagram and community networking—helps reach young and digital-based entrepreneurs, although content consistency and interaction quality remain areas for improvement (Dwiyuniar, 2025; Nurhadi, 2025). Field data also show that entrepreneurs who regularly participate in MCC programs tend to gain wider networks and market exposure.

However, empowerment efforts are not evenly distributed and often concentrate on already organized communities. Several respondents noted that program information circulates mainly within specific networks—such as design communities, tech start-ups, or campus-based groups—leaving subsectors like home-based culinary, small crafts, and traditional fashion feeling excluded. Similar patterns were found in Ciamis, where limited communication and weak institutional synergy caused empowerment to benefit only actors with relatively strong initial capacities (Andriani et al., 2024). Other village-based studies also show that training and marketing support can foster entrepreneurship but depend on sustained mentoring and local institutional capacity (Saefullah, 2021; Firnanda, 2024; Fahlevi, 2025). This research confirms that MCC's empowerment design has not fully addressed subsectoral and regional disparities.

From a business administration perspective, effective empowerment depends on the capacity of local institutions to integrate technical assistance, market access, and digital support into a needs-oriented service package. Recent MSME digitalization studies highlight digital literacy, marketplace utilization, social media marketing, and app-based financial recording as key competitiveness factors (Irianto, 2022). Yet many entrepreneurs remain digitally lagging due to resource constraints and limited understanding of digital performance metrics (Rachmatsyah et al., 2025). Similar conditions appear in Malang, especially among non-digital subsectors that still rely on direct sales and word-of-mouth. Although the Malang Creative Economy Action Plan positions digital infrastructure and the MCC platform as foundational components (Bappeda Kota Malang, 2023), digital adoption remains uneven. Literature consistently shows that structured and continuous training improves online marketing capabilities but requires strong support from local governments and universities (Digitalisasi UMKM, 2022; Irianto, 2022; Putri et al., 2025).

From a public service good governance perspective, problems stem not only from resource limitations but also from lack of transparency, unclear service standards, and limited participation in program planning. Studies affirm that information openness, procedural clarity, and effective feedback mechanisms are essential for service quality and public trust (Ikhsan, 2025). Good governance also correlates with effective economic development policies, including in the creative sector (Suwanda et al., 2025; Rahmawati, 2025). Policy briefs emphasize the need for integrating these principles into sectoral institutional design, not only general bureaucratic reforms (Widya Publika, 2025). Thus, MCC and related agencies hold a strategic role as both the “face” of public service innovation and indicators of transparency, accountability, and participation.

Overall, the effectiveness of creative economy empowerment in Malang depends not merely on physical infrastructure or training availability, but on the quality of service design and institutional governance. Legally, this implies that regional regulations should explicitly stipulate service standards, accountability mechanisms, and rights of participation—not only visions and institutional nomenclature. From a business administration viewpoint, the findings highlight the importance of service-dominant logic and customer (entrepreneur) relationship management, positioning actors as co-creators of value. Therefore, this study provides practical recommendations for redesigning Malang’s creative economy service model and offers theoretical contributions to interdisciplinary legal–business administration discussions on local governance of the creative economy.

Impact of Institutional Arrangements on Creative Business Strategies and Performance

The findings show that the quality of local institutional arrangements directly affects how creative economy actors formulate business strategies, innovate, and sustain performance. National studies emphasize that the strength of the creative economy lies not only in its GDP contribution and employment but also in its role in structural transformation and sustainable development—provided consistent governance and policy support exist at both central and local levels (UNCTAD, 2024; Susanti, 2024; Dairoby, 2023). Research on local government roles likewise indicates that regulatory clarity and institutional design shape a conducive business climate, especially for vulnerable creative MSMEs (Abidin, 2022; Evelina & Sulasari, 2024). In this context,

Malang's RA Ekraf and MCC function not merely as legal frameworks but as instruments influencing daily business behavior.

From a business strategy perspective, actors in Malang who perceive stronger institutional support tend to be more proactive in developing business models, entering external markets, and pursuing export opportunities. This aligns with studies showing that targeted policy support and institutional ecosystems encourage creators to convert creative strengths into global competitiveness (Budi et al., 2023). Other research finds that creative business performance depends on individual traits and business model innovation, but these factors are effective only when supported by regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, and institutional resources (Dellyana et al., 2023; Zidane et al., 2025). Field findings indicate that actors more engaged with MCC and related agencies exhibit longer-term growth orientations, while less-connected actors remain focused on sustaining local markets.

Institutional arrangements also influence digital capability and platform use. Studies on digital platform capability show that leveraging marketplaces, social media, and government-MSME platforms enhances growth prospects, although digital access gaps persist (Sanistasya, 2024; Prasetyo, 2024). Research further highlights that digital business model innovation among creative MSMEs depends heavily on policy support, infrastructure, and structured digital literacy programs (Syarkani, 2025; Sudirman, 2025). In this study, many Malang actors acknowledged that government- or university-supported digital marketing and branding programs improved their strategies, while those in less-exposed subsectors (e.g., home-based crafts, small-scale culinary) still faced digital literacy challenges.

Institutional design also shapes access to finance and entrepreneurial capacity. Studies on creative asset commercialization emphasize that policy frameworks recognizing the economic value of intellectual property and providing creative asset-based financing can expand funding opportunities when supported by clear regulations (Mahmudah, 2024). Literature on MSME empowerment stresses that empowerment must strengthen bargaining power, decision-making autonomy, and sustained access to networks (Evelina & Sulasari, 2024; Hikmah, 2024; Tantawi, 2023). Macro-level analyses of Indonesia's 2015–2020 creative economy performance also show positive correlations between sectoral growth and strengthened ecosystems of education, research, and institutions (Zidane et al., 2025; Indonesian Creative Economy Performance, 2024). In

Malang, actors engaged in medium-term mentoring reported improvements in managerial skills, market expansion, and confidence in accessing formal finance.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce that creative economy institutional arrangements bridge legal logic (certainty, structure, rights and obligations) and business logic (strategy, innovation, performance). From institutional theory and public service management perspectives, well-designed institutions provide incentives and resources that encourage innovation while offering protection amid market uncertainty (UNCTAD, 2024; Dellyana, 2023; Susanti, 2024). From an empowerment perspective, responsive institutions function not only as aid providers but as strategic partners enhancing capacity and bargaining power (Evelina & Sulasari, 2024; Dairobby, 2023; Abidin, 2022). Thus, strengthening institutional design in Malang—including clearer mandates, cross-agency coordination, and more inclusive service models—has the potential to improve governance as well as the strategic quality and performance of creative businesses.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the institutional framework for the creative economy in Malang City is normatively progressive but remains in a consolidation phase. National regulations—UU 24/2019 and PP 24/2022—provide a clear legal basis for local government roles, and Malang has responded with its Creative Economy Action Plan (2023–2027), the strengthening of the Malang Creative Center (MCC), and several supporting policies. However, authority distribution, cross-agency coordination, and institutional entry points for creative actors are not yet fully structured. Thus, rule-making has advanced, while rule-implementation and capacity building lag behind.

In terms of service implementation and empowerment, MCC and related agencies function as key providers of training, mentoring, and promotion spaces. Actors engaged in these programs report improved networks and business capacity, yet benefits remain uneven. Information circulates mainly among well-organized, digitally connected communities, while peripheral subsectors—home-based crafts, small culinary businesses, traditional fashion—face limited access and weak digital literacy. Good governance elements such as transparency, clear service standards, and participation mechanisms are still not fully integrated.

The study also finds that institutional quality directly affects business strategies

and performance. Actors connected to MCC and government empowerment schemes tend to adopt more innovative business models, expand markets (including digitally), and begin accessing formal finance. Those outside institutional reach remain reliant on local, traditional business practices. This confirms that creative economy institutions function not merely as administrative structures but as determinants of business transformation toward innovation and competitiveness.

Theoretically, the findings reaffirm the relevance of institutional theory, public service management, and empowerment theory. Institutional arrangements serve as a bridge between legal logic (certainty, structure, rights) and business logic (strategy, innovation, performance). From a legal perspective, successful implementation depends on organizational design, coordination, and accountability. From a business administration perspective, effective empowerment requires user-oriented, inclusive, and continuous public services—not one-off training programs.

Practically, the study highlights the need to:

1. Clarify institutional roles and strengthen cross-agency coordination;
2. Enhance MCC as a service hub with clear standards and feedback mechanisms;
3. Design more inclusive empowerment programs for underserved subsectors; and
4. Integrate digital literacy, market access, and relevant financing schemes.

Despite limitations—single-case scope and qualitative methodology—this study provides a comprehensive overview of how local legal-based institutional arrangements shape empowerment processes and creative business performance in Malang City.

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