# Potensi Ekosistem Desain dalam Pengelolaan Jejaring Kota Desain UNESCO (*The Potential of the Design Ecosystem for the Management of the UNESCO Cities of Design Network*)

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## Abstract

This study examines the institutional, financial, relational, and operational conditions shaping collaboration and sustainability within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) Cities of Design (CoD) sub-network. Drawing on a descriptive questionnaire comprising 20 respondent records from 19 cities and a preliminary analytical report, the study identifies patterns in governance, network coordination, financial resources, and collaborative practices. Findings reveal strong relational foundations, including mutual trust (8.25/10) and organizational clarity (8.1/10), but collaboration remains largely occasional and dependent on individual initiatives. Limited funding, uneven institutional arrangements, insufficient staff capacity, and inconsistent monitoring constrain long-term cooperation. Sustained funding and committed political leadership emerge as the most important enabling conditions. The study proposes a practical framework connecting local institutional management, network-level collaboration infrastructure, and locally meaningful evaluation to strengthen sustained, inclusive, and impactful inter-city collaboration.

Keyword: UNESCO Creative Cities Network; Cities of Design; inter-city collaboration; governance; sustainability; creative cities; network management; local impact

## Introduction

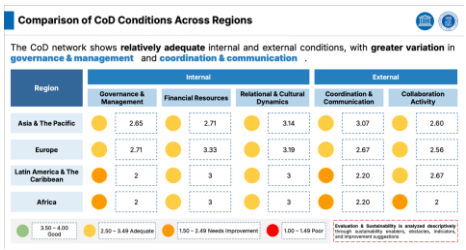
The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) provides a platform for cities to mobilize creativity and cultural resources in support of sustainable urban development. Within this network, the Cities of Design (CoD) sub-network facilitates international exchange, knowledge sharing, and collaborative initiatives through design. However, network membership does not automatically translate into sustained collaboration or meaningful local impact.

Existing interactions frequently depend on individual relationships and short-term opportunities, while institutional support, strategic planning, and financial resources remain uneven. Sustainable collaboration requires both strong local governance arrangements and effective network-level coordination mechanisms.

Understanding how these conditions interact is therefore essential to strengthening the network's contribution to local creative ecosystems. This study investigates the institutional and relational dynamics shaping CoD collaboration, identifies its principal enabling conditions and barriers, and proposes a practical framework for strengthening institutional continuity, collective action, and locally meaningful outcomes.

## Research Method

This study employs a descriptive, cross-sectional research approach based on questionnaire data and a preliminary analytical presentation of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) Cities of Design (CoD) sub-network. The dataset comprises 20 completed respondent records representing 19 distinct cities across four regions: Asia and the Pacific (6), Europe (9), Latin America and the Caribbean (3), and Africa (1). Bandung is represented by two respondents; therefore, respondent-level results are distinguished from city-level observations.




*Picture 1. The Results of Analysis Using the Perspective of Stakeholder Analysis and Social Network Analysis (SNA)*

The questionnaire covers respondent and city profiles, collaboration activities, governance and management, coordination and communication, financial resources, relational and cultural dynamics, and evaluation and sustainability. It incorporates categorical questions, multiple-response items, 0–10 rating scales, and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative patterns and qualitative perspectives.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including response frequencies, distributions, and respondent-level averages. The reported average scores include mutual trust (8.25/10), organizational clarity (8.1/10), commitment to UCCN objectives (6.85/10), joint decision-making effectiveness (6.8/10), and communication sufficiency (6.3/10). Multiple-response items were interpreted as overlapping selections rather than mutually exclusive categories. Qualitative responses were examined thematically to identify recurring issues concerning funding constraints, political continuity, communication, institutional differences, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder participation.

An ecosystem perspective guided the analysis by distinguishing internal city-level conditions from external network-level mechanisms, with evaluation and sustainability considered cross-cutting dimensions. The findings are interpreted descriptively, acknowledging uneven regional representation, the cross-sectional design, and the preliminary nature of the analytical dataset. Consequently, the study identifies reported patterns and perceived conditions rather than establishing causal relationships or definitive city rankings.

## Discussion & Result

Findings reveal a network characterized by strong relational foundations but uneven institutional and operational support. Mutual trust (8.25/10) and organizational clarity (8.1/10) are relatively high, yet collaboration is predominantly occasional, with nine respondents reporting one or two collaborative activities annually. Institutional continuity is constrained by partially documented strategies, inconsistent monitoring, and reliance on individual focal points. Financial limitations represent the most frequently identified obstacle (19 responses), while sustained funding (19) and committed political leadership (18) are the leading enabling conditions.

Communication channels are widely used, but formal coordination procedures and systematic information-sharing mechanisms remain underdeveloped. These findings suggest that trust and individual commitment alone cannot ensure sustainable cooperation. Strengthening collaboration requires institutional ownership, predictable resources, shared but flexible procedures, and broader local stakeholder participation. Accordingly, the study proposes three interconnected functions: strengthening local institutional management, activating collective network infrastructure, and sustaining local impact through participatory monitoring and evaluation.

## Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the UCCN Cities of Design sub-network possesses considerable collaborative potential, supported by established relationships, mutual trust, and diverse exchange activities. Nevertheless, collaboration remains irregular and vulnerable to financial constraints, administrative transitions, limited staff capacity, and inconsistent institutional arrangements.

Strengthening the network requires moving beyond individual initiatives towards more durable systems of cooperation. At the city level, this involves embedding the designation in institutional structures, strategic plans, and regular monitoring. At the network level, it requires accessible communication, flexible collaboration procedures, shared knowledge infrastructure, and diversified funding mechanisms.

Furthermore, sustainability should be evaluated through local stakeholder participation, knowledge generation, institutional capacity, policy influence, and partnership continuity rather than activity numbers alone. Future research should validate the proposed framework through deeper stakeholder analysis, longitudinal investigation, and testing of the suggested monitoring indicators across participating cities.