Potential of *noken* as part of a creative economy in improving the economy of indigenous Papuans

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**Abstract.** As a traditional indigenous product from Papua that is recognized by the world through UNESCO as world heritage and intangible property, *noken* must be able to improve the economy of the people of Papua. The purpose of writing this article is to determine the extent of the potential of *noken* as part of the creative economy in improving the economy of the people of Papua. It had arranged with qualitative descriptive writing types and literature study methods by reading, recording and exploring study materials sourced from journals, books, articles, magazines, newspapers and other documents in printed or electronic form which were then evaluated and analyzed. The results obtained from this writing that in terms of the creative economy, *noken* has enormous potential as part of it because it is realized through ideas and high creative power. In terms of increasing the *Noken* economy, it also has excellent potential to guarantee the welfare of indigenous Papuans. To support both of them, an active role of the government is needed as a forum to guarantee and channel ideas of indigenous Papuan creations.

1. **Introduction**

Papua is an island located at the eastern part of Indonesia, completing the framework of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia. Extends up to 420,540 km² with a variety of natural resources of economic value, flora and fauna as well as cultural uniqueness with 76.30% indigenous Papuans who inhabit it and more than 260 native languages of Papua. Specifically, Papua has the right to regulate and manage itself through individual autonomy, following the mandate of Law No. 21 of 2001[1]. Thus the Papuan government seeks to encourage the creation of synergies and harmonized homogeneous programs from the center to the regions in various sectors.

By 2018, when Indonesia's economic growth began to stabilize at 5.06 percent, the province of Papua could become the province with the fastest economic growth in Indonesia at 28.93 percent, as shown below (Bank Indonesia & Regional Economic and Financial Studies in Papua Province).
Figure 1. Economic Growth in Papua in 2018

Economic growth in Papua shot up is in terms of business sectors with leading mining sectors, can be seen in the picture below (Bank Indonesia & Regional Economic and Financial Studies in Papua Province).

Figure 2. GRDP of Business Field-Side in Papua in 2018

Although the most significant contributor to economic growth in Papua does not come from the creative economy sub-sector, along with the current digitalization development, the creative economy can make creativity as an added value to the economy.

The seriousness of the government and public attention towards economic development in Papua is shown from the policy of the central government to Papua. In addition to building infrastructure, health and education, economic growth based on local wisdom through the creative economy are considered to have great potential.

The Institute for Economic and Financial Development in a study stated that the creative economy is an economic valuation process arising from the use of intellectual property, where creativity, expertise, and individual talents are an integral part of producing products that can be sold. Developing countries adopt the creative economy in developed countries that use the creative economy as a strategy to restructure the economy and encourage innovation and growth although the original
economic map in developing countries has not been identified due to different socioeconomic situations in developed countries.

Ideas are the main factor in creating a creative economy that increases productivity [2]. Economic ideas need to be considered carefully so that they can produce the excellent output [3]. Thus, it can be said that the economy is built from ideas that are created and produce products that have high value and even something unlimited.

What is happening now is that our indigenous people in Papua are not yet fully aware of the potential of noken as part of a creative economy that can improve their welfare. Noken was made just to fill leisure time or for their own use, whereas the government guaranteed their work and creativity through the decision of the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia (2008) to publish references on the scope of the creative economy consisting of 14 sectors, namely advertising, architecture, goods, arts, crafts, design, fashion, film, video and photography, interactive games, music and art, performance, publishing and printing, computer and software services, radio and television, research and development [4]. The references above have clarified the existence of Papuan noken. Thus, noken as a traditional product handmade by Papuan mothers with their ideas and ways should be the driving force of the creative economy in Papua locally, nationally, and internationally.

2. Methods
This type of research was qualitative descriptive, with the method or literature study, which consists of reading, taking notes, and exploring several journals, books, articles, newspapers, magazines, and documents, in printed and electronic form, after which they were evaluated and analyzed.

3. Results and discussions
3.1. Philosophy of noken
Noken is a native description of the Papuan people. This unique and philosophical bag is recognized worldwide by the United Nations through UNESCO as wealth and intangible world heritage. Noken is a traditional bag of the Papuan people which is worn using the head and made of wood fiber, orchid roots, and forest grass. This function is to carry the needed daily needs [5]. In Papua, native people of Noken function to carry crops like vegetables, tubers, firewood, products to the market or even to transport or carry children.

Noken Papua is a symbol of a kind, peaceful and fertile life for the people of Papua. Among Papuan women, noken is also considered a symbol of maturity, and a woman cannot be considered an adult if she does not know how to knit noken properly. Besides, noken has various types and sizes (large, medium, small) and has names according to their size also varies according to the original tribe where the noken originated. Because of its uniqueness, noken is also often used as a souvenir and gift for guests who have set foot on the earth of paradise and is used in official ceremonies and traditional rituals.

3.2. Potential of noken as part of the creative economy
The term "creative economy" has emerged and is known throughout the world by Jhon Howkins (2001) in his book "How People Make Money with Ideas"[3]. It is said that economic activity in society is to spend most of its time generating ideas and doing them repeatedly because for the community to produce ideas, we must do something to move forward.

The latest creative economy literature by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2010 describes the creative economy as "an evolving concept based on creative assets that have the potential to generate economic growth and development"[5]. Alternatively, a concept that involves those based on creative assets has the potential to produce economic growth and development. It outlined that the creative economy can motivate income intensively, structuring employment and earning exports, while increasing social interest, cultural diversity and human development, including social, cultural and economic aspects in technological expansion, intellectual property rights, and tourism. A series of knowledge-based economic activities with cross-sectoral dimensions of development and connectivity at the micro and macro levels in the
choice of development strategies also require interdepartmental actions and innovative and multi-
disciplinary strategies. Thus at the heart of the creative economy is the creative industry.

Andri Irawan (2015) in his writings "Creative Economy as a Solution for the Welfare of
Communities in Increasing the Economy," suggests that one solution to the problem of facing an
aggressive level of competition is through the creative economy [6]. This is not only determined by
the magnitude of the process at the level of production but also its imaginative aspects and innovations in
addition to technological factors which also have a strong influence on the development of the creative
economy [6]. Some of the characteristics and characteristics found in the creative economy include
crucial elements such as creativity, expertise, talents, and talents that have a selling point by offering
intellectual creations based on ideas.

The creative economy is a strategic sector of national development because it makes a significant
contribution to the national economy. The creative economy can present more calculations based on
knowledge, including cultural heritage, and existing technology, from creative ideas and innovations
to creative ideas manifesting into creative and useful market works. Besides, Indonesian creative
works can elevate Indonesians abroad and create pride in the country. Creativity and innovation also
create a friendly business climate.

Judging from the description and characteristics of the creative economy above, the noken has a
great opportunity as part of the creative economy. Noken was born from the creative power of Papuan
mothers through hand knitting made from nature. In addition to exploring the natural wealth of Papua
through its raw materials, the skills and expertise in knitting and weaving can show their creativity,
which results in a variety of motifs and colors. Noken has the potential to become a superior and
commercial product because of its uniqueness as well because it has received world appreciation and
recognition by the United Nations (UN) through UNESCO as an intangible world heritage. This can
make Papua noken a product of high economic value because of its nature, type, and character as well
as its uniqueness in the process of producing it.

3. 3. Potential of Noken in improving the economy of indigenous Papuans.
So far, the marine, fisheries and mining sectors dominate the high economic growth in Papua. This is
natural because the two sectors were already present and dominated the market. Over time, other
sectors in Papua have begun to show their resilience in the existence of regional and national
economies, including the handicraft industry sector.

Elisabeth Marit and Hugo Warami (2015) in their study entitled "Noken Papua: The Source of
Creative Communities in the Land of Papua," explains that noken is a high economic value product
produced with limited input. Because it uses more factors of production produced from nature without
producing high costs or the cost of production is equal to zero, or in other words, noken has a minimal
production cost [7]. Original Noken with knitting material from bark fibers available in the forest or
nature is taken.

Along with the times and the rapid flow of information, knowledge, and technology, the trend of
making noken has shifted in terms of raw materials. Awareness of raw material depletion in nature, or
because of forest exploitation which results in deforestation for development and industrial purposes
and the increasing difficulty of obtaining raw materials, makes Papuan mums as noken craftsmen
switch to other essential materials. Then there are variations and incorporation of materials in its
manufacture.

Besides using materials from nature, but also collaborated using wool yarn. The prospect of this
raw material is easily obtained at low prices too. The emergence of creativity in economics is not a
barrier to being in the business world. Many new ideas emerge and of course, make it easier for people
to meet their needs. Modernization took place here which was formed by Papuan mothers. Schoorl
argues that modernization is a form of change in society in all aspects where the process of
transformation from traditional to modern forms.10 The theory of modernization is more focused on
non-modern society into a modern way through the process of economic growth and changes in socio-
political and cultural structures through community modernization in terms of industrialization.
Correspondingly, Wilbert E. Moore in his writings argues that modernization is a pattern of the
transformation of the life of society as a whole from traditional to a technological era to stabilize a country's economy [8].

Rostow (1960) [9] distinguishes economic growth in five stages, namely:

1) The traditional society where, at this stage, the category of society is still very simple, production activities are only intended to meet their own needs conventionally and simply.

2) The preconditions for take-off, these people are in a transition period, where they begin to realize the importance of development in the economy so that it is possible to prepare themselves for progress.

3) The take-off, there is a movement of drastic and significant changes in society

4) The drive to maturity, wherein this phase the community uses and modern technology in the use of existing resources.

5) The period of high consumption (The high mass consumption) where the attention of the public has turned to the problem of consumerism and welfare rather than thinking about the problem of production, to gain influence, power and recognition of other parties

To meet the demands and developments of the times, the innovation of noken products is also carried out by Papuan mothers. Currently, various types of Noken products, both from bark fibers and wool yarn, are made with high creativity and with various functions. Small size can be used to place cellphones, wallets, while medium and large sizes are used to carry books, and so on. Innovations in terms of material variations can also be easily found. For example, they are adding cassowary feather accents, or even beads that are modified with unique writings to increase the economic value of noken. Even in terms of the model can be adjusted to the request of the buyer if the craftsman is able to do it. Economic improvement is influenced by the efforts of the community itself as the determinants who dare to try because they dare to innovate in production activities.

Nowadays, the price of noken marketed varies according to size, function and processing time. Noken knitted with functional quality bark fibers are usually produced in limited quantities. Thus, the selling price can reach one hundred fifty thousand rupiahs to five hundred thousand rupiahs per fruit if purchased directly from Papuan mothers. The selling price is not much different from noken made from wool yarn, with prices ranging from one hundred thousand rupiahs to five hundred thousand rupiahs per piece. The basis of pricing is also usually determined by the level of difficulty in the manufacturing process. Especially if it has been decorated with additional trinkets to beautify the Noken model so that it becomes more exclusive. If the handicrafts of Papuan mothers are bought and sold in souvenir shops, promoted through various cultural events at national and international levels, the economic value of Noken can create prosperity and prosperity for their craftsmen. The tasks and roles of the regional government are crucial here. How to provide maximum opportunities, access and space for approximately 353 noken craftsmen in this case Papuan mothers to be able to show their work in the eyes of the nation and the world.

4. Conclusion

The potential of noken as a component of the creative economy is included in the strategic sector of regional development because it provides a significant contribution to the economy not only for the noken craftsmen themselves but also for the regional economy. The creative economy can realize high value with a knowledge base, including cultural heritage, and existing technology, from creative ideas to innovation through innovative and useful commercial work. Realizing a creative economy that is moving towards community welfare in a better direction requires integration between the government and related parties.

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