



Collaborative Governance in the Management of the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Batam City

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Abstract

The development of the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Batam City is aimed at becoming a strategic hub for digital economy growth and creative industries. However, its implementation faces serious governance challenges, such as overlapping authority between the Batam City Government and the Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority (BP Batam), inadequate supporting infrastructure, and low stakeholder engagement. This study aims to analyze the collaborative governance model in the management of the Nongsa SEZ using the framework of Ansell and Gash, which consists of four core components: starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and the collaborative process. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, utilizing in-depth interviews, document analysis, and participatory observation as data collection techniques. The findings reveal four main issues: power imbalances, exclusivity in institutional design, weak facilitative leadership, and suboptimal collaborative processes. These factors hinder the development of inclusive and sustainable collaboration. This study offers practical contributions by proposing a participatory collaborative forum and academic contributions by enriching the literature on collaborative governance in digital economy-oriented SEZ development in Indonesia. This study concludes that the governance of the Nongsa SEZ has not yet fully met the prerequisites for effective collaboration as defined by Ansell and Gash. Strengthening formal collaborative forums, enhancing the capacity of local actors, and aligning regulations across government levels are necessary to support participatory, integrated, and sustainable SEZ governance.

Keywords: Governance; Collaborative; Special Economic Zone

Introduction

In the era of globalization and increasingly complex economic competition, the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) has become one of the Indonesian government's flagship strategies to stimulate regional and national economic growth. SEZs are designed as instruments to enhance investment, accelerate industrialization, expand employment opportunities, and improve regional economic competitiveness (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, 2024). One of the zones receiving significant attention is the Nongsa SEZ in Batam City, which is being developed with a focus on the digital economy, creative industries, and technology-based tourism (BP Batam, 2024; Fatimah et al., 2022).

Geographically, the Nongsa SEZ holds a strategic advantage due to its location near Singapore and its developing ecosystem of technology and education. However, its implementation faces complex structural and institutional challenges, including overlapping authority between the Batam City Government and the Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority (BP Batam) (Dalla & Hutabarat, 2018), infrastructure limitations, and a mismatch between industry needs and the competencies of the local workforce (Chen et al., 2022; Tafese et al., 2025).

Governance issues are critical in managing SEZs, as their success depends heavily on effective coordination among stakeholders. It is within this context that the collaborative governance model becomes important to examine. Collaborative governance refers to a governing arrangement in which public and non-public actors engage in a collective, deliberative process to formulate and implement public policies (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This approach is highly relevant for the Nongsa SEZ, which involves a diverse set of actors, including the central government, BP Batam, creative industry players, educational institutions, and local communities.

The urgency of this study rests on three main points. First, to date, few studies have specifically examined the implementation of collaborative governance in the Nongsa SEZ, despite its strategic positioning as a hub for Indonesia's digital economy. Most existing research has focused on SEZs in Batam in general or on foreign zones (Kutin-Mensah et al., 2017; Wang, 2013; Zeng, 2011), while the complexity of institutional arrangements, incentive structures, and priority sectors demands a more contextual and specific approach (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007; Emerson et al., 2012).

Second, according to BP Batam's 2024 performance report, there has been a significant increase in investment realization in Batam, including the Nongsa SEZ. However, this growth has not been accompanied by an optimal collaborative governance model that effectively integrates the digital economy with the local community and other sectors (BP Batam, 2024). Challenges persist, such as infrastructure deficiencies, weak stakeholder participation, and limited cross-agency coordination.

Third, from an academic perspective, this study seeks to address a gap in the public administration literature regarding how multi-stakeholder collaboration can be designed and implemented in the context of technology-based SEZs. The study contributes to the development of a collaborative governance model that is adaptive to the characteristics of the rapidly evolving digital and creative sectors in the new economy era. This article aims to examine how the collaborative governance model is applied in managing the Nongsa SEZ, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. Additionally, it proposes strategies to strengthen collaborative governance based on the principles of good governance, including transparency, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and sustainability (Beierle & Cayford, 2010; Lynn, 2001).

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative research approach is employed using a case study method, with the Nongsa SEZ as the primary locus of analysis. Data are collected through document analysis, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation. The study also utilizes the Ansell and Gash (2007) model as the analytical framework, which includes four key elements: starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and the collaborative process. This research distinguishes itself from previous studies that have emphasized economic or technocratic aspects in SEZ management. While prior findings have focused on the impact of SEZs on firm productivity (Aritenang & Chandramidi, 2020) or issues of overlapping authority in Batam (Dalla & Hutabarat, 2018), this study places cross-sectoral collaboration at the heart of SEZ governance, with an in-depth analysis of actor interactions, decision-making mechanisms, and policy integration at both local and national levels.

Therefore, this study explicitly aims to examine how the collaborative governance model, as conceptualized by Ansell and Gash, is implemented in the management of the Nongsa SEZ. It also seeks to identify the enabling and inhibiting factors of collaboration among stakeholders, and to propose strategies that strengthen inclusive, participatory, and sustainable governance for technology-driven economic zones. The original contribution

of this article lies in developing a context-specific collaborative governance model for the Nongsa SEZ, along with a comprehensive analysis of the social and economic outcomes of the collaborative process, not limited solely to economic outputs such as investment and productivity (Aggarwal, 2023; Frick & Rodríguez-Pose, 2022).

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a case study design, focusing on the collaborative governance of the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Batam City. The research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the processes, actors, and dynamics of multi-stakeholder collaboration in managing the zone. The fieldwork was conducted over a period of six months, from March 2024 to June 2025, allowing adequate time for data immersion and triangulation. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with 18 key informants, including representatives from BP Batam, Batam City Government, Nongsa SEZ management, creative industry stakeholders, academics, and local community members. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with the following selection criteria: (1) direct involvement in SEZ management or policy implementation; (2) institutional representation of public, private, or civil society sectors; and (3) willingness to participate in extended interviews and validation processes. Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, participatory observation in official forums, and document analysis of relevant policies, reports, and regulations. To enhance methodological transparency, triangulation was applied across data sources and collection techniques. The data analysis followed an interactive model involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Thematic analysis was conducted using the four components of the Ansell and Gash framework: starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative process.

Results and Discussion

1. Overview of Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Batam City

The 2024 Performance Accountability Report (LAKIP) of the Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority (BP Batam) recorded a 138.13% increase in investment performance achievements in the Batam Free Trade Zone and Free Port (KPBPB), exceeding the Starting target. This achievement highlights Batam's substantial potential in attracting investment, including to the Nongsa area. However, the report also emphasizes the need for improvements in optimizing asset utilization and enhancing service quality (BP Batam, 2024). According to the 2024 BP Batam Performance Report, the main performance indicators surpassed their targets. The realized investment value in the KPBPB Batam reached IDR 55.25 trillion, significantly exceeding the Starting target of IDR 40 trillion (BP Batam, 2024). Moreover, public satisfaction with public services reached an IKM score of 87.02 out of the target score of 87, reflecting consistency in the quality of services provided. In terms of non-tax state revenue (PNBP), realization amounted to IDR 2.295 trillion, exceeding the target of IDR 2.13 trillion (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, 2024). These figures indicate that BP Batam has demonstrated notable positive performance in regional management, including in supporting the development of the Nongsa SEZ in Batam City.

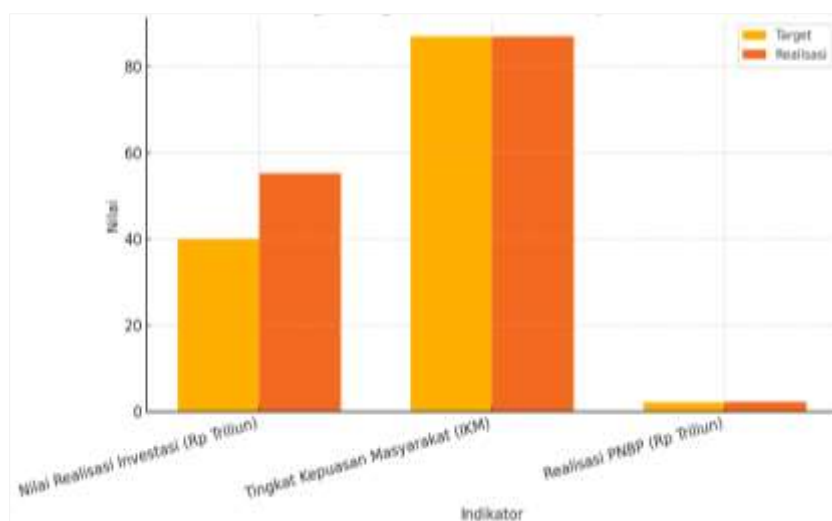


Figure 1. Comparison Chart of Target and Performance Realization

Source: BP Batam LAKIP, processed, 2024

The figure above illustrates the comparison between the targets and actual performance of three key indicators for BP Batam in 2024. In all indicators, realized performance exceeded targets, with an average achievement rate of 115.29%. This substantial increase in investment value underscores Batam's attractiveness particularly the Nongsa area as a strategic destination for investment in the technology, tourism, and creative industries. These achievements reinforce the argument that collaborative governance is essential to sustain and accelerate this positive trend in the future.

To improve clarity and emphasize the achievements more concisely, the following table summarizes the key performance indicators reported by BP Batam in 2024. This tabular presentation allows for a more accessible interpretation of the performance outcomes that form the contextual basis for the collaborative governance analysis in subsequent sections.

Table 1. BP Batam's Main Performance in 2024

Indicator	Target (2024)	Realization (2024)	Achievement (%)
Investment Value (IDR Trillion)	40.00	55.25	138.13%
Public Satisfaction Index (IKM Score)	87.00	87.02	100.02%
Non-Tax State Revenue (PNBP, IDR Trillion)	2.13	2.295	107.73%

Source: BP Batam LAKIP 2024 (processed)

The increase in investment, public service quality, and asset utilization reflected in the 2024 LAKIP data represents not only administrative success but also opens significant opportunities for the development of new economic zones such as the Nongsa SEZ. With this strong performance foundation, the implementation of a collaborative governance model becomes increasingly relevant. Cross-sector collaboration is necessary to ensure sustainable growth, local economic integration, and the strengthening of Batam's position as a digital investment hub in Southeast Asia.

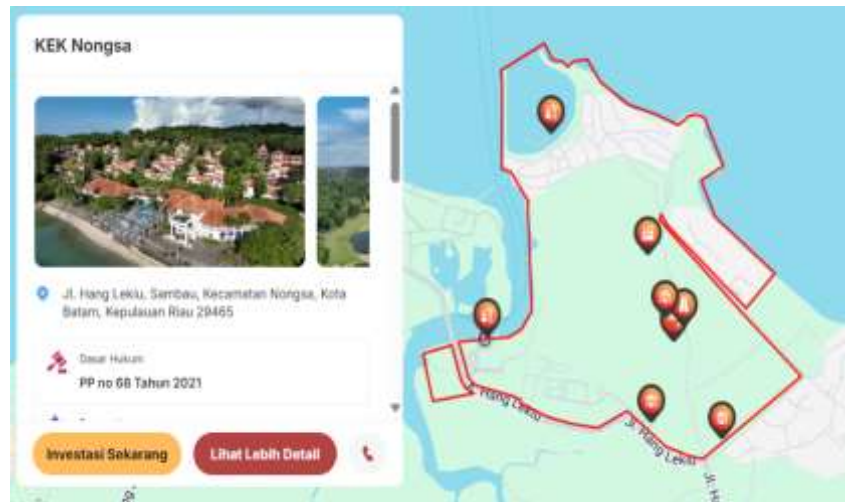


Figure 2. Location Nongsa Special Economic Zone

Source: <https://kek.go.id/id>

Although the Nongsa SEZ in Batam City has been designated as a special economic zone focused on digital economy, creative industries, and tourism covering a development area of 166 hectares the implementation of collaborative governance in the area still faces numerous challenges. One of the main issues is the lack of adequate supporting infrastructure for digital and creative economic activities. These limitations include transportation accessibility, availability of high-speed internet networks, and other essential public facilities necessary for the operation of technology-based companies. In addition, coordination between the central government, local government, and zone administrators must be improved to ensure policy and program alignment that supports optimal development of the Nongsa SEZ. While the zone has attracted investor interest in the digital and creative sectors, challenges remain in providing a skilled workforce aligned with the needs of the industry.

2. Analysis of Collaborative Governance Using the Ansell & Gash Framework

a. Starting Conditions

The Starting conditions of collaboration in the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) reveal a power and resource imbalance among the actors involved. The central government, through the Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority (BP Batam), holds a dominant position in decision-making processes, while the Batam City Government, local communities, and micro-business actors tend to occupy less strategic roles. Institutional conflict between BP Batam and the Batam City Government has led to low levels of trust and communication among stakeholders. Although there has been encouragement from the central government to unify leadership, historical tensions and sectoral interests continue to cast a shadow (Anwar et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2024).

An analysis of the Starting collaborative conditions in the Nongsa SEZ reveals that the historical relationships among key actors have created complex and often disharmonious dynamics. Interviews with representatives from BP Batam indicate that the agency perceives itself as having strong legitimacy in managing the SEZ, due to its status as a representative of the central government. In contrast, officials from the Batam City Government report facing limitations in spatial planning, especially as authority over land management and strategic investments rests with BP Batam. This power imbalance is reinforced by document analysis, including legal regulations and institutional structures, which show that BP Batam has greater authority in determining the direction of regional development. Direct observations in coordination forums reveal a lack of open dialogue initiatives from BP Batam towards local stakeholders, ultimately hindering the

development of mutual trust and equitable collaboration. This situation illustrates that, structurally, collaboration has been built upon unequal relations among actors, weakening the potential for effective collaboration from the outset (Busenberg, 1999; Freeman, 1997).

Furthermore, from the perspective of local communities and creative industry players who could be strategic partners in the development of the area there is a prevailing sense of exclusion from the planning and decision-making processes (Mugano, 2021). Interviews with representatives of the local IT community and digital startup entrepreneurs reveal that they have never been directly involved in formulating the development agenda of the Nongsa SEZ. This data is supported by documentation such as annual reports and official regional planning documents, which contain minimal references to public consultations or other participatory mechanisms. Observations of limited public discussion events held by the zone's management show that invitations were extended only to government agencies and major investors, with no presence of civil society representatives. These findings demonstrate that beyond formal power imbalances, there is also a neglect of inclusivity principles, which should be the foundational basis for building sustainable multi-stakeholder collaboration.

From a temporal perspective, a time-based triangulation approach indicates that this imbalance is not a temporary condition, but has persisted consistently from the planning stage through to project implementation (Chaisse & Dimitropoulos, 2021). In interviews with local academics who have followed the SEZ development process since 2019, it was explained that from the beginning, there was a dominance of development narratives originating from the central government, without serious efforts to incorporate input from local actors. Observations conducted in 2024 also show no significant changes in the communication patterns among actors, with BP Batam continuing to position itself as the sole coordinator of regional development. These Starting conditions dominated by a history of institutional conflict, imbalances in resources and authority, and a lack of participation incentives for non-state actors hinder the establishment of a strong foundation for genuine collaboration as required (Cieřlik, 2025; Davies & Mazhikeyev, 2019)

b. Institutional Design

The institutional design in the governance of the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) reflects an exclusive tendency and has not provided an equal space for all stakeholders to engage in the decision-making process. Based on interviews with BP Batam officials and SEZ management staff, it was mentioned that the institutional structure established thus far is more technocratic in nature, with coordination flows focused on a vertical relationship between the central government and the zone's management. No mechanisms were found that explicitly regulate the participation of local communities, creative industry actors, or educational institutions in planning or monitoring forums. This is further supported by document analysis, such as the Government Regulation on the Establishment of Nongsa SEZ and the SEZ Master Plan, which only mention the involvement of formal parties within a top-down cooperation framework. The absence of an inclusive multi-actor forum indicates the weakness of the institutional design in creating genuine collaborative governance, as emphasized in Ansell and Gash's model, which suggests that collaboration forums should be open, have shared ground rules, and guarantee equal access.

Observations of coordination meetings held by the zone management also reveal a similar pattern. Coordination forums are generally limited, involving only representatives from technical ministries, BP Batam, and major investors. Meanwhile, civil society organizations, local digital communities, and academics are only invited in

a symbolic capacity, such as for ceremonial events or project launches, not in deliberative forums that influence policy directions. Interviews with two academics from universities in Batam revealed that they have never been involved in the formulation of SEZ policies, even though they have relevant research and analytical capacity related to the development of the digital sector and creative economy. In addition, local business associations have complained about the lack of access to planning information, such as investment maps, incentive criteria, or socio-economic impact assessments. The absence of transparency principles indicates that existing forums do not meet the standards for inclusive and deliberative collaborative governance.

From a temporal perspective, triangulation results indicate that the weaknesses in institutional design are systemic and ongoing. Since the establishment of the Nongsa SEZ in 2019 until the implementation of development programs in 2024, there have been no significant institutional updates to expand the participation of non-governmental actors. Interviews with senior BP Batam employees revealed that the forum structure still adheres to the initial provisions without renewing participatory mechanisms. Even in the annual evaluation documents of the SEZ analyzed by the researcher, success indicators still focus on investment values and infrastructure achievements, rather than the quality of the collaboration process or public participation. This suggests that the institutional design of the Nongsa SEZ has not been directed towards creating a deliberative space capable of accommodating diverse perspectives and interests.

c. Facilitative Leadership

Leadership within the collaboration of the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) remains administrative in nature and has not fully played the role of a facilitator. BP Batam, as the dominant actor, functions more as a project controller rather than a collaborative leader who bridges cross-sectoral interests. There is no actor or institution specifically tasked with building trust, encouraging open communication, or mediating conflicts between stakeholders. The absence of a facilitative leader has led to the lack of a common forum that can unite the vision of the government, industry players, and local communities. In such a condition, collaboration tends to stagnate at the formal coordination level, without the development of substantive synergy.

Leadership in the governance of the Nongsa SEZ has so far been administrative and has not fulfilled the facilitative leadership functions outlined by Ansell and Gash. Interviews with BP Batam and Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) officials indicated that the leadership exercised focuses more on project control and performance reporting, rather than facilitating relations between actors or creating a shared vision. In various forums, institutional leaders tend to position themselves as sole decision-makers guiding the program, rather than as bridges connecting the various interests within the SEZ. In the context of collaboration, a facilitative leader should be able to create spaces for dialogue, mediate conflicts, and build commitments among actors with diverse backgrounds and interests. Unfortunately, these functions have not been optimally carried out because no figure or institution explicitly plays that role.

In practice, leadership in the Nongsa SEZ is institutional rather than relational. Field observations of coordination forums and inter-agency meetings show that the activities are formal and procedural, with agendas that have been unilaterally prepared by the zone's management. There is no mediation mechanism when differences in viewpoints occur among stakeholders, and final decisions are still determined by the primary zone managers. Interviews with creative industry players and local tech communities reinforce the impression that they have yet to experience a leader who is open to bottom-up aspirations or encourages horizontal collaboration. On the other hand, potential institutions such as business associations, universities, or digital communities are not

empowered to act as co-leaders or strategic partners in the management process. This suggests that leadership in the SEZ is still trapped in a bureaucratic managerial approach that is less adaptive to the dynamics of collaboration.

From a temporal perspective, the absence of facilitative leadership has remained consistent since the initial establishment of the SEZ. Triangulation results from reports dating back to 2019 until 2024 show no trace of a champion or facilitator figure from within the local community who has driven the transformation of relationships between actors. Interviews with a former development consultant revealed that dialogue forums often serve only as formalities to meet administrative requirements, without follow-up actions that build a shared sense of ownership of the Nongsa SEZ. The lack of collaborative leadership has led to failure in building mutual trust and shared commitment, which are core elements of the collaboration cycle according to Ansell and Gash. This poses a risk of creating role fragmentation and passive resistance from stakeholders who feel marginalized.

d. Collaborative Process

The collaborative process in the management of the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) has not yet been fully realized. Interactions between actors have not progressed in a positive cycle, starting from face-to-face dialogues, trust-building, commitment reinforcement, and reaching mutual understanding. Multi-stakeholder dialogues occur only occasionally and lack continuity (Bingham & O’Leary, 2014; Booher & Innes, 2017). There are no mechanisms for collective learning or small wins that could strengthen the collaboration process. As a result, long-term commitments necessary for the sustainable management of the SEZ have not been formed. The existing process is largely administrative and procedural, lacking a strong deliberative dimension. Local communities and creative industry players do not yet fully feel ownership over the development process of the SEZ.

The collaborative process in managing the Nongsa SEZ has yet to follow the ideal collaboration cycle as outlined by Ansell and Gash, which begins with face-to-face dialogue, trust-building, commitment reinforcement, and eventually leads to mutual understanding and intermediate outcomes. Interviews with key actors from both the government and private sectors revealed that interactions between stakeholders are still incidental and unstructured in regular collaboration forums. Activities involving multiple parties, such as coordination meetings, policy socialization, or program evaluations, tend to be one-directional and do not provide space for deliberative discussion. Private sector players, especially those in the digital industry and creative economy, complain that their inputs are rarely followed up with concrete policies. Local communities even feel that they have never been substantively involved since the SEZ was first established. The lack of open and consistent dialogue platforms has prevented the development of trust and a shared sense of ownership over the Nongsa SEZ.

This finding is reinforced by observations during several official activities organized by the zone management, which tend to focus on performance reporting and project achievements without opening space for joint reflection on challenges and governance improvements. There have been no efforts to generate small wins or early achievements that could build momentum for trust among actors. When collaborative agendas such as training or investment promotion occur, these activities are entirely designed by the managers without participation from external stakeholders in the program design. Interviews with academics and creative industry players revealed that there have been no efforts to form joint working teams involving educational and business sectors in policy formulation or digital human resource development. This shows that the collaborative process in the Nongsa SEZ has not evolved into a dynamic and reflective

joint process, but rather remains a rigid and exclusive administrative coordination procedure. From a temporal perspective, the failure to establish a collaborative process remains stagnant. Based on a time triangulation review of documents from 2019 to 2024, no indicators were found to show a significant improvement in the intensity and quality of interactions between actors. Communication patterns still remain elitist and top-down. There is no strengthening of participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that could serve as joint reflections in developing long-term strategies for the SEZ. One member of the management team even stated that interactions with local communities or SMEs are only initiated when requested by the relevant ministries, rather than as an internal initiative. Without a sustained and trust-filled collaborative cycle, the governance of the Nongsa SEZ is at risk of becoming trapped in institutional exclusivity and losing the collaborative potential that should be the strength of an SEZ based on the creative and digital economy.

If collaborative governance in the Nongsa SEZ remains stagnant, the long-term consequences could be substantial. The persistence of fragmented authority and weak stakeholder participation may result in institutional lock-ins, where policy implementation continues to rely on centralized control, undermining local innovation and ownership. This risks marginalizing local communities, creating legitimacy deficits, and limiting the socio-economic inclusivity of the SEZ. In the long run, such governance failure may erode investor confidence and hinder the SEZ's potential to evolve into a dynamic, knowledge-based economic node.

Comparative lessons from international cases highlight the importance of inclusive governance in SEZ success. For instance, China's Shenzhen SEZ thrived not only due to investment incentives but also because of adaptive local governance that allowed iterative stakeholder engagement (Zeng, 2011). Similarly, in Vietnam, SEZs like Dung Quat succeeded by integrating industrial development with local vocational training and participatory planning (Tafese et al., 2025). In contrast, many African SEZs failed to achieve sustainability due to exclusionary governance and lack of local integration (Aggarwal, 2023). These international cases affirm that collaborative mechanisms particularly those that build trust, redistribute authority, and institutionalize inclusive decision-making are critical for the long-term viability of SEZs. Therefore, the Nongsa SEZ must move beyond formal coordination towards deliberative and trust-based collaboration if it is to become a transformative economic space in the digital era.

Conclusion

collaborative governance in the management of the Nongsa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Batam has yet to function optimally as per the characteristics of effective collaborative governance outlined in the Ansell and Gash model. The four main components of this model—initial conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative processes—continue to face various interwoven structural and cultural challenges. The initial conditions of collaboration are overshadowed by power imbalances between central and local actors, as well as low levels of trust among stakeholders. The institutional design of the SEZ tends to be exclusive and technocratic, lacking inclusive space for local communities, creative industry players, and educational institutions to participate. The leadership in the SEZ remains administrative in nature, focused on program control, and has yet to play the facilitative role necessary to bridge diverse interests. The collaborative process, which should involve ongoing interactions and open dialogue, has not been formed, resulting in a lack of mutual understanding and collective commitment in managing the Nongsa SEZ. Therefore, the success of managing the Nongsa SEZ depends heavily on institutional reforms and the transformation of

relations among actors. The establishment of a formal collaboration forum that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable is necessary, alongside strengthening the role of local actors as strategic partners, rather than mere policy recipients. The leadership in the SEZ needs to shift from a bureaucratic approach to participatory and visionary collaborative leadership. Additionally, both central and regional policies must be aligned to create regulations that support integrative and reflective governance. In this way, collaborative governance will not only remain managerial rhetoric but will become a tangible framework in developing the Nongsa SEZ into a fair, competitive, and sustainable digital-based economic zone.

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