

Collaborative governance in light rail transit services in Palembang city: A multi-helix perspective

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Abstract: This study examines the application of collaborative governance in the management of Light Rail Transit (LRT) services in Palembang City, Indonesia. Using Emerson and Nabatchi's collaborative governance framework integrated with a multi-helix approach, this research analyzes the dynamics of collaboration between various stakeholders in the provision of LRT services. Through qualitative analysis of interviews with key stakeholders, this study identified significant challenges in collaborative processes, including uncontrolled uncertainty, inadequate interdependence, limited consequential incentives, and inadequate initiative leadership. Research findings reveal that weak principal engagement, limited shared motivation, and uneven capacity for joint action have hindered effective collaboration. This research contributes to the literature on collaborative governance in public transport management and provides practical recommendations for improving LRT services through increased stakeholder collaboration.

Keywords: Collaborative governance, Digital infrastructure, E-government quality, Light rail transit (LRT), Public transportation management, Stakeholder collaboration, Transportation policy.

1. Introduction

The development of public transport infrastructure is an important aspect of urban development, especially in fast-growing cities in developing countries. Light Rail Transit (LRT) systems have emerged as a popular solution to urban mobility challenges due to their capacity, efficiency and environmental benefits. However, successful implementation and operation of such systems requires effective collaboration among various stakeholders. In Indonesia, the City of Palembang pioneered the country's first LRT system, which was launched in 2018 to support the Asian Games. However, this system faces challenges in attracting enough passengers and providing optimal service quality. This study examines how collaborative governance principles are applied in the management of Palembang LRT services, with a focus on interactions between government institutions, business, academics, society and the media. This research uses Emerson and Nabatchi [1] collaborative governance framework, enhanced by Wijaya [2] multi-helix perspective, to analyze the dynamics of collaboration in the provision of LRT services. This integrated approach provides a comprehensive viewpoint for examining the complex relationships and processes that shape public transport management in emerging urban contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Collaborative Governance Plus Multi-Helix

Public transportation systems require coordination across stakeholders to achieve optimal performance. Collaborative governance is an approach in dealing with complex public problems through structured involvement of government, the private sector and civil society. Ansell and Gash [3] define

it as an arrangement in which public institutions involve non-state stakeholders in deliberative and consensus-oriented joint decision making. This approach is relevant in transportation services because responsibilities are spread across multiple organizations.

Emerson and Nabatchi [1] stated that collaborative governance involves various parties in managing public policy which cannot be achieved alone. Wijaya [2] developed Collaborative Governance Plus Multi-Helix (CGPMH) which expands this concept by involving more stakeholders beyond traditional public-private partnerships. The CGPMH framework has four main dimensions:

1. Drivers: Factors driving collaboration such as uncertainty, dependency, incentives, and leadership.
2. Principled Engagement: Dialogue, information sharing, and negotiation based on shared principles.
3. Shared Motivation: Trust, understanding, internal legitimacy, and commitment.
4. Collective Action Capacity: The ability to act collectively through rules, knowledge, and financial resources.

This model expands collaborative governance to include a multi-helix perspective [4] involving interactions between government, industry, academia, civil society, and the media to foster innovation. In transportation systems, CGPMH emphasizes the integration of regulations, operational expertise, research, community feedback, and information dissemination.

Booher [5] highlights that collaborative governance enhances democracy through accountability, transparency and stakeholder involvement. Innes, et al. [6] supports this approach in facing urban challenges through dialogue and networks. This perspective is useful in analyzing the governance of LRT services in Palembang.

This framework offers a systematic approach to understanding the dynamics of collaboration in public services. Previous research shows that collaboration-based strategies improve urban mobility (Tuan et al., 2022) and increase user loyalty to public transportation [7].

3. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach to examine collaborative governance in Palembang LRT services. Data collection involved in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives from the South Sumatra Light Railway Management Agency (BPKARSS), local government agencies, businesses, academic institutions, community organizations, and the media. Document analysis and direct observation complement the interview data. This research focuses on key aspects, namely collaborative governance in LRT service provision, examining drivers, principle engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action. Data analysis followed Miles, et al. [8] interactive model, which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This approach enables a systematic examination of the complex relationships and processes involved in the collaborative governance of Palembang LRT services.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Driving Collaboration in LRT Services

4.1.1. Uncertainty

Uncertainty is the main driving factor in the collaborative governance of Palembang LRT services. Emerson and Nabatchi [1] stated that uncertainty often drives collaboration when one entity cannot control external or internal factors. In the case of the Palembang LRT, uncertainty can be seen in the low awareness and utilization of services by the community, even though BPKARSS has made various efforts.

BPKARSS faces the challenge of changing public behavior, which requires collaboration with the media, government and community stakeholders to increase education about the benefits of LRT. This is in accordance with Emerson and Nabatchi's view that collaboration is necessary to overcome

uncertainty and achieve common goals. However, despite various efforts, the increase in passenger numbers is still limited. The Head of BPKARSS attributed this to the lack of educational information received by the public. The media plays an important role as an intermediary between management and society, as stated by Emerson and Nabatchi [1] who emphasize the role of the media in bridging uncertainty. This challenge also reflects [9] findings that transportation-based development in Asian cities faces obstacles in modal integration and public acceptance, thus requiring multi-stakeholder involvement in the long term.

4.1.2. Interdependence

Mutual dependency became an important driver in the governance of the Palembang LRT, with BPKARSS realizing its limited capacity and the need for support from other parties. As Diao [10] points out, a sustainable urban transportation system requires the integration of government, private sector and community resources.

BPKARSS recognizes that LRT management cannot be done alone, especially in developing digital infrastructure and public outreach. This encourages collaboration with parties that have complementary resources and expertise. Emerson and Nabatchi [1] emphasized that this dependence motivates sharing responsibilities according to each individual's capacity. The Head of BPKARSS emphasized the role of the media as a wide disseminator of information and NGOs in direct outreach to the public.

This interdependence creates opportunities for cross-sector synergy to overcome challenges, such as low public awareness and limited infrastructure. Solid collaboration is expected to improve service quality and encourage the use of public transportation. However, despite this recognition of interdependence, collaborative practice remains fragmented, leading to gaps in digital information provision and community engagement. These findings support the research of [11] which emphasizes the importance of integrated digital platforms in strengthening public service coordination

4.1.3. Consequential Incentives and Initiative Leadership

Emerson and Nabatchi [1] highlight two important factors in effective collaboration: impact incentives And initiative leadership. These incentives ensure that all parties experience the benefits of success or the consequences of failed collaboration. In managing the Palembang LRT, incentives are not only financial but also include increasing public awareness about the benefits of the LRT. BPKARSS has invited various stakeholders to coordination and outreach meetings, but the increase in the number of users is still not optimal.

The success of the LRT has a positive impact on the government, media and society, so all parties should be motivated to actively participate. Apart from incentives, initiative leadership also plays an important role. BPKARSS not only follows existing procedures but also initiates innovative steps to increase public interest in LRT. This reflects the challenges within distributed leadership [12] which is necessary in collaborative governance.

Initiative leadership enables LRT management to seek innovative solutions to the uncertainty of public behavior. BPKARSS involves various parties, including government, the private sector and society, to create new opportunities and encourage innovation. Emerson and Nabatchi [1] confirmed that initiative leadership strengthens sustainable collaboration.

However, leadership responsibilities remain unequally distributed, with BPKARSS bearing an unequal coordination burden. This reflects the challenges in distributed leadership [13] as seen in the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit in Yogyakarta, where successful collaborative transportation requires a more proportional distribution of responsibilities.

4.2. Principle Involvement in LRT Service Collaboration

4.2.1. Discovery

Discovery in collaborative management plays an important role in creating and optimizing relationships between actors to achieve common goals, as described by Emerson and Nabatchi [1].

According to them, discovery involves a process in which actors from various sectors share information, resources and perspectives to create a deeper and more synergistic understanding of the problems faced. In the context of public transportation services, especially LRT management in Palembang, discovery allows the actors involved to identify potential collaborations that can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of services for the community.

Emerson and Nabatchi [1] argue that the discovery process not only includes the exchange of information but also involves creating space for dialogue and negotiation among various actors. In the case of LRT management in Palembang, the findings serve as a first step to understanding how various parties, including government, the private sector, academia, and the community, can collaborate. By using a helical approach, each actor has a special role that can contribute to improving LRT services, especially in the aspects of accessibility and integration with other modes of transportation.

Research findings show that discoveries in LRT services in Palembang have enabled the identification of collaboration opportunities with the private sector, transport departments, academia and NGOs. The private sector, for example, functions as a feeder connecting passengers from distant areas to LRT stations. This integration of feeder services is in line with the recommendations of Tuan, et al. [14] which emphasizes the importance of multimodal integration in determining public transportation policy priorities.

This collaboration reflects a discovery process in identifying and implementing new ways to create a more integrated and accessible transportation system for Palembang residents. However, this study also reveals that although the discovery process has generated many ideas and potential for collaboration, there are still challenges in synchronizing the various parties involved. The findings help identify coordination gaps between existing sectors that need to be addressed for optimal cooperation.

4.3. Consideration

According to Emerson and Nabatchi [1] deliberation is an important component in collaborative management which functions to build shared understanding through discussion and collective consideration. Deliberation refers to the process in which the various actors involved in the collaboration have the opportunity to discuss existing problems, explore solutions, and agree on steps to be taken together. In the context of Palembang LRT management, deliberation is needed to overcome communication and coordination challenges that often hinder efforts to improve services.

These findings reflect De Oña [15] research on public transport satisfaction, which identified communication quality as an important mediator between service provision and public acceptance. Deliberation challenges stem from several factors, including the absence of a dedicated communication platform, irregular meeting schedules, and unclear division of roles among government stakeholders.

The research results show that deliberation can facilitate effective communication between actors, which is very important to avoid miscommunication. In LRT management, the lack of effective communication between the parties involved often causes miscommunication and even conflict in cooperation between institutions. Open and inclusive deliberations help create a clearer understanding of the roles, responsibilities and contributions of each actor in the development of LRT services. Thus, deliberation allows each party to listen to each other, understand various perspectives, and find common ground that can advance common goals.

This study also highlights that deliberation plays an important role in creating an inclusive participation space, where all relevant parties feel involved in the decision-making process. Limited stakeholder involvement in the management of the Palembang LRT has caused disharmony in cooperation. In this context, deliberation is needed to ensure that all parties, including the government, private sector and society, can voice their views and ideas. With more comprehensive involvement, each actor will feel they have shared responsibility for the success of the LRT service improvement program. In addition, deliberation allows for better coordination between government agencies.

Emerson and Nabatchi [1] underscore the importance of deliberation to align policies and actions between institutions, preventing overlaps or conflicts of interest. Coordination between government

agencies such as BPKARSS, transportation departments, and other parties is often hampered by a lack of structured communication. With effective deliberation, these institutions can align perceptions about the goals to be achieved and develop mutually supportive policies to improve the quality of LRT services.

4.4. Determination

Determination is an important aspect in collaboration and public policy management. Emerson and Nabatchi [1] emphasized that determination is not just individual determination, but also a shared commitment that is reflected in collaborative decision making.

In managing the Palembang LRT, determination is a key factor in improving the quality of public transportation services. The decisions taken involve various stakeholders, including local government, BPKARSS, and the private sector. The joint agreement is clear evidence of collective determination to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation system.

Research findings show that this determination is realized through a clear work structure, regular meetings, and the formation of working groups that play a role in evaluating obstacles and formulating solutions. This working group ensures that LRT management planning is not only determined at the top level, but also involves active discussion from various parties.

A deeper planning process shows the importance of shared understanding and intensive coordination to achieve common goals. This is in line with the view of Emerson and Nabatchi [1] that determination in public collaboration must be supported by a strong structure and commitment to face challenges collectively.

4.5. Shared Motivation in LRT Service Collaboration

4.5.1. Mutual Trust

Shared trust is the main basis for cross-sector collaboration, as stated by Emerson and Nabatchi [1]. This trust reflects the belief that each party will act according to commitments, have good intentions, and be responsible for their roles. In managing the Palembang LRT, mutual trust is a key factor in maintaining sustainable collaboration between stakeholders.

However, research shows that beliefs are often only expressed in documents without actually being reflected in daily practice. This leads to “false trust” that is not supported by concrete actions and transparent communication. The communication gap between the parties causes differences in perceptions regarding responsibilities, giving rise to an imbalance in participation.

BPKARSS faces the challenge of having to assume greater responsibility than other stakeholders, who tend to take a more passive role. This situation contrasts with the findings of Vicente, et al. [7] who emphasize that the balance of stakeholder commitments contributes significantly to the effectiveness of collaboration in public transport governance. Therefore, more intensive communication and a more even distribution of responsibilities are needed to strengthen mutual trust in the management of the Palembang LRT.

4.5.2. Mutual Understanding

According to Emerson and Nabatchi [1] mutual understanding is the main foundation for effective collaboration, including agreement on shared goals, values, norms and expectations. Mutual understanding does not arise automatically, but develops through ongoing communication, interaction and coordination. In the context of Palembang LRT services, mutual understanding between stakeholders is crucial to ensure each party understands their roles and responsibilities in improving service quality.

Research findings show that this concept is recognized by BPKARSS and its partners, who emphasize the importance of aligned understanding in increasing collaboration effectiveness. However, its implementation faces challenges, especially in communications infrastructure. The lack of an adequate communication platform, such as a website or digital coordination system, causes difficulties in

maintaining alignment of vision and roles. This is contrary to the view of Bertot, et al. [16] who emphasize the importance of digital platforms in public service innovation.

To address these challenges, regular meetings and periodic evaluations are necessary to update understanding and adapt collaborative strategies to evolving challenges. Emerson and Nabatchi [1] emphasized that shared understanding is a dynamic process that must be continuously updated to remain relevant in the face of change. Therefore, strengthening communication infrastructure and increasing interaction between parties is the key to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of collaboration in Palembang LRT services.

4.5.3. Legitimacy and Internal Commitment

According to Emerson and Nabatchi [1] internal legitimacy and commitment are two main elements in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of organizational collaboration. Internal legitimacy refers to recognition of the capabilities, roles and contributions of each party in cooperation. Meanwhile, commitment involves active involvement in decision making and implementing concrete actions to achieve common goals.

In the context of South Sumatra LRT management, internal legitimacy is formed through recognition of the competence of various parties, including the government, private sector and academics. Each party brings relevant expertise, which not only builds trust but also strengthens their position in decision making. In accordance with the views of Emerson and Nabatchi [1] the existence of recognized competencies increases commitment to collaborative goals and makes it easier to achieve expected results.

In addition, this research reveals that real commitment determines the success of collaboration. In LRT management, commitment is not only visible in formal meetings but also in direct involvement in the field. This is in line with Emerson and Nabatchi [1] who emphasize that commitment must be realized in real actions, not just written agreements. Therefore, the success of collaboration in South Sumatra LRT services depends on a combination of strong internal legitimacy and commitment manifested in operational practices.

4.6. Joint Action Capacity in LRT Service Collaboration

4.6.1. Procedural Framework and Implementation Gaps

A procedural framework is in place for LRT management, with BPKARSS responsible for coordinating stakeholder activities. However, implementation challenges arise due to inconsistent monitoring and evaluation. As one respondent noted: "Rules can be very good, but implementation is sometimes less than optimal." This implementation gap reflects what Emerson and Nabatchi [1] identified as a common challenge in collaborative governance regimes, where formal structures exist but their practical implementation remains inconsistent.

This research reveals that although procedural guidelines for collaboration have been well established through memorandums of understanding and formal agreements, the day-to-day implementation of these procedures is still poorly monitored and followed up. BPKARSS's leadership in procedure development is widely recognized, but implementation of these procedures into consistent collaborative practice remains a challenge.

4.6.2. Limitations of Knowledge Management and Digital Infrastructure

Knowledge sharing primarily occurred through formal meetings, although stakeholders identified the need for more frequent information exchange and digital platforms to improve information flow. The absence of a dedicated website is currently highlighted as a limitation in knowledge dissemination and public engagement, which contradicts the findings of Yilmaz, et al. [17] regarding the importance of digital information quality in light rail service satisfaction.

The Director of BPKARSS acknowledged:

"If there is a mutual understanding, of course all parties understand about this collaboration to improve LRT services, but we don't have a website yet. To be actively involved together, frequent meetings and evaluation of activities are needed."

These gaps in digital infrastructure limit internal knowledge sharing among stakeholders and external communication with potential LRT users. Kumar, et al. [11] emphasize that digital platforms have a dual function in public service networks: facilitating inter-organizational coordination and improving user experience through the accessibility of service information.

4.6.3. Limited Resources and Technical Capacity

Resource limitations impacted various aspects of collaboration, with particular challenges in technical capacity and funding for extended service hours and upgraded station facilities. These limitations reflect what Agranoff and McGuire [18] identify as critical barriers to effective collaborative public management, where resource imbalances can undermine collective action capabilities.

The research found that resource constraints were particularly evident in three areas: technological infrastructure for coordination, technical expertise for service innovation, and financial resources for service improvement. These constraints limit the ability of collaborative networks to implement comprehensive service improvements despite having an established formal structure. These findings support the research of Tuan, et al. [14] which shows that resource adequacy significantly influences the quality of collaborative transportation policy implementation.

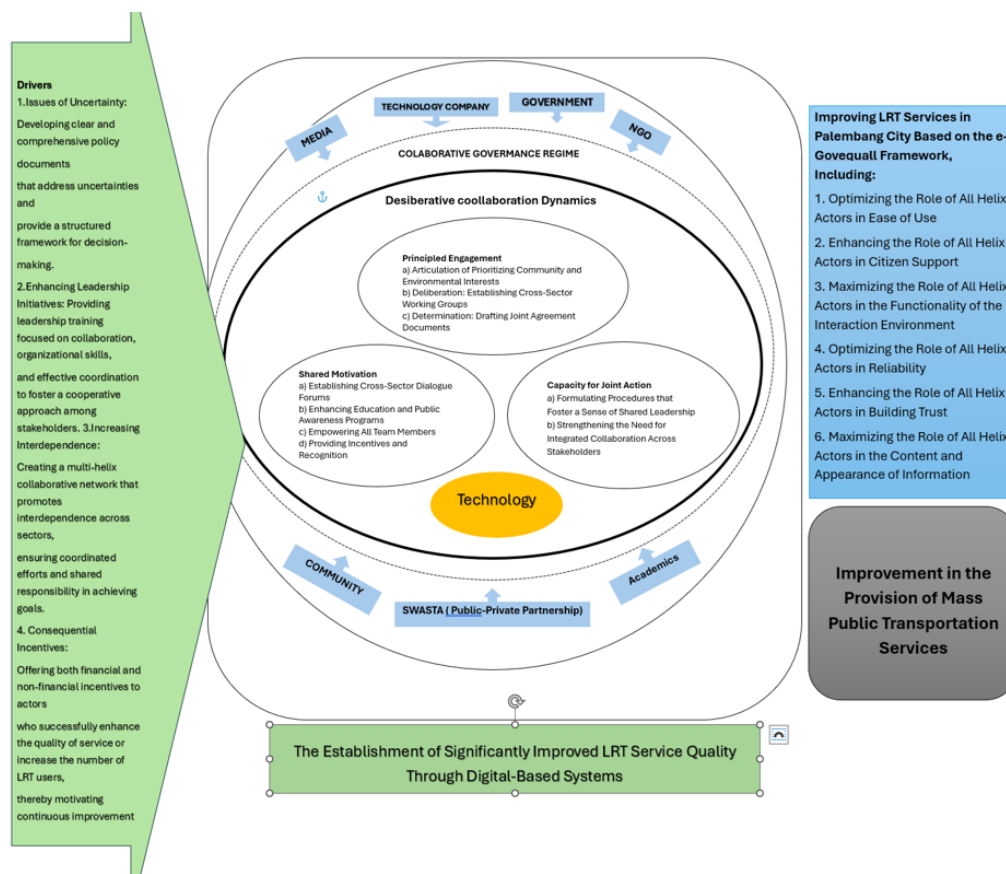


Figure 1. Collaborative Governance Model Based on E-Government Quality with a Deliberative Collaboration Dynamics Approach to Improve Public Transportation Services in Urban Areas.

Figure 1 shows a recommendation model based on the Collaborative Governance Model Based on E-Government Quality with a Deliberative Collaboration Dynamics Approach to Improve Public Transportation Services in Urban Areas. This model places technology as a central element that supports cross-sector collaboration processes and plays an important role in improving the quality of digital-based services. Technology enables more effective integration and coordination among various multi-helix actors, namely government, technology companies, the private sector (public-private partnerships), academia, society, media and NGOs, which together form a governance ecosystem.

The framework in this model adopts Deliberative Collaboration Dynamics which consists of three main elements: Principled Engagement, Shared Motivation, and Capacity for Joint Action. Principled Engagement involves expressing cross-sector interests, deliberation to form cross-sector working groups, and drafting collective agreement documents. Motivation Bersama focuses on building cross-sector dialogue, increasing education and outreach, empowering team members, and giving awards to actors who contribute. Meanwhile, Capacity for Joint Action includes formulating procedures that create a sense of shared ownership, strengthening collaborative leadership, sharing knowledge between helixes, and strengthening budget resources.

The recommended actions in this model include optimizing the roles of all helix actors to improve six main aspects of E-Govqual-based service quality, namely: ease of use, citizen support, interaction environment functionality, reliability, trust, and presentation of relevant and visually attractive information (information content and display). The implementation of this model is expected to significantly improve the quality of digital-based LRT services while encouraging an increase in the number of mass transportation users in Palembang City.

5. Conclusions and Implications for Theory and Practice

This study shows that collaborative governance in the Palembang LRT service has a strong formal structure but faces challenges in implementation, especially in stakeholder communication and ongoing participation. To increase the effectiveness of collaboration, there are four main recommendations that can be implemented:

5.1. Improved Stakeholder Communication

It is necessary to develop special digital platforms and increase the frequency of interactions to strengthen internal coordination and public involvement. The absence of a centralized information system currently limits the effectiveness of communication, as stated by Kumar, et al. [11] regarding the impact of e-government on transportation services.

5.2. Distribution of Leadership Responsibilities

There needs to be a more even distribution of leadership so that the burden of coordination does not rest too heavily on BPKARSS. In line with Bryson, et al. [12] a distributed leadership approach has been proven to increase the effectiveness of collaboration in complex public services.

5.3. Strengthening Intermodal Integration

LRT connectivity with other modes of transportation needs to be expanded through a more efficient feeder system and integrated scheduling. This supports the findings of Tuan, et al. [14] regarding the importance of intermodal integration in improving the quality of public transportation services.

5.4. Formal Community Involvement Mechanism

Community participation must be more formalized in planning and evaluating LRT services. Vicente, et al. [7] emphasize that active community involvement contributes to increasing loyalty and utilization of public transportation services.

These findings emphasize that although formal collaborative structures are necessary, their success still depends on consistent coordination, shared technical capacity, and stakeholder commitment in facing transportation governance challenges in Palembang.

6. Recommendation

To address the identified challenges and leverage existing strengths, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Develop a comprehensive digital platform to integrate information sharing, user feedback, and service management functionality.
2. Increase stakeholder engagement through regular and structured forums for interaction and strategic planning.
3. Implement clear performance indicators for operational efficiency and collaborative effectiveness.
4. Strengthen leadership initiatives to increase capacity to drive collaborative efforts and initiate innovative solutions.
5. Improve financial planning with a transparent and collaborative budgeting process that is aligned with strategic priorities.
6. Improve public communication to build trust, increase awareness, and actively involve the community in improving LRT services.
7. Invest in knowledge management to facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative ideas among stakeholders.
8. Develop adaptive governance mechanisms to respond quickly to changing circumstances and emerging challenges.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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