

Collaborative Governance in Empowering Batik Lasem Creative Economy: A Community Engagement Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this community involvement event is to examine and improve how different groups work together to support the Batik Lasem creative economy. The program is designed in a way that encourages people to take part and share their ideas. It uses structured group discussions, called Focus Group Discussions (FGD), with people from local government, universities, non-profit groups, researchers, and batik makers. This method helps everyone involved to create knowledge together, talk openly, and find common problems and chances for growth within the Batik Lasem community. The results show that working together is very important for helping different groups work well together, building trust, and getting everyone on the same page for development. The program also gives useful results like creating mentorship programs for batik makers, including cultural values in local economic plans, and making a report to send to regional leaders. It also helps people understand how government systems work, build better connections between groups, and give batik makers more skills to deal with bigger economic and policy issues. Even though there are good results, there are some challenges, like the short time of the project and the need for ongoing support to keep things moving long-term. Overall, this program shows that working together can be a good way to connect cultural preservation with economic growth in creative industries that are based on heritage. It also offers a model that can be used in similar projects in other communities.

Keywords: collaborative governance, creative economy, batik Lasem, community engagement, stakeholder collaboration..

INTRODUCTION

Community Engagement and the Tri Dharma of Higher Education

Community engagement constitutes a core component of the Tri Dharma of higher education in Indonesia, functioning as a mechanism for translating academic knowledge into tangible societal benefits. In the context of creative economy development, universities are increasingly expected to play a strategic role in fostering local innovation, strengthening community capacity, and supporting sustainable economic growth. Previous

studies have shown that effective community engagement enhances economic resilience and promotes co-creation between academic institutions and communities (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Cepiku et al., 2021; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). However, many initiatives remain fragmented and short-term, limiting their long-term impact on local creative industries. This gap highlights the importance of adopting more organized, cooperative, and governance-focused methods that can bring together various stakeholders into a unified system for empowerment (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015; Osborne, 2020).

Batik Lasem as Cultural Heritage and Economic Asset

Batik Lasem represents a unique intersection between cultural heritage and economic potential, characterised by its historical significance, distinctive motifs, and embedded local identity as part of Indonesia's wider creative economy, industries rooted in heritage, like batik, play an important role in creating jobs and boosting income in different regions. Contemporary literature emphasises that cultural heritage products can serve as drivers of place-based development, particularly when supported by strategic branding and value chain integration (Duxbury et al., 2020; Richards, 2021). Despite its cultural significance, Batik Lasem continues to encounter ongoing difficulties, such as restricted access to markets, insufficient support from institutions, and the gradual loss of traditional knowledge caused by changes in generations. These issues indicate that economic potential alone is insufficient without systemic support mechanisms. Therefore, a governance-based approach that integrates cultural preservation with economic strategies becomes essential in ensuring both sustainability and competitiveness (Sumanapala et al., 2024; Vardopoulos et al., 2023).

Challenges in Stakeholder Coordination and Policy Integration

One of the main challenges in building creative economies like Batik Lasem is the poor coordination between different groups involved, such as government bodies, local artisans, researchers, and non-governmental organizations. Studies show that when governance systems are split into separate parts, it can cause problems such as inconsistent policies, repeated programs, and poor use of resources (Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012; McLaughlin & Osborne, 2000; Øjvind Nielsen et al., 2024). In the case of Batik Lasem, the lack of comprehensive policy structures and ongoing cooperative efforts has hindered the ability to scale up empowerment programs. Moreover, local governments often face challenges in balancing the need to preserve cultural heritage with the goals of promoting economic growth. These challenges show the importance of using governance models that help different groups work together, build trust, and make decisions collectively, which allows for more effective and meaningful actions.

Collaborative Governance as a Strategic Solution

Collaborative governance has become a promising method for dealing with complex issues that involve multiple actors in the public sector, especially in areas where coordination across different sectors is needed. This method focuses on involving all parties, working together to solve problems, and taking shared responsibility, which helps improve the success and results of policy implementation. Recent studies demonstrate that collaborative governance can significantly improve innovation capacity, policy coherence, and stakeholder commitment in creative economy development (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Emerson et al., 2012). In the case of Batik Lasem, collaborative governance offers a structure that combines the responsibilities and contributions of the local government and academic institutions. Combine artisans and non-governmental organizations into a single, coordinated strategy. By encouraging open conversation and collaborative problem-solving through methods like Focus Group Discussions, this method helps to uncover common goals and develop practical solutions, such as mentorship programs and policy suggestions (O'leary & Vij, 2012; Pérez-Durán, 2024).

Research Objective and Contribution

Building upon the identified challenges and theoretical insights, this study aims to analyse how collaborative governance can facilitate the empowerment of the Batik Lasem creative economy through community engagement. The study specifically looks at how different groups work together, how knowledge is shared between them, and the results this has in creating policies and improving skills and abilities. Recent literature

underscores the importance of such integrative approaches in bridging the gap between theory and practice, particularly in heritage-based creative industries (Brandsen et al., 2018; Kooiman, 2002; Meijer & Bolívar, 2016). The study adds to the increasing understanding of collaborative governance by offering real-world examples from a community involvement context, and it also provides useful guidance for decision-makers and professionals aiming to improve the long-term viability and success of local creative industries (Licsandru et al., 2025; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

New Public Governance and Collaborative Governance

Recent scholarship has highlighted a shift from traditional hierarchical public administration towards New Public Governance (NPG), which emphasises collaboration, interdependence, and network-based problem-solving. This perspective positions governance as a process involving multiple actors rather than a state-centred activity. Collaborative governance emerges within this framework as a mechanism that enables collective decision-making and shared responsibility among stakeholders. Krogh (2024) clarifies that New Public Governance is increasingly treated as a reform model for strengthening collaboration within and beyond the public sector, while the broader reassessment of governance traditions by Osborne and colleagues in the contemporary debate on public management reform also confirms the renewed salience of post-bureaucratic and relational governance logics. At the same time, research on citizen involvement and collaborative public management shows that including stakeholders is no longer a secondary aspect but a fundamental part of modern governance structures. The problem, however, is that much of this literature has concentrated on conceptual refinement and administrative reform debates rather than on how New Public Governance is operationalised in small-scale, place-based cultural economies. Accordingly, an important solution proposed in recent work is to use collaborative governance as the practical mechanism through which New Public Governance can be translated into concrete, multi-actor arrangements in local development settings.

The collaborative governance literature has further developed this argument by demonstrating that cross-sector collaboration becomes especially relevant when problems exceed the capacity of a single organisation. Existing studies have identified key elements of collaborative governance, including institutional design, facilitative leadership, knowledge sharing, and trust-building. These factors are considered essential for improving policy coherence and fostering innovation in complex governance environments. Avoyan (2024) shows that collaborative conditions shape output performance, while Nielsen Øjvind Nielsen et al. (2024) identifies specific configurations that support successful outcomes in green-transition governance. Ulibarri (2023) also underlines that collaborative dynamics are contingent rather than uniform, and demonstrates that collaboration often faces implementation frictions despite broad normative support. However, much of the literature remains focused on conceptual development and large-scale governance systems, with limited attention to how collaborative governance is operationalised in local, small-scale, and culturally embedded contexts. This creates a gap in understanding how collaborative governance functions in practice within community-based initiatives.

Collaborative Governance in Creative Economy Development

The creative economy literature recognises cultural heritage and creative industries as important drivers of local economic development. Studies show that heritage-based industries contribute to employment generation, regional identity, and tourism development, particularly when supported by institutional collaboration and policy integration. Arcos-Pumarola et al. (2023) demonstrate that intangible heritage and creative industries can function as development assets for creative cities, while Liu & Kou (2024) identify institutional and experiential determinants that support the sustainable development of creative tourism. Islam & Sadhukhan (2025) further emphasise that direct interaction with artisans and workshops is highly influential in creative tourism ecosystems, and Kusumaningrum et al. (2024) highlight how creative economy resilience in Indonesia depends on cross-sectoral support and local government partnerships. The literature therefore already recognises that heritage-based creative sectors are not merely symbolic assets but productive economic resources. The unresolved issue, however, is that many studies focus more heavily on tourism performance,

city branding, or sectoral resilience than on the governance architecture required to sustain collaboration among actors in culturally rooted industries such as Batik Lasem.

At the same time, research increasingly highlights the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in overcoming fragmented support systems and limited access to resources in creative sectors. Government agencies, communities, and knowledge institutions are seen as interdependent actors whose coordination determines the success of creative economy initiatives. Akbar and Makarim (2025) shows that creative economy development at local level increasingly depends on collaborative assessment and institutional interaction, whereas recent work on smart tourism and creative economy collaboration in Yogyakarta similarly frames multi-actor coordination as essential for sustainable destination development. Studies on cultural heritage tourism management and on policy reform for Indonesian creative sectors also reveal that creative industries frequently suffer from implementation gaps, infrastructural weakness, and partial policy inclusion. Despite this recognition, existing studies tend to focus on outcomes such as tourism performance, branding, or economic resilience, rather than examining the governance processes that enable collaboration. Furthermore, there is limited explanation of how collaborative mechanisms translate into concrete outputs, such as mentoring systems, policy instruments, or institutional commitments. This indicates a gap between the theoretical importance of collaboration and its practical implementation in heritage-based creative industries such as Batik Lasem.

Role of Local Government in Creative Economy Empowerment

The literature consistently identifies local government as a key actor in creative economy development, particularly in integrating policies, facilitating institutions, and mobilising resources. Recent studies emphasise that local governments must move beyond regulatory roles and act as facilitators and coordinators within collaborative networks. Zainuri et al. (2025) demonstrate that government policies play a major role in influencing the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in the creative industry. Meanwhile, Pramono et al. (2025) suggest that arts and culture can serve as a key national competitive advantage, but only if they are backed by consistent and well-coordinated public efforts. Homsombat et al. (2025) also mention that even when governments focus on the creative economy, small and medium-sized businesses frequently find it difficult to adjust without ongoing policy support. However, empirical evidence shows that many local governments face limitations in coordination capacity, resource allocation, and policy integration. As a result, creative economy initiatives often remain fragmented and lack sustainability. Hence, the literature has already made clear that local government matters profoundly. The problem that persists is that governmental commitment often exists without adequate coordination capacity, leaving policy ambitions insufficiently translated into field-level empowerment.

Another body of recent work has shown that local government becomes most effective when it acts as a broker within collaborative arrangements rather than as a solitary policymaker. Research on local government cultural services, sustainable destination governance, and collaborative regulation suggests that hierarchical interventions alone often produce rigidity, while network-oriented local governance can better accommodate competing economic, cultural, and sustainability priorities. Wang et al. (2022) show that hierarchical governance may generate sustainability problems in heritage destinations, and later studies on localised collaborative governance continue to underline the need for shared accountability and inter-organisational coordination. This means that the literature has already identified the limitations of top-down governance and the promise of facilitative state roles. Yet a specific gap remains concerning how regional bodies such as Bappeda can integrate culture, artisan development, and economic planning into a coherent collaborative agenda. In addition, previous studies tend to assume that government involvement automatically leads to effective outcomes, without critically examining challenges such as institutional constraints, competing priorities, and implementation gaps. This highlights the need to analyse how local governments function within collaborative governance arrangements and how their role influences the effectiveness of stakeholder coordination in practice.

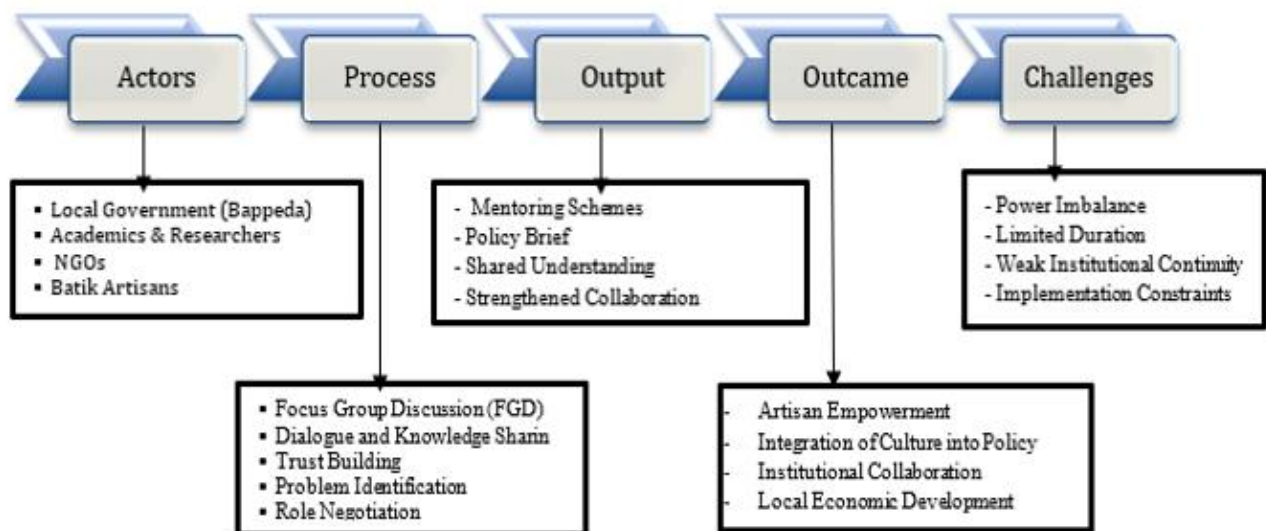
Conceptual Framework

Building on the identified gaps, this study develops a conceptual framework that links three main components: actors, collaborative processes, and outcomes. The literature has already recognized several important elements including engagement conditions, shared motivation, institutional design, leadership, knowledge exchange, and resource availability. Avoyan (2024) demonstrates that these conditions shape output performance, while Waardenburg et al. (2025) argues that performance management remains an underdeveloped but necessary dimension of collaborative governance. Øjvind Nielsen et al. (2024) and Buelow et al. (2025) likewise show that collaborative outcomes depend on how governance arrangements are structured and evaluated rather than on collaboration rhetoric alone. In addition, recent conceptual work on integrated governance in complex ecosystems reinforces the need to connect governance inputs with measurable policy and societal consequences. What has been examined, therefore, is the process aspect of collaboration and, more and more, the performance aspect. What remains insufficiently developed is a contextual framework linking collaborative actors and processes to heritage-specific outcomes such as artisan mentoring, cultural preservation, and policy innovation in local creative economies.

Based on this gap, the conceptual framework for the present article links three layers. First, the actor dimension includes local government, academics, researchers, civil society organisations, and batik artisans. Second, the process dimension involves collaborative mechanisms such as dialogue, knowledge sharing, trust-building, and joint problem identification facilitated through Focus Group Discussions. Third, the outcome dimension includes both tangible outputs (mentoring schemes, policy briefs) and broader impacts (artisan empowerment, cultural policy integration, and local economic development).

Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on collaboration as a general principle, this framework emphasises how collaborative governance is operationalised in a community engagement setting and how it produces measurable and context-specific outcome. By integrating governance theory with empirical engagement practice, this study contributes to bridging the gap between conceptual discussions of collaborative governance and its application in heritage-based creative economy development.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model of Collaborative Governance in Batik Lasem



This study proposes a conceptual model linking actors, processes, outputs, and outcomes within a collaborative governance framework. The model illustrates how multi-stakeholder actors engage through structured

mechanisms such as Focus Group Discussions, enabling dialogue, trust-building, and joint problem identification. These processes generate tangible outputs, including mentoring schemes and policy briefs, which contribute to broader outcomes such as artisan empowerment and local economic development. However, the model also recognises cross-cutting challenges, including power imbalances, limited programme duration, and weak institutional continuity, which may affect the sustainability of collaborative outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Community Engagement Design

This study adopts a qualitative community engagement approach, positioning the activity as part of the Tri Dharma of higher education while also incorporating a systematic analytical procedure to enhance methodological rigour. The study combines participatory engagement with interpretive qualitative analysis to capture both the process and outcomes of collaborative governance in the Batik Lasem context. To strengthen the credibility of findings, this study integrates elements of thematic analysis and data triangulation, ensuring that insights are not solely based on descriptive observations but are analytically grounded (Durose et al., 2018; McNall et al., 2009). However, a lot of the current research continues to concentrate on the methods used in participatory studies rather than on organized interaction efforts that are part of decision-making and policy processes. This limitation suggests the need for a design that not only facilitates participation but also produces actionable outputs. Accordingly, the present approach adopts Focus Group Discussion as a facilitative mechanism for structured dialogue, ensuring that engagement leads to tangible outcomes such as collaboration strengthening and policy recommendations (Banks et al., 2018; Kindon et al., 2024; Pain et al., 2022).

Research Setting and Context

The activity was conducted at the Lasem Heritage Foundation on 7 February 2026, a site that functions as a cultural hub for heritage preservation and community-based initiatives. The choice of this setting matches current academic work that highlights the value of place-based methods in involving communities and building their cultural economy. Studies have shown that heritage spaces can act as living laboratories where stakeholders interact, exchange knowledge, and co-develop strategies for sustainable development (Duxbury et al., 2020; Strzelecka et al., 2023). Even though this recognition exists, previous studies have mostly looked at these spaces through the lens of tourism or cultural engagement, giving less focus to their function as platforms for governance involving multiple stakeholders working together. This gap shows that heritage sites should be seen not just as cultural treasures but also as places where discussions and policies can be developed. Therefore, the Lasem Heritage Foundation is positioned in this study as a strategic venue that enables interaction among actors involved in the Batik Lasem creative economy (Richards, 2020).

Participants and Stakeholder Composition

Data were collected through a structured Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving 30 participants representing multiple stakeholder groups, including local government (Bappeda Kabupaten Rembang), academics, researchers, non-governmental organisations, and batik artisans. The involvement of several different participants shows the principles of working together governance that highlights diversity, inclusivity, and the mutual reliance among stakeholders. Recent studies highlight that stakeholder heterogeneity enhances the quality of deliberation, fosters innovation, and improves the legitimacy of collective decisions (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012). Despite this, much of the current research tends to assume that involving stakeholders will naturally result in successful collaboration, without considering issues like unequal power distribution, conflicting interests, and difficulties in communication. This indicates that having many different people involved is not enough on its own without proper guidance and organization. Therefore, this activity was created to promote equal involvement and meaningful exchanges between all stakeholders, which helps in building a common understanding and fostering joint agreements (Cristofoli et al., 2023; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015).

Implementation through Focus Group Discussion

The programme was implemented through a structured Focus Group Discussion, guided by thematic inputs on New Public Governance, collaborative governance, and the role of local government in creative economy empowerment. Recent literature underscores that FGD is not merely a data-gathering tool but also a participatory platform for collective reflection, knowledge exchange, and consensus-building (Morgan, 2018; O. Nyumba et al., 2018). However, many studies still view FGDs as methods that extract information rather than as processes that involve meaningful transformation and engagement. This limitation highlights the need to reposition FGDs within a community engagement framework that prioritises dialogue and co-creation. In this activity, the FGD was created to promote interactive conversations, allow participants to exchange their experiences, and come up with useful suggestions for working together and creating policies. As a result, the FGD served as a governance tool that allowed stakeholders to work together to identify issues, suggest solutions, and bring their viewpoints into harmony (Guest et al., 2013; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Wilkinson et al., 2022).

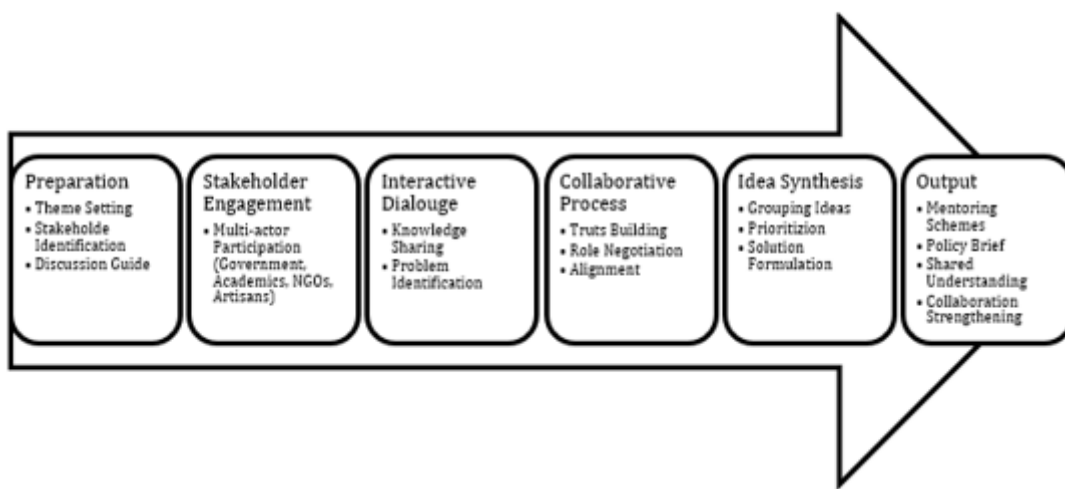


Figure 2 FGD Process to Output Flow

The FGD process (figure 2) followed a structured sequence starting from preparation and stakeholder engagement, followed by interactive dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. Through these stages, participants engaged in knowledge exchange, trust-building, and alignment of perspectives. The process culminated in the synthesis of ideas, resulting in tangible outputs such as mentoring schemes, policy briefs, and strengthened inter-stakeholder collaboration. This structured flow demonstrates how collaborative governance mechanisms can translate deliberative interaction into actionable outcomes

Analytical Approach and Reflexive Interpretation

Instead of employing formal data collection and statistical analysis, this study adopts a reflexive and interpretive approach to understanding the outcomes of the engagement activity. Recent methodological discussions suggest that community engagement initiatives require flexible and context-sensitive analytical approaches that capture processes, interactions, and emergent outcomes rather than relying solely on predefined variables (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell, 2021; Naeem et al., 2023). Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative research, but its use in community engagement settings is still limited, especially when it comes to connecting how people interact with the results of governance. This gap suggests the importance of an interpretive approach that emphasizes how collaboration patterns, alignment among stakeholders, and tangible results are interconnected. Therefore, this study interprets the outcomes of the FGD through thematic reflection on collaboration dynamics, governance mechanisms, and empowerment strategies, enabling a nuanced understanding of how collaborative governance operates in practice within the Batik Lasem context.

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalisation of its findings. First, the study is based on a single Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted within a limited time frame. While the FGD enabled rich interaction and initial insight generation, it does not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of collaborative governance, which typically requires sustained engagement over time.

Second, the absence of longitudinal evaluation limits the ability to assess whether the identified outputs—such as mentoring schemes and policy recommendations—are implemented, sustained, or capable of producing long-term impact. As a result, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting initial outcomes rather than established institutional change.

Third, the study relies primarily on qualitative and interpretive data, which may be influenced by participant perspectives and researcher interpretation. Although efforts were made to enhance validity through triangulation and diverse stakeholder participation, the lack of quantitative data restricts the ability to generalise findings across different contexts.

Fourth, potential power imbalances among stakeholders during the FGD may have influenced the discussion process and outcomes. Participants from institutional backgrounds, such as government and academia, may have had greater influence in shaping the direction of the discussion compared to batik artisans. This may result in outputs that are not fully representative of all stakeholder perspectives.

Finally, the study is conducted within a specific local context (Batik Lasem), which may limit the transferability of findings to other regions or creative industries with different institutional, cultural, or economic conditions.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable empirical insight into the early-stage operationalisation of collaborative governance in a heritage-based creative economy context.

Programme Implementation

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage was designed as a critical foundation to ensure that the engagement process would be both structured and outcome oriented. The development of materials centred on three connected themes: New Public Governance, collaborative governance, and the role of local government in empowering the creative economy. This thematic selection was not incidental; rather, it reflects the growing recognition in recent literature that complex socio-economic challenges require governance-oriented knowledge rather than purely technical training. Contemporary studies have demonstrated that community engagement programmes tend to be more effective when they incorporate governance literacy, enabling participants to understand not only “what to do” but also “how systems work” (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Cepiku et al., 2021; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015; Osborne, 2020).

Existing literature has already explored the importance of co-creation and participatory governance; however, many engagement programmes still rely on one-way knowledge transfer, limiting their transformative potential. This gap supports the intentional creation of materials that promote discussion, thoughtful analysis, and collaborative problem definition. In the context of Batik Lasem, such an approach is particularly necessary because the challenges faced by artisans are not solely technical but also institutional, involving fragmented policies and weak coordination among stakeholders. Therefore, the preparation phase focused on making sure there was clear understanding of concepts and that the content was relevant to real-life situations, allowing participants to relate governance theories to their own experiences. This design choice supports recent discussions that successful community involvement requires connecting theoretical knowledge with real-life situations to create practical solutions.

Implementation through Focus Group Discussion

The implementation of the programme through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was intended to facilitate interactive and inclusive dialogue among diverse stakeholders. Unlike conventional workshops that often prioritise presentation over participation, the FGD format was selected because it enables the emergence of collective knowledge through structured conversation. Recent methodological studies highlight that FGDs can function as platforms for deliberation, negotiation, and co-creation, particularly when addressing complex governance issues (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Morgan, 2018; O. Nyumba et al., 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2022).

The implementation of the FGD followed structured discussions centred around predetermined topics, while still permitting participants to bring up issues relevant to their specific context. Facilitation methods were used to promote equal involvement, such as encouraging fewer vocal members, controlling those who spoke a lot, and summarizing important ideas throughout the conversation. This approach was necessary because earlier research has shown that unequal participation can undermine the quality of collaborative processes and limit the inclusivity of outcomes. The literature has already recognized the potential of FGDs in providing detailed insights; however, it frequently views them as tools for gathering data rather than as instruments for governance. In contrast, this program treated FGD to build agreement, bring together different viewpoints, and create real results like mentoring programs and policy recommendations. This change from extracting information to involving participants in FGD helps overcome a major issue in current methods of engagement

Stakeholder Engagement Dynamics

The way stakeholders interacted during the program showed how important communication, building trust, and figuring out roles are in working together effectively. The involvement of participants from various backgrounds, such as government officials, academics, non-governmental organizations, and artisans, contributed to a setting with multiple viewpoints that enhanced the conversation. Recent studies indicate that such diversity enhances problem-solving capacity and innovation, as it brings together different forms of knowledge and experience (Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012).

However, the literature also points out that diversity can create certain challenges, such as differing priorities, unequal power dynamics, and difficulties in communication. These challenges were addressed through organized guidance and the creation of a common plan; participants were able to shift from their personal viewpoints to a shared understanding. The development of a shared understanding became clear through the recognition of common challenges, including insufficient institutional support and the necessity for coordinated mentoring programs for batik artisans. Moreover, the discussion of roles and responsibilities among the stakeholders showed a change from separate efforts to a shared sense of responsibility. While earlier research has emphasized the significance of trust and communication in collaborative governance, they often fail to provide detailed explanations of how these dynamics actually work in real situations. This program shows that building trust does not happen automatically but requires guidance and support. A process that needs careful planning, open discussion involving everyone, and ongoing communication. As a result, the engagement process not only created new ideas but also improved relationships between stakeholders, setting the stage for ongoing collaboration (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Cristofoli et al., 2023; Vangen et al., 2015).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The programme demonstrated that collaborative governance became meaningful only when government representatives, academics, non-governmental organisations, researchers, and batik artisans were placed within the same deliberative space and encouraged to move beyond sectoral priorities. Recent literature has already established that multi-stakeholder collaboration improves implementation effectiveness in creative-economy and MSME settings because different actors contribute complementary resources, legitimacy, and problem-solving capacities. For instance, Akbar and Makarim (2025) found that creative-economy development became more effective when public agencies worked with external stakeholders, while the Rosyadistudy reported that government, community, and academic roles significantly shaped implementation effectiveness. Similar

patterns are observed in research on local economic development, indicating that collaborative governance relies on institutional factors design, leadership, and shared commitment are more important than relying solely on formal authority. Recent work on co-creation in the creative economy likewise indicates that inclusive interaction strengthens innovation outcomes, and broader evidence from community tourism shows that stakeholder collaboration supports collective adaptation and innovation. What had remained less clear in the literature was how such collaboration could be activated in a heritage-based batik context through a short, focused community-engagement format. The present programme addresses that gap by showing that an FGD can function not merely as a discussion forum but as a coordination mechanism through which fragmented actors begin to recognise interdependence, identify common priorities, and establish an initial collaborative agenda for Batik Lasem empowerment.

Development of Mentoring Schemes for Batik Artisans

One of the most clear and useful results of the program was the development of a structured approach to mentoring batik artisans. This was important because the literature has already shown that creative-economy actors, particularly MSMEs and heritage producers, often face recurring constraints related to innovation capability, market access, managerial skills, and weak institutional support. Waardenburg et al. (2025) underline that creative product innovation is central to strengthening local economies and MSME competitiveness, while Atmojo et al. (2026) show that government efforts and digital-media use remain crucial in supporting creative-economy MSMEs. Research into creative hubs and craft empowerment shows that ongoing support, business incubation, and assistance in connecting to markets are more successful than single, short-term training programs. In parallel, the Rosyadi Penta helix study suggests that collaboration is most useful when stakeholder roles are translated into implementation mechanisms rather than remaining normative commitments. The literature, however, has not adequately explained how mentoring programs can be developed together in industries that are deeply rooted in culture, where traditional skills, historical significance, and local policies come together. The present programme contributes by indicating that mentoring should be designed as a collaborative and staged process involving technical guidance, branding support, market expansion, and policy facilitation. This matters because batik artisans do not only require production-related assistance; they also need an institutional ecosystem that helps connect craftsmanship with business sustainability and public support.

Integration of Cultural Values into Economic Policy

The discussion also revealed that the creative economy of Batik Lasem cannot be separated from its cultural meaning. Participants did not see batik only as a product, but as a tradition that carries cultural heritage and should be considered in the development of local economic strategies. This finding aligns with recent studies that demonstrate how cultural heritage supports sustainable economic growth when efforts to preserve it are integrated with economic strategies in a way that complements rather than conflicts with each other. Vardopoulos et al. (2023) argue that cultural heritage protection can support high-quality economic development, while studies on heritage revitalisation in Kayutangan and on heritage-based tourism management stress that socio-cultural value must be incorporated into development strategies. Saputra (2024) likewise shows that governance frameworks shape the success of cultural preservation, and recent work integrating cultural heritage and the creative economy in Indonesia highlights that local identity can become a strategic development asset when embedded in policy and planning. The literature has therefore already explored the importance of culture for development, yet it has left insufficient room for explaining how cultural values are translated into actual policy conversations at the local level. The present programme helps address this omission by showing that cultural integration emerged through collective discussion on how Batik Lasem's history, symbolism, and artisanal practices should inform empowerment priorities. In this sense, culture was not seen as a decorative element added to economic policy, but as the fundamental basis that shaped the reasoning behind the policy.

Policy Brief as a Strategic Output

A particularly significant outcome of the programme was the preparation of a policy brief ready to be submitted to the local government. This output is important because collaborative forums are often criticised for

generating discussion without producing instruments that can influence policy implementation. Recent literature on collaborative governance and public-sector innovation shows that working together is more impactful when it leads to clear results that can be used by those making decisions, such as strategic documents, programme roadmaps, or recommendations for implementation. Avoyan et al. (2024) emphasise that collaborative conditions should be assessed partly in relation to output performance, while Waardenburg et al. (2025) argue that performance management remains essential in collaborative governance. Research on local government policy for creative industries and on smart-tourism and creative-economy collaboration in Indonesia also indicates that institutional effectiveness depends on the translation of multi-actor dialogue into actionable planning tools. The more comprehensive Zainuri et al. (2025) highlights the importance of creative industries in policy-making and emphasizes the necessity for organized public involvement. What remains underdeveloped in prior studies is a detailed understanding of how community-engagement activities can generate policy-ready outputs within a short time frame. The present programme addresses this gap by demonstrating that a policy brief can serve as a bridge between deliberation and government action, converting stakeholder insights into a format that is legible, concise, and potentially usable by Bappeda and related agencies.

Theoretical Discussion

From a theoretical standpoint, the programme reinforces the argument that New Public Governance becomes operational through collaborative governance practices that encourage co-creation, distributed responsibility, and negotiated solutions even though research has already demonstrated that modern governance is shifting away from models centred on the state towards networked arrangements where public value is created through collaboration among various actors. Krogh & Triantafyllou (2024) present New Public Governance as a reform model that focuses on collaboration, and Osborne (2020) also emphasize the ongoing importance of this approach relational and hybrid governance forms. Within this larger change, research on collaborative governance by Avoyan et al. (2024), Øjvind Nielsen (2024), and Ulibarri et al. (2023) indicates that the results depend on the quality of the collaborative environment, how the participants are arranged, and the level of common purpose among them. The body of literature on the creative economy has started to acknowledge that collaboration and interaction among multiple actors play a significant role in driving innovation and promoting inclusive development. Yet the connection between these two literatures remains relatively thin in heritage-based community-engagement settings, especially in small local creative economies such as Batik Lasem. The present programme contributes by showing that collaborative governance is not only a macro-level public-management concept but also a usable framework for designing community service activities that produce coordination, mentoring ideas, cultural-policy integration, and policy outputs. Theoretically, this suggests that community engagement can be understood as a micro-level arena where New Public Governance is enacted in practice through deliberative collaboration and place-based problem-solving.

Critical Discussion of Collaborative Governance Outcomes

While the programme demonstrates the potential of collaborative governance in facilitating stakeholder interaction and generating tangible outputs, a more critical examination reveals that these outcomes are not free from structural and contextual limitations.

First, although multi-stakeholder participation was achieved, participation did not equate to equal influence. Government officials and academics tended to shape the direction of discussions, while batik artisans were less dominant in expressing their perspectives. This suggests that collaborative governance, in practice, may reproduce existing power hierarchies rather than fully democratise decision-making processes. Consequently, the resulting outputs, such as mentoring schemes and policy recommendations, may reflect institutional priorities more strongly than grassroots needs.

Second, the effectiveness of the collaborative process was highly dependent on facilitation rather than organic interaction. The emergence of shared understanding required structured guidance, indicating that collaboration does not naturally occur even when stakeholders are present. This raises questions about the sustainability of collaboration once external facilitation is removed. Without continuous facilitative support, there is a risk that stakeholder engagement will weaken over time.

Third, while the programme successfully produced tangible outputs, the implementation feasibility of these outputs remains uncertain. The study does not provide evidence that mentoring schemes or policy briefs will be adopted or institutionalised by local authorities. This reflects a common limitation in collaborative governance initiatives, where deliberative processes generate ideas but fail to translate them into long-term policy or practice.

In addition, the short duration of the programme limits its ability to capture long-term impacts and institutional change. Collaborative governance is inherently a long-term process requiring sustained interaction, trust-building, and iterative learning. A single engagement activity, although valuable as an initial step, may not be sufficient to produce lasting transformation in governance structures or economic outcomes.

Another critical issue concerns the tension between cultural preservation and economic development. While participants emphasised the importance of integrating cultural values into economic policy, the study does not fully address how this balance can be maintained in practice. Increased market orientation may risk commodifying cultural heritage, potentially undermining the authenticity of Batik Lasem. This unresolved tension highlights the need for governance approaches that are sensitive not only to economic goals but also to cultural sustainability.

Finally, the findings indicate that collaborative governance operates within existing institutional constraints, including fragmented coordination, limited resources, and competing stakeholder priorities. Rather than eliminating these challenges, collaboration must continuously negotiate them. This suggests that collaborative governance should be understood not as a solution in itself, but as a process that requires ongoing management of complexity, conflict, and institutional limitations.

Long-Term Evaluation (Discussion)

Another important limitation concerns the absence of long-term evaluation of collaborative outcomes. While the programme successfully generated initial outputs, such as mentoring schemes and policy recommendations, the study does not assess whether these outputs are sustained, implemented, or produce measurable impact over time.

Collaborative governance is inherently a dynamic and evolving process that requires continuous interaction, monitoring, and adaptation. Without longitudinal evaluation, it is difficult to determine whether the observed outcomes represent temporary alignment among stakeholders or the emergence of stable and institutionalised collaboration.

This highlights the need for future research to incorporate long-term evaluation frameworks that can capture changes in stakeholder relationships, policy implementation, and economic outcomes within the Batik Lasem creative economy.

Community Impact

Increased Awareness of Collaborative Governance

The program helped participants gain a better understanding of the key ideas and real-world applications of collaborative governance. Previous studies have shown that governance literacy is important for helping stakeholders engage effectively in decision-making processes involving multiple actors, especially in complex social and economic settings. Recent studies suggest that when stakeholders understand governance mechanisms, they are more likely to engage in collective problem-solving and contribute to policy innovation (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). However, a lot of this literature has mainly looked at institutional settings, and there hasn't been much focus on how awareness is developed in community engagement situations. The program tackled this gap by converting abstract governance ideas into practical conversations that were relevant to Batik Lasem, helping participants understand and embrace the value of working together. As a result, collaborative governance was no longer perceived as a theoretical construct but

as a feasible approach for addressing local economic challenges (Cristofoli et al., 2023; Emerson et al., 2012; Osborne, 2020).

Strengthened Institutional Relationships

Another important effect of the programme is the enhancement of relationships between institutions and stakeholders. The interaction between representatives from the local government, academics, non-governmental organizations, and batik artisans helped to facilitate the growth of mutual understanding and trust is crucial for achieving successful collaboration. Recent research has consistently demonstrated that trust-building and relational capital are fundamental to the success of collaborative governance initiatives, as they reduce coordination costs and enhance commitment among actors (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012; McLaughlin & Osborne, 2000; Vangen et al., 2015). Even with these findings, many current studies view trust as something that happens rather than as a process that can be intentionally encouraged and supported. The current programme shows that organized participation, like FGD, can serve as a platform for starting and enhancing relationships between institutions. This is especially important in the case of Batik Lasem, as broken connections have traditionally reduced the success of development programs.

Enhanced Capacity of Batik Artisans

The programme also contributed to enhancing the capacity of batik artisans, particularly in understanding the broader ecosystem in which their activities are situated. While artisans usually concentrate on making things and their skills, the conversation made them aware of problems connected to how things are managed, the rules in place, and how markets work. Recent literature emphasises that capacity building in the creative economy must extend beyond technical skills to include managerial, institutional, and strategic competencies (Duxbury et al., 2020; Kusumaningrum et al., 2024). However, many empowerment programs continue to concentrate mainly on teaching specific skills, while overlooking the significance of understanding the broader system. The current initiative aimed to overcome this limitation by prompting artisans to interact with various other parties and to understand their importance within a wider collaborative environment. This broader viewpoint is intended to help make better decisions and increase the ability to adapt in a competitive and constantly changing creative industry (Richards, 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

Contribution to Sustainable Cultural Tourism

The integration of collaborative governance and cultural heritage perspectives within the programme has potential implications for the development of sustainable cultural tourism in Lasem. The literature has widely acknowledged that cultural tourism can contribute to local economic development while preserving heritage, if it is managed through inclusive and participatory approaches (Richards, 2021; Sumanapala et al., 2024). Despite these efforts, many places still struggle with issues like over-commercialisation, the loss of their genuine character, and a lack of strong community involvement. The program helps tackle these issues by supporting a governance approach that ensures tourism development is in line with cultural preservation and the needs of local communities. By including batik artisans as important participants, the initiative makes sure that tourism strategies are based on local knowledge and values, which helps to increase both authenticity and sustainability (Vardopoulos et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022).

Strengthening Local Economic Resilience

Finally, the programme has implications for enhancing local economic resilience by supporting the growth of the Batik Lasem creative economy through empowerment. Recent studies highlight that resilience in local economies is closely linked to diversification, innovation, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions, all of which are facilitated by collaborative networks (Martin et al., 2021; Neise et al., 2025). However, the literature also shows that many local economies face difficulties in developing resilience because of poor coordination and insufficient institutional support. The program tackles this issue by encouraging teamwork, improving skills and knowledge, and creating outcomes that are useful for making policies to help with lasting development. In this way, the effect goes beyond short-term results, helping to build a stronger and more flexible local economy. The Batik Lasem case thus illustrates how community engagement, when grounded in

collaborative governance, can serve as a catalyst for sustainable and resilient economic development (Duxbury et al., 2020; Kusumaningrum et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature by addressing the gap concerning the practical implementation of collaborative governance in heritage-based creative economies. The findings demonstrate that collaborative governance can be operationalised through structured community engagement, producing tangible outputs such as mentoring schemes and policy briefs. The results show that when various groups involved are gathered in a well-organized decision-making environment, disjointed systems can be changed into unified efforts. Recent literature has already established that collaborative governance enhances public value creation, stakeholder alignment, and policy effectiveness (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Emerson et al., 2012; Osborne, 2020). At the same time, the study highlights that collaborative processes are shaped by power dynamics, institutional constraints, and limited programme duration, which may affect the sustainability of outcomes. This indicates that collaboration alone is insufficient without continuous facilitation and institutional support. However, much of this research is still largely theoretical or focused on large-scale governance systems. Therefore, this study advances the understanding of collaborative governance by showing that its effectiveness depends on the integration of participatory processes, governance structures, and long-term commitment. In the context of Batik Lasem, collaborative governance provides a promising but conditional approach for linking cultural preservation with economic development. This indicates that collaborative governance is not just an idea on paper but a real-world approach for dealing with challenges related to coordination in creative economies that are based on heritage (Cristofoli et al., 2023; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015).

While this study demonstrates the potential of collaborative governance in generating initial outcomes, its effectiveness in producing long-term impact remains contingent upon sustained engagement and institutional support. Therefore, collaborative governance should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention.

The findings of this study should be understood as an initial step in the development of collaborative governance. The long-term effectiveness of such initiatives depends on sustained engagement, institutionalisation, and continuous evaluation. Future research should therefore adopt longitudinal and process-based approaches to examine how collaborative governance evolves over time and how initial outputs translate into sustainable outcomes.

Practical Recommendations

The findings imply several practical strategies for strengthening stakeholder collaboration in similar contexts. Continuous facilitation is necessary to maintain involvement beyond single events, as effective collaboration depends on consistent communication, trust development, and repeated learning opportunities. Second, institutional partnerships between universities, local government, community organizations should be established in a formal manner to ensure ongoing operations and the sharing of resources. It is also important to ensure that the programme's activities are in line with the local development priorities to increase their relevance and effectiveness. Recent studies have emphasised that sustained collaboration depends on facilitative leadership, shared goals, and institutional support mechanisms (Bryson et al., 2015; Vangen et al., 2015). Despite this, current approaches frequently depend on unplanned efforts that do not have sustained coordination over time. The current program emphasizes the significance of creating engagement activities within a wider collaborative environment, making sure that results are not separate but support continuous development efforts (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Cepiku et al., 2021; McLaughlin & Osborne, 2000).

Policy Recommendations

From a policy standpoint, the program highlights the importance of including cultural heritage in regional economic development plans. Batik Lasem should not be treated solely as a cultural artefact but as a strategic

economic resource that requires coordinated policy support. Local governments, especially planning bodies like Bappeda, are important in ensuring that the preservation of culture is balanced with economic goals. They help in distributing resources effectively and establish systems for collaboration among different governing institutions. Recent literature indicates that policy integration and cross-sector coordination are critical for the success of creative economy initiatives (Duxbury et al., 2020; Richards, 2021; Zainuri et al., 2025). However, many policy frameworks are still not fully integrated, which reduces their ability to work effectively. The program indicates that tools like policy briefs can be useful in turning insights from stakeholders into specific, implementable suggestions. This highlights how important it is to base policy decisions on solid evidence and to involve people in the decision-making process, which helps to build a stronger creative economy.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should build on the findings from this program by using long-term and comparative methods. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the sustainability of outcomes from collaborative governance and their long-term effects on empowering artisans and promoting local economic development. Comparative studies in various regions can offer a more comprehensive view of how different factors in a specific context affect the success of collaborative governance in creative economies. There is an increasing requirement to examine how digital governance and technological advancements, including artificial intelligence and digital platforms, can assist in fostering collaborative efforts and expanding market opportunities. Recent scholarship highlights the increasing role of digital transformation in governance and creative industries, yet its intersection with collaborative governance remains underexplored (Meijer & Bolívar, 2016; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). By addressing these gaps, future studies can help create a more thorough grasp of how collaborative governance can be adjusted and expanded across various cultural and economic settings.

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