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## An Assessment of Stakeholder Perception on the Development of Iskandar Malaysia: Review of process and procedure

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### Abstract

This paper examines the establishment of Iskandar Malaysia development through qualitative and quantitative research methods. This paper also evaluates stakeholders' perception on the development process and procedures in Iskandar Malaysia. Through review of literatures, semi-structured interviews and questionnaire, data were gathered. A triangulation method was then used to examine the information on a level of stakeholder participation in the development of Iskandar Malaysia. Results indicated there were conflicts between Iskandar Malaysia master plan with the development plans used in the region. Hence, the discussion on recommendation and suggestion in the article will offer several recommendations for improving regional economic development in Malaysia.

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*Keywords:* Economic region; stakeholders' involvement; triangulation methods; Iskandar Malaysia

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## 1. Introduction

Formerly, regions in Malaysia were formed based on its spatial characteristic and shared a common thing or internally homogenous in terms of its particular attributes. Consequently, under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), regions including Iskandar Malaysia were rebranded as the economic regions. However, as compared to the other economic regions in Malaysia, the jurisdictional boundary of Iskandar Malaysia in the Southern region is the smallest with only consisting of two districts. In addition, regional development authority namely the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) was established along with the IRDA Act 2007 under the Federal Act (Act 664) for the region. As the economic core area for the Southern region that followed the country planning top-down approach, the planning of Iskandar Malaysia is heavily relied on the intervention and financial assistant from the federal government. Numerous authors (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2012; Aref et al 2009; Po, Kaercher and Nancarrow, 2003) indicated that development impacts often associated with positive and negative impacts on economic, social and environment aspects. Based on literatures, stakeholder and public involvement is an essential component of meaningful participation and positive acceptance of the public on the programme.

In Malaysia, various regions have been established and this is including the development of Iskandar Malaysia as the centre of economic development in the southern region. Review of literatures revealed that implementation of Iskandar Malaysia is unique in a way that it developed based on the federal government intervention. Literature review also highlighted that the implementation of regional economic in Malaysia is said was successful in achieving development and economic growth. However, some authors doubted that most of the regional development under the top-down approach will not be achieved due to the conflict of wealth distribution between the federal and state authority. Moreover, following the national top-down approach, there is a lack of local stakeholder's intervention in planning and development of Iskandar Malaysia. This research reviews on the stakeholders' perception on process and procedures involved in Iskandar Malaysia decision making and development process.

### 1.1. Problem statement

The study concentrates on Iskandar Malaysia because of several reasons.

#### 1.1.1. *The unique establishment of Iskandar Malaysia particularly on it single authority namely IRDA*

In response for regional needs, the regional development authority will be established as the authority responsible for the development within a region. For Iskandar Malaysia, establishment of IRDA will assist the State Planning Committee (SPC) and relevant local planning authorities to co-ordinate development within the IDR. This can be considered as a new governmental authority with newly introduced Act and development plan. Hence, it is the intention of the study to investigate role of IRDA in the planning and development of Iskandar Malaysia.

#### 1.1.2. *The establishment order of Iskandar Malaysia is lack of involvement from the public*

Following the Malaysia top-down development approach, the local authorities are responsible to incorporate the proposal outlined in the Iskandar Malaysia master plan. The master plan and development blueprints for Iskandar Malaysia development are outlined from a contribution of opinion from many parties and individuals (IRDA, 2012). However, none of publicity and public participation was involved throughout the formulation process of the CDP. Thus, it is the intention of paper to study the public participation process in Iskandar Malaysia.

#### 1.1.3. *The lack of assessment on the establishment of Iskandar Malaysia development blueprints*

Various initiatives, programmes, policies as well as strategies were proposed to enhance the development of regions in Malaysia. Until now, there are 24 approved development blueprints proposed to guide planning and development within the region (IRDA, 2012). The local authorities within the boundary of Iskandar Malaysia are obligate to conform to the provision of CDP or the master plan of the region, development blueprints in the formation and execution of the local plan. However, less research was conducted on the provision of the Iskandar Malaysia development blueprint. Hence, the study intends to examine the content and provision of the development blueprints.

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