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Too Committed to Fail? Credible Revisability and the Strategic Orchestration of Nusantara, New Capitals and Megaprojects under Radical Uncertainty

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Abstract

Between 2023 and 2026, several high-profile megaprojects underwent cancellation, scope reductions, funding withdrawals, or organizational restructuring. Existing theoretical perspectives explain why project sponsors escalate their commitments, why megaprojects experience cost overruns, how real options generate strategic value, and how orchestrators coordinate actors beyond their direct organizational control. However, these perspectives do not adequately explain how sponsors can maintain credible long-term commitments while preserving the legitimate capacity to revise strategic decisions under radical uncertainty. This article develops a theory of credible revisability by integrating insights from strategic commitment, escalation of commitment, megaproject governance, real options theory, ecosystem orchestration, public-sector dynamic capabilities, and mission-oriented innovation policy. The theoretical synthesis is supported by a comparative documentary analysis of twelve megaprojects and new capital city initiatives. The study identifies commitment displacement—the shift of commitment from enduring public functions toward specific implementation instruments—as a central mechanism through which strategic commitment can evolve into institutional entrenchment. Building on this mechanism, the article introduces Transformational Orchestration for Nexus Endurance (TONE), a governance strategy that anchors long-term commitments in a protected minimum level of essential public functions, establishes predefined authority to revise implementation instruments, distributes decision-making rights over strategic options among actors controlling complementary resources, manages interdependencies across interconnected systems, and applies symmetrical evaluation criteria to decisions concerning project continuation and termination. Eight theoretical propositions, a governance typology, and tests against competing theoretical explanations specify the conditions under which TONE is expected to outperform institutional entrenchment, strategic drift, and opportunistic policy reversal. Indonesia's new capital, Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), serves as an illustrative case demonstrating the framework's applicability and potential transferability to other new

capital cities, planned urban developments, and large-scale infrastructure megaprojects.

INTRODUCTION

Can a government demonstrate stronger strategic commitment by revising its flagship project rather than completing it as originally designed? Although seemingly paradoxical, this question has become increasingly consequential in public-sector strategy. Recent decisions illustrate its significance. In the United Kingdom, the government canceled HS2 Phases 2a and 2b and HS2 East in October 2023, citing escalating costs. It subsequently reallocated £36 billion to other transportation priorities and reduced the planned London Euston terminus from ten platforms to six (Department for Transport, 2024). In Saudi Arabia, The Line, originally envisioned as a 170-kilometer linear city accommodating nine million residents, has been scaled back to 2.4 kilometers by 2030 and remains under review (AGBI, 2026). Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund, recorded an $8 billion write-down on its gigaproject investments, citing cost overruns, implementation delays, and changing market conditions (Reuters, 2025a). In the United States, the Federal Railroad Administration terminated approximately $4 billion in federal grant agreements supporting California's high-speed rail project (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2025). California subsequently initiated legal proceedings before dismissing the lawsuit, characterizing the federal administration as an unreliable partner (California High-Speed Rail Authority, 2026).

Indonesia provides two additional examples. The sovereign wealth fund Daya Anagata Nusantara (Danantara) initiated efforts to restructure the debt associated with the US$7.3 billion Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway, known as Whoosh (The Jakarta Post, 2025), while the finance minister stated that the national budget would not be used to service the project's debt obligations (Antara, 2025). Furthermore, Presidential Regulation No. 79 of 2025 redefined the development trajectory of Indonesia's new capital, Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), by establishing its designation as the country's "political capital" by 2028. However, the associated development targets were expressed primarily in terms of land area, construction completion percentages, and the number of relocated civil servants, without providing a sufficiently detailed operational definition of the political capital concept (BBC News Indonesia, 2025).

These developments are frequently interpreted as evidence of inadequate planning or weakened political commitment. This article instead conceptualizes them as manifestations of a structural dilemma in the organization and governance of strategic commitments (Retnandari, 2022). Commitment represents a valuable strategic asset because irreversible decisions can encourage other actors to invest complementary resources (Ghemawat, 1991; Pisano, 2022), particularly in megaprojects and new capital developments that depend on stakeholders beyond the sponsor's direct organizational control. However, commitment can simultaneously increase the costs of strategic correction. Previous research has documented the escalation of commitment to unsuccessful courses of action (Staw, 1976; Sleesman et al., 2012; Sleesman et al., 2018), persistent cost overruns, schedule delays, and benefit shortfalls in megaproject delivery (Flyvbjerg, 2014), and potentially irrational political decisions to terminate projects at advanced stages of implementation (Juarez Cornelio et al., 2021).

The central strategic challenge is therefore not simply whether to continue or terminate a project but how to design governance arrangements that distinguish enduring commitments

from revisable implementation choices. This requires determining which objectives should remain protected, which instruments should remain adaptable, and which actors possess the authority, resources, and legitimacy to initiate and implement revisions. This article conceptualizes this challenge as the credibility–reversibility dilemma.

Existing theoretical perspectives address different dimensions of this dilemma but do not provide a fully integrated explanation. Escalation-of-commitment research explains organizational persistence in unsuccessful initiatives but offers limited guidance on designing legitimate mechanisms for strategic revision. Real options theory generally emphasizes decision-making by identifiable option holders with the authority to exercise strategic flexibility (Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017). Ecosystem orchestration explains coordination among interdependent actors operating without unified ownership (Jacobides et al., 2018; Foss et al., 2023), but provides less explicit guidance on sustaining coordination when the underlying value proposition changes. Dynamic adaptive policy pathways identify decision triggers under deep uncertainty (Haasnoot et al., 2013), although governance and implementation challenges remain significant (Haasnoot et al., 2024; Malekpour & Newig, 2020). Similarly, mission-oriented innovation policy emphasizes strategic directionality and the contested nature of collective objectives (Mazzucato, 2018; Wanzenböck et al., 2020), while acknowledging the risks associated with excessive policy expectations and overpromising (Janssen et al., 2021). Collectively, these perspectives leave an important theoretical gap concerning the mechanisms through which strategic commitment becomes institutional entrenchment and the governance arrangements required to maintain credible commitments while enabling legitimate strategic revision.

The pressures underlying this dilemma are intensifying as large-scale infrastructure and urban development projects become increasingly interconnected with critical resource and technological systems. The International Energy Agency projected that global data center electricity consumption would approximately double from 485 TWh in 2025 to 950 TWh by 2030 (IEA, 2026). Research on polycrises has also distinguished among shared systemic stresses, cascading disruptions, and cross-system feedback mechanisms that amplify interconnected risks (Lawrence et al., 2024). Consequently, new capital developments and gigaprojects are increasingly dependent on energy, water, land, digital infrastructure, and fiscal systems that extend beyond the direct control of individual project sponsors. These interdependencies can generate correlated demands for strategic adjustment, increasing the potential costs of institutional entrenchment and reducing the effectiveness of rigid implementation commitments.

Against this background, this article addresses the following research question: How can public-sector sponsors sustain credible commitments to the essential public functions of megaprojects and new capital developments while retaining the legitimate capacity to revise implementation instruments under conditions of radical uncertainty and systemic interdependence? The article makes three principal theoretical contributions. First, it introduces commitment displacement, defined as the progressive transfer of commitment from enduring public functions to specific implementation instruments, as a mechanism through which strategic determination can evolve into institutional entrenchment. Second, it develops Transformational Orchestration for Nexus Endurance (TONE), a governance strategy that derives credibility from a protected minimum level of essential public functions, ex ante

revision rules, distributed option-exercise rights, and symmetrical evaluation of continuation and termination decisions rather than the immutability of implementation instruments. Third, it formulates eight testable theoretical propositions and a governance typology, systematically contrasting the proposed framework with seven closely related theoretical perspectives. These contributions are informed by a comparative documentary analysis of twelve megaprojects and new capital developments across eight countries, with Nusantara serving as a particularly demanding illustrative case rather than a basis for a definitive assessment of project success or failure.

METHOD

This conceptual study integrated theory synthesis and model development (Jaakkola, 2020). Following Cornelissen et al. (2021), the study adopted an explanatory theorizing approach to identify underlying mechanisms and the conditions governing their operation. Configurational theorizing principles were incorporated to examine combinations of causal conditions, equifinality, and causal asymmetry (Furnari et al., 2021). Elements of prospective theorizing were also employed to explore plausible future developments while maintaining theoretical rigor and the testability of the proposed claims (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2024).

The theoretical synthesis was conducted in four stages. First, the credibility–reversibility dilemma was defined, and the explanatory contributions of relevant theoretical perspectives were identified. Second, theoretical limitations were examined in the context of sovereign, multi-actor, and interdependent megaprojects (Table 1). Third, the emerging framework was informed by a comparative documentary analysis of project revision episodes across twelve cases (Section 4). Finally, theoretical constructs, causal mechanisms, propositions, and competing predictions were developed and critically examined (Sections 5–6), with Nusantara serving as an illustrative case (Section 7).

Cases were purposively selected to capture variation in project revision outcomes rather than estimate their prevalence. Selection criteria included government or state-controlled sponsorship; classification as a national capital, new city, or transportation megaproject valued at US$1 billion or more; at least one documented revision, termination, scope adjustment, or restructuring episode between 2004 and 2026; and the availability of official documentation or credible independent reporting. Each episode was coded across five dimensions: the stated object of commitment, the trigger for revision, the authority responsible for authorizing the revision, the existence of ex ante revision rules, and the documented status of the project's intended public functions following revision. Coding reflected the author's interpretation of the cited documentary evidence and was used to develop and refine theoretical explanations rather than conduct formal empirical hypothesis testing. Statements originating from interested parties were distinguished from independently established findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pattern 1: Revision is common, but it arrives as crisis rather than design. In most cases revision was triggered by cost escalation, partner withdrawal, fiscal stress, or political turnover rather than pre-specified rules, so it was experienced as defeat, rupture, or write-down, and its legitimacy depended on narrative rather than procedure. Consistent with the regret-cost

mechanism (Eitan et al., 2023), **when no exit door is designed, revision must break one open.**

Pattern 2: Where commitment was anchored in function, revision preserved the mission. In Sejong, a constitutional veto removed the instrument (a new national capital), yet the legislature redesigned the project as a multifunctional administrative city that retained the decongestion and balanced-development purpose (Hankyoreh, 2020). HS2's reallocation of funds to "Network North" claims, contestably, to preserve a regional connectivity function. Function-anchored commitment appears to make revision narratable as continuity rather than retreat.

Pattern 3: Fragmented authority determines whether revision becomes correction or rupture. In California and Mexico City, revision authority was distributed across levels of government or administrations without shared review, so the same evidence could justify either continuation or termination, and revision took the form of withdrawal or cancellation. Whoosh shows a quieter variant: financial restructuring proceeds while the boundary between sovereign-fund and state-budget responsibility is contested and the expansion commitment remains unrevised.

Pattern 4: Nexus coupling makes revision needs correlated. Berlin's opening was held hostage by failures in a single coupled subsystem, fire protection (Euronews, 2020); Egypt's capital is coupled to fiscal conditions set partly by an external lender (CNN, 2024); and Masdar's trajectory was coupled to the 2008 financial crisis and technology markets (World Construction Network, 2023).

Pattern 5: Symbolic salience raises the cost of admitting revision. Capitals and flagship cities (Naypyidaw, the New Administrative Capital, The Line, Nusantara) carry national symbolism that converts any instrument revision into a statement about the regime, the nation, or the leader; in Naypyidaw no revision mechanism is visible at all. These patterns suggest that the decisive variable is not the strength of commitment but its **object** and its **governance**.

Theory Development: From Commitment Displacement To Credible Revisability

5.1 The Core Mechanism: Commitment Displacement

We define **commitment displacement** as the process through which a sponsor's commitment migrates from the public functions a project is meant to provide (connectivity, administrative capacity, liveable housing, decarbonisation) to the specific instruments chosen to provide them (a route, a design, a site, a technology, a date, a building programme). If total commitment C comprises commitment to functions, C_F, and commitment to instruments, C_I, displacement is an increase in the ratio C_I / C_F over time. It matters because regret cost (Eitan et al., 2023) is a function of commitment to instruments, not to functions: a sponsor committed to administrative capacity can switch instruments at moderate regret cost, whereas a sponsor committed to a particular building programme by a particular date cannot do so without appearing to fail.

Four drivers plausibly promote displacement. The first is **symbolic salience**, when the project becomes a representation of national identity, modernity, or leadership (Moser & Côté-Roy, 2021; Al Faruq, 2025). The second is **instrument-specific legal and contractual commitments**, when laws, concession contracts, and targets are written in physical rather than functional terms. The third is **output-based accountability metrics**: hectares, percentages of

buildings, and relocated staff direct organisational attention toward instruments (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio et al., 2018). The fourth is **identity-linked sponsorship**, when the project is associated with a particular leader or administration, so that revision becomes a referendum on that leader. Commitment displacement reframes escalation of commitment. Escalation research asks why decision makers persist (Sleesman et al., 2012). Displacement theory asks **what they are persisting with**, and predicts that the same intensity of commitment produces very different revision costs depending on its object.

Core Constructs

Table 1. Core constructs of the theory of credible revisability

Construct	Definition	Indicative observable evidence
Functional anchoring (FA)	The degree to which commitment is formally tied to specified public functions, beneficiaries, and a protected minimum level of service, the functional floor	Mandates and targets expressed as service levels, access, and outcomes; legal protection of the functional floor
Instrument plasticity (IP)	The degree to which technology, scale, sequence, location, and partners can be changed at bounded regret cost	Modularity; staged contracts; break and compensation clauses; redeployable assets (de Neufville & Scholtes, 2011)
Authorised correction capacity (ACC)	A cross-boundary arrangement through which validated evidence can produce a lawful, funded, implemented change, linking sensing, adjudication, authorisation, resourcing, and implementation	Documented decision rights, pre-committed contingency funds, mandated response duties, appeal and review
Nexus coupling (NC)	The structure of interdependence among the project and the energy, water, land, mobility, digital, and fiscal systems on which its functions depend	Dependency maps; common-mode exposures; availability of substitutes and buffers (Lawrence et al., 2024)
Legitimate endurance (LE), the outcome	Sustained provision of protected public functions through disturbance and configuration change, without unacknowledged displacement of material harm onto other territories or groups	Service and benefit trajectories; distributional outcomes; rights compliance; treatment of external costs

The constructs are deliberately distinct. FA and IP describe the content of commitment, ACC describes the governance capability that connects them, NC describes the structural context, and LE is the outcome. Treating them as items of a single index would confuse mechanism, context, and result (Furnari et al., 2021).

Conditions of Influence

Six conditions moderate the relationships among the constructs: (1) **type of uncertainty**, since credible revisability matters most under deep or radical uncertainty (Marchau et al., 2019; Kay & King, 2020), whereas under calculable risk conventional planning may suffice; (2) **symbolic salience**, which accelerates displacement and raises the political cost of revision; (3) **complementor asset specificity**, since complementors with instrument-specific investments will demand compensation or resist revision; (4) **authority fragmentation**, the number of veto players with independent revision power; (5) **digital observability**, whose effect depends on whether authority and resources to respond exist; and (6) **territorial inclusion** of affected territories in defining the functional floor and reviewing revisions (Uyarra et al., 2025).

From Mechanism to Strategy: The Emergence of TONE

If commitment displacement is the problem, the solution is neither weaker commitment, which produces drift, nor unconstrained flexibility, which produces opportunistic reversal. It is to re-engineer the object and governance of commitment so that revision becomes an act of commitment rather than its negation. We call this property **credible revisability**: a sponsor's capacity to revise instruments in ways that complementors and citizens perceive as consistent with its declared commitments. **What complementors need is predictability of the rules under which instruments change, and credible protection of the functions on which their investments depend. They do not need the instruments to be fixed.** Where their assets are tied to functions, a commitment to functions with transparent revision rules can be more credible than a commitment to a design that is hostage to cost shocks, fiscal shifts, and political turnover. Where their assets are tied to instruments, revisability must be paired with compensation, which we call revision insurance.

The strategy that operationalises credible revisability is **Transformational Orchestration for Nexus Endurance (TONE)**: *transformational* because it treats configuration change as normal rather than exceptional; *orchestration* because it operates through actors the sponsor does not own, extending orchestration without ownership (Foss et al., 2023) from aligning actors around a value proposition to keeping them aligned through its revision; *nexus* because it treats interdependence among energy, water, land, mobility, digital, and fiscal systems as a design variable; and *endurance* because its success criterion is the sustained provision of protected public functions, not the permanence of the original configuration.

TONE consists of five design principles. (1) **Anchor commitment in a functional floor**: declare, in law or policy, the minimum public functions, beneficiaries, and rights that will be protected under any revision, and express targets in functional terms. (2) **Pre-authorise revision through a revision charter**: specify ex ante the triggers, evidence standards, decision rights, and contingency resources for staging, rescoping, re-sequencing, switching, pausing, or exiting. (3) **Distribute option rights through orchestrated options**: allocate the rights to propose and co-decide revisions to the actors that control complementary resources, and offer revision insurance where their assets are instrument-specific. (4) **Govern nexus coupling selectively**: map dependencies, stress-test common-mode exposures, and preserve substitutes and buffers where coupling would let a single system failure disable protected functions. (5) **Review continuation and termination symmetrically**: assign an independent body to evaluate continuation, redesign, delay, and termination against the same prospective public-value criteria, so that neither escalation nor reverse escalation is privileged. Figure 1 depicts the mechanism.

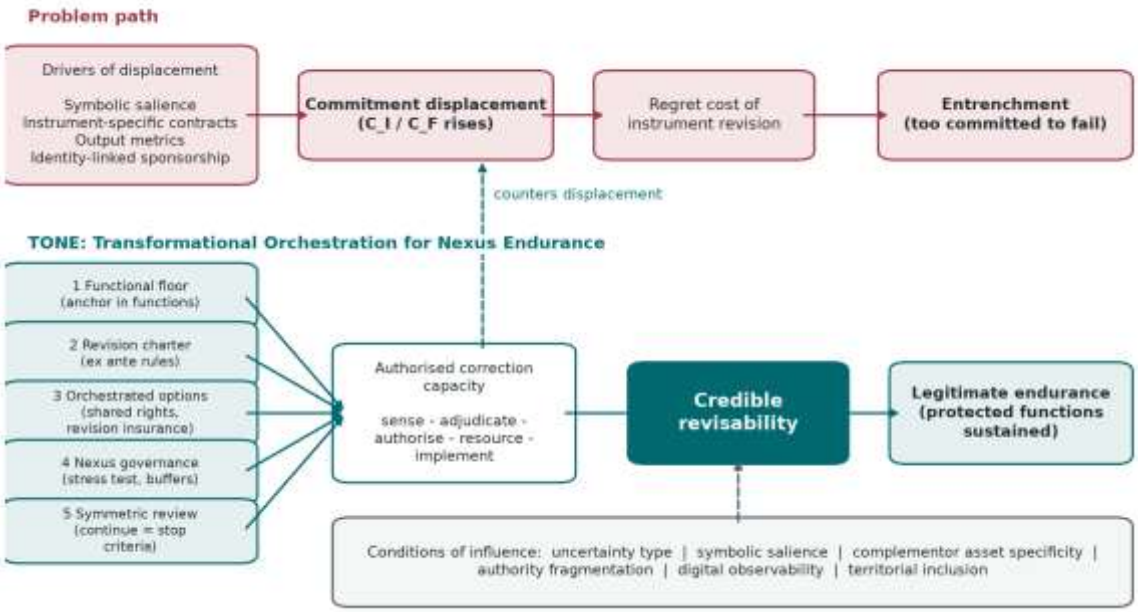


Figure 1. The TONE mechanism

In Figure 1, commitment displacement converts strong commitment into entrenchment, while the five design principles counter displacement and produce credible revisability, conditioned by six moderating conditions. Arrows denote proposed relationships, not estimated effects.

A Typology of Commitment Configurations

Crossing the strength of commitment with instrument plasticity yields four configurations (Table 4). The decisive difference between the two strong-commitment quadrants is the object of commitment: functions in one, instruments in the other. Credible revisability requires commitment anchored in functions and authorised correction capacity to translate plasticity into timely, legitimate revision; case placements are illustrative interpretations.

Table 2. Four commitment configurations (strength of commitment × instrument plasticity)

Strength of commitment	Low instrument plasticity	High instrument plasticity
High	**Entrenchment.** 'Too committed to fail': strong commitment displaced onto fixed instruments. Example: Naypyidaw; early The Line	**Credible revisability (TONE).** Strong commitment anchored in a functional floor; rule-governed instrument revision. Nearest: Sejong after 2004 veto
Low	**Drift.** No protected function, no usable flexibility; stall without closure. Elements: Berlin Brandenburg Airport delays	**Opportunistic reversal.** Instruments change with political or fiscal winds; revision as rupture. Example: Mexico City airport; California HSR

Entrenchment describes a project too committed to fail and, for that reason, unable to learn; drift describes projects that stall without either correction or closure; opportunistic reversal turns revision into rupture; and in credible revisability functions are protected while

instruments are revised through legitimate procedures. Sejong approaches the last configuration, although its revision was externally imposed rather than designed ex ante.

Propositions

The following propositions specify the theory's testable claims. They concern associations and mechanisms to be investigated, not effects established by this article.

Proposition 1 (Commitment displacement). Symbolic salience, instrument-specific legal and contractual commitments, output-based accountability metrics, and identity-linked sponsorship will each be positively associated with commitment displacement. Displacement, in turn, will be positively associated with the perceived regret cost of instrument revision.

Proposition 2 (Credible revisability). Holding functional anchoring constant, the presence of an ex ante revision charter will be associated with a shorter interval between disconfirming evidence and instrument revision. It will not be associated with lower complementor investment, except where complementors' assets are instrument-specific and no revision insurance is provided.

Proposition 3 (Orchestrated options). Revision options will be exercised in a more timely and less conflictual manner when option rights are shared with the actors controlling complementary resources than when they are held exclusively by the sponsor.

Proposition 4 (Authority over information). Improvements in digital observability will shorten the interval from warning to correction only when authorised correction capacity is present. Without it, greater observability will increase the stock of unresolved warnings.

Proposition 5 (Nexus coupling). Under tight coupling with common-mode exposure, a disturbance in one system will trigger correlated revisions across others. Configurations that preserve substitutes and buffers will exhibit smaller losses of protected functions.

Proposition 6 (Symmetric review). Independent review that evaluates continuation, redesign, delay, and termination against the same prospective criteria will be associated with fewer unjustified continuations (escalation) and fewer unjustified terminations (reverse escalation) than review organised around defending or repudiating a predecessor's project.

Proposition 7 (Functional floor and legitimacy). Revisions that preserve a declared functional floor, and that include affected territories in defining it, will retain more legitimacy than revisions that do not. Legitimacy loss from earlier revisions will raise the cost of subsequent ones.

Proposition 8 (Equifinality). Legitimate endurance can arise through at least two configurations: (a) high functional anchoring, high instrument plasticity, and high authorised correction capacity under deep uncertainty and tight coupling (TONE); and (b) high functional anchoring with low uncertainty and loose coupling (conventional delivery). Entrenchment will arise when high symbolic salience and low plasticity coincide with deep uncertainty, whatever the declared strength of purpose.

Table 3 specifies the operational tests and the observations that would disconfirm each proposition.

Table 3. Operational tests and potentially disconfirming observations

Proposition	Empirical comparison	Observation that would weaken the claim
P1	Projects differing in symbolic salience and metric type; text analysis of laws and targets	Displacement indicators unrelated to perceived regret cost or revision delay

Proposition	Empirical comparison	Observation that would weaken the claim
P2	Matched revision episodes with and without ex ante charters	Charters do not shorten correction intervals, or reduce complementor investment even with revision insurance
P3	Revisions with shared versus sponsor-held option rights	Shared rights produce slower or more conflictual revisions
P4	Digital upgrades with and without changes in decision rights and funding	Observability alone shortens correction intervals despite unchanged authority bottlenecks
P5	Comparable disturbances under different coupling and buffer structures	Tight coupling without buffers does not increase function loss
P6	Review bodies differing in independence and symmetry of criteria	Symmetric review fails to reduce either error, or merely legitimises predetermined decisions
P7	Revisions with and without declared functional floors and territorial participation	Floor-preserving revisions lose as much legitimacy as others
P8	Fuzzy-set QCA across capitals and megaprojects	Legitimate endurance arises without either specified configuration, or entrenchment arises without the specified conditions

Testing The Theory Against Its Nearest Rivals

A new theory is worth having only if it predicts something its nearest rivals do not. Table 4 contrasts TONE's predictions with those of seven rival perspectives for a common situation: disconfirming evidence emerges midway through a megaproject or capital relocation.

Table 4. Rival predictions when disconfirming evidence emerges midway through a megaproject

Rival theory	Predicted response	Distinctive TONE prediction	Discriminating observation
Escalation of commitment (Sleesman et al., 2018)	Persistence proportional to sunk costs and identity threat	Persistence depends on the object of commitment; function-anchored sponsors revise with less delay at equal sunk cost	Revision delay at equal sunk cost but different commitment objects
Reverse escalation (Juarez Cornelio et al., 2021)	Termination when political turnover reframes the project	Symmetric review reduces both continuation and termination errors	Error rates under symmetric versus partisan review
Iron law and behavioural bias (Flyvbjerg, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2021)	Better front-end forecasting reduces later shocks	Even with good forecasts, deep uncertainty requires governed revision; front-end quality is necessary but not sufficient	Projects with comparable forecast quality but different revision charters
Real options (Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017)	Embedded options are exercised when value-maximising	Options held by non-owned actors are exercised only when option rights and revision insurance are distributed	Exercise rates of comparable options under owner-held versus shared rights
Ecosystem orchestration (Foss et al., 2023)	Leader's sensing, seizing, and	Alignment through revision requires a functional floor and	Complementor exit following revisions with

Rival theory	Predicted response	Distinctive TONE prediction	Discriminating observation
	reconfiguring sustain alignment	predictable revision rules, not leader capability alone	and without declared floors
Adaptive pathways (Haasnoot et al., 2024)	Pre-defined triggers prompt switching	Triggers prompt switching only when authorised correction capacity exists	Trigger activations followed or not followed by implemented change
Robust action and paradox (Ferraro et al., 2015; Smith & Lewis, 2011)	Multivocality and distributed experimentation sustain progress amid tension	Pluralism must be coupled with binding decision rights and funding; multivocality alone can delay correction	Revision speed in multivocal settings with and without revision charters

Three features distinguish TONE from its rivals: **it relocates the problem of escalation from intensity to object**, so sponsors with equal sunk costs should revise at different speeds depending on whether commitments are written in functional or instrumental terms; **it extends real options and orchestration to collectively held options**, so formal flexibility remains unused unless option rights and revision insurance are distributed; and **it treats correction as an authority problem rather than an information problem**, so monitoring, triggers, and deliberation will not shorten correction intervals without binding decision rights and funding. Table 5 specifies how each prediction could be shown wrong.

Illustration: Nusantara And The Transferability Of Tone

Nusantara combines most of the conditions the theory associates with displacement risk. Laws 3/2022 and 21/2023 grant the Nusantara Capital Authority special powers, including over investment and land, which critical scholarship interprets as legal, bureaucratic, and territorial exceptionalisation (Al Faruq, 2025). Presidential Regulation 63/2022 set out five phases from 2022 to 2045, and the first phase fell behind schedule; investor letters of intent substantially exceeded realised private investment, which remained heavily dependent on the state budget (Negara & Neo, 2024). The authority reported Rp 65.3 trillion in non-state-budget investment from 49 business actors as of September 2025 (Otorita Ibu Kota Nusantara, 2025).

State-budget realisation rose from Rp 5.5 trillion in 2022 to Rp 27 trillion in 2023 and a preliminary Rp 43.3 trillion in 2024, while the 2026 draft budget allocated Rp 6.3 trillion (Liputan6, 2025). Presidential Regulation 79/2025 re-specified the 2028 objective as a "political capital", with targets including a 800–850-hectare government core area, 20% completion of office buildings, 50% of housing, 50% coverage of basic infrastructure, an accessibility index of 0.74, 1,700–4,100 relocated civil servants, and 25% smart-city service coverage (BBC News Indonesia, 2025); the authority projects 9,500 civil servants by 2029 (Otorita Ibu Kota Nusantara, 2025).

The 2025 re-specification is a revision episode: the functional target changed from a fully relocated capital to a political capital, and the funding trajectory shifted sharply. Yet the accountability metrics remain predominantly instrumental, measuring hectares, construction percentages, and relocated staff rather than the governmental functions and territorial benefits a political capital is meant to deliver. The theory predicts that such metrics promote displacement (P1) and that a revision not anchored in a declared functional floor will be read

as retreat rather than continuity (P7). The digital dimension illustrates P4: in January 2026 the authority reported smart-metering of electricity and water in civil-servant housing, but no quantified change in consumption (Otorita Ibu Kota Nusantara, 2026). The next question is which actor is authorised and funded to act on what the sensors reveal.

Table 5 translates TONE into a diagnostic for Nusantara. The entries are diagnostic questions and recommended instruments, not assessments of performance.

Table 5. TONE diagnostic for Nusantara

TONE principle	Documented status	Diagnostic question	Recommended instrument
Functional floor	2028 targets expressed mainly in physical and relocation terms (BBC News Indonesia, 2025)	Which governmental functions must operate from Nusantara by 2028, for whom, at what service level?	Legally declared functional floor with service-level indicators
Revision charter	Revisions occur through presidential regulations and budget decisions	What evidence triggers rescoping, re-sequencing, or pausing of specific components, and who decides?	Charter specifying triggers, evidence standards, decision rights, and contingency funds
Orchestrated options	Investment pledges exceed realisations (Negara & Neo, 2024)	Which complementors hold instrument-specific assets, and what protects them if instruments change?	Option register and revision insurance in cooperation agreements
Nexus coupling	Dependence on regional water, energy, connectivity, and fiscal transfers (Negara & Neo, 2024)	Which single-system failures could disable protected functions?	Nexus stress test linking Nusantara, Balikpapan, Samarinda, and national budget scenarios
Symmetric review	No independent body evaluates continuation and termination on common criteria	Who reviews whether to accelerate, resequence, or pause, under the same public-value criteria?	Independent symmetric review board reporting publicly
Territorial inclusion	Critical scholarship highlights exceptionalisation (Al Faruq, 2025)	Do affected communities and regional governments help define the functional floor?	Participation in floor-setting and revision review
Digital actionability	Smart metering reported without measured effects (Otorita Ibu Kota Nusantara, 2026)	Is any actor obligated and funded to respond to sensor evidence?	Response duties attached to data streams

Transferability. The theory is not specific to Indonesia. Its boundary conditions are stated in terms of variables (symbolic salience, uncertainty, coupling, authority fragmentation, complementor asset specificity), not countries. It therefore applies wherever a sovereign or quasi-sovereign sponsor commits publicly to a long-lived, interdependent project whose value depends on actors it does not own. Such settings include new capitals and administrative cities; new towns and charter cities; giga-projects; special economic zones; high-speed rail networks; and AI and data-centre campuses whose electricity and water demands couple them to regional systems (IEA, 2026; Cáceres et al., 2024).

Contributions to Strategic Management

First, the theory contributes to commitment theory by distinguishing the object of commitment from its intensity. Classical commitment theory treats irreversibility as the source of credibility (Ghemawat, 1991), and escalation research treats it as the source of error (Sleesman et al., 2018). Both are right about different objects: irreversibility in functions creates credibility, whereas irreversibility in instruments creates error under deep uncertainty, and commitment displacement names the process through which the first becomes the second. **Second, the theory extends real options and resource redeployment** (Trigeorgis & Reuer, 2017; Lieberman et al., 2017) to collectively held options: **orchestrated options**, the deliberate distribution of option rights and revision insurance among holders of complementary resources, specify how flexibility becomes usable when no single actor owns it.

Third, the theory advances orchestration research from alignment to re-alignment. Whereas Foss et al. (2023) theorise ecosystem leadership as the capability to establish and maintain cooperation without common ownership, TONE addresses cooperation while the value proposition's instruments change, through the functional floor and the revision charter. **Fourth, the theory re-specifies public-sector dynamic capabilities**, beyond sense-making, connecting, and shaping (Kattel, 2022) and roles, resources, and abilities (Borrás et al., 2024), as cross-boundary authorised correction capacity: the institutionalised link between validated evidence and lawful, funded, implemented change, residing in the configuration of actors rather than in any single organisation.

Contributions to Megaproject, Mission, and New-City Research

For megaproject research, the theory complements the front-end emphasis of the iron-law tradition with a theory of governed revision during execution. For mission-oriented policy, it distinguishes missions (protected functions) from instruments (revisable means), giving operational content to calls for adaptive and place-sensitive missions (Uyarra et al., 2025; OECD, 2026). For new-city research, it complements critical accounts of power and prestige (Moser & Côté-Roy, 2021; Al Faruq, 2025) with a strategic account of how symbolic salience shapes the cost of correction.

Practical Implications for Leaders

The theory implies a shift in how leaders of nations, regions, and institutions should frame their commitments. **The question to ask is not "will we finish what we started?" but "what will we protect, and under what rules will we change everything else?"** Table 6 summarises the instruments.

Table 6. TONE instruments for sponsors of new capitals and megaprojects

Instrument	Purpose	Design requirement
Functional floor	Make the protected public function explicit and binding	Expressed in service levels, beneficiaries, and rights rather than physical outputs
Revision charter	Convert revision from political defeat into rule-governed act	Ex ante triggers, evidence standards, decision rights, and contingency funds
Option register	Make dispersed flexibility visible and usable	Inventory of stage, switch, scale, and exit options with their holders
Revision insurance	Protect complementors with instrument-specific assets	Compensation or transition clauses in cooperation agreements

Instrument	Purpose	Design requirement
Nexus stress test	Expose correlated revision needs	Joint scenarios across energy, water, land, mobility, digital, and fiscal systems
Symmetric review board	Reduce escalation and reverse-escalation errors	Independence; common prospective criteria for continuation and termination; public reporting
Response duties for data	Translate observability into correction	Named actor obligated and funded to respond to specified signals

Research Agenda and Limitations

The propositions invite four empirical designs: a **configurational comparison** using fuzzy-set QCA across twenty to forty capitals and megaprojects (P8 and the typology); **process tracing** of revision episodes, including Nusantara's 2025 re-specification, from evidence to authorisation to implementation (P1, P2, P7); **text analysis** measuring displacement as the ratio of instrumental to functional language in laws, contracts, and targets; and **survey experiments** testing whether revision charters and functional floors preserve perceived credibility among investors and citizens (P2, P7).

As a theory-building contribution, this article has limitations. The comparative evidence is documentary, purposively selected, and coded by a single author; several cases rely on journalistic or official sources whose claims may be contested; and Nusantara's outcomes are not yet observable. The distinction between functions and instruments may itself be politically contested, so TONE requires that it be publicly reasoned, legally bounded, and revisable through democratic procedures.

CONCLUSION

The most significant strategic risk facing new capital developments and megaprojects is not necessarily the erosion of political commitment but the persistence of rigid implementation arrangements that constrain necessary adjustments. Recent episodes of scope revision, asset write-downs, and financial restructuring across major projects in London, NEOM, California, and Jakarta demonstrate that strategic revision is an inherent feature of transformative development initiatives, although such adjustments frequently emerge as responses to crises rather than through institutionalized governance mechanisms. This article concludes that the critical determinant of strategic adaptability is not merely the strength of commitment but the object toward which that commitment is directed. When commitment shifts from enduring public functions to specific implementation instruments, strategic determination can evolve into institutional entrenchment, limiting organizational learning and adaptive capacity. To address this challenge, the proposed Transformational Orchestration for Nexus Endurance (TONE) framework establishes a governance approach centered on a protected minimum level of essential public functions, ex ante authorization of strategic revisions, distributed option-exercise rights among actors controlling complementary resources, coordinated management of interdependencies across energy, water, land, digital infrastructure, and fiscal systems, and symmetrical evaluation of project continuation and termination. For Nusantara and other new capital developments, the findings suggest that effective governance requires balancing credible long-term commitments with sufficient flexibility to accommodate changing

circumstances. Accordingly, public-sector sponsors should prioritize service-level outcomes over physical construction targets and consider adopting formal revision charters, strategic option registers, revision insurance mechanisms, cross-sectoral stress testing, independent review boards applying symmetrical decision criteria, and clearly defined data-reporting and response obligations. Future research should empirically evaluate the eight theoretical propositions through fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), process tracing of strategic revision episodes, including Nusantara's 2025 regulatory redefinition, systematic textual analysis of legal and policy documents, and survey experiments involving investors and citizens. Ultimately, sustainable strategic commitment should be directed toward the enduring public value that megaprojects are intended to deliver rather than the permanent preservation of their original implementation instruments.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author states that there are no conflicts of interest, whether personal, commercial, or financial, that can affect the implementation and results of this study.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Author contributes to research design, data collection and processing, system development, result analysis, and article manuscript preparation.

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE STATEMENT

In the process of compiling this article, the author uses generative artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool in language refinement, writing structure, and grammar improvement. The use of AI is carried out on a limited basis and remains under the supervision of the author. All data, analysis, interpretation, and scientific substance in this article have been checked and verified by the author. The author is solely responsible for the accuracy, authenticity, and final content of the manuscript.

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