

Leadership and Innovation in East Java: The Case of Policy Sustainability

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Abstract

This paper will assess twenty innovations initiated by the mayors and regents in twenty different cities and regencies in East Java, Indonesia. Using secondary data from the Java Pos Institute of Autonomy [Jawa Pos Institute of Pro-Otonomi] (JPIP), these twenty policies are categorized into three groups: *fading, steady and blooming*. Two are categorized as fading; eight are categorized as steady; and ten are categorized as blooming. This study finds that leaders' characteristics as public servants are primary drivers of successful innovation, which is also importantly influenced by intermediary actors, budgets, and media coverage. So long as policy is resilient and embedded in long-term plans, leadership transition does not affect policy sustainability, which is also buttressed by interest from a public that feels its benefits and encourages its maintenance. We thus posit that, to sustain policy, public response is critical, as a lack of public interest can be a primary driver of program termination.

Keywords: leadership, innovation, intermediary actors, sustainable policy



1 Introduction

After the sudden collapse of President Soeharto's regime in 1997–1998, Indonesia began the long process of democratization (Aspinall, [2018](#)). Recognizing the prevalent belief outside Java that political power had not been distributed fairly (Rabasa & Chalk, [2001](#)), as well as to regain local governments' trust and avoid the threat of separatism, the central government proposed initiating decentralization. National Laws No. 22/[1999](#) and No. 25/[1999](#), which devolved state power and revenue to local governments, were enacted by the Habibie administration in 1999. Under this new system, provinces and municipalities (i.e. cities/regencies) could be divided to create new administrative areas, thereby gaining greater economic and political independence. This enabled provinces, cities, and regencies to compete amongst themselves.

In 2002, Untung Wiyono, the Regent of Sragen, implemented a one-stop service policy that operated in dedicated service offices (Darmawan, [2011](#)). By combining all the procedures involved in establishing new businesses, this policy sought to abbreviate the complicated process. Previously, it had taken up to six months to complete the registration process, which involved visits to a multitude of government offices to register their businesses. This policy gained significant popular and media attention, which perceived the policy as a ground-breaking means of reducing the time and energy needed to receive a permit. However, Untung's breakthrough went against central regulations, and thus the Ministry of Home Affairs could revoke such local initiatives if deemed against the interests of the central government.

After six years of tedious work, after many regencies had replicated Untung's policy, the Minister of Home Affairs Decree No. 24 of [2006](#) on One-Stop Service Guidelines (Ahadiyah, [2006](#)) recognized Sragen Regency as introducing a best practice in one-stop government service in Indonesia. This positive feedback from the central government spurred local governments to begin implementing their own innovative policies in different fields, without fear of major obstacles.

Prior to 2005, Indonesia's local heads of government were appointed by local legislatures. However, since June 2005, governors, mayors, and regents have been directly elected. Many candidates have offered such populist policies as free schooling, free healthcare, and free business licenses, especially during their campaigns. For instance, in 2001, Awang Faroek—then serving as the Regent of East Kutai—implemented free tuition for elementary, junior, and secondary school students. This policy was successful, and subsequently imitated in such regencies as Kutai Kartanegara and Badung (Karim et al., [2013](#), p. 231).

At first, this policy was not perceived as an innovation, but viewed simply as a political maneuver for achieving electoral victory. That these policies are electorally beneficial is undeniable; many of the mayors and regents who replicated Untung's and Faroeek's policies were (re)elected. As such, many candidates and politicians have incorporated innovation into their electoral strategies.

Often, the spotlight has been cast on East Java, which has produced a cornucopia of innovations. As of 2018, East Java and its municipalities are responsible for approximately 165 innovations in the education sector alone (jatimnow.com, [2018](#)). Soekarwo, the Governor of East Java; Kang Nyoto, the Regent of Bojonegoro; Tri Rismaharini, the Mayor of Surabaya; Azwar Anaz, the Regent of Banyuwangi; Djarot Syaiful Hidayat, the Mayor of Blitar; Emil Dardak, the Regent of Trenggalek; and Sutiaji, the Mayor Malang have all received popular acclaim for their innovative programs. In fact, unlike elsewhere in Indonesia, almost all of East Java's municipalities are known for their inclusivity and their even dispersion of innovation.

Nevertheless, there has still remained a question of sustainability; innovative programs still depend on enabling environments such as local leadership, budgets, and human resources. Institutionalizing innovation is therefore a crucial part of ensuring its continuation after leadership change. This paper therefore tries to investigate the important factors that ensure innovations' survival. Using data from the Public Service Innovation Network [Jaringan Inovasi Pelayanan Publik] (JIPP) of East Java, provided by the Java Pos Institute of Autonomy [Jawa Pos Institute of Pro-Otonomi] (JPIP), the author analyzed twenty regions and categorized them based on their maintenance and/or replacement. Investigating the sustainability of innovation, the writer seeks to examine its contributing factors. Following this introduction, a brief review of the literature is provided to explore the concepts of servant leadership, leadership and innovation, and sustainable policy, all of which provide the basis of this study. Section three provides a short explanation of the data generation process. Section four will discuss the empirical findings of the study, and the final section will provide conclusions and recommendations.



2 Literature Review

1. Servant Leadership

In a democratic system, leaders are representatives of the people, individuals who receive a mandate to rule in the name of the people for a determinate period of time. In Indonesia's governmental system, governors are the executives who lead the provincial government, mayors are the executives who lead the city government, and regents are the executives who lead the regency government. These public officials are expected to serve the people in their jurisdiction. Although scholarship on leadership is widespread, this paper will focus on leaders' innovations in public service policy. It will focus on a specific leadership style: servant leadership, first conceptualized by Robert Greenleaf in [1970](#).

In this style, successful leadership consists of two main roles: servant and leader. It is built upon a philosophy of naturalness, consciousness, and a desire to serve the greater good (Rachmawati & Lantu, [2014](#)). "Servant leadership is based on the premise that, to bring out the best in their followers, leaders rely on one-on-one communication to understand the abilities, needs, desires, goals, and potential of those individuals" (Liden et al., [2008](#)).

All leadership styles have their own characteristics, and servant leaders require service, humility, empathy, and agape love (Chiniara & Bentein, [2018](#)). Servant leaders should demonstrate motivation, empowerment, and public development (Mittal & Dorfman, [2012](#)).

What distinguishes servant leaders from other leaders, such as transformational leaders, is the fact that servant leaders seek to satisfy their patrons, while transformational leaders desire perceived leadership effectiveness (van Dierendonck et al., [2014](#)). Servant leaders are thus better equipped for boosting team cohesion and influencing organizational citizenship behavior (Chiniara & Bentein, [2018](#)), which has a trickle-down effect on employees' work performance (Stollberger et al., [2019](#)).

Leaders who are dedicated to service are those leaders who take care of their followers (Andre & Lantu, [2015](#)). According to Bauer et al. ([2019](#)), servant leaders can encourage passive employees to become more proactive, while at the same time enhancing positive exchanges between leaders and team members (Zou et al., [2015](#)).

A review of the literature shows that 285 articles on servant leaders have been published since 1998, with 16 techniques being used to measure the quality of servant leaders (Eva et al., [2019](#)). This theme is a popular one, highlighting the public interest. Nonetheless, there remains the question of the relationship

between servant leader and innovation. According to Erkutlu & Chafra ([2015](#)), servant leadership is positively and significantly correlated with innovative behavior. Furthermore, “servant leadership promotes individual relational identification and collective proto-typicality with the leader which, in turn, fosters employee creativity and team innovation” (Yoshida et al., [2014](#)).

2. Leadership and Innovation

Innovation scholars generally agree that leadership is a key determinant for successful innovation (Lukoschek et al., [2018](#)), playing a critical role in teams’ success and organizational creativity (Hughes et al., [2018](#)). Moreover, it is suggested that leadership styles can influence the atmosphere of innovation (Ding et al., [2019](#); Elrehail, [2018](#); Xie et al., [2018](#)) and strengthen team innovations (Ye et al., [2016](#)). Leadership and innovation are thus intricately correlated, creating ambidextrous leadership (Rosing et al., [2011](#)).

Merriam-Webster ([n.d.](#)) defines innovation as a new idea; method or device; a novelty. Meanwhile, Kuczmarski ([1995](#)) understands innovation as “a mindset, a pervasive attitude or a way of thinking, focusing beyond the present into the future.” Specifically, there are several factors that should be mastered by an innovative leader (Kremer et al., [2019](#)):

- (1) developing the right group norms,
- (2) designing teams strategically,
- (3) managing interactions with those outside the team,
- (4) showing support as a leader,
- (5) displaying organizational support, and
- (6) using performance management effectively.

Certain types of personalities and leadership profile facilitate sustainable transition. Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, creativity, and unconventionality are considered characters that can promote innovation (Kemperman & Timmermans, [2014](#)). The twenty policies analyzed in this paper differ from regular policies, and thus can be considered innovative. Some have been incremental, while a few have been radical breakthroughs.



3. Sustainable Policy

In public sector, innovation can be hindered or facilitated by government regulations and policies. Research by Figueira et al. (2018) and Shawe et al. (2019) on OECD countries demonstrates that the public sector, unlike the private sector, tends to be less accepting of integrated sustainable policies and practices. Successful policies involve many actors, although the role of intermediary actors tends to be underrated. “The role of government policy in endorsing and sustaining innovation can be traced through the intermediary factors, namely, the firm’s willingness, capacity, and opportunity to change” (Patanakul & Pinto, 2014). Intermediary actors’ significant role in sustaining policy, even though leadership transition, has been investigated thoughtfully by Mignon and Kanda (2018), who find that intermediary actors—who may include public agencies, public offices, and public service unit force—may be deeply intertwined into the supply and demand side.

Furthermore, the continuity of policy cannot be guaranteed through the sustainability concept alone. Davidson et al. (2019) argue that policy resilience is also important for maintaining policy. Resilient policy must be incorporated into planning, thereby enabling governments to deal with transition and innovation. In relation to this, Fagerberg (2018) suggests that, in order to create a transformative innovation policy, five main steps should be included: setting direction, embracing opportunity, mobilizing, holistic policymaking, and improving governance.

3 Data Generation Process

This paper uses a descriptive qualitative process, analyzing existing data from the Java Pos Institute of Autonomy [Jawa Pos Institute of Pro-Otonomi] (JPIP), which in 2002 began to implement a reward for regions deemed to have successfully decentralized (JPIP, 2014). At first, presentations were based on trial and error; nonetheless, it has remained ongoing. Moreover, the Java Pos Institute of Autonomy released a report in 2014 examining continuity and discontinuity in awardees’ innovations.

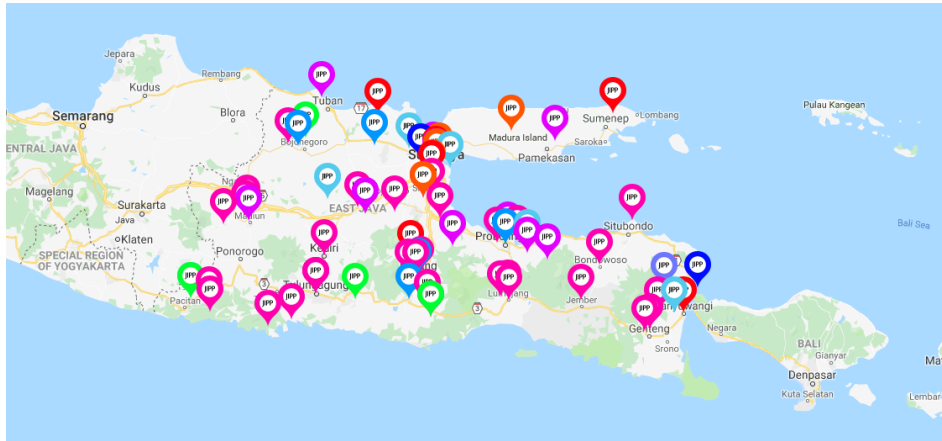
This paper conducted its data collection and analysis through two main stages. First, innovation policies initiated by local leaders were selected, based on data from the JPIP’s 2014 report and the Public Service Innovation Network [Jaringan Inovasi Pelayanan Publik] (JIPP) of East Java. Second, to track the continuity of innovation, this paper uses local online newspapers and official government websites.

Twenty innovative programs from twenty of East Java's thirty-eight cities and regencies were selected. Afterwards, the writer conducted a robust check of online media, official websites, and other resources to ascertain whether innovations have been continued. As the awards were issued in 2004 and 2013, this paper tries to investigate their continuation between 2013 and 2019. After the robustness check, innovations were categorized into three distinct groups: fading, steady, and blooming. Programs considered "fading" were those that had been stopped or discontinued by subsequent leaders. "Steady" programs were those that had continued, but without any further developments. "Blooming" programs, finally, were those that had been subsequently improved and expanded.

4 Results

Indonesia passed its decentralization policy when the central government passed Law No. 22 of [1999](#) on Local Government, with active implementation beginning in 2001. However, this did not dramatically change the administrative regimes; Indonesia has retained a highly hierarchal regulatory structure, wherein local governments remain highly limited; this is particularly true in budgetary matters, which constrains their ability to create creative and innovative programs. Nonetheless, some regions have been able to accelerate their efforts to solve local problems. Innovation has commonly been used as a shortcut for resolving disputes. Coupled with the new political system, which allows direct local elections, local executive candidates have offered innovative solutions to attract attention and eventually foster innovation.

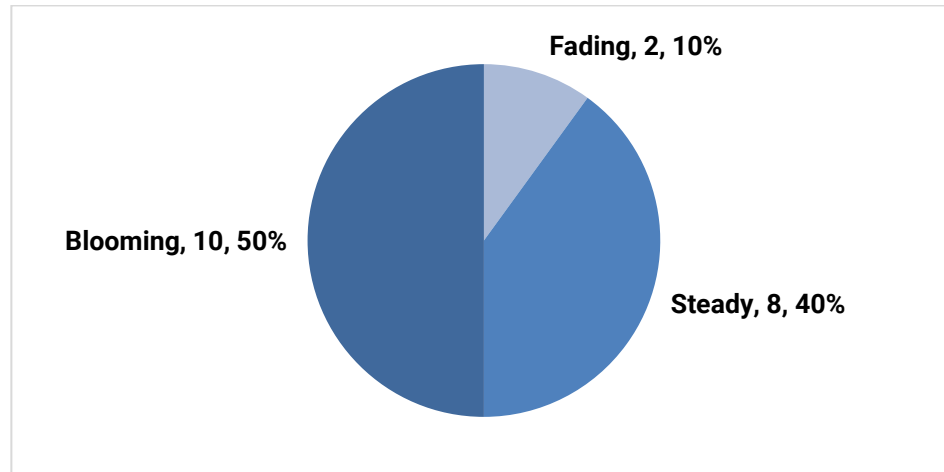
The Province of East Java, in particular, has seen rapid growth in its innovation. Every regency and city in East Java has its own programs. Figure 1 shows the prevalence of innovation in East Java.

Figure 1: Map of Innovation in East Java

Note. From JIPP Jawa Timur (2019).

According to the Java Pos Institute of Autonomy (JPIP), six actors have initiated innovation in East Java: central government, province, donor agencies, non-bureaucrats, local work units/offices, and mayors/regents. This paper focuses its investigation on innovations that were initiated by local leaders, a decision made with several considerations. First, leadership transition is observable through local elections, and thus it is easy to ascertain whether leaders—the social engineers who produce innovation—have been re-elected. Second, leaders are considered elite; leaders are at the peak of the leadership pyramid, owing to their decision-making abilities. Lastly, constituents have high expectations and demands that elected leaders will realize campaign promises. None of these arguments apply to the other five actors.

Figure 2 shows the continuity of the twenty innovation programs. It finds a similar distribution of programs that are still developing (blooming) and that are underdeveloped (steady and fading). More specifically, two programs are classified as fading; eight programs are categorized as steady; and ten programs are blooming. This current study investigates the factors that support and hinder the continuation and discontinuation in innovation programs. Complete details on leaders and programs can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Figure 1. Innovation program continuity

Note. Created by the Author.

1. Fading Innovation Programs

Fading occurs when programs are implemented, but fail to achieve significant progress within two years, and thus are unfortunately terminated by subsequent leaders. Two programs are included in this group: a shuttle program for expectant mothers in Magetan Regency and a local health care program in Sidoarjo Regency. One of the main factors that influence programs is leadership transition. New leaders' priorities may differ from those of previous leaders, and different party alliances can further hinder program maintenance. Another factor is the lack of enthusiasm from intermediary actors (i.e. local officials), as a result of which programs are not internalized by operators. Further limiting program sustainability is a lack of community response; where community members' responses are lukewarm, leaders have little incentive to continue programs. Higher-level regulations, such as the Ministry of Health's requirement that all health insurance for the underprivileged be covered by a third party, may also prevent local governments from maintaining similar policies.



2. Steady Innovation Programs

Steady programs are those that, while maintained by successors, have experienced no significant progress. The main difference between fading and steady programs, thus, lies in the final decision to stop or continue the program. This research identified eight innovation programs in this category: budget and revenue pocketbooks (Pamekasan Regency), microfinance (Sampang Regency), education (Bondowoso Regency), nutritional rehabilitation (Situbondo Regency), hospital on tablet (Jember Regency), conflict management (Pasuruan Regency), power redistribution (Madiun Regency), and government resource management (Surabaya City).

Programs may be hampered or bolstered for a variety of reasons. First, there may be no significant increase in program budget. Second, the leaders of intermediary institutions, such as local work units/offices, may change. Third, innovative content may remain stagnant, relying predominantly on conventional media (email, telephone, face-to-face contact) for channeling complaints, thereby limiting their ability to express their dissatisfaction. Fourth, leaders may not maintain the same level of enthusiasm. Fifth, programs may be imperfect and require significant improvement. Sixth, successors may have different leadership styles, thereby affecting program implementation. Finally, programs may not be reinforced by higher-level regulations such as bylaws or regional regulations; many programs are only supported by mayoral/regent decrees, which are not binding and easily changed by successors.

Leadership transitions significantly affect policy sustainability. Successors from the same party, or who have previously served as deputy mayor/regent, are more likely to continue their programs. Similarly, where citizens have positively responded to programs, they are more likely to be maintained; persons who perceive themselves as benefiting from the program can increase public awareness of it, and thus pressure the government to maintain the program. Support from intermediary actors also affects program stability, as can media coverage; positive coverage can support program maintenance.

3. Blooming Innovation Programs

Blooming programs are those that have been well maintained, and even improved their service quality, management, budget, sophistication, and coverage. Good innovation can provide real solutions to public problems. Ten programs are identified as blooming: product packaging education for farmers (Sumenep Regency), immediate birth certificates (Banyuwangi Regency), district health services (Lumajang Regency), landfill education tourism (Malang Regency), Hallo Bupati (Blitar Regency), information systems for bottom-up planning (Probolinggo Regency), heart attack emergency services (Tulungagung Regency), district health services (Trenggalek Regency), poverty alleviation (Pacitan Regency), and Friday dialogue with the regent (Bojonegoro Regency).

For programs in this category, the key to success is committed leadership. As programs have been initiated by the mayor/regent, this executive must dedicate him/herself towards maintaining the program and buttressing its legal standing. When transitions in leadership occur, subsequent leaders' commitment will impact programs' continued existence. Leaders with a sense of public service, who attempt to be servant leaders, are not restricted by their political orientation, but will dedicate themselves to public service.

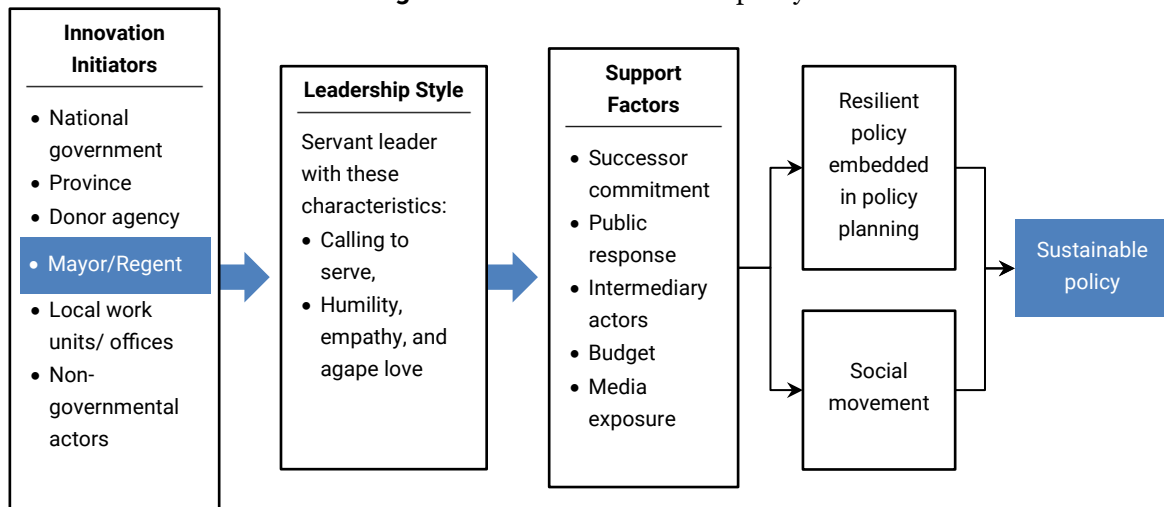
A second key factor is strong public response. As community members benefit from programs, they support the program's maintenance even under new leadership. Also important is the support of intermediary actors; mayors and regents must avoid extreme changes in order to avoid discouraging employees and ensuring the stability of bureaucracy. After stability is created, leaders must ensure that intermediary actors can manage programs and provide solid standard operating procedure. In such cases, procedures can offer powerful tools for sustaining policy.

The third factor is budget; prioritized programs have greater financial support, which enables them to be improved with better technology, better management, and better infrastructure. Fourth is positive exposure from outsiders, including the media and award-granting bodies. Such achievements can encourage leaders to act further, to seek free promotion as a means of enhancing their political careers; they can also encourage political support from the legislature.

After comparing the twenty innovative programs and policies, an outline of the elements that create sustainable policies can be clearly seen. As seen in Figure 3, six actors may initiate innovation: central government, province, donor agencies, non-bureaucrats, bureaucrats, and local leaders (the focus of this paper). Such leaders must prepare certain tools for ensuring their policies' continued survival after transition, including successor commitment; public

belief in program benefits; and intermediary actor involvement (given that intermediary actors' position in the bureaucracy tends to be more stable than those of local leaders). Budgetary considerations also affect policy sustainability; with a higher budget, technology and service quality can be improved. The final factor is media exposure, as positive news coverage can promote program survival. All of these factors are expected to create resilient policy and increase public awareness.

Figure 3. Model of sustainable policy



Note. Created by the Author.

5 Conclusion

This study has certain limitations. Data was collected from secondary resources, and only twenty policies from twenty different municipalities were analyzed. By comparing these twenty innovations, it was found that certain leadership styles (such as servant leadership) can stimulate innovation by garnishing voter support or solving public problems. An interesting finding of this paper is the role of intermediary actors; where previous studies have identified intermediaries as main actors, this study found that such intermediaries can both support and oppose program sustainability. By cultivating a stable bureaucracy, leaders can improve the likelihood that programs will be sustained. To sum up, resilient policy must be incorporated in the planning process. Public awareness must also be cultivated by ensuring that voters recognize the advantages of the programs and the disadvantages of losing it. In short, a conducive environment must be created to ensure program growth and maintenance.

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