

# A Contextualized Digital Government Model for Decentralized Governance: Evidence from Local Digital Transformation in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Why do some local governments achieve more effective digital transformation than others despite operating under the same national regulatory framework? Existing digital government scholarship, particularly Digital Era Governance (DEG), has advanced important insights into reintegration, holistic service delivery, and digitalization. However, it remains less explicit in explaining how national digital reform agendas are translated into effective local governance outcomes within decentralized systems. Addressing this gap, this article develops a Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) model to explain variation in local digital government effectiveness. Drawing on a qualitative case study of Banyuwangi Regency, Indonesia, the study analyzes policy documents, national digital government evaluation records, and 11 semi-structured interviews with central and local government actors using NVivo-assisted thematic analysis. The findings show that digital government effectiveness is not produced by regulatory compliance alone, but through the interaction of four contextualization mechanisms: policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. Banyuwangi's effectiveness lies in its ability to translate national digital mandates into locally meaningful development priorities, institutionalize cross-sectoral coordination, sustain fiscal, technological, and human resource commitments, and strengthen the perceived social legitimacy of digital reform. The article contributes to digital government studies by extending DEG through a contextualized perspective that explains how national reform frameworks are locally interpreted, organizationally coordinated, materially sustained, and socially legitimized in decentralized governance systems.

**Keywords:** Contextualized Digital Government; Decentralized Governance; Local Digital Transformation; Indonesia

## Introduction

Digital government is increasingly understood not as the digitization of administrative procedures alone, but as a broader transformation of public governance involving service integration, data coordination, organizational redesign, and new forms of state–citizen interaction. This distinction is important because digital transformation in the public sector involves changes in organizational processes, institutional arrangements, service logic, and public value creation, rather than the mere adoption of digital tools (Mergel et al., 2019). Across many jurisdictions, this trajectory has moved beyond conventional e-government toward more platform-based, data-driven, citizen-centric, and increasingly AI-enabled forms of governance (Nicholls, 2019; Vogl et al., 2019; Rizk et al., 2024; Xu, 2024; Maulana et al., 2024). In this broader sense, digital government concerns the capacity of the public sector to deliver more integrated, responsive, transparent, and publicly valuable governance arrangements. From a public value perspective, ICT-enabled public sector reform should be assessed not only by efficiency gains, but also by its contribution to socially meaningful and collectively valued outcomes (Cordella & Bonina, 2012).

A central framework for understanding this transformation is Digital Era Governance (DEG). DEG emphasizes three broad tendencies in contemporary public sector reform: the reintegration of fragmented bureaucratic functions, more holistic and needs-oriented service delivery, and digitalization as a dominant organizing logic of public administration (Dunleavy, et al., 2006). The framework is important because it shifts attention away from

narrow technology adoption and toward wider institutional and organizational change involving coordination, information sharing, service redesign, and data-enabled governance (Nicholls, 2019; Vogl et al., 2019; Xu, 2024). DEG therefore provides a strong account of the direction of digital transformation in the public sector.

However, explaining the direction of digital transformation is not the same as explaining variation in its effectiveness. In decentralized governance systems, local governments may operate under similar national regulatory frameworks, evaluation standards, and digital architectures, but still produce uneven outcomes in service integration, organizational coordination, resource sustainability, and citizen acceptance (Kim & Kim, 2021, Luna-Reyes et al., 2020). This suggests that the analytical problem is not merely whether digital reform is adopted, but how national reform agendas are interpreted, adapted, and operationalized within specific local governance settings.

Yet DEG is less explicit in explaining why local governments operating under the same national digital reform framework often produce uneven implementation outcomes, especially in decentralized governance systems. This limitation matters because the central analytical problem is no longer whether digital reform is taking place, but why similar reform agendas generate different levels of effectiveness across local governments. In practice, these differences appear in service integration, organizational coordination, resource sustainability, and citizen acceptance, even where national standards, architectures, and evaluation systems are formally shared. Existing studies similarly show that digital expansion does not automatically translate into better public sector performance, efficiency, or service quality, and that local outcomes are often mediated by governance arrangements, institutional routines, organizational capabilities, and sociocultural conditions (Nicholls, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2021; Gil-Garcia et al., 2018; Xu & Dai, 2024; Maulana et al., 2024).

This problem becomes especially salient in decentralized settings, where local governments operate within a common regulatory architecture but differ in leadership arrangements, collaborative ecosystems, resource endowments, governance capacity, and development priorities (Luna-Reyes et al., 2020; Xu & Dai, 2024; Maulana et al., 2024; Pribadi et al., 2024). Existing scholarship has identified many relevant determinants of digital transformation, including IT governance, leadership, infrastructure, regulatory clarity, organizational readiness, collaboration, participation, and citizen trust (Luna-Reyes et al., 2020; Maulana et al., 2024; Rizk et al., 2024; Pribadi et al., 2024). Yet much of this literature still treats these elements as separate enabling conditions. What remains underdeveloped is a mechanism-based explanation of how these elements become connected in practice and why similar nationally driven reform agendas produce different levels of effectiveness across local governments operating under shared formal institutional conditions.

This article addresses that gap by arguing that digital government effectiveness in decentralized systems depends on the depth of contextualization. This argument resonates with the broader evolution of digital government scholarship, which increasingly recognizes that digital government develops through more complex, context-specific, and specialized forms rather than through a uniform technological trajectory (Janowski, 2015). Local governments should not be understood as passive implementers of nationally designed reform agendas. Rather, they act as interpretive and strategic actors that translate national digital mandates into locally meaningful priorities, organizational arrangements, resource commitments, and socially legitimate service practices. From this perspective, local context is not a passive background variable, but an active governance arena through which digital reform acquires its practical effectiveness. This argument is consistent with studies showing that reform outcomes depend on governance arrangements that fit local conditions, on the capacity to tailor digital strategies to local priorities, and on institutional and collaborative configurations that support implementation beyond formal compliance (Kim & Kim, 2021; Xu & Dai, 2024; Maulana et al., 2024).

Building on this argument, the article proposes Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) as an analytical framework for explaining how nationally driven digital reform becomes effective through local contextualization. CDG is not intended to replace DEG. Rather, it functions as a contextual extension that addresses a dimension underspecified in DEG: why similar digital reform agendas generate different levels of effectiveness across local governments operating within the same formal institutional framework. In this article, contextualization is examined through four interrelated dimensions: policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. Policy alignment refers to the translation of national digital agendas into local development priorities and institutional commitments. Organizational configuration concerns the leadership, coordination, and governance arrangements through which reform is operationalized. Resource mobilization captures the deployment of financial, technological, and human capacities needed to sustain implementation, while societal engagement refers to citizen support, trust, acceptance, and broader social legitimacy. These dimensions are treated not as isolated variables, but as mutually reinforcing domains through which contextualization shapes the effectiveness of local digital government.

What distinguishes CDG from existing approaches is that it moves beyond factor-based explanations of digital reform toward a mechanism-based account of how effectiveness is produced in decentralized governance.

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Existing approaches have identified important elements such as leadership, coordination, institutional support, infrastructure, capacity, and citizen trust, but they often stop at listing relevant determinants rather than explaining how these become causally connected in practice. CDG addresses this limitation by conceptualizing contextualization as an active governance process through which nationally mandated digital reform is translated, organized, resourced, and legitimized within local settings. In this formulation, digital government effectiveness does not arise from favorable conditions alone, nor from governance capacity in isolation, but from the dynamic interaction of policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. CDG therefore contributes not merely a classification of relevant dimensions, but a process-based explanation of how their interaction produces uneven reform effectiveness across local governments.

The article examines this argument through a qualitative case study of Banyuwangi Regency, Indonesia. Banyuwangi constitutes an analytically significant case because it has demonstrated relatively strong digital transformation performance within a decentralized governance context while also facing challenges commonly associated with local government reform, including geographic dispersion, administrative complexity, and uneven capacity conditions. The case is valuable not because it is statistically representative, but because it provides an empirically rich setting in which to trace how nationally driven digital reform is translated into local governance strategies and practices and how such contextualization affects implementation effectiveness.

Against this background, the article asks: how does contextualization shape the effectiveness of digital transformation in a decentralized governance system? In answering this question, the article makes two contributions. First, it argues that variation in local digital government effectiveness cannot be sufficiently explained by regulatory compliance, technology adoption, or technical capacity alone, but must be understood through the degree to which digital reform is locally translated, coordinated, and legitimized within specific governance settings. Second, it advances Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) as an analytical framework for explaining how the interaction between policy, organizational arrangements, resources, and social legitimacy shapes the effectiveness of local digital transformation. By doing so, the article extends digital government scholarship beyond a primary focus on standardization and adoption toward a more grounded understanding of context in decentralized governance systems.

### Conceptual Framework

This study proposes Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) as an analytical framework for explaining variation in digital government effectiveness under decentralized governance. While Digital Era Governance (DEG) explains the broader direction of public sector digital transformation through reintegration, holistic service delivery, and digitalization (Dunleavy, et al., 2006), it is less explicit in explaining why local governments operating under the same national policy architecture often produce uneven outcomes. Existing scholarship has identified important elements such as leadership, coordination, institutional support, infrastructure, organizational capacity, and citizen trust, but these are often treated as separate determinants rather than as part of a connected explanatory process (Pittaway & Montazemi, 2020; Luna-Reyes et al., 2020; Xu & Dai, 2024; Zhou et al., 2024; Pribadi et al., 2024). CDG addresses this limitation by shifting attention from factor-based explanation toward the process through which digital reform becomes effective in local governance practice. In this framework, contextualization is understood not as a passive background condition, but as an active governance process through which nationally driven digital reform is translated, adapted, coordinated, resourced, and legitimized within specific local settings. This interpretation is consistent with the view that digital government evolves from basic transformation toward contextualization, where the meaning and effectiveness of digital reform depend on the institutional, sectoral, and territorial conditions in which it is implemented (Janowski, 2015).

The four dimensions of CDG are derived from recurring debates in digital government and decentralized governance scholarship. Policy alignment reflects the problem of how nationally standardized reform agendas are translated into local priorities and institutional commitments. Organizational configuration draws on work emphasizing leadership, coordination, and the organizational arrangements required to overcome fragmentation in digital reform. Resource mobilization reflects long-standing implementation concerns with fiscal support, infrastructure, and administrative capacity as conditions for sustaining reform beyond formal adoption. Societal engagement draws from citizen-centric governance and digital service scholarship showing that reform effectiveness also depends on trust, acceptance, accessibility, and social legitimacy. Public value-oriented studies of e-government further show that digital reform is expected to generate not only improved services and administrative efficiency, but also trust, transparency, social value, and citizen well-being (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019). Taken together, these dimensions capture not isolated determinants, but the principal governance domains through which contextualization operates in decentralized local settings.

On this basis, CDG is structured around four interrelated dimensions: policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. These dimensions are treated not as independent

variables, but as mutually reinforcing governance domains whose interaction shapes reform effectiveness. Policy alignment provides strategic direction, organizational configuration translates that direction into workable institutional practice, resource mobilization supplies the capacities required for sustained implementation, and societal engagement strengthens legitimacy and public acceptance. CDG therefore contributes not merely a classification of relevant dimensions, but a process-based explanation of how their interaction produces uneven reform effectiveness across local governments. If DEG helps explain the broad direction of digital transformation, CDG extends that perspective by explaining why similar reform agendas generate different levels of effectiveness once filtered through local governance conditions.

CDG should also be distinguished from several adjacent approaches in digital government and public administration scholarship. First, while implementation capacity approaches explain digital reform in terms of the availability of organizational, financial, technical, and human resources (Hill & Hupe, 2022), CDG does not treat capacity as an isolated condition. Instead, it asks how capacity is mobilized and aligned with local policy priorities, coordination arrangements, and social legitimacy. Second, local digital governance approaches are useful for examining digital transformation at the subnational level, but they often describe the institutional setting, actor configuration, or service innovation practices of local governments (Lips, 2020). CDG goes further by specifying contextualization as the mechanism through which national reform agendas are translated into locally effective governance practices. Third, adaptive governance emphasizes flexibility, learning, and adjustment under changing conditions (Janssen & Van Der Voort, 2016). CDG incorporates adaptation, but places it within a broader explanatory process that also includes policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. Finally, institutional embeddedness highlights how reform becomes rooted in existing institutional norms, routines, and structures (Scott, 2014). CDG shares this concern, but extends it by explaining how embeddedness is produced through the interaction between national mandates and local processes of interpretation, coordination, resourcing, and legitimation. In this sense, CDG does not merely identify the local conditions that support digital reform; it explains how these conditions are assembled into a contextually effective model of digital government.

Figure 1 presents CDG as a process-based explanatory framework. The model begins with nationally driven digital reform and shows that its effectiveness at the local level depends on the extent to which reform is translated through four contextualization mechanisms. These mechanisms do not operate in isolation. Policy alignment provides direction, organizational configuration enables coordination, resource mobilization sustains implementation, and societal engagement generates perceived legitimacy. Their interaction produces variation in local digital government effectiveness.

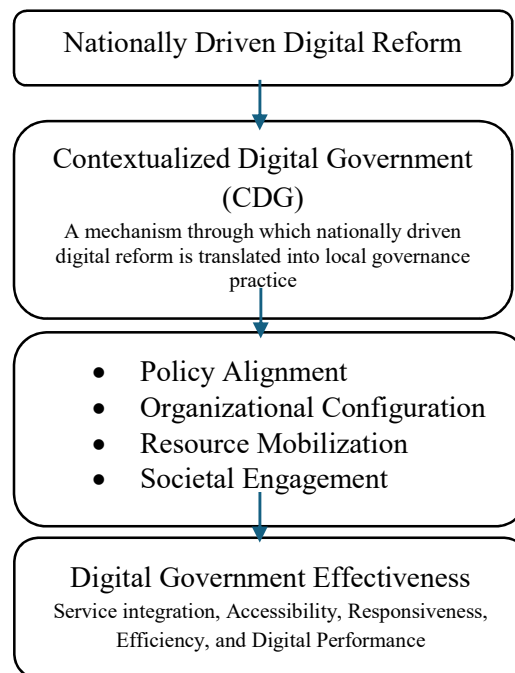


Figure 1. Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) as a Mechanism Explaining Uneven Local Digital Government Effectiveness

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As presented in Figure 1, CDG does not treat these four dimensions as separate determinants, but as interconnected governance domains through which nationally mandated digital reform is translated into local governance practice. In this sense, contextualization functions as the mechanism that connects national reform agendas with differing levels of effectiveness across local governments operating under shared formal institutional conditions.

Taken together, the CDG framework offers an analytical lens for examining how nationally driven digital reform acquires varying levels of effectiveness once translated into local governance settings. In this study, CDG is not applied as a fixed causal model in a variable-based sense, but as a framework for tracing the processes through which digital reform is aligned, organized, resourced, and legitimized in practice. The following section outlines the qualitative case study design, case selection, data collection, and analytical procedures used to investigate these processes in Banyuwangi Regency.

### Methods

#### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative single-case study design to examine how contextualization shapes the effectiveness of digital transformation in a decentralized governance system. A qualitative case study is appropriate for investigating complex governance processes in real institutional settings, particularly when the aim is not to test predefined causal variables but to explain how policy agendas are interpreted, adapted, and enacted in practice. A single-case design is especially suitable for analytical refinement because it allows in-depth tracing of how a proposed explanatory framework operates within a concrete institutional context under shared national policy conditions. In this article, the design is used to examine how nationally driven digital government reform is translated into local governance arrangements and how such translation contributes to implementation effectiveness. Indonesia provides a relevant setting for this inquiry because it combines a nationally standardized digital government framework with a decentralized administrative system in which subnational governments retain substantial discretion in implementation. This combination makes it possible to examine why local governments operating under the same formal regulatory architecture produce different digital transformation outcomes.

The study does not seek statistical generalization, but analytical refinement. The purpose of the single-case design is to trace the governance mechanisms through which a nationally standardized digital reform agenda becomes locally effective. This design is appropriate because the research question concerns process, interpretation, and institutional translation rather than the measurement of causal effects across a large number of cases.

#### Case Selection

Banyuwangi Regency, Indonesia, was selected as a strategic and positive deviant case. Empirically, Banyuwangi has demonstrated strong and sustained digital government performance within the same national regulatory framework that applies to other Indonesian local governments. In the 2024 national digital government evaluation, Banyuwangi achieved an overall index of 4.77, with the policy and service domains each reaching 5.00. At the same time, the regency faces challenges commonly associated with local government reform, including territorial dispersion, rural service delivery needs, administrative complexity, and uneven capacity conditions. Analytically, this combination makes Banyuwangi a useful case for examining how digital government effectiveness emerges not from formal compliance alone, but from the contextualization of national reform mandates into local governance priorities, organizational arrangements, resource commitments, and socially relevant service practices. The case is therefore not treated as statistically representative, but as an empirically rich setting for refining a mechanism-based explanation of local digital government effectiveness in decentralized governance.

#### Data Collection

The study draws on multiple qualitative data sources to capture the processes through which digital reform is contextualized in local governance. These sources consist of semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interview informants were selected purposively on the basis of their direct involvement in the formulation, implementation, coordination, or evaluation of digital government at either the national or local level. A total of 11 informants were interviewed between May and August 2025, consisting of five informants from central government institutions and six informants from Banyuwangi Regency. This sampling strategy was intended to capture perspectives from actors involved in digital government from policy, coordination, planning, and implementation positions.

Table 1. Interview Informants

<b>Informant Group</b>	<b>Institutional Affiliation</b>	<b>Number of Informants</b>	<b>Relevance to the Study</b>
<b>Central Government Actors</b>	Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs	5	National digital government policy, evaluation, coordination, and regulatory framework
<b>Local Government Actors</b>	Communication and Information Office, Regional Secretariat, Regional Development Planning Agency, and village government in Banyuwangi Regency	6	Local implementation, planning, coordination, service delivery, and village-level digital governance
<b>Total</b>		11	

The documentary sources were selected on the basis of their direct relevance to digital government implementation in Indonesia and Banyuwangi Regency. These materials included formal digital government evaluation results produced by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, as well as regional planning documents and other official policy and planning documents related to local digital transformation. Document selection was guided by two considerations: first, whether the documents provided evidence on formal policy commitments, evaluation outcomes, or implementation direction; and second, whether they helped trace the relationship between national digital mandates and local governance practice. The combination of interviews and documentary materials allowed the study to compare formal policy architecture with actor interpretations and implementation experience.

### Data Analysis

The analysis was guided by the Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) framework developed in this article. Rather than functioning as a rigid coding template, CDG served as an analytical lens for organizing and interpreting the empirical material. Four interrelated dimensions were used to structure the analysis: policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. Policy alignment refers to the extent to which national digital reform agendas were translated into local development priorities and policy commitments. Organizational configuration captures the leadership arrangements, coordination mechanisms, and institutional structures that supported implementation. Resource mobilization concerns the deployment of budgetary, infrastructural, and human capacities required to sustain digital transformation. Societal engagement refers to citizen support, acceptance, trust, and broader social legitimacy surrounding digital reform.

Coding was conducted in NVivo through a staged qualitative coding process. In the first stage, all interview transcripts and documentary materials were imported into NVivo to support systematic data management. In the second stage, deductive coding was applied using the four main CDG dimensions as initial analytical categories. In the third stage, inductive refinement was undertaken through repeated reading of the material in order to identify subthemes within each dimension. For example, coding within policy alignment included regulatory translation, local policy integration, and strategic prioritization; organizational configuration included leadership, coordination, organizational structure, and governance routines; resource mobilization included infrastructure, fiscal support, and human resource capacity; and societal engagement included trust, support, accessibility, and legitimacy. In the final stage, relationships across these themes were interpreted to explain how the interaction among the four dimensions shaped digital government effectiveness in the Banyuwangi case.

The NVivo-based percentages reported in the findings refer to relative thematic emphasis within the coded materials. They were derived from coded references across interview transcripts and documentary materials grouped into central- and local-level sources. These percentages are not intended to represent statistical effects, causal weights, or population-level distributions. Instead, they function as a qualitative aid for identifying patterns of emphasis across actor groups and documentary sources. Substantive interpretation was based on triangulation between coding patterns, interview narratives, and documentary evidence. To avoid over-quantification, the percentages are used only as supporting evidence, while the main analytical claims are grounded in process interpretation and empirical excerpts from the qualitative data.

All interview data were anonymized to protect informant confidentiality. Informants are referred to by institutional category rather than personal name, for example central government informant, local government informant, or village-level informant. This anonymization strategy was used to preserve the analytical relevance of actor position while minimizing the risk of individual identification.

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## Trustworthiness

To strengthen credibility, the study applied source triangulation by comparing evidence from interviews, policy documents, planning documents, and formal evaluation records. Analytical dependability was supported through an iterative coding process, repeated recoding, and the maintenance of an audit trail linking empirical materials to the four CDG dimensions. The coding process combined deductive categories derived from the conceptual framework with inductive refinement based on emerging empirical subthemes. Although coding was conducted by a single researcher, consistency was strengthened through repeated cross-checking between coded segments, interview narratives, and documentary evidence. Thematic saturation was assessed during data collection; after the ninth interview, no substantially new categories emerged, while the remaining interviews mainly confirmed and elaborated previously identified patterns. These procedures enhance the transparency, consistency, and interpretive credibility of the analysis.

## Results

This section presents the empirical findings on how Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) operated in the case of Banyuwangi Regency. Consistent with the analytical framework, the findings are organized around four interrelated dimensions: policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. The analysis draws on interviews, policy documents, and formal evaluation records. The NVivo coding percentages reported in this section are used to indicate relative thematic emphasis across central and local-level materials, while substantive interpretation is based on triangulation with interview narratives and documentary evidence. Overall, the findings show that Banyuwangi did not merely comply with nationally driven digital reform, but translated it into local governance practices that were more adaptive, operational, and socially resonant.

### 4.1 Policy Alignment: Translating National Digital Mandates into Local Development Priorities

The first dimension, policy alignment, concerns how nationally driven digital government reform was translated into local policy frameworks and development priorities. In Indonesia, local digital transformation takes place under a relatively strong national regulatory architecture, particularly through the digital government framework, digital architecture standards, evaluation indicators, and mandates related to interoperability, data governance, and information security. At this level, the central government provides the normative structure that shapes digital reform across subnational governments.

NVivo coding indicates that both central and local materials placed strong emphasis on the formal policy framework. At both levels, references to the policy framework accounted for 63% of coded material, while strategy accounted for approximately 36%. These patterns suggest that digital reform at both levels was strongly anchored in a shared formal policy architecture. However, similar thematic emphasis did not translate into identical institutional practice. Central-level accounts primarily stressed standard setting, compliance monitoring, and architectural design, whereas local accounts in Banyuwangi more often framed national policy as something to be interpreted and aligned with local priorities rather than merely followed procedurally.

Interview evidence supports this distinction. In Banyuwangi, digital reform was closely aligned with broader regional priorities, particularly public service improvement, village governance, and local development competitiveness. Rather than treating digitalization as a stand-alone technological agenda, the regency positioned it as an enabling instrument to support locally defined development goals. This alignment was reflected in the way national mandates were translated into local planning documents, workflow restructuring, clearer data ownership arrangements, and more integrated operating procedures. As one informant from the Banyuwangi Communication and Information Office explained, “Digitalization cannot stand alone; it must be embedded within Banyuwangi’s broader development concept.” This finding is consistent with evidence from national-level informants, which suggests that national regulations provide an overarching framework, but the effectiveness of digital government depends on regional capacity to translate these regulations into the vision of the regional head, cross-agency coordination, service business processes, and local priorities. As an informant from the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform stated, “The Ministry has provided templates that can be adopted by local governments; they only need to modify them according to their context.” Taken together, these findings indicate that digital government effectiveness is not produced by regulatory compliance alone, but by the ability of local governments to contextualize national digital reform mandates within their own institutional, administrative, and developmental settings.

This adaptive alignment was also reflected in Banyuwangi’s formal policy architecture. Beyond the umbrella local digital government regulation, the regency adopted the full set of mandatory internal digital government policies, including those related to one data governance, digital government architecture, digital roadmapping, application governance, service integration, information security, and IT audit. In performance terms, this institutionalization was reflected in Banyuwangi’s 2024 digital government scores, which reached 5.00 in the policy domain and 5.00 in the

service domain, contributing to an overall index of 4.77. These scores are analytically important not merely as performance indicators, but as evidence that local policy alignment had been institutionalized across both formal policy and service domains. In this sense, Banyuwangi's performance reflects the conversion of national digital government requirements into local policy architecture and service delivery priorities. A particularly clear expression of this alignment can be seen in the Smart Kampung initiative. Rather than adopting a generic model of digitalization, Banyuwangi developed a village-centered approach adapted to its demographic and territorial conditions. Taken together, the findings suggest that policy alignment in Banyuwangi involved not only compliance with national regulation, but the active translation of national digital reform into locally meaningful governance priorities.

#### **4.2 Organizational Configuration: Coordinating Digital Reform across Local Bureaucratic Boundaries**

The second dimension, organizational configuration, refers to how digital transformation was institutionalized through leadership, organizational structure, bureaucratic culture, and governance capability. The findings indicate that the sustainability of digital reform depended not only on formal structures or technical units, but also on the extent to which digitalization became integrated into broader organizational practice.

NVivo coding shows a notable difference in emphasis between central and local materials. At the central level, coded references were distributed across governance capability (50%), organizational structure (48%), organizational culture (45%), and digital leadership (43%). This pattern suggests that central-level understandings of digital reform were oriented toward formal institutional design and administrative capability. At the local level, however, coded prominence was higher across all indicators, with digital leadership (56%) emerging as the most prominent theme, followed by organizational culture (54%), organizational structure (51%), and governance capability (49%). This pattern suggests that Banyuwangi's digital transformation was experienced not only as a structural reform but also as an organizational project requiring leadership, internal ownership, and shared routines.

Interview evidence reinforces this interpretation. Local actors described digitalization as part of a long-term development agenda rather than a narrow technical obligation. This framing appears to have encouraged broader ownership across local agencies and helped position digital reform as a shared governance orientation rather than as a task confined to ICT units. Banyuwangi also established a local digital government Coordination Team led at the highest executive level, with the Regent as the person in charge and the Regional Secretary as coordinator, while key agencies such as planning, finance, inspectorate, communication and information, population administration, and the organizational bureau were involved as implementing members. As one local informant noted, "This policy cannot be carried out by only one agency," while a central-level informant emphasized that coordination is crucial because "each institution has its own systems and interests." These statements show that organizational contextualization in Banyuwangi involved not only formal structure, but also workable mechanisms of horizontal coordination.

The prominence of organizational culture also indicates that digital reform in Banyuwangi was becoming embedded in routine administrative practices. This was reflected in changing work habits, stronger expectations around data sharing, and more collaborative patterns of interagency coordination. An informant from the Banyuwangi Communication and Information Office emphasized that digital reform could not be attributed to a single agency: "This success is not merely because of this agency, but also because of the integration and solidarity of other regional agencies." Similarly, an informant from the Regional Secretariat highlighted how digital reform had been institutionalized through standardized administrative routines: "The procedure is fully implemented. What we write and use as a reference is what we carry out. We document it, and this allows the program to be sustained." These accounts suggest that organizational configuration in Banyuwangi was sustained through a combination of leadership, cultural internalization, and interagency coordination, rather than through formal structural design alone.

#### **4.3 Resource Mobilization: Converting Fiscal, Technological, and Human Capacity into Sustained Reform**

The third dimension, resource mobilization, concerns how digital reform was supported through the allocation and direction of financial, infrastructural, and human resources. In the empirical material, resource commitment emerged as a key indicator of whether digital transformation had moved beyond rhetorical support toward institutional consolidation.

NVivo coding shows a clear difference between central and local emphases. At the central level, coded material highlighted technology and infrastructure (45%) and budget support (41%), while human resource competency received less emphasis (31%). This suggests that central-level perspectives tended to focus on macro-level enablers of digital transformation, particularly infrastructure provision and fiscal design. In Banyuwangi, by contrast, human resource competency (68%) emerged as the most prominent theme, followed by budget allocation (58%) and technology and infrastructure (54%). This pattern indicates that local reform was experienced more directly as a challenge of implementation capacity rather than technological provision alone.

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Interview evidence supports this interpretation. A local informant stated that Banyuwangi's annual ICT spending typically ranged from approximately IDR 29 to 37 billion, indicating that digital reform was backed by relatively stable fiscal support rather than ad hoc project funding. The significance of this fiscal commitment lies in its continuity. Rather than relying on fragmented project-based funding, Banyuwangi's digital transformation was supported through recurring budgetary allocation and integration into local planning priorities. This indicates that resource mobilization functioned as a mechanism of institutional consolidation. Importantly, this support was integrated into formal planning documents, suggesting that digitalization was not treated as a fragmented sectoral initiative. On the infrastructure side, Banyuwangi's digital ecosystem extended beyond basic connectivity to include MAN/WAN development, hybrid data center arrangements, strengthened cybersecurity systems, expanded Wi-Fi access through Smart Kampung, and connectivity support for remote areas, including the use of Starlink in isolated locations. Taken together, these details suggest that resource mobilization in Banyuwangi involved not only material investment, but also the strategic adaptation of budget and infrastructure to local territorial realities.

The most distinctive feature of this dimension, however, was its emphasis on human capacity. The coding pattern, supported by interview evidence, suggests that Banyuwangi's digital reform had moved beyond infrastructure provision toward the consolidation of bureaucratic capability. Interview evidence indicates sustained efforts to strengthen administrative competence, including capacity-building programs and collaboration with relevant institutions to support adaptation to digital change. As an informant from the Banyuwangi Communication and Information Office explained, "There are always programs to improve human resource capacity. We collaborate with institutions such as Digital Talent, so that the personnel responsible for implementation can adapt more quickly to ongoing changes." This evidence shows that resource mobilization was not limited to procurement or technological investment, but involved the strategic alignment of budget, infrastructure, and bureaucratic capability with the broader digital reform agenda.

### **4.4 Societal Engagement: Reducing Administrative Distance and Building Perceived Social Legitimacy**

The fourth dimension, societal engagement, refers to the extent to which digital reform gained support, acceptance, and broader social legitimacy. The findings suggest that digital reform in Banyuwangi was perceived by local actors as socially relevant because it addressed concrete service access problems, especially those related to distance, territorial dispersion, and the administrative burden faced by residents in rural areas.

This local relevance was closely tied to Banyuwangi's territorial conditions. The regency covers a very large area, and travel from some villages to the administrative center can reach around 100 kilometers or take up to four hours. In such a setting, the practical value of digital reform was closely associated with reducing physical distance and administrative burden. This helps explain why local actors associated Smart Kampung not merely with technological modernization, but with more immediate and accessible service delivery. In practice, many services could be accessed or facilitated at the village level, reducing the need for citizens to travel to the regency center for routine administrative matters.

NVivo thematic analysis shows that accessibility, inclusiveness, and public trust were recurring themes associated with Smart Kampung. This emphasis is consistent with earlier e-government research showing that citizen satisfaction with digital government services is closely related to trust in government, particularly when online services are perceived as responsive and useful (Welch et al., 2005). Further support for this pattern appears in the NVivo crosstab results on public trust and public support. At the central level, coding references for public trust reached 47% and public support 42%. At the local level, these proportions increased to 52% and 57%, respectively. These patterns suggest that legitimacy was articulated more strongly in the local arena, where digital reform was experienced more directly by citizens. Informants consistently linked digital reform with reduced service distance, easier access, and improved transparency, particularly in a regency characterized by broad geographic dispersion and uneven population distribution.

To make this subsection more empirically vivid, evidence from village-level informants illustrates how digital reform was experienced in practical service terms. In Sukojadi Village, Smart Kampung was associated with faster and more responsive service delivery. As one village official explained, "Services became faster, with direct online responses. Over time, this eventually led to the emergence of the Smart Kampung application." A similar account was provided by a village official in Blimbingsari, who described how residents could access administrative services more easily and quickly: "They come directly to the main office in Blimbingsari, go to the service desk, sit and wait for five or ten minutes, and the document is completed. They can immediately use the letter." Taken together, these findings indicate that societal engagement was an important dimension of digital government effectiveness in Banyuwangi. Legitimacy emerged not from digitalization alone, but from the perceived fit between reform design and local socio-geographic conditions, particularly the ability of digital and village-based service arrangements to simplify access, reduce administrative burden, and bring public services closer to citizens. This finding supports the public

value perspective that digital reform becomes meaningful when it is connected to citizens’ practical needs, administrative accessibility, and socially valued outcomes rather than being treated merely as a technological modernization project (Cordella & Bonina, 2012).

Table 1 summarizes the NVivo coding distribution across the four dimensions of Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) and highlights the differing emphases between central and local materials. Read together with the interview and documentary evidence, these patterns suggest that digital reform in Banyuwangi was shaped not by greater exposure to national policy, but by deeper local translation across policy, organizational, resource, and societal domains. Across these dimensions, the key distinction between central and local levels lay not primarily in commitment to reform, but in the depth of contextualization through which nationally driven digital agendas were translated into local governance practices.

Table 2. NVivo-based Comparative Thematic Coding Across the Four Dimensions of Contextualized Digital Government (CDG)

Dimension	Central Government	Local Government (Banyuwangi)	Analytical Interpretation
<b>Policy Alignment</b>	Policy framework (63%); Strategy (36%)	Policy framework (63%); Strategy (36%)	Regulatory coherence forms the structural backbone at both levels, but Banyuwangi shows deeper adaptive translation into local development priorities.
<b>Organizational Configuration</b>	Governance capability (50%); Organizational structure (48%); Organizational culture (45%); Digital leadership (43%)	Digital leadership (56%); Organizational culture (54%); Organizational structure (51%); Governance capability (49%)	Banyuwangi demonstrates stronger internalization of reform through leadership and cultural alignment.
<b>Resource Mobilization</b>	Technology & infrastructure (45%); Budget support (41%); HR competency (31%)	HR competency (68%); Budget allocation (58%); Technology & infrastructure (54%)	Local implementation places greater emphasis on capacity consolidation, especially human resources.
<b>Societal Engagement</b>	Public trust (47%); Public support (42%)	Public trust (52%); Public support (57%)	Legitimacy is articulated more strongly at the local level, where reform is experienced directly by citizens.

Note: Percentages indicate relative thematic emphasis within the coded materials and should not be interpreted as statistical effect sizes or causal weights. They are used to support qualitative pattern recognition and are interpreted together with interview narratives and documentary evidence.

Table 2 summarizes the relative thematic emphasis in the coded material across the four dimensions of Contextualized Digital Government (CDG), comparing central- and local-level perspectives. Overall, the findings suggest that Banyuwangi’s digital transformation effectiveness was shaped less by formal commitment to reform than by the depth of local contextualization through which nationally driven digital agendas were translated into governance practice.

#### 4.5 Tensions and Limits of Contextualization in Banyuwangi

Despite its strong digital government performance, contextualization in Banyuwangi was not without tensions and limitations. The findings indicate that successful local digital transformation did not eliminate the unevenness commonly found in decentralized governance settings. Several challenges remained, particularly uneven digital literacy among citizens and village-level actors, varying administrative and technical capacity across villages, the need for sustained coordination across agencies, and the risk that digital integration may remain highly dependent on strong executive leadership. These tensions suggest that contextualization is not a linear or fully completed process, but an ongoing governance practice that requires continuous adjustment, coordination, and institutional maintenance.

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In this context, digital services such as Smart Kampung should not be understood merely as technological platforms, but as hybrid service arrangements that still depend on human mediation, local administrative capacity, and the ability of village officials to make digital services accessible to citizens.

These limitations also show that the effectiveness of digital government in Banyuwangi remains contingent on the continuous interaction among policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. While strong leadership and institutional commitment helped accelerate reform, long-term sustainability requires deeper institutionalization through stable coordination routines, budgetary support, human resource development, and shared ownership across agencies and village governments. Therefore, CDG should not be read as a success formula or a normative checklist for local digital transformation. Rather, it should be understood as an analytical framework for identifying the conditions under which contextualization becomes more or less complete, more or less sustainable, and more or less socially embedded within decentralized local governance.

### Discussion

The findings suggest that digital government effectiveness in decentralized governance is not adequately explained by regulatory compliance, technological provision, or organizational capacity in isolation. Rather, the Banyuwangi case shows that effectiveness depends on how nationally driven digital reform is contextualized within local governance practice through the interaction of policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. This shifts the analytical focus from whether reform is formally adopted to how reform is translated into locally meaningful governance practice. In this sense, the article argues that digital government effectiveness in decentralized systems is not simply a function of compliance or capacity, but of the depth of local contextualization through which national reform agendas acquire practical effectiveness. This interpretation extends recent debates in digital government that question the assumption that formal digital expansion automatically produces better governance outcomes.

### 5.1 Beyond Compliance and Capacity: Rethinking Digital Government Effectiveness in Decentralized Governance

A first implication of the findings is that digital government effectiveness should be understood as something broader than policy compliance or administrative capacity. Existing studies have shown the importance of regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, leadership, and organizational readiness for digital transformation (Luna-Reyes et al., 2020; Pribadi et al., 2024). Yet these explanations often remain incomplete when local governments operate under the same national policy architecture but still generate uneven outcomes. The findings in this article suggest that neither formal policy alignment nor the presence of digital capacity alone is sufficient to explain such variation. What matters more is whether these elements become connected and mutually reinforcing within local governance practice.

This argument is important because it reframes the explanation of digital government effectiveness. Rather than asking only whether local governments possess the right institutional or technical conditions, the article shows that effectiveness depends on whether nationally driven reform is translated into local priorities, organizational routines, resource commitments, and socially legitimate service arrangements. This also reinforces the need to reconnect digital government research with core public management questions, including coordination, organizational change, administrative capacity, and governance performance (Gil-Garcia et al., 2018). This moves the discussion beyond a factor-based view of implementation toward a more relational understanding in which effectiveness is produced through the configuration of multiple governance domains. In that sense, the article contributes to digital government scholarship by showing that uneven local outcomes are best understood not as simple differences in adoption levels, but as differences in how reform is contextualized and enacted within local governance systems, a point that resonates with comparative work on local digital governance and decentralized implementation (Kim & Kim, 2021; Xu & Dai, 2024; Maulana et al., 2024).

### 5.2 Repositioning DEG: From a Directional Framework to a Contextual Extension

A second implication concerns the theoretical position of Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) in relation to Digital Era Governance (DEG). DEG remains valuable because it explains the broad direction of public sector digital transformation through reintegration, holistic service delivery, and digitalization (Vogl et al., 2019; Xu, 2024). However, its analytical strength lies primarily in explaining the trajectory of reform rather than the variation in effectiveness that emerges when similar reform agendas are implemented across decentralized local governments. This is where CDG adds explanatory value.

The contribution of CDG is therefore not to replace DEG, but to function as a contextual extension of it. If DEG explains the systemic direction of digital transformation, CDG helps explain why that direction acquires uneven levels of effectiveness once filtered through local governance conditions. More specifically, CDG proposes that the

practical effectiveness of digital reform depends on how national mandates are translated into local governance arrangements through four interdependent dimensions: policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement. In this sense, CDG is best understood as a middle-range explanatory framework for analyzing subnational digital transformation in decentralized states. Its purpose is not to produce a universal law of digital government, but to offer an analytically portable explanation of how nationally driven reform becomes more or less effective across different local governance settings. This positioning builds on DEG while responding to calls for more context-sensitive explanations of digital reform under decentralized conditions (Vogl et al., 2019; Xu, 2024; Xu & Dai, 2024).

### **5.3 Contextualization as the Mechanism Linking National Reform to Local Effectiveness**

The central theoretical argument of this article is that contextualization functions as the mechanism through which nationally driven digital reform becomes effective in local governance practice. This point moves the discussion beyond the idea that local context is merely a background condition shaping implementation. Instead, local context should be understood as an active arena in which reform is interpreted, reconfigured, resourced, and legitimized. The significance of this argument is that it identifies contextualization in local governance practice as the missing link between national digital reform design and uneven local outcomes.

Seen from this perspective, the four dimensions of CDG are not simply categories for describing implementation. They are the principal domains through which contextualization operates. Policy alignment translates reform into local developmental priorities and institutional commitments. Organizational configuration translates reform into workable leadership arrangement, coordination routines, and governance structures. Resource mobilization sustains reform materially through sustained fiscal, infrastructural, and human support. Societal engagement legitimizes reform socially by generating trust, acceptance, and perceived usefulness. The trust dimension is particularly important because citizen experiences with e-government services can shape broader perceptions of government responsiveness and credibility (Welch et al., 2005). What the Banyuwangi case shows, therefore, is not merely that these dimensions matter, but that their interaction is what enables digital reform to move beyond formal adoption and become operationally effective. This interpretation is consistent with wider scholarship suggesting that digital reform outcomes are mediated by coordination, leadership, institutional support, and legitimacy rather than by technology adoption alone (Luna-Reyes et al., 2020; Maulana et al., 2024; Rizk et al., 2024).

### **5.4 What CDG Changes in the Academic Conversation**

From a broader academic perspective, CDG changes the conversation in at least two ways. First, it shifts attention from the common question of which factors matter toward the more explanatory question of how effectiveness is produced. This is an important move because much of the existing literature identifies leadership, infrastructure, coordination, trust, or governance capacity as relevant variables, but often leaves underexplained the process through which these elements become causally connected in local practice (Luna-Reyes et al., 2020; Pribadi et al., 2024; Rizk et al., 2024). CDG addresses that gap by treating digital government effectiveness as the outcome of an interactive governance process, not the sum of separate determinants.

Second, CDG reorients digital government analysis toward the problem of variation under shared institutional conditions. This is especially relevant in decentralized governance systems, where local governments face similar national standards but differ in how reform is interpreted and enacted. By focusing on contextualization as the mechanism linking national reform to local effectiveness, CDG offers a way to explain why some local governments move beyond procedural compliance while others remain limited to formal adoption. In this sense, the article contributes not only to Indonesian digital government studies, but also to wider debates on subnational digital transformation in decentralized states. The argument is therefore not that Banyuwangi is unique, but that the processes observed in Banyuwangi help make visible an explanatory mechanism that may also be relevant in other cases where local governments operate under shared national reform frameworks.

### **5.5 Analytical Transferability Beyond the Banyuwangi Case**

A likely concern is whether the framework proposed here is overly shaped by a strong-performing case. That concern is valid, particularly because Banyuwangi is often seen as a successful example of local digital transformation. However, the purpose of the case in this article is not to present Banyuwangi as a model to be copied mechanically, nor to claim that CDG is reducible to Banyuwangi's specific characteristics. Rather, Banyuwangi is treated as an analytically strategic case for theory refinement: a case that makes visible the processes through which digital reform is contextualized within local governance under decentralized conditions.

From this perspective, the analytical value of the case lies in its capacity to illuminate a mechanism, not in its claim to represent all local governments. The framework is therefore intended to have analytical

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transferability rather than statistical generalizability. CDG is not derived from Banyuwangi's uniqueness alone, but from the broader problem of uneven effectiveness across local governments operating under shared national institutional conditions. What Banyuwangi provides is an empirically rich setting in which the interaction among policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement can be observed clearly enough to refine a broader explanation. This strengthens the argument that CDG may be useful for analyzing variation in digital government effectiveness in other decentralized contexts, including cases with weaker performance, different sectoral priorities, or different forms of local capacity, in line with comparative insights on local governance variation under decentralization.

### 5.6 Practical Implications

The findings also carry practical implications for both local and central government actors. For local governments, the argument of this article suggests that digital reform should not be approached merely as a technological agenda or as a compliance exercise tied to national evaluation indicators. Reform is more likely to become effective when it is aligned with local development priorities, supported by workable coordination arrangements, backed by sustained resources, and experienced by citizens as relevant and useful. This implication is consistent with scholarship emphasizing that local digital transformation requires governance arrangements that fit territorial conditions rather than one-size-fits-all reform templates (Xu & Dai, 2024; Maulana et al., 2024). Seen from a public value perspective, the Banyuwangi case suggests that local digital government effectiveness depends on whether digital services are perceived as producing tangible value for citizens, including accessibility, service responsiveness, trust, and social benefit (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019).

For the central government, the findings reinforce the importance of national standardization, but also suggest that standardization should leave room for local translation. A common regulatory framework remains necessary for integration and accountability, yet substantive effectiveness depends on whether local governments are able to convert national reform agendas into local governance practice. In this respect, the practical lesson of CDG is that digital government reform requires a balance between macro-level consistency and local-level adaptability, an issue repeatedly highlighted in recent work on digital government under decentralized and multi-level governance arrangements.

### Conclusion

This article has argued that digital government effectiveness in decentralized governance cannot be explained solely by policy standardization, regulatory compliance, or technological availability. Based on a qualitative case study of Banyuwangi Regency, Indonesia, the study shows that effectiveness is shaped through contextualization: the translation of nationally driven digital reform into local governance arrangements that are aligned with development priorities, embedded in organizational coordination, supported by resource commitments, and connected to perceived social legitimacy.

The article proposes Contextualized Digital Government (CDG) as its main conceptual contribution. CDG extends Digital Era Governance by explaining why similar national digital reform agendas produce uneven local outcomes in decentralized settings. Its contribution lies not only in identifying relevant dimensions of reform, but in explaining how policy alignment, organizational configuration, resource mobilization, and societal engagement interact as mechanisms that produce local digital government effectiveness. By conceptualizing contextualization as the mechanism linking national reform design to local effectiveness, CDG offers a portable analytical lens for examining why digital government reforms succeed, stagnate, or remain superficial across decentralized governance systems.

The study has several limitations. It is based on a single high-performing case and relies primarily on government actors and documentary sources, with limited direct evidence from citizen users. These limitations do not diminish the analytical value of the case, but they define the boundary of the claims made in this article. Future research should examine CDG through comparative studies involving local governments with different levels of digital government performance, including weaker-performing cases where contextualization may be incomplete, fragmented, or contested. Such research would help assess the broader analytical transferability of CDG and deepen its contribution to digital government and decentralized governance scholarship.

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