

The Challenges of Public Innovation: Insights From Risk Governance in Batang Regency

Adywarman

Doctorate Alumni, Institute for Governance and Polic Analysis, University of Canberra
adi.adyawarman@canberra.edu.au

Abstract

Interest in public sector innovations has been growing among policy makers, practitioners, and scholars. Despite the complexity of modernisation and resource constraints, public leaders must create innovative policies to deliver better services and overcome societal challenges. This research is on public innovation which examined opportunities and challenges facing public innovation. The study was triggered by the mixed outcomes of the decentralisation policy in Indonesia. While some local governments have engaged in service, process and governance innovations, many continue to face difficulties in adopting and sustaining innovative programs. Through case studies of two governance innovations in Batang Regency (2012-2017), this research appraised the dilemma of risk governance in securing the credibility and sustainability of two innovative ideas, namely UPKP2 local ombudsman and Budget Festival. Results of the study highlighted evidence that considering the highly dynamic socio-political environment that heads of local governments face, managing risk governance is important in implementing public innovation in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Keywords: *dark side; governance innovation; perverse effects; public control.*

INTRODUCTION

Following the success achieved in the private sector, innovation has become a ‘buzzword’ favoured by policymakers and practitioners since 1980s (Borins, 2001). The complexity of modernisation and resource constraints require innovative policies that provide better services and overcome societal challenges. While public sector innovation is non-linear and occurs in dynamic circumstances, there is not much previous research challenges and unintended results that ensue (Brown & Louis, 2013; Meijer & Thaens, 2020).

The concept of innovation in the public sector emphasises the implementation of new ideas which generate meaningful change and positive impact. Moore et al. (1997, p.276) proposed a practical definition of innovation as “a new change that is large enough, general enough and durable enough to appreciably affect the operations or character of the organisation”. Osborne (1998) distinguished this discontinuous change into three types of innovation: 1) Expansionary innovation (new needs are being addressed through existing organisational skills or capacity); 2) Evolutionary innovation (existing needs are being addressed through new or improved organisational skills or capacity); and 3) Total innovation (both new and existing needs are being addressed through creating new organisational skills or capacity).

Findings in previous research on public innovation have mostly focused on service, internal process, and technology dimensions,

but have overlooked the governance dimension, which has the ability to transform a new social production system beyond the organisational boundary (Hartley, 2005). In contrast to other types of innovation, governance innovation is more ambiguous since it is usually not a physical product. Moore and Hartley (2008) identified five unique ways which differentiate governance innovation from other types of innovation, as follows:

- 1) Bursting the boundary of organisation and creating network-based production.
- 2) Tapping new pools of financing, material resources and human energy.
- 3) Exploiting the public capacity to redefine private rights and responsibilities.
- 4) Redistributing the right to define and judge the public value.
- 5) Evaluating the innovations in terms of justice, fairness, and community-building.

Practically, governance innovations may take the form of certain service deliveries with a better governance style (for example participatory health program) or new intermediate programs that deliver better value for other service deliveries and governmental functions (for instance good governance program). This research focused on the latter form of governance innovation.

In Indonesia, demand for local innovation comes from a multiplicity of directions. One of the main demands centres on the need to combat corruption, collusion, and nepotism (known as *KKN*), which has its origins in the new order government of President Soeharto (Setiyono & McLeod, 2002).

The change in government in the aftermath of Suharto's regime in 1998, spawned reforms, including bureaucratic reforms and decentralisation. Although several anti-corruption and good governance initiatives have been implemented, corruption is still persistent and has become rampant in local governments in the aftermath of the implementation of decentralisation policy (Patunru & Rahman, 2014).

Although some local governments still perform poorly on good governance, an increasing number of them have demonstrated progress in promoting innovative reforms in service delivery and governance (Leisher & Nachuk, 2006; Bunnell, Miller, Phelps & Taylor, 2013). Hanif and Pratikno (2012) found an increasing number of local innovations, which they classified into four groups of activities, that included, those that i) promoting good enabling economic environment that support economic development; ii) improving basic service delivery, including encouraging open and transparent governance; iii) initiating pro-poor local development and poverty alleviation; and iv) enhancing participatory planning and budgeting, social audit, and government accountability.

Local innovations are associated with high outcomes in terms of public value, in terms of new services, processes, and governance. For example, Jembrana (Bali Province) and Bantul (Yogyakarta Province) pioneered the provision of free public health and education services for low-income fami-

lies (Rosser, Wilson & Sulistiyanto, 2011). Meanwhile, Sragen (Central Java Province) established information technology based 'One-stop services' for citizen records and business permits. These 'e-government' initiatives have succeeded in achieving domestic and global recognition, which has led some local governments to replicate them with varying degrees of success.

Nonetheless, while stories of success are evident in many cases of public innovations, literature on cases of failure in local innovation in Indonesia is still limited. Some of the few include Hanintya and Manar (2020) who examined the failure of "i-Jus Melon" program (*Ijin usaha micro melalui online* or online licensing program for micro and small enterprises) in Semarang City. This program started in 2016, with the aim of monitoring service the development of community businesses. Ironically, many members of the public were never informed about the existence of the program, while those who knew its existence could not access the various electronic applications that included processing business support facilities such as unsecured loans, training, and marketing partnerships. The failure of the program is attributable to lack of technology, poor management and limited financial transparency (Hanintya & Manar, 2020).

There are concerns that some local government heads can abuse innovation projects by supporting and perpetuating initiatives that serve their vested interests (*Kompas News*, 7 April 2013). A case in point as elu-

cidated by Savirani (2017) relates to the criticism, which was levelled against the discretion of Governor Basuki Thahaja Purnawan in Jakarta in meting out penalties to private developers for exceeding building floor limits (KLB). Practically, the governor issued a rule that allowed the penalty for violating KLB to take the form of building public infrastructure such as overpasses and city parks. The rationale behind the criticism was based on the consideration that since the penalty took the form of compensation that was not in money terms, there were no records of such transactions and resultant projects on local government accounts, which made accountability through auditing is difficult (Savirani, 2017).

Thus, innovations in the public sector has been hailed as an opportunity for local governments to demonstrate their good understanding and progress in responding to aspirations and expectations of the local population by promoting and encouraging innovations that increase quantity and quality, access, responsibility and transparency of services. However, there are some cases for various reasons, where innovation initiatives have has not made significant contribution to enhancing public service delivery.

The research was guided by the following research questions, *inter alia*,

- i) What governance innovations were adopted and how were they implemented?
- ii) Which stakeholders played a part in the implementation of the governance innovations?

- iii) What obstacles did governance innovations face? and

- iv) Did local government leaders adopt appropriate risk management measures in implementing governance innovations? If so what were those risk mitigation measures?

RESEARCH METHODS

Case Study

This research was based on a case study approach. The study conducted an in-depth description and analysis of a complex social phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The case study was on Batang Regency (a rural municipality in Central Java Province). There selection of Batang regency as the location of the research was based on a number reasons:

First, Batang was once plagued by malfeasance and corruption in the past. The former Regent, Mr. Bambang Bintoro and two district legislature (DPRD) chairmen were sentenced to imprisonment in 2012 due to involvement in collective corruption case.

Secondly, on becoming the regent of Batang, Mr. Yoyok Riyo Sudibyo (2012–2017) implemented several governance innovations that have received acknowledgement and recognition from respected institutions. This is reflected in the reception of Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award in 2015 and the Public Service Innovator Award by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform in 2016.

Third, Regent Yoyok represented a politician who had no political party affiliation.

On the contrary he embraced working with local activists in his innovations and maintained close relations with national institutions and watchdog NGOs. As testament to his integrity, Mr Yoyok decided not to contest in the subsequent local government elections in 2017.

This background would shape the process of governance innovation in Batang Regency. Specifically, this research focused on risk governance in implementing innovations by highlighting two innovation cases that have different levels of risk, success, and continuity. The two innovations included :

1) *UPKP2 (Unit Peningkatan Kualitas Pelayanan Publik) local ombudsman initiative*: an attempt to introduce a system for investigating and addressing complaints of maladministration and shortage in the public service; and

2) *The Budget Festival*: an attempt to introduce more transparency into local budget management through three days exhibition.

Data collection methods

Research used primary and secondary data. Secondary data entailed published reports and documents from the government, NGOs and other credible sources including mass media. Meanwhile, primary data was collected by conducting in depth semi-structured interviews to encourage participants share their understanding and perspectives freely (Yin, 2003).

Three groups were selected as a focus for this study, including *local government heads*

and politicians as formal policymakers, *bureaucrats* as the policy implementers, and *individuals representing the local community*, such as local activists, private contractors, and journalists. To gain a broader perspective ('helicopter view'), this research interviewed academics, senior officials from two relevant national ministries, the provincial representative of national ombudsman (ORI), and nationally renowned activists who are involved in various capacities in governance innovation in Batang regency. Interviews were conducted between October 2017 and January 2018 in various cities, including Batang, Semarang and Jakarta. Collecting primary from local and national level and from various stakeholders was aimed at generating a diverse set of data on each issue for triangulation purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Empirical findings on public innovations

Innovation has become essential for the public sector to deliver better services and governance amid fiscal austerity, societal challenges, legitimacy deficit and wicked problems (Sørensen & Torfing, 2016). Since public innovations development does not occur in a vacuum, there is no guarantee that any innovative idea can be transformed easily into specific actions plans, adoption and deployment arrangements. Hartley (2013) emphasizes the level of uncertainty associated with innovations with respect to process and outcome. This is because internal and external aspects affect the adoption and de-

ployment of innovations by public organisations, including multiple veto points, inherent risks that influence power and politics of decision making relating to access and use of resources and innovation processes (Tsebelis, 1995; Stoker, 2010).

In an assessment of innovation landscape in public service in Australia, the Australian Government (2010) identified 23 barriers that affect five different stages of the innovation process, from the generation to diffusion. Six of the impediments affecting all innovation processes, including risk, short-term focus, failure of leadership, policies and procedures, efficiency and resources, and external opposition. Meanwhile, two obstacles (lack of championship and scrutiny) may hamper four out of five innovation processes. The assessment underscored the crucial salience of the selection process because of its crucial importance. This is due to the fact that barriers to the selection process simultaneously or separately affect the innovation generation and implementation processes. Emerging factors, which include measurement and impact, accountability, and identifying success factor, influence the extent to which innovations adoption and diffusion processes are sustained.

While a lot of previous research on public innovation has focused on the factors that support innovations and the impact of innovations on public service delivery, research on innovation failures has been limited (De Vries, Bekkers and Tummers, 2016). Among the few is Meijer and Thaens (2020),

that identified ten potential negative consequences (or perverse effects) of innovations, which include i) lack of stability (making stress, cultural shock and doubt for employees and users); ii) used for illegal practices (breaching prevailing procedures and regulations); iii) can avenue to perpetrate corruption (too much freedom for innovators and people are not speaking up when integrity at risk); iv) waste of public money (generating negative outcomes and failing to deliver on their entire promise); v) absence of democratic control (ignoring democratic representatives); vi) technocratic dominance in policy-making (advanced technology marginalises policy-makers with knowledge gaps), and vii) unforeseen security risks (leaking of personal information).

The underlying antecedents behind these perverse effects relate to the failure to strengthen the contribution of public value to society as well as limitations of public control. Based on the two dimensions, Meijer and Thaens (2020) identified the light (positive outcome) and dark (negative outcomes) sides of public innovation that are illustrated in Table 1. While the ultimate goal of public innovations is creating valuable and controlled innovations, there are always the possibility that unintended consequences can occur either due to little contribution of the innovation to public value or lack of control over the process and outcome or both.

Both public value and public control dimensions are key aspects of legitimacy for

public innovations. While process or input legitimacy relies on a system of public control, output legitimacy depends on the creation of public value (Scharpf, 1999). Thus, public innovation processes require agile decision making under conditions of high uncertainty and choice between different public values, with the processes carried out under limited external control. Thus, to ensure valuable and legitimate outcomes, it is imperative that complex and dynamic circumstances are given a lot of attention in assessing public innovations.

Within this complicated context in the public sector, one challenge that has received less attention is the risk management of innovation (Brown & Osborne, 2013). Although most public policy and services carried out public organisations are beneficial and successful, not a few fail to achieve their expected outcomes. This leads to “playing safe” behaviour (risk aversion) and “incremental pluralistic policy formation” that generates only a marginal improvement (Bhatta, 2003). Brown and Osborne (2013) classifies the risk of the new applications in the public sector into consequential risk (direct risk to the individual, such as the service users), organisational risk (the risk to

professional or organisational reputation), and behavioural risk (the risk to the stakeholders surrounding a service or wider community). Each of the risk loci require different responses or instruments within different policy and service environment.

Risk management theory in the public sector can be traced to two sources. First, the actuarial literature, which is concerned with minimizing the presence of risk for an organisation and its consequent cost (risk minimisation approach (Stulz, 1996)). This approach assumes that risk is detrimental to an organisation and can be managed through an internal process (closed system). Secondly, literature on public health and safety acknowledges the inevitability of risk but seeks to limit and manage its consequences for the organisation (risk analysis approach (Rasmussen, 1997)). The approach acknowledges the interrelationship between the organisation and its environment (natural system) as a process that can be managed in a linear and unidirectional manner. While these two approaches can provide the theoretical foundation for innovation in the public sector, they are insufficient to negotiate the potential risks of innovation against potential benefits among key stakeholders.

Table 1. Mapping the light and dark side of public innovation

	Low public control	High public control
Low public value	Wasteful and uncontrolled innovation	Wasteful and controlled innovation
High public value	Valuable and uncontrolled innovation	Valuable and controlled innovation

Source: Meijer and Thaens (2020, p.10).

Subsequently, Renn (2008) adopts an unequivocally “open system” approach, which focuses on governance in pluralist environments rather than its management within an individual organisation. This approach assumes that risk is socially constructed by its participants who have the potential for trade off between risk and benefit, with some of the benefits contested and conflicting between one and other. In that regard, Renn cited in Brown and Osborne (2013, p.197-198), proposes three approaches, including :

- 1)Technocratic risk management that relies on expert-decision making to minimise the risk of any action (similar to the risk minimisation approach);
- 2)Decisionist risk management ,which combines scientific input with political decision-making, thereby opening up the process to a potential negotiation of the benefits and consequences of identified risks (equivalent to the risk analysis approach). However, according to Renn (2008), this approach fails to open the debate about the risk to all key stakeholders since politicians can substitute their own perceptions of risk for those stakeholders.

3)Transparent risk governance that shifts away from expert-based technocratic solutions and politicians-based decisionistic solutions to a more inclusive and transparent approach. This approach views the public sector as an open system and acknowledges the necessity of an inclusive approach to all stakeholders in order to generate a more sophisticated analysis and framework for dealing with the risk of public innovation.

Stimulating these three modes of risk governance with three grades of innovation (evolutionary, expansionary, and total innovation), Brown and Osborne (2013) proposed a holistic framework, as presented in Table 2.

Technocratic risk management provides a framework for evolutionary innovation, while decisionistic risk management can accommodate evolutionary and expansionary innovations (Brown & Osborne, 2013). On the other hand, transparent risk governance provides the most comprehensive framework of all innovation risk management approaches, including the essential framework for total innovation (Flemig, Osborne & Kinder, 2016). Transparent risk negotiations may respond to the new information-rich but fragmented world of the modern public sec-

Table 2. A Holistic Framework for Risk Governance in Public Sector Innovation

Type of innovation	Mode of risk governance		
	Risk minimisation (technocratic)	Risk analysis (decisionistic)	Risk negotiation (transparent)
Evolutionary	X	X	X
Expansionary		X	X
Total			X

Source: Brown & Osborne (2013)

tor and enable their contested means, benefits, and risks to be negotiated across multiple stakeholders.

Thus, risk governance is a crucial strategy for public innovators in adopting and diffusing local innovations in dynamic socio-political environments, including decentralized local governments in Indonesia.

Governance changes in Batang Regency

In contrast to his predecessor, Regent Yoyok Riyo Sudibyo (2012-2017) implemented governance reforms, which were grounded in their election slogan 'Clean bureaucracy, Advanced economy'. The tagline was an implicit criticism of bad governance, which had plagued Batang regency government during 10 years under the previous regent's leadership (Mahsun, 2017). The focus of the new leadership included efforts to increase access, quality, and transparency of public services in Batang regency and strengthening new forms of collaboration with non-state actors within and beyond their jurisdiction.

In general, Regent Yoyok promoted a series of bureaucratic reform that were in line with central government guidelines and regulations (for instance Presidential Decree No. 81/2010). The guidelines concerned such issues as conducting merit based recruitment and selection of employees in order to employ competent and integrated officials; and introduction of new practices that were aimed at strengthening good governance and preventing corruption. Regent

Yoyok emphasized action rather than rhetoric which perspective in decision making he considered vital for convincing the bureaucracy and the public (Arif & Indriastuti, 2017). One initial of the regent's emphasis on action was his decision to issue an anti-gratification letter that instructed local government bureaucrats and private contractors to ignore any requests made in his name or on behalf of his family and election supporters. In addition, the regent made it imperative for local bureaucrats and the winners of local government public procurement to sign the integrity pact that was intended to prevent corrupt activities.

Nonetheless, implementing bureaucracy reforms can rarely achieve intended objective simply because they are based on good intentions. This is because any reforms that are made are likely to face resistance from stakeholders who have benefited from status quo. Thus, considering potential resistance and tension that bureaucracy reforms trigger and the impact on not only the reform process but also operations of the organization in delivering services, reform efforts are bound to be delayed even fail. Good meaning reforms may end up being perceived as inappropriate, reckless, and opportunistic if instead of contributing to improvement in public services, they create gridlock that halts and falters service delivery. To avert that, Regent Yoyok who had had no previous experience in the bureaucracy, tried to learn from various sources on the best ways to lead and manage a local government. As a

younger regent (40 years-old in 2012), he made himself flexible, and approachable and easily accessible which enabled him to develop good relationships with civil society advocates. Two prominent local activists (AS. Burhan from Lakpesdam NU/Laskar Batang and Handoko Wibowo from Omah Tani) played an important role in supporting his candidature as a firebrand of anti-corruption and introduced him to national anti-corruption NGOs, such as Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) and Transparency International Indonesia (TII).

To that end, the adoption of governance innovations in Batang regency involved various approaches that were beyond emphasis on reforming the bureaucracy. This is corroborated by excerpt of an interview with the Batang regent and a local activist, who agreed that :

I was impatient with the situation in the local bureaucracy and society. Strangely enough, I was a soldier but many of my friends are from NGO backgrounds who are sincere, had willingness to help without any pecuniary interests. Based on my interaction with such sources, I got some ideas such as UPKP2 local ombudsman and Budget Festival (Regent YRS, 12 October 2017).

Regent Yoyok gave space to civil society to meet the bureaucrats, which enabled us to have influence on some policies. We focused on public service and education matters. However, to avoid the conflict of interests, we were not involved in administrative matters, such as the official placements and

procurement of goods. (ASB, 4 October 2017).

Practically, the regent would communicate his ideas to local bureaucrats to get administrative support (for instance local government personnel, budgeting, and material offices) and, more importantly, ensured that actions were in compliance with relevant prevailing regulations. Doubtless, limited resources and lack of clarity of some regulations were some of the critical obstacles, as is the risk-averse nature of the bureaucracy towards new ideas that did not have clear-cut precedents in other jurisdictions, hence lacked supporting regulatory framework. One senior local bureaucrat explained how the local bureaucracy dealt with some of the innovative ideas that the regent proposed to the bureaucracy:

The new ideas usually came from Regent Yoyok. Then, he communicated those ideas to the regional government secretary and heads of department. We had to work out solutions to execute them without violating the prevailing rules. (NA, 5 October 2017)

However, while Regent Yoyok had affable and pleasant amicable conversations with NGO activists and younger staffs, he faced communication problems with the local legislature (DPRD) who were his working partner in the local government. The regent and his allies started with the assumption that the DPRD members were products of corrupt political recruitment (Interview with YRS on 12 October 2017 and ASB on 4 October 2017). Thus, based on that argu-

ment, members of the legislature were bound to prioritise approaches and methods they could use to achieve their vested interests and short-term goals to the detriment of societal wellbeing.

On the other hand, DPRD members in Batang highlighted the important roles they play as representatives of the population whom had elected them through direct local elections. Local legislators criticised the reluctance of Regent Yoyok to forge closer interaction with them. Such criticism is demonstrated in the excerpt of an interview with one young legislator, who noted that:

The relationship between Regent Yoyok and the DPRD was not so harmonious. The regent rarely conducted a dialogue or listened to input from the DPRD. In fact, as the people's representatives, we often paid visits to people's farming fields and villages to identify and collect actual problems and needs in the community (TI, 25 January 2018)

Despite very cognizant of the strategic role DPRD plays in local budgeting and regulation drafting processes, Regent Yoyok and his team trapped into colluding with efforts that breached of procedures and regulations. Such a decision was not easy given the fact that as one senior bureaucrat warned the regent, the local government executive head could not ignore the needs and requirements of DPRD in performing their budgeting and legislative functions including budgeting for travel expenses and aspiration allowances (Interview with SS, 3 October 2017).

To that end, the regent had to face dynamic circumstances and multiple stakeholders in implementing reforms in Batang regency. As the head of the local government, the regent managed to leverage technocratic risk management in reforming local bureaucracy by using national regulations and good practices in other regions as reference and guidance (expansionary and evolutionary innovations). In addition, the regent was open to proposals and suggestions from local activists on promoting local bureaucratic reforms. Nonetheless, the regent had poor relations with conservative officials and local legislators. The above backdrop influenced the success and effectiveness of the entire process that involved two outstanding governance innovations. The adoption of the two innovations was predicated on the issuing of supplementary legislation, budgeting, and other resources.

Unit Peningkatan Kualitas Pelayanan Publik (UPKP2): local Ombudsman

Public service delivery advocates perceived public officials as showing resistance and reluctance to listen to service users' complaints. The attitude was attributable to the lack of commitment from the top leadership. Overcoming the problem required the development of a public complaints handling unit in Batang regency (Interview with Vice Regent SU, 3 October 2017). The expectation was that the creation of a complaints management unit in the regency, through enhancing engagement between service providers and users, would foster better

service delivery and good governance in the regency (Crouch, 2007).

There are various scheme of public complaint management at the national and local level in Indonesia. While the Ombudsman of Indonesia (ORI) has representative offices in all 34 Provinces, many local governments also established a special institution for handling public complaints related to the local authorities. Some examples include the unit for information and complaint services (UPIK) in Yogyakarta City and the centre for public complaint services (P3M) in Semarang City. In Batang regency, local activists clamored for the establishment of an independent institution that would be responsible for safeguarding and ensuring that political promises of regent during election complains were honoured (Interview with SH, 3 May 2018). One of the proposals was the creation of a powerful body that would fall under the direct authority and control of the regent, which is akin to the Presidential Delivery Unit for Development Monitoring and Oversight (UKP4) at the national level. Meanwhile, another proposal, advocated by Transparency International Indonesia (TII), is the establishment of an Independent Monitoring Unit for Goods and Services Procurement (LPI-PBJ).

Designing the best model for the new institution involving Batang government evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the alternative public complaints' management mechanisms with respect to feasibility, human resource availability, and fi-

nancial and regulatory aspects as well as assessing potential behavioural risks with local activists. Doubtless, the initiative to establish an independent and powerful public complaint handling unit in the regency faced strong opposition for several reasons, including as one member of the regency bureaucracy revealed

The election campaign team [of Regent Yoyok] wanted to create a strong institution that has access to large regency financing and facilities. The same team would fill positions in the institution. Such an institution had no legal basis and would squander public finances. Alternatively, the regent should strengthen the local inspectorate to handle the supervisory function of public complaints management. (IBC11, 20 December 2017)

To overcome the problem of absence of a legal framework that would support the establishment of an independent and powerful public complaints handing unit in the regency, some local activists demanded the enacting of a local regulation (Perda) that has stronger legitimacy and ranked highest among all local government legislations (Interview with SH, 3 May 2018). As a product of joint efforts of the local executive and legislature, Perda has stronger political support which makes any future efforts to rescind it by future local government leadership is more difficult. Perda also has the authority to create a new local public institution that uses local government expenditure to finance its activities. However, high un-

certainty that surrounded the approval of Perda in the local legislature (including the risk of delay and transaction costs), forced the regent to establish a complaints handling unit based on Regent Regulation (Perbup), which did not require local legislature approval. After a series of discussions with local bureaucrats and local activists concerning the potential benefits and risks of the public complains handling unit, the regent agreed to enact Perbup No. 90/2012 on Improving the Quality of Public Service in Batang regency. The regulation provided the legal foundation for the establishment of UPKP2 (*Unit Peningkatan Kualitas Pelayanan Publik* or Public Service Quality Improvement Unit) as the public service complaints management unit. The structure of UPKP2 Batang is different from similar organisations in other local administrations that are fully administered by civil servants. UPKP2 consists of four commissioners that are selected from professional or community applicants through open recruitment and one commissioner who is appointed by the regent to represent the local bureaucracy. The mixed composition is a reflection of efforts to forge collaboration between local government and civil society in monitoring service delivery and handling of public complaints in Batang regency (Interview with ASB, 4 October 2017).

To oversee UPKP2, that Perbup also established the Public Service Improvement Quality Team (TPKP2). The team consists of the vice-regent, Batang regency secretary,

administrative assistant of regency secretary, and the head of the organization division. The presence of very senior officials in TPKP2 is crucial for the support that UPKP2 needs in resolving difficult problems that relate activities of local bureaucrats. Moreover, putting UPKP2 under a bureaucratic structure (TPKP2) means the Batang regency government is able to allocate financial resources required to support activities on independent organizational structure that needs prior approval of the local legislature. However, this structure also means that the UPKP2 agency has a small budget allocations including salaries for its commissioners and operational purposes (Interview with AW, 29 September 2017).

UPKP2 Batang has two functions, *inter alia*, serving as social advocate in solving complaints and collaborating and supporting the bureaucracy to deliver excellent services. The establishment of UPKP2 agency has received appreciation from the public. Specifically, UPKP2 assists the public in solving complaints they have about public services and improving the service quality of public service providers through collaboration arrangements. This was reflected in an excerpt of an interview with members of the Batang regency bureaucracy:

UPKP2 is beneficial to use as it assists our office in resolving complaints of parents about rising number of unauthorized school charges. (RNF, 22 December 2017)

The number of bad or fake NGOs was increasing during the previous regime. One

of the sources of income for NGOs in the past was the collection of a fee from the citizens who were complainants as well as extorting targeted public officials. With the establishment of UPKP2, Batang regency society prefers to report their complaints to UPKP2 without making any payments. Thus, the new improved governance system, leaves no space for bad NGOs to manoeuvre. (AY, 9 October 2017)

To that end, considering the positive contribution that UPKP2 made to the public wellbeing and service delivery improvement, there was a lot of hope that work of the agency would receive the support of all stakeholders, including the legislature. Initially the Regent Yoyok waited legislature to submit the regulation bill proposal on the establishment of UPKP2 (*Kompas News*, 30 October 2016). However, the legislature did not take the initiative, which prompted the Regent to opt to amend the prevailing regulation on UPKP2 Batang by issuing a regent regulation Perbup No. 3/2017. The regulation provided legal foundation for the reappointment of UPKP2 commissioners based on performance evaluation results. Subsequently, the regent issued a Regent Decree No. 06/12/12/2017 that renewed the appointment of UPKP2 commissioners for the period of 2017 to 2021. The decree provided the legal basis for UPKP2 Batang regency to obtain financial support from the local budget. Nonetheless, activities of the agency were undermined by the continual decrease in annual budget allocation. The annual

budget allocation to activities and operations of the agency decreased from Rp.266 million (2015), Rp.205 million (2016), to Rp.150 million in 2017 (UPKP2 Batang, 2017). The decrease in budget allocation for activities of the agency underscore the need to mitigate sources of long-term risk to governance enhancement efforts by strengthening the legal framework of the agency.

Today, the new Regent Wihaji (2017-2022), who is a politician, has succeeded in receiving the approval of the local legislature for the formulation of the local regulation on public services in Batang Regency. The Perda No. 4/2018 to a large extent accommodates most of the clauses in Perbup No. 90/2012 on improving public service quality. Thus, the acceptance of the local legislature to this proposal can be construed as strong support for the efforts of UPKP2 Batang to enhance public engagement and the quality of public service delivery.

Budget festival

The politicisation of the local bureaucracy in Batang under Regent Bambang Bintoro (2002–2012) created a closed-knit development system that was in stark contradiction with the medium-term development plan of the regency (Saputro, 2016). Moreover, activities of the local government were not in compliance with the guidelines and requirements of budgeting procedures, including schedules for public procurement and budget disbursements. Consequently, local government projects became rent seek-

ing opportunities for local bureaucrats, legislators, and contractors (Burhan, 2017).

Regent Yoyok was aware that the budget process and associated corruption was largely responsible for poor public service delivery. To overcome the problem, the regent devised ways that were aimed at enhancing transparency of the budgeting process and encourage public participation by increasing their awareness of public issues and programs (Arif & Indriastuti, 2017). First, the regent disseminated a summary of the local budget, followed by discussions of its contents, targets and goals in meetings that were held in subdistrict offices. However, the regent was dissatisfied with the impact of the meeting forum because a few people attended, most of whom were administrative staff of subdistrict and village offices.

Besides, Regent Yoyok thought of buying and installing a billboard (videotron) in the central park square (*alun-alun*) that would serve as medium to disseminate local policies to the citizens, including information local budget targets, development priorities and programs. However, based on input from the head of the Planning, Development and Research Agency (Bapelitbang), the allocation of approximately Rp.750 million to procure the videotron would better be spent on infrastructure maintenance rather than (*Detik News*, 8 April 2016). Consequently, the regent thought of other ways that while could increase the engagement the local government with the local population, did not do so at the expense of spending on

equally important public service infrastructure facilities.

One of the options was the budget festival. The idea of a budget festival itself is unique but simple. Recognizing people's enthusiasm in such festivals as trade exhibitions, education exhibitions, and culinary events, the regent came up with an idea to use such festivals as forums to disseminate local budget information in more attractive and interactive ways. In addition, another advantage of using budget festival as public education avenue on local budget was that they are cheap to arrange but have the potential to attract citizens from different walks of life. Moreover, the idea of local budget festival received strong support of local activists who believed that the events would serve as opportune space for the government to enhance budget transparency as well as an important step in encouraging participatory budgeting that accommodates public needs and promotes wealth (Interview with ASB, 4 October 2017).

Nonetheless, budget transparency remains a very sensitive issue within the bureaucracy and faces formidable barriers. There are still many in the bureaucracy who are reluctant to accept and comply with budget transparency requirements, citing confidentiality of the budget report as the most common reason. However, the strongest obstacle to budget transparency are officials who have vested interests in the lack of transparency hence committed to resist any efforts tailored toward opening up of the

budgeting process to parties to public scrutiny (Interview with Regent YRS, 12 October 2017).

Nonetheless, adopting the concept of budget festival was problematic as the idea had no precedent in Indonesia. To the end, Batang regent, Mr Yoyok first and foremost discussed the idea with local activists and reached a conclusion that the best way to implement the idea was by commencing with disseminating budget information, followed by conducting a seminar on budget management and anti-corruption measures. Implementing the idea through the information dissemination and convening a seminar on corruption efforts by late 2013 created organizational risks, especially the requirement to revise local government budget to accommodate expenditure on the proposed budget transparency related activities. Such revision could only be possible with the approval of the local legislature. The process of revising the local government budget takes a lot of energy and time. To that end, the regent requested the local bureaucracy to identify for budget repurposing opportunities in various offices as well as seeking financial support from third parties through sponsorship mechanisms. The following are excerpts from interviews with the regent and one local activist:

It would have been easy to conduct this activity if all local government office heads did their jobs with sincerity. But problems arose because everything was made to seem very complicated. For example, the cost of a

hiring a tent was Rp. 100 million. The cost could be shared among various local government offices each of which spending Rp. 10 million. Nonetheless, no agency was willing to make the sacrifice (Regent YRS, 12 October 2017).

There was no allocation in the local budget for the first Budget Festival. Thus, Regent Yoyok, local bureaucrats, and activists worked together to identify existing budget items that financed related activities as well as seek supplementary funds from external sources (ASB, 4 October 2017).

To implement the budget festival, the Regent issues Decree No. 900/092/2014 on organizing the budget festival. The decree along other issues stipulated the appointment of the Vice-Regent, Mr Soetadi as the official holding ultimate responsibility for conducting daily preparations for the first Budget Festival in Batang regency; distribution of budget festival tasks to a committee that comprised ten units of the local government, UPKP2 Batang, and civil society including NGO Laskar Batang representatives.

The first budget exhibition was held from 13 to 15 February 2014. The festival was inaugurated by the Director-General of Local Finance Affairs, Budiarmo Teguh Widodo, who represented the Minister of Finance. In his remarks, Budiarmo Teguh Widodo, underlined the distinctive nature of the budget festival idea in succinct terms:

Budget festival is a crazy idea. There is no local head who wants to disclose the details of their local budget. Nonetheless, Ba-

tang Regency has already implemented the idea. This activity is a good strategy and should be emulated by other local governments, both at the district and provincial levels (Radar Pekalongan News, 13 February 2014)

Each Batang government office set up a booth that provided information about their programs and budget earmarks to support such programs during the year; and achievements made in the previous year, including explanations about activities that were not implemented. Although the stands and display of information were fairly simple, that did not reduce the enthusiasm of residents to attend and ask serious questions to representatives of the local organisations. In addition, the festival also involved the conduct of public seminars and art exhibitions that proved riveting attractions for many visitors.

Particularly, participants in the festival expressed concern about the annual budget of the regent and vice-regent, including the their salaries, allowances, and operational costs. Many visitors stunned to know that the monthly net salary of the regent was Rp.6.2 million while the take-home pay for the vice-regent was just Rp. 4.9 million rupiahs, excluding their operational budgets (*Detik News*, 13 March 2016). The divulgence of public information is important for the public, however, because it gives people a definite reference point to use in making judgement about the feasibility and appropriateness of the lifestyles that public offi-

cial lead while in office (Interview with Vice Regent SU, 3 October 2017).

As the first example of a local budget transparency innovation in Indonesia, the Budget Festival received broad coverage in the national mass media. This initiative enhanced the reputation of Batang regency from a little known region to a renowned one in Indonesia. The local government received plaudits and expressions of recognition the national government, other local governments, and civil society. The monumental achievement also convinced the consortium of anti-corruption NGOs to confer the Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption (BHACA) Award to Regent Yoyok in 2015 along with Tri Risma Hartini, the Mayor of Surabaya. Similarly, Regent Yoyok received the Public Service Innovator in 2016 from the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic reform, which was in recognition of the breakthrough governance innovation.

Doubtless, receiving the BHACA award, had substantial impact on the credibility of Regent Yoyok across the country. He has since then been invited to deliver speeches in seminars held in universities and TV talk-shows to share his ideas and efforts on strengthening transparency and creating a corruption-free local bureaucracy in Batang Regency. Such good impressions of the regent's work and his administration made it easier for organizing the 2nd Budget Festival in 2016 and eventually won him the political support of the local legislature to have specific budget allocation tailored towards en-

hancing transparency in the regency (Interview with AH, 9 October 2017).

In strengthening governance, the second budget festival in 2016 increased the invitations of national institutions and local governments. Specifically, the regent invited the chairman of the local legislature to deliver remarks during the opening session of the festival. The gesture underscored dramatic improvement in the formal relations between the local administration and the legislature (DPRD). In his speech, the chairman of DPRD reiterated the support and commitment of DPRD to issues that serve public interests in the regency, but warns of dangers of violating prevailing checks and balances in carrying out duties and responsibilities. He warned that :

DPRD has always supported the idea of budget transparency, including the Budget Festival. However, all our decisions must be accountable to the people, including budget efficiency for each program. Like a car, the executive steps on “the accelerator pedal”, while DPRD steps on the “the brakes pedal” to avoid infringements and public criticism (TR, 9 January 2018)

The second budget festival was based on five specific themes, inter alia, public service, budget planning and development process, education, health, and village budget management. Batang government also recognised the importance of promoting budget transparency at the village level. To implement that, the regency created a special zone for village representatives. The decision had

a lot of strategic importance as it was in line with the national government policy that had since 2015 is allocating direct grant to village governments that are aimed at accelerating village development. To that end, Batang government by providing village governments an opportunity to participate in budget transparency, was lending support to efforts by village governments to strengthen governance capacity, including the ability to monitor the effective use of village funds. In 2016, efforts to enhance transparency by Batang government were rewarded when the Supreme Auditing Board (BPK) passed an “unqualified opinion” (*WTP*) for annual budget report (*Tribun Jateng*, 28 May 2017).

Nonetheless, efforts to enhance budget transparency, including budget festival in Batang government were not grounded or based on a strong regulatory framework that would have guaranteed their sustainability. This was in contrast with other festivals, such as the annual Batang Expo which involves exhibition of local development results and promotion of local businesses (for example Regent Regulation No. 1/2016 on Batang Expo). Consequently, it proved difficult for the local government to continue to support the Budget Festival once the regent was no longer in power. The implication was that however important or iconic the innovation is, without legal foundation to support its existence, it is bound to lose relevancy and support as soon as the initiator is no longer in charge. While he discontinues the implementation of Budget Festival, the

new Regent Wihaji (2017-2022) proposes that increasing public access through e-government on local development monitoring (E-simpelbang) can strengthen governance in general and budget transparency in particular (Interview with Regent WI, 19 January 2018).

Thus, the difficulty of continuity of innovations that Batang regency faced underscores the importance of public innovators to lay a strong regulatory foundation and budgetary support by winning the support of the local legislature. Maintaining the momentum of innovations in public institutions requires not only the support and legitimacy of the executive arm of government but also the legislature and involvement of not state actors achieved through public engagement initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The research investigated the role that innovations in the public sector contribute toward improving the quality of public services and effectiveness of government functions in Batang regency during the leadership of Regent Yoyok Riyo Sudibyo (2012–2017). Innovation in governance mechanisms has helped to shift decision making and service delivery from total monopoly of the corridors of government institutions to involving non state actors, leading to inclusiveness in the distribution and sharing of social benefits and costs (Hartley, 2016).

Nonetheless, the adoption of public innovations is a complicated process given the

fact that it requires various resources that are dispersed among many actors with varying vested interests. To that end, public innovations face many obstacles and detractors that undermine the process because of unwillingness to change habits and practices, and fear of powerful groups to lose benefits enjoyed (Sørensen & Torfing, 2016). Innovation involves experimentation which makes it inherently risky as the outcomes are not known beforehand. While successful innovation receives accolades for initiators and implementers, innovation failure generate criticism and even public embarrassment in some instances.

Three key factors contributed to the creation of an innovative climate and improvement in risk governance in Batang. Firstly, every innovation focussed on addressing complicated issues (behavioural changes) that related to improving local governance and public service delivery, including the accountability process and budget transparency. Secondly, local government leaders were keen on learning new ways of doing things and mitigate risks by utilising extended networks and encouraging public participation and engagement. Third, the local government showed flexibility in responding to public demands by inviting various stakeholders to collaborate in proposing, acting and embedding governance ideas in both administrative activities and public service delivery.

Findings in the research revealed two governance innovations that had both simi-

larities and differences, with respect to the degree of risk, success, legality, and continuity. As change process, the creative destruction of new governance ideas exerts challenges to the common emphasis on predictability and stability that has become a hallmark of the public sector, including obsolete regulations, rigid procedures, and conservative bureaucrats. The pursuit of governance innovations in Batang reflects varying degree of collaborative actions between the executive arm (regent), local activists (as the “think-tank”) and reformist bureaucrats right from innovation conception to institutionalisation. Conversely, other conformist groups tried to stall the process that posed a threat to their vested interests, including local council members, bureaucrats, and private contractors. Nonetheless, the most significant risk came from the the absence of legislators and reluctance of conservative bureaucrats to support governance innovation process.

Governance innovations have shaped and reconstructed the relationship between the local government and citizens. The implementation of UPKP2 local ombudsman and Budget Festival, helped the local government executive to create a new mechanism that fostered community engagement by conveying their aspirations and a source of public access to to local budget information. However, as the outcome of the budget festival innovation in the aftermath of its initiator showed, there is no guarantee that ideas that are driven by good and genuine intentions

can be translated smoothly into into effective programs. This is especially the case in instances where innovations require supporting legislation, budgetary allocation, and other resources. Proponents of the innovation process tried to reduce resistance and obstacles to innovations by identifying potential gains and risks of each governance initiative at various loci (individual, organisational and society) and conducted negotiations transparently with multiple stakeholders in open and transparent ways. Such a process helped in selecting the most promising and practical solutions.

It is , however, worth noting that the use of extended network that involved credible public and social institutions (both local and national level), created a constructive space for Regent Yoyok to negotiate governance innovation risk to reach acceptable levels that were in line with potential benefits and legitimacy. On the contrary, while the rigid views of the bureaucracy emphasized the importance of basing innovations on existing regulations, NGO campaigners perceived absence of regulatory framework as an opportunity to create new regulations that can accommodate societal changes. A case in point related to the establishment of local ombudsman (UPKP2) through an executive regulation and utilisation of other budget allocations on other government items to finance the first budget festival activity in 2014, rather than formulate and implement the lengthy and politically fraught local regulation

Both cases showed that the regent exercised a decisionistic risk management (by considering technical inputs from local bureaucrats and local activist) and to a certain extent- adopted transparent risk negotiation (by conducting negotiations with other credible state and social institutions, while avoiding members of the legislature) prior to making use of executive discretion (Perbup and SK Bupati) in political decision-making. However, innovations that are based on regent regulation have limitations. Contrary to a local government regulation (Perda) which is jointly agreed by the local executive and the local legislature, the power and authority of the regent decree (Perbup) is limited to the particular executive authority and subject to alterations even rescinding, with changes in the local government leadership.

The adoption of new governance ideas in Batang shows that risk governance can succeed if relevant actors coordinate their actions and establish joint ownership of new innovative solutions. The exchange and pooling of resources can prevent overlaps, generate synergies among stakeholders, reduce costs, and mitigate risks. Public participation in the innovation processes enhances public acceptance and generates wide acknowledgement of the benefits that support the sustainability and continuity of the innovation but also its replication in other areas. It is such strong public acceptance of governance innovations that were implemented by the previous regent has encouraged the new Regent Wihaji (2017–2022) to

maintain and support them using new approaches and strategies rather than revert to administrative regime of opaque governance.

Since this study was limited to one regency in Indonesia, it would be useful to follow up on the findings by testing them in other regions, which have both similar and distinctive characteristics. Learning from the cessation of iconic Budget Festival by the successive regent, the author recommends the future research focus on efforts to enhance the sustainability of total innovations under leadership changes and better ways of gaining legitimacy for transformational local governance innovations.

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