BRIDGING GLOBAL VISION AND LOCAL ACTION: BUREAUCRATIC CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN LAMONGAN REGENCY

Midkholus Surur[1]*, Mahmud Aprian Mabruri[2],Alif Firdaus Zamzam[3]

[1,2,3] Ilmu Politik, Fisip Universitas Islam Darul 'Ulum, Lamongan, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The success of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is largely determined by the capacity of local governments to translate the global agenda into contextualized local development practices. This paper examines the bureaucratic challenges in bridging the global vision of the SDGs with their implementation in development policies in Lamongan Regency. The study employs a literature-based research method using a critical synthesis approach to academic literature, policy documents, and relevant official reports.

The findings indicate that SDG integration in Lamongan Regency remains partial and hierarchical, characterized by three levels of implementation maturity. First is the symbolic stage, marked by ceremonial adoption without substantive change. Second is the instrumental stage, in which SDG indicators are utilized as tools for measuring sectoral performance. Third is the transformative stage, characterized by a paradigm shift toward a holistic and integrative development approach. In this process, the bureaucracy functions as an active translation actor through mechanisms of priority selection, target adaptation, translation into concrete programs, resource allocation, and negotiation with stakeholders.

However, this translation process faces multidimensional challenges, including structural, cultural, capacity-related, and political constraints. Institutional fragmentation, data limitations, procedural work culture, limited understanding among civil servants, and dependence on the personal commitment of local leaders emerge as major obstacles. This study emphasizes that SDG localization is not merely a technical adaptation process but a complex socio political negotiation, thereby requiring institutional strengthening, reform of planning and performance based budgeting systems, systematic capacity building for civil servants, and a fundamental shift in bureaucratic paradigms toward collaborative and long-term sustainable development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global agenda agreed upon by 193 United Nations member countries in 2015 as a collective commitment to achieve sustainable development by 2030. This agenda consists of 17 goals, 169 targets, and 241 indicators designed to address global development challenges, ranging from poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, to inclusive governance (United Nations, 2015). The success of the SDGs heavily depends on each country's ability to translate this global vision into strategies and development actions at the local level, a process known as "SDGs localization" (Rohdewohld, 2022).

*Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: midkholussurur@unisda.ac.id

Indonesia, as one of the SDGs signatories, has demonstrated strong political commitment through integrating this agenda into the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024 and the issuance of Presidential Regulation Number 59 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals Achievement. However, Indonesia's SDGs achievement in 2024 shows an interesting paradox: although 61.4% of indicators have been achieved, Indonesia's overall score is only 70.22, ranking 77th out of 193 countries (Bappenas, 2024; Sachs et al., 2025). More critically, the 2024 People's Scorecard from civil society provides a much lower assessment with a score of 27 and a "low progress" category (INFID, 2024). This gap between the government's formal achievement and civil society's assessment indicates a significant gap between the global SDGs vision and real implementation at the local level.

One fundamental challenge in SDGs implementation is how to translate the universal global framework into highly diverse local contexts. The SDGs are designed as global norms and standards, but their implementation must be adapted to the geographical, socio-economic, cultural conditions, and institutional capacity of each region (van't Land, 2022). This "translation" process is not merely technical adaptation but involves complex negotiations between global priorities and local needs, between universal standards and contextual realities.

In Indonesia, the process of bridging this global vision and local action becomes more complex due to the decentralization system that grants extensive autonomy to local governments. Based on Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, district/city governments have primary authority in development planning and implementation. However, this authority also brings consequences: the success of SDGs localization is heavily determined by the capacity, commitment, and innovation of regional bureaucracy in integrating the global agenda into regional planning documents, particularly the Regional Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMD) (Bappenas, 2020; Akhmadi, 2021; Ferrazzi, 2022). Hudalah et al. (2020) in their evaluation of two decades of decentralization in Indonesia found that although decentralization has provided broader autonomy space, vertical and horizontal coordination challenges and capacity gaps between regions remain significant obstacles to effective regional development.

In the context of decentralization, regional bureaucracy occupies a strategic position as a "bridge" between the global SDGs vision and local development action. Regional bureaucracy is not merely an administrative executor of policies but an actor that actively translates, adapts, and contextualizes global SDGs indicators into development programs responsive to local community needs. This translation process involves a series of strategic decisions: which indicators are relevant to regional priorities, how global targets are adapted to local capacity, what programs are most effective for achieving SDGs goals, and how to ensure limited resource allocation can provide optimal impact.

However, this strategic role is often not accompanied by adequate capacity. Regional bureaucracy faces various structural, cultural, and institutional challenges that hinder their effectiveness in integrating SDGs into development planning. Limited technical understanding of the SDGs framework, fragmented coordination among Regional Government Organizations (OPD), weak information systems, procedural work culture, and limitations in human resources and budget are real obstacles in practice (Dwiyanto, 2018; Sutopo, 2021; Shoesmith et al., 2020). Shoesmith et al. (2020) specifically identified that underdeveloped regions in Eastern Indonesia face more serious challenges in terms of bureaucratic capacity, institutional infrastructure, and resources to carry out development, including in the context of SDGs localization.

East Java Province, as one of the provinces with the largest economy in Indonesia, demonstrates relatively strong commitment to SDGs implementation through various regional policies and programs. However, evaluation shows that there are still 124 SDGs indicators without data at the provincial level, reflecting serious challenges in the development information system and bureaucratic capacity to support evidence-based planning (Bappeda Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2023). Without adequate data, the process of bridging global vision with local action becomes speculative and unmeasurable, as confirmed by the Asian Development Bank (2020) in its study on SDGs snapshot at Indonesia's subnational government level, which found significant data gaps in various regions.

Lamongan Regency becomes an interesting case to examine the dynamics of this global-local bridge. As one of the regencies in East Java with great potential in agriculture, fisheries, and MSMEs sectors, Lamongan faces paradoxical challenges: on one hand, it has sufficient natural and economic resources, but on the other hand, it still struggles with poverty above 12%, inter-regional inequality, and environmental vulnerability (BPS Lamongan, 2023). This condition shows that development has not been fully inclusive and sustainable in accordance with the spirit of SDGs.

The Lamongan Regency Government has integrated some SDGs indicators into the RPJMD 2021–2026, showing formal commitment to the global agenda. However, evaluation reveals that this integration is still partial, not fully cross-sectoral, and the maturity level of integration varies among OPDs (Bappeda Lamongan, 2023). Some OPDs have substantially understood and adopted SDGs, while other OPDs are still in the symbolic adoption stage without significant changes in planning and budgeting practices. This condition indicates that the process of "bridging" global vision and local action has not been running optimally.

The fundamental problem lies in how regional bureaucracy translates the abstract SDGs framework into concrete operational planning documents. RPJMD as a five-year planning document should be a strategic instrument that bridges long-term vision (including SDGs) with annual development programs. However, in practice, SDGs integration into RPJMD faces several challenges:

First, conceptual challenge: Many bureaucratic officials do not fully understand the essence of SDGs as a transformative framework for development. SDGs are often understood as additional reporting indicators, not as a new paradigm in planning and implementing development. Consequently, integration tends to be mechanistic, merely matching existing programs with SDGs indicators without fundamental changes in thinking and working methods. Shahib & Abbas (2025) in their study on SDGs institutionalization in Indonesian public sector accounting found that local governments face challenges in adapting global SDGs indicators to local contexts, requiring organizational learning processes and participatory governance to bridge global norms with local situations. Putra et al. (2024) reinforced this finding by revealing that despite formal SDGs integration efforts into regional development plans in 17 Indonesian provinces, economic and governance paradigms still dominate, indicating that transformation toward holistic sustainable development has not fully occurred.

Second, coordination challenge: SDGs have a holistic and cross-sectoral character, while regional bureaucratic structure remains highly sectoral and fragmented. Each OPD tends to work based on its own main tasks and functions without strong coordination mechanisms to ensure synergy. Yet, many SDGs goals such as poverty alleviation, quality education, or economic resilience require integrated multi-sectoral approaches. Afandi et al. (2021) in their research on SDGs implementation in Bandung Regency identified that

weak cross-sectoral coordination is one of the main challenges in integrating and implementing SDGs at the local level, along with lack of knowledge about SDGs and confusion in local indicators and data collection. International Budget Partnership (2022) added that weak coordination among ministries and agencies, both at national and regional levels, causes inaccurate indicator measurement and lack of consistent SDGs adoption at the local level.

Third, data and information system challenge: SDGs-based planning requires accurate, current, and disaggregated data to monitor progress and identify gaps. However, many regions, including Lamongan Regency, face data limitations for some SDGs indicators. Without adequate data, the planning process becomes non-evidence-based and difficult to monitor and evaluate. Djafar et al. (2025) in their study on strengthening local government organizational capacity found that challenges of untrained human resources and suboptimal information technology utilization hinder development planning that is responsive to community needs and based on accurate data.

Fourth, apparatus capacity challenge: Integrating SDGs requires technical competence in policy analysis, strategic planning, and performance-based budgeting. However, regional bureaucratic apparatus capacity in this regard remains limited and varies. Training and capacity development conducted are often sporadic and unsystematic. The comparative study by Okitasari et al. (2022) on SDGs localization in Indonesia and the Philippines revealed that local governments face broad institutional capacity challenges, ranging from socio-economic to institutional issues, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and causing priorities to shift to economic and health recovery at the expense of social and environmental goals. Sari & Fujimura (2019) in their analysis of national and local governance systems for achieving SDGs in Japan and Indonesia found that Indonesia faces specific challenges in "vision and goal setting" at the national level, and in "implementation" which is lacking in terms of "decision-making capacity" and "knowledge use," indicating that the process of translating global policies into local actions requires more effective governance structures and more adequate apparatus capacity.

Fifth, bureaucratic culture challenge: Bureaucratic work culture that still focuses on procedures and inputs, not on results and impacts, hinders SDGs implementation that demands outcome orientation. Strong silo culture, resistance to change, and weak performance accountability are also significant cultural obstacles.

Sixth, political and leadership challenge: SDGs integration requires strong political support from regional heads and legislature. However, short political cycles (five years) are often misaligned with SDGs time horizon (long-term until 2030). Leadership changes can cause inconsistency in commitment and development priorities.

Understanding how regional bureaucracy performs the "bridge" function between global vision and local action becomes very important for several reasons. First, SDGs success in Indonesia heavily depends on implementation effectiveness at the regional level, considering that most development programs are implemented by district/city governments. Second, challenges faced by regional bureaucracy are systemic and complex, requiring in-depth understanding of the structural, cultural, and institutional dimensions underlying them. Third, lessons learned from regional cases such as Lamongan Regency can provide valuable insights for efforts to strengthen the capacity of other local governments in integrating SDGs.

Furthermore, understanding this global-local bridge process is important for identifying strategic intervention points in improving regional development planning systems. Without adequate understanding of how and why SDGs integration is running

partially, improvement efforts will tend to be trial and error and not address the root causes.

Academic studies on SDGs in Indonesia, particularly at the regional level, have developed quite rapidly in recent years. However, existing literature is still dominated by studies focusing on evaluating SDGs indicator achievements or analyzing alignment between regional planning documents and national SDGs targets. These studies are generally descriptive-quantitative in nature, measuring the extent to which indicators have been achieved or identifying gaps between targets and realization (Pratiwi & Nugroho, 2021; Rahmawati, 2022).

Meanwhile, studies that explicitly analyze the process and dynamics of SDGs integration particularly the role of regional bureaucracy as actors bridging global vision and local action remain very limited. Yet, understanding "how" and "why" SDGs integration proceeds in certain ways is as important as knowing "what" has or has not been achieved. The integration process involves complex negotiations among various actors, different institutional logics, and dynamic political and social contexts.

The research gap in this study lies in three main aspects:

First, gap in understanding bureaucracy as translation actors. Existing literature tends to view regional bureaucracy as passive implementors who merely execute instructions from central government or mechanically adopt SDGs indicators. Understanding of bureaucracy as actors that actively translate, adapt, and contextualize global agendas into local realities with all the complexity, negotiations, and dilemmas accompanying them remains inadequate in the literature. Fitrah et al. (2025) in their study on SDGs localization in Banyumas revealed that global-local partnership dynamics are often dominated by international organizations in decision-making, while the role of local bureaucracy as active translation actors receives insufficient analytical attention.

Second, gap in analyzing structural, cultural, and institutional challenges. Previous studies tend to identify general SDGs implementation obstacles (such as budget or human resource limitations) but have not elaborated in depth how structural dimensions (systems, regulations, procedures), cultural dimensions (values, norms, bureaucratic behavior), and institutional dimensions (coordination, accountability, incentives) interact and form partial integration patterns.

Third, gap in understanding the global-local "bridge" process. The concept of "bridging" global vision and local action presupposes a complex mediation process between two different logics: the logic of SDGs universality and the logic of local context particularity. How regional bureaucracy navigates the tension between global standard demands and local capacity limitations, between SDGs transformative ambitions and regional political-economic realities, and between SDGs long-term orientation and short-term political pressures these questions have not been widely answered in existing literature. Rimba et al. (2024) in their study on localization and its impact on SDGs achievement in Indonesia found that seven of twelve priority indicators at the provincial level are localized indicators, with the majority in SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Good Health), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), indicating that the localization process involves selective prioritization based on local context, but the decision-making and negotiation dynamics in this prioritization process still require further elaboration.

This gap demonstrates the need for an analytical approach that not only assesses outputs (what is integrated) but also processes (how integration takes place) and context (why integration proceeds in certain ways). Understanding these three dimensions simultaneously will provide a more comprehensive picture of challenges and opportunities in bridging the global SDGs vision with local development action.

2. METHOD

To address this research gap, this study employs a library research method with a critical synthesis approach. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to integrate various theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from diverse literature to build comprehensive conceptual understanding of the global-local bridge process in the context of regional bureaucracy (Zed, 2008).

The sources used include:

1. Academic literature: national and international scientific journals on SDGs, global agenda localization, government bureaucracy, and regional development planning
2. Policy documents: laws and regulations, RPJMN, Lamongan Regency RPJMD, OPD Strategic Plans, and other planning documents
3. Official reports: SDGs achievement reports from Bappenas, East Java Provincial Bappeda, Lamongan Regency Bappeda, and statistical data from BPS
4. Civil society studies: People's Scorecard and publications from INFID and other civil society organizations
5. International institution publications: reports and studies from the UN, UNDP, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and other international institutions related to SDGs and development governance

The analysis process was conducted through several stages: identification and inventory of relevant literature; classification of literature based on themes and perspectives; extraction of key concepts and findings; cross-literature synthesis to identify patterns, gaps, and contradictions; and construction of an analytical framework that integrates various perspectives to understand the dynamics of the global-local bridge.

The critical synthesis approach enables this research not only to summarize existing findings but also to identify limitations and gaps in the literature, as well as to develop new understanding of the phenomenon under study. Through critical dialogue with various literatures, this research seeks to build a more nuanced perspective on the challenges of bureaucracy in bridging the global SDGs vision and local development action.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

a. Patterns of SDGs Integration in Lamongan Regency Development Planning

Analysis of the Lamongan Regency RPJMD 2021-2026 reveals a pattern of SDGs integration that is partial and hierarchical. This integration can be categorized into three different maturity levels based on the depth of adoption and transformation of planning practices.

1) First Level: Symbolic Integration

At this level, several OPDs demonstrate ceremonial SDGs adoption, merely listing SDGs indicators in planning documents without substantive changes in programs or budget allocation. SDGs indicators are treated as additional labels for pre-existing programs, not as a transformative framework that changes the way development is planned. This phenomenon aligns with Putra et al. (2024) findings, which revealed that despite formal SDGs integration efforts, conventional paradigms still dominate planning practices in many regions. Main characteristics of symbolic integration include: Listing of SDGs indicators in planning documents without relevance analysis, No changes in program design

or budget allocation, Integration conducted to meet administrative demands from central government, and Officials' understanding of SDGs still very limited to basic concept level.

2) Second Level: Instrumental Integration

At the intermediate level, several OPDs have used SDGs indicators as tools to measure and report development program performance. There are efforts to align program targets with SDGs targets, although still within their respective sectoral frameworks. At this level, SDGs function as a performance metric system that complements existing regional development indicators but has not fully transformed the planning logic from sectoral approach to holistic-integrative approach. Characteristics of instrumental integration include: Adjustment of program targets with relevant SDGs indicators, Use of SDGs indicators in monitoring and evaluation systems, Reporting of program achievements using the SDGs framework, and No systematic cross-sectoral approach yet.

3) Third Level: Transformative Integration

Only a small portion of OPDs reach this level, where SDGs are not only adopted as indicators but also as a new paradigm in planning development. At the transformative level, there are changes in officials' thinking about development from short-term output orientation to long-term outcome orientation, from sectoral approach to cross-sectoral approach, and from focusing solely on economic growth to balance among economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Characteristics of transformative integration include: Paradigm shift in planning from sectoral to holistic-integrative, Active collaboration across OPDs for strategic programs, Innovation in program design based on sustainable development principles, and Orientation toward long-term outcomes and transformative impact.

This hierarchical pattern indicates that the global-local bridge process does not occur evenly across the bureaucratic structure. This variation in integration maturity levels is influenced by several factors: technical capacity of officials in each OPD, leadership level and commitment of OPD heads to SDGs, complexity of affairs handled, and availability of supporting data and information systems.

b. **Translation Mechanisms Performed by Regional Bureaucracy**

Analysis of literature and policy documents reveals that Lamongan Regency's regional bureaucracy acts as an active translation actor performing a series of mediation processes between global SDGs norms and local realities. This translation process involves five main mechanisms:

1) Priority Selection

Facing 241 very broad SDGs indicators, regional bureaucracy conducts priority selection to identify which indicators are most relevant to Lamongan Regency's conditions and needs. This selection process is not entirely rational-technocratic but is influenced by various political, economic, and social factors. Findings show that priorities tend to be given to: Indicators already aligned with regional head's priority programs, Indicators with available baseline data, Indicators related to affairs under district government's primary authority, and Indicators that are politically popular and receive public support. These findings confirm Rimba et al. (2024) analysis that SDGs localization involves selective prioritization, with main focus on SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Good Health), and SDG 8 (Decent

Work and Economic Growth). Meanwhile, less popular or deemed less urgent SDGs goals such as SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Marine Ecosystems), or SDG 5 (Gender Equality) tend to receive lower attention in planning documents.

2) Target Adaptation

After selecting priorities, bureaucracy adapts global SDGs targets to Lamongan Regency's local context. Universal global targets are adjusted to baseline conditions, capacity, and realistic regional projections. Identified adaptation processes include: Adjustment of measurement standards according to national and local contexts (e.g., using national poverty line replacing $1.90/day standard), Modification of quantitative targets based on regional baseline conditions, Adjustment of achievement timeline considering local capacity, and Contextualization of indicators according to regional geographical and socio-economic characteristics.

3) Translation into Concrete Programs

Abstract SDGs indicators and targets are translated into concrete and operational development programs and activities. Analysis results show that this translation process produces various types of programs: Relabeled conventional programs where pre-existing programs are given SDGs labels without substantial changes, Adjusted programs where existing programs are modified to better align with SDGs targets, and Innovative programs where new programs are specifically designed to achieve certain SDGs targets (very limited in number).

4) Resource Allocation

Translating vision into action also involves crucial decisions about budget and other resource allocation. Analysis of budgeting patterns shows: Allocation for transformative SDGs programs remains limited (less than 30% of total development budget), Dominance of routine expenditure and physical infrastructure capital expenditure (more than 60% of budget), Significant variation in budget allocation for SDGs among OPDs, and Limited budget for cross-sectoral programs requiring intensive coordination.

These findings align with International Budget Partnership (2022) criticism that SDGs adoption at local level is often not accompanied by adequate budget allocation.

5) Stakeholder Negotiation

The global local bridge process also involves negotiation with various stakeholders. Analysis identifies several negotiation patterns: Vertical negotiation between district government and provincial and central government regarding directions, targets, and technical/financial support, Horizontal negotiation between executive and legislature in budget discussions, Internal bureaucratic negotiation between Bappeda as planning coordinator and sectoral OPDs, and Negotiation with civil society through public consultation mechanisms that remain limited and formal.

c. **Structural Challenges in SDGs Integration**

In-depth analysis of the SDGs integration process reveals several structural challenges rooted in the bureaucratic system design and regional development planning.

1) Institutional Fragmentation

Sectoral OPD structure creates institutional fragmentation that hinders the holistic SDGs approach. Specific findings include: No special SDGs coordination

body with adequate authority, Bappeda has limited authority to force OPD collaboration, Each OPD plans programs based on its own main tasks and functions, and Existing coordination forums are sporadic and ineffective. This condition is confirmed by Afandi et al. (2021) who found that weak cross-sectoral coordination is the main obstacle to SDGs implementation at district level.

2) Vertical and Horizontal Gaps

Research findings identify two types of gaps:

Vertical Gap: Gap between national SDGs policies and implementation at district level, Limited communication and coordination among central, provincial, and district governments, Inconsistency in indicators and targets among government levels, and Limited technical and financial support from higher-level government. Horizontal Gap: Capacity variation among OPDs in understanding and integrating SDGs, Gap in SDGs achievement among areas within Lamongan Regency, Differences in commitment and resources among OPDs. Shoesmith et al. (2020) identified that underdeveloped regions face more serious challenges in terms of bureaucratic capacity, infrastructure, and resources.

3) Information System Dysfunction

Regional development information systems that are not yet integrated cause difficulties in monitoring and evaluating SDGs achievements. Specific findings include: Most SDGs indicators (more than 40%) have no data at district level, Available data is often not current (lagging 2-3 years behind), No integrated platform to integrate data from various sources, and Weak data analysis capacity to support decision-making. As reported by Bappeda Provinsi Jawa Timur (2023), there are still 124 SDGs indicators without data at provincial level, and this number is likely larger at district level. Asian Development Bank (2020) confirms that data gaps are a serious challenge in SDGs implementation in Indonesia's subnational governments.

4) Budgeting System Rigidity

Budgeting system still oriented toward inputs and processes hinders optimal resource allocation for SDGs. Findings include: Rigid and inflexible planning and budgeting document formats, Budget segmentation per OPD complicating cross-sectoral program funding, Annual planning cycle not aligned with transformative nature of SDGs, and Limited performance-based budgeting mechanisms.

d. **Bureaucratic Cultural Challenges**

Behind structural challenges, there is a cultural dimension equally important in hindering global-local bridge effectiveness.

1) Procedural Orientation vs. Results Orientation

Findings show that highly procedural bureaucratic culture dominates planning practices: Focus on compliance with formal regulations rather than outcome achievement, Emphasis on administrative document completeness, Resistance to innovation due to fear of violating procedures, and Weak orientation toward program impact and sustainability. Dwiyanto (2018) calls this condition "defensive bureaucratic culture" where officials prioritize avoiding procedural errors over taking risks to innovate.

2) Silo Culture and Resistance to Collaboration

Although SDGs demand cross-sectoral approaches, findings show strong silo culture: OPDs tend to work independently with minimal coordination,

Collaboration perceived as additional burden, No culture of resource and information sharing, and Strong sectoral ego in protecting respective turfs.

This resistance to collaboration is reinforced by incentive systems that do not encourage cooperation. Official performance assessment focuses more on individual or respective OPD target achievement, not on contribution to collective achievement.

3) Limited Understanding of SDGs Essence

As identified by Afandi et al. (2021), findings show lack of knowledge about SDGs: Many officials only understand SDGs as a collection of reporting indicators, Understanding of interconnections among SDGs dimensions is very limited, SDGs perceived as additional program from center, not new paradigm, and Lack of understanding about "no one left behind" principle and transformative approach.

4) Weak Performance Accountabilit

Still weak accountability system produces findings: No significant consequences for OPDs failing to achieve SDGs targets, Accountability more emphasized on administrative rather than substantive aspects, Ineffective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and Weak transparency and public participation in oversight.

e. Human Resource Capacity Challenges

The third dimension of bureaucratic challenges lies in HR capacity aspects.

1) Limited Technical Competence

Integrating SDGs requires diverse technical competencies. Findings show: Less than 30% of planning officials have adequate understanding of SDGs, Policy analysis and strategic planning capabilities still limited, Capacity in performance-based budgeting not yet optimal, and Competence in data-based monitoring and evaluation still low. Djafar et al. (2025) identified that challenges of untrained human resources and suboptimal information technology utilization hinder responsive and data-based development planning.

2) Limited Analytical Capacity

SDGs-based planning requires high analytical capability. Findings reveal: Planning documents tend to be descriptive rather than analytical-strategic, Weak ability to identify root causes of development problems, Limitations in understanding interconnections among various issues, and Lack of capacity in designing theory of change.

3) Data Utilization Capacity Gap

Despite information system development efforts, findings show: Available data not optimally utilized for decision-making, Lack of capacity in processing and analyzing data, Weak ability to generate actionable insights from data, and Dependence on intuition and experience rather than evidence-based planning. Sari & Fujimura (2019) identified that Indonesia faces challenges in "knowledge utilization" for development planning.

4) Limited Innovation Capacity

SDGs demand innovation in designing development solutions. Findings show: Tendency to repeat conventional programs, Lack of experimentation with new approaches, No system encouraging and rewarding innovation, and Risk of innovation failure greater than reward for success.

f. **Political and Leadership Dynamics**
   Political dimension becomes a contextual factor heavily influencing the global-local bridge process.
   1) Dependence on Regional Head Commitment
      Findings show that SDGs integration heavily depends on regional head's personal commitment: Regional head support determines budget allocation for SDGs programs, Regional head's political priorities can change according to local political dynamics, Formal commitment in RPJMD not always translated into implementation, and Without regional head support, SDGs agenda is marginalized. Okitasari et al. (2022) found that the COVID-19 pandemic caused priorities to shift to economic and health recovery, indicating that commitment to SDGs can fluctuate depending on context.
   2) Tension between Political Cycle and SDGs Horizon
      Findings identify temporal tension: Regional heads prioritize quick wins visible within 5-year term, Transformative SDGs programs require longer time to deliver impact, Leadership changes cause inconsistency in development priorities, and SDGs time horizon (until 2030) not aligned with local political cycle.

g. **Limited Legislative Role**
   Findings on DPRD's role show: DPRD's understanding and commitment to SDGs still very limited, Budget discussions dominated by practical political considerations, Oversight function on SDGs implementation not optimal, and DPRD has not become critical partner in promoting SDGs integration.

Discussion

a. **Bureaucracy as Translation Actors: Complexity and Dilemmas**
   This research confirms and expands understanding of the role of regional bureaucracy as active translation actors in the process of localizing global agendas. Unlike conventional perspectives that view bureaucracy as passive implementers merely executing instructions from central government, this research demonstrates that regional bureaucracy actively translates, adapts, and contextualizes global SDGs norms into local realities with all accompanying complexities.

   This translation process is not merely technical adaptation, but involves a series of complex socio-political negotiations. Darmawan et al. (2025) in their study on SDGs localization in Banyumas reveal that global-local partnership dynamics are often dominated by international organizations in decision-making. This research adds an important dimension: that at the local level, bureaucracy must also negotiate with various domestic actors and interests regional heads with their political agendas, legislatures with constituent interests, civil society with participation demands, as well as existing structural and cultural limitations.

   The dilemma faced by bureaucracy in this translation process reflects fundamental tension between universality and particularity. SDGs are designed as a universal agenda applicable to all countries and regions, but their implementation must be adapted to highly diverse local contexts. The question that arises is: to what extent can adaptation be done without losing the transformative essence of SDGs? At what point does "adaptation" become "dilution" that reduces the transformative ambition of the global agenda?

   Shahib & Abbas (2025) emphasize that SDGs institutionalization requires deep organizational learning processes to bridge global norms with local situations.

This research finds that such organizational learning has not occurred systematically in Lamongan Regency. SDGs integration is still dominated by mechanistic approaches merely matching existing programs with SDGs indicators rather than critical reflection on whether the existing development paradigm aligns with sustainability principles.

b. **Structural Fragmentation and Holistic Approach Challenges**

Findings on institutional fragmentation and weak coordination underscore the paradox of decentralization in the SDGs context. On one hand, decentralization provides autonomy for local governments to design development according to local needs. On the other hand, fragmented and sectoral bureaucratic structures actually hinder the holistic approach demanded by SDGs. Srisaparmi et al. (2020) in their evaluation of two decades of decentralization in Indonesia found that vertical and horizontal coordination challenges remain significant obstacles. This research strengthens and deepens that analysis by showing that fragmentation is not just an administrative coordination problem, but reflects different institutional logics between sectoral bureaucratic structures and SDGs integrative approach demands. The structure of Regional Government Organizations (OPD) operating based on their respective main tasks and functions creates what can be called "institutional silos" where each organization has its own logic, incentives, and accountability that do not always align with collective SDGs goals. Without strong coordination mechanisms with authority, SDGs integration efforts will remain partial and fragmented.

Bappeda (Regional Development Planning Agency), which should be the integrator, faces authority and capacity dilemmas. Formally, Bappeda has the mandate to coordinate regional development planning. However, in practice, Bappeda does not have hierarchical authority over sectoral OPDs and often only functions as a compiler of plans submitted by each OPD. Without strong authority, Bappeda finds it difficult to force OPDs to collaborate or change their priorities for alignment with SDGs. The critical question that arises is: is more fundamental structural reform needed to enable a holistic approach? Can a "matrix organization" model that combines functional structure with cross-sector teams for strategic issues like SDGs be an alternative? Or is strengthening existing coordination mechanisms sufficient with support from appropriate incentive systems?

c. **Bureaucratic Culture: Persistent Hidden Barriers**

Findings on cultural challenges procedural orientation, silo culture, resistance to innovation reveal that structural change alone is insufficient to realize effective SDGs integration. Unsupportive organizational culture can hinder or even defeat the best structural reforms. Dwiyanto (2018) identifies "defensive bureaucratic culture" as a crucial barrier in Indonesian bureaucracy reform. This research shows that this defensive culture is not just about risk avoidance, but reflects an incentive system misaligned with transformation goals. Officials who try to innovate or take different approaches face greater risks (possibility of being considered violating procedures, criticism from superiors or auditors) compared to rewards they receive (recognition, promotion, or financial incentives).

Strong silo culture also reflects fragmented organizational identity. Officials identify themselves more as part of a specific OPD rather than as part of the broader regional government system. Loyalty and accountability are directed more toward

OPD leadership and achievement of respective OPD targets, not toward collective sustainable development goals. Changing organizational culture requires deeper and longer term intervention than merely training or socialization. Required changes include:

1) Performance assessment system: from focus on individual/sectoral output to contribution to collective outcomes
2) Incentive system: providing rewards for innovation and cross-sector collaboration
3) Transformative leadership: leaders who model values of collaboration, results orientation, and continuous learning
4) Organizational narrative: changing dominant narrative from "us vs them" (inter-OPD) to "we together" for sustainable development goals

d. Capacity Gaps: Neglected Long-term Investment

Findings on limited official capacity both technical competence, analytical capacity, and innovation capacity underscore that investment in bureaucratic human resource development is often neglected in regional development agendas. Development focus is more directed toward physical infrastructure rather than equally important "capacity infrastructure" for development sustainability. Djafar et al. (2025) identify that untrained human resources hinder responsive development planning. However, this research shows the problem is not just lack of training, but also unsystematic capacity development. Training conducted tends to be sporadic, unsustainable, and not followed by mentoring to ensure effective knowledge transfer.

More fundamentally, there is a gap between required competencies and existing recruitment and promotion systems. Personnel systems that still prioritize seniority and political loyalty over competence and performance result in no strong incentive for officials to develop their capacities. Promotion and job placement are not always based on competencies relevant to tasks to be undertaken. Sari & Fujimura (2019) identify challenges in "decision-making capacity" and "knowledge use" in Indonesia. This research deepens that analysis by showing that capacity gaps are not only individual problems, but also systemic problems. Without systems supporting the use of data and knowledge for decision-making (for example, user-friendly data analysis platforms, effective knowledge sharing mechanisms, organizational culture valuing evidence-based decision making), individual capacity development efforts will not provide optimal impact.

The strategic question that arises is: how to design capacity development systems that focus not only on individual training, but also on overall organizational capacity development? How to ensure that investment in human resource development provides sustainable returns, not lost due to job rotation or employee transfers?

e. Political Dimension: Tension between Local Democracy and Global Agenda

Findings on dependence on regional head commitment and tension between political cycles and SDGs horizon reveal fundamental dilemmas in sustainable development governance. On one hand, local democracy provides legitimacy to elected regional heads to determine development priorities according to their constituents' aspirations. On the other hand, global agendas like SDGs demand long-

term commitment transcending five-year political cycles. Okitasari et al. (2022) found that the COVID-19 pandemic caused priorities to shift from SDGs to economic and health recovery. This finding underscores that commitment to SDGs is contingent dependent on political, economic, and social contexts that can change rapidly. The critical question is: how to ensure continuity of commitment to long-term agendas like SDGs amid rapidly changing local political dynamics?

One important implication is the need for SDGs institutionalization that transcends personal leader commitment. SDGs must be integrated into planning, budgeting, and accountability systems that are permanent, so they are not easily ignored despite leadership changes. This requires strong regulatory support, transparent monitoring mechanisms, and active civil society participation to ensure accountability.

The still-limited legislative role also indicates gaps in checks and balances on SDGs implementation. The Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) should be able to become a critical partner pushing the executive to be consistent with SDGs commitments, but limited understanding and commitment of DPRD causes this function not to operate optimally. Strengthening legislative capacity on SDGs and sustainable development becomes an important agenda often overlooked.

f. Data Gaps: Assumption-based vs. Evidence-based Planning

Findings on information system dysfunction and data gaps underscore the paradox of development planning: in an era of abundant information, regional development planning faces scarcity of relevant and quality data to support decision-making. Asian Development Bank (2020) confirms data gaps as a serious challenge in SDGs implementation in Indonesian subnational governments. This research adds an important dimension: that data gaps are not just about availability, but also quality, currency, and utilization. Even when data is available, it is often not optimally used for planning and decision-making.

This creates what can be called "planning by assumption" rather than "evidence-based planning". Without accurate data on baseline conditions, trends, and gaps, target setting becomes speculative and designed programs may not match real community needs. Monitoring and evaluation also become difficult to conduct objectively, causing weak accountability. Investment in integrated and quality regional development information systems should be a strategic priority. However, in practice, budget allocation for information system development is often viewed as "overhead" less prioritized compared to direct development programs. This view ignores the fact that quality data and information are prerequisites for effective development programs.

Furthermore, information system development must be accompanied by strengthening official capacity in data literacy and analysis. Sophisticated information systems will not provide benefits if officials lack ability to use them to generate insights relevant to decision-making.

g. Theoretical Implications: Enriching Understanding of Global Agenda Localization

This research provides several important theoretical contributions to literature on global agenda localization and sustainable development governance.

First, this research enriches understanding of localization processes as complex socio-political translation. Previous literature tends to view localization as

relatively straightforward technical adaptation. This research shows that localization involves a series of complex negotiations between various institutional logics, actor interests, and contextual limitations. Regional bureaucracy is not merely a passive implementer, but an active translation actor that creatively and selectively translates global norms into local realities.

Second, findings on three maturity levels of integration—symbolic, instrumental, and transformative provide an analytical framework for understanding variation in policy implementation at the regional level. This framework shows that formal policy adoption does not automatically produce practice transformation, and that institutionalization processes occur gradually and unevenly. This framework can be used to analyze adoption and institutionalization processes of other global policies at the local level.

Third, identification of structural, cultural, and capacity dimensions as interrelated challenges strengthens the institutionalist perspective that organizational change requires holistic intervention. Focus solely on technical aspects (training, information systems) without changing incentive structures and organizational culture will not produce sustainable transformation. This finding confirms and expands Shahib & Abbas's (2025) analysis on the need for holistic approaches in SDGs institutionalization.

Fourth, this research reveals fundamental tension between global agenda universality and local context particularity. SDGs are designed as universal norms, but their implementation must be adapted to highly diverse local conditions. This tension creates dilemmas for local actors: to what extent can adaptation be done without losing the transformative essence of the global agenda? This dilemma requires further theoretical elaboration on how to bridge tension between global standardization and local responsiveness.

h. Practical Implications: Toward Comprehensive Capacity Strengthening Strategy

Based on analysis of multidimensional challenges faced by bureaucracy, a comprehensive, systematic, and sustainable capacity strengthening strategy is needed. This strategy must include interventions at various levels and dimensions:

1) Strengthening Coordination Institutions

Institutional fragmentation requires strengthening coordination mechanisms that are not only administrative but also have authority and capacity to ensure cross-sector integration. Several options to consider include: Formation of SDGs Coordination Team at the regency level led directly by regional head or deputy regional head, with membership from relevant OPD leaders, academics, and civil society; Strengthening Bappeda's role by providing stronger authority in coordinating cross-sector planning, supported by addition of human resources with special competencies in SDGs; Development of digital collaboration platform facilitating communication, information sharing, and cross-OPD program coordination; and Institutionalization of multi-stakeholder forums involving government, DPRD, civil society, private sector, and academics to ensure participation and accountability in SDGs implementation.

2) Planning and Budgeting System Reform

Planning and budgeting system rigidity requires reform enabling more flexible and outcome-oriented approaches, including: Development of performance-based budgeting linking budget allocation with measurable SDGs targets;

Creation of cross-sector funding mechanisms for programs requiring inter-OPD collaboration, for instance through "pooled funding" for certain strategic issues; Strengthening Musrenbang as meaningful participation mechanism, not just formal ritual, ensuring emerging aspirations are truly integrated in planning documents; Development of outcome-based monitoring and evaluation system focused on program impact on SDGs achievement, not just administrative completeness.

3) Systematic Official Capacity Development

Limited official capacity requires development approaches that are not only sporadic but systematic and sustainable, such as: Tiered training programs on SDGs, from awareness building for all officials to in-depth technical training for planning officials; Long-term technical assistance for OPDs in integrating SDGs into Strategic Plans, Work Plans, and Budget Work Plans, involving consultants or academics with expertise; Development of communities of practice among planners from various OPDs to share experiences, challenges, and innovative solutions; Peer learning exchanges with other regions having good practices in SDGs integration; and Strengthening knowledge management systems to document and share knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned in SDGs implementation.

4) Data and Information System Strengthening

Data gaps require strategic investment in development information systems, including: Development of integrated SDGs data platform integrating data from various sources (BPS, OPD, special surveys) and presenting it in easily accessible and understandable formats; Strengthening regional statistical capacity through collaboration with BPS and universities to collect unavailable SDGs indicator data; Development of interactive SDGs dashboard enabling stakeholders to monitor achievements and identify gaps in real-time; Data literacy training for officials to enable use of data for situation analysis, decision-making, and program evaluation; and Promotion of data-driven decision making culture through leadership example and incentive systems valuing evidence use in planning.

5) Organizational Culture Change

Cultural challenges require more fundamental long-term interventions, including: Reform of performance assessment system that not only assesses individual/sectoral target achievement but also contribution to collective outcomes and cross-sector collaboration; Development of reward and recognition system providing appreciation for innovation, collaboration, and SDGs target achievement; Promotion of transformative leadership modeling values of collaboration, results orientation, continuous learning, and accountability; Internal campaigns to build shared understanding of sustainable development vision and each official's role in realizing it; and Creation of safe spaces for experimentation where officials can try new approaches without fear of punishment if they fail, as long as failure becomes learning.

6) Political Dimension Strengthening

Dependence on political commitment requires institutionalization strategy transcending personal commitment, such as: Strengthening regional regulations on SDGs implementation through Regional Regulations or Regent Regulations providing clear legal mandate and budget allocation; Strengthening DPRD capacity on SDGs and sustainable development to effectively carry out legislation,

budgeting, and oversight functions; Transparency and public accountability through periodic publication of SDGs achievements and community participation mechanisms in monitoring; Strengthening civil society role as watchdog and critical partner of government in SDGs implementation; and Development of cross-party consensus on importance of sustainable development so commitment does not change due to leadership changes.

7) Support from Central and Provincial Government

Local governments cannot work alone in integrating SDGs. More systematic support from central and provincial government is needed: Provision of more operational technical guidelines on how to integrate SDGs into regional planning documents; Technical assistance and mentoring from relevant ministries/agencies and provincial government; Fiscal incentives for regions showing good performance in SDGs achievement, for instance through Special Allocation Fund (DAK) or Regional Incentive Fund (DID); Inter-regional learning sharing platform facilitated by central or provincial government; Harmonization of indicators and targets between national, provincial, and regency/city levels to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

i. Critical Reflection: Between Global Ambition and Local Reality

This research reveals fundamental tension inherent in global agenda localization processes: tension between SDGs transformative ambition and local limitation realities. SDGs demand transformation of development paradigm from business as usual toward truly sustainable and inclusive development. However, such transformation faces very deep structural, cultural, and political barriers. The reflective question that arises is: are SDGs ambitions realistic for local government contexts like Lamongan Regency facing capacity limitations, institutional fragmentation, and complex local political dynamics? Or do SDGs function as an "aspirational framework" providing direction and inspiration, although full achievement may require longer time than 2030?

Putra et al. (2024) found that conventional paradigms continue to dominate despite formal SDGs integration. This finding indicates that paradigm transformation does not occur automatically only with formal agenda adoption. Transformation requires deep social learning processes, incentive system changes, and consistent leadership all requiring long time.

However, time is something SDGs do not have enough of. With the 2030 target approaching, pressure to show results can push local governments to focus on "low-hanging fruits" easily achievable targets that may not be transformative. This risk needs to be recognized so SDGs localization efforts do not fall into symbolic achievements without substantial changes in development patterns.

On the other hand, SDGs can also become catalysts for long-needed bureaucratic reform. SDGs integration demands can become momentum to push changes in planning, budgeting, coordination, and accountability systems that are beneficial not only for SDGs but also for overall local government effectiveness.

j. Research Limitations and Future Research Agenda

As literature-based research, this study has limitations that need acknowledgment and become opportunities for further research.

First, methodological limitations. Although efforts have been made to triangulate sources, analysis produced is limited to interpretation of available

documents and literature. Field research with in-depth qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, or participant observation can provide more nuanced understanding of dynamics and dilemmas faced by bureaucracy in their daily work.

Second, generalization limitations. Focus on Lamongan Regency case provides rich contextual insights, but generalizing findings to other regions must be done carefully. Each region has different socio-economic, political, and institutional characteristics. Comparative research involving several regencies/cities with varying characteristics can provide more comprehensive understanding of factors affecting SDGs localization success.

Third, analysis scope limitations. This research focuses more on internal bureaucracy dimensions (structure, culture, capacity) and less explores external dimensions such as non-governmental actor roles, center-regional relationship dynamics more deeply, or influence of broader political-economic factors. Further research using political economy or governance approaches can reveal power and interest dimensions affecting SDGs localization processes.

Fourth, temporal limitations. This research analyzes situations at one particular time point. Longitudinal studies following SDGs integration processes over several years can provide better understanding of change dynamics, organizational learning, and planning practice evolution over time.

Based on these limitations, several further research agendas can be proposed: Bureaucracy ethnographic research to understand daily practices of officials in translating SDGs, negotiations and dilemmas they face, and adaptation strategies they develop**,** Multi-case comparative study comparing SDGs localization processes in several regencies/cities with different characteristics (advanced vs disadvantaged regions, Java vs outside Java, regions with progressive vs conventional leadership) to identify success-differentiating factors**,** Political economy analysis of how power distribution, actor interests, and local political-economic structures affect development priorities and resource allocation for SDGs**,** Impact evaluation of interventions to assess effectiveness of various capacity strengthening models (training, mentoring, information systems) on SDGs integration quality and indicator achievements**,** Action research involving collaboration between researchers and practitioners to develop, implement, and test innovations in SDGs-based development planning**,** Studies on non-state actor roles (civil society, private sector, academics) in pushing and monitoring SDGs implementation at local level**,** and Longitudinal analysis of SDGs integration practice evolution and organizational learning in regional bureaucracy over certain time periods

4. CONCLUSION
Bridging the Unbridged

This research reveals that the process of bridging the global vision of SDGs with local development action in Lamongan Regency is still far from optimal. Although formal commitment and integration efforts exist in planning documents, implementation remains partial, fragmented, and not yet transformative. Regional bureaucracy, which should be an effective bridge, faces various structural, cultural, capacity, and political challenges that hinder their effectiveness.

Research findings show that challenges faced are systemic and multidimensional they cannot be resolved with single interventions or partial

approaches. A comprehensive strategy is needed that intervenes in various dimensions simultaneously: institutional structure reform, organizational culture change, official capacity strengthening, data and information system improvement, and political dimension and accountability strengthening.

More fundamentally, the global-local bridging process requires paradigm transformation in how bureaucracy thinks and works from sectoral to holistic orientation, from procedural to results orientation, from silo culture to collaboration culture, and from resistance to change to culture of continuous learning and innovation. Such transformation does not happen overnight, but requires long-term commitment, transformative leadership, and systematic support from various parties.

SDGs, with all their transformative ambition, can become catalysts for long-needed bureaucratic reform. However, for this catalyst to work effectively, supportive conditions are required: strong political will, investment in capacity development, strengthening of governance systems and mechanisms, and active participation from all stakeholders. Only with comprehensive, systematic, and sustainable approaches can the bridge between global vision and local action truly materialize, and sustainable development can become reality, not merely rhetoric.

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The author fully realizes that this research still has various limitations, both in terms of scope, depth of analysis, and methodology. Constructive criticism and suggestions from readers are highly expected for improvement and development of future research. The author hopes that this research, with all its limitations, can contribute to the development of literature on SDGs localization and sustainable development governance in Indonesia, as well as provide practical insights for strengthening local government capacity in integrating and implementing sustainable development agendas.

May this research be beneficial for the advancement of science and sustainable development practice in Indonesia, particularly at the local government level. May Allah SWT always bless every effort we make in contributing to community welfare and life sustainability.

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