

Local Leadership in Implementing Public Digital Transformation towards Deli Serdang Smart City

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ABSTRACT

One of the challenges in encouraging digital transformation within local government is the commitment to developing a comprehensive digital ecosystem. This study aims to see how local leadership can integrate Smart City Policy in transforming regional government governance to be more efficient and fairer. This research is qualitative based with a descriptive approach. The research results show that digital transformation in the Deli Serdang Regency Government has yet to impact the smart city's main goals. The Smart City concept is no longer limited to just ICT diffusion, city leaders must innovate in core service areas in implementing the Smart City concept. However, there is still a silo mentality in regional apparatus organizations, which is shown by the resistance and rejection of e-gov, which is triggered by a lack of awareness and appreciation for e-gov, and unwillingness to share data and information, thus causing inefficient information flow to support public service performance. There is a need to incorporate knowledge of social values and unique institutional arrangements by encouraging partnership synergy in utilizing local leaders' resources and capacities in smart city implementation. Local leaders must restructure and act in line with core public values and combine the values of digitalization with a democratic context to achieve a prosperous society that prioritizes equality and participation.

Keywords: Smart City, Local Leadership, Digital Transformation, Deli Serdang

ABSTRAK

Salah satu tantangan dalam mendorong transformasi digital di pemerintahan daerah adalah komitmen pengembangan ekosistem digital yang komprehensif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana kepemimpinan daerah dapat mengintegrasikan Kebijakan Kota Cerdas dalam mentransformasi tata kelola pemerintahan daerah menjadi lebih efisien dan berkeadilan. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi digital di Pemerintah Kabupaten Deli Serdang belum berdampak pada tujuan utama smart city. Konsep Smart City tidak lagi sebatas difusi ICT saja, para pemimpin kota harus melakukan inovasi pada bidang layanan inti dalam penerapan konsep Smart City. Namun masih terdapat mentalitas silo dalam organisasi perangkat daerah yang ditunjukkan dengan adanya penolakan dan penolakan terhadap e-gov yang dipicu oleh rendahnya kesadaran dan apresiasi terhadap e-gov, serta keengganan untuk berbagi data dan informasi, sehingga menyebabkan tidak efisiennya arus informasi dalam menunjang kinerja pelayanan publik. Ada kebutuhan untuk menggabungkan pengetahuan tentang nilai-nilai sosial dan pengaturan kelembagaan yang unik dengan mendorong sinergi kemitraan dalam memanfaatkan sumber daya dan kapasitas pemimpin lokal dalam penerapan kota pintar. Para pemimpin daerah harus melakukan restrukturisasi dan bertindak sejalan dengan nilai-nilai inti publik dan menggabungkan nilai-nilai digitalisasi dengan konteks demokrasi untuk mencapai masyarakat sejahtera yang mengutamakan kesetaraan dan partisipasi.

Kata Kunci: Smart City, Kepemimpinan Lokal, Transformasi Digital, Deli Serdang

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INTRODUCTION

Cities facing some main challenges due to rapid urbanization, including the demand for resources, the impact of climate change, increased demand for city services such as transport, health, housing, and social services, and social cohesion issues (van de Berg, Braun, and van der Meer 2007; Cohen, 2006) which cause cities to transform forcefully and be more inclusive. Among many transformation fields, public administration is an important field and most impacted by the digital revolution. What was once a tangle of traditional processes is now starting to unravel, embracing digital networks that are redefining the way things work and innovating their interactions with audiences. The term 'digital transformation,' although associated with the private sector, now has an essential position in public policy.

The rapid development of internet and technology, has transform the government's mindset regarding providing public services to its citizens from the conventional to the smart model (F. Liu, Shi, dan Chen, 2021). On the one hand, smart and collaborative governance is at the heart of the smart city concept. On the other hand, smart cities receive less attention from stakeholders, and the government tends to focus on achieving achievements and how to do it. Since its inception, the concept of smart cities has developed significantly by integrating ICT, digital use, community involvement, and ways of managing government with complex structures involving city administration, state agencies, corporations, residents, and communities (Anand and Navio-Marco, 2018).

In the earliest conception of Smart City, information and communication technology (ICT) had a very important role. Smart cities can guide three-dimensional alignment between infrastructure, human resources, and governance, which will contribute to a balance between the potential risks and benefits of digital transformation in public policy (Rodriguez-Bolivar, 2015). The literature reveals that smart cities can become smart coordination cities because smart city management relies on collaborative processes and participation from various actors. (MPR Bolivar and Meijer 2016; Broccardo, Culasso, and Mauro, 2019). Moreover, in developed countries, ICT facilitates knowledge exchange and integration between government institutions and external partners, such as citizens (Parycek and Viale, 2017).

Cohen and Boyd (2013) define Smart Cities as a comprehensive and integrated approach to increasing the effectiveness of city operations, improving residents' quality of life, and stimulating the local economy. Cohen further defines a smart city as an Aspect-Weighted Intelligent urban environment that utilizes ICT intelligently and efficiently by integrating various resources, resulting in cost and energy savings and reducing the environmental impact of all innovation and economic support.

Smart cities are not just about the application of technology but rather how technology is used as part of a broader approach to help urban governance effectively functioning within individual systems and integrated as a whole. One of the goals of digital transformation is to increase operational efficiency through automation and process optimization. Automation involves using technology to perform tasks previously performed manually, such as data entry or scheduling, which can increase productivity and reduce errors. On the other hand, process optimization involves looking at how local



government works and simplifying and eliminating unnecessary steps. For example, an agency might use digital signatures to simplify its contract approval process, allowing faster approvals.

Smart cities build on existing city, so local authorities can set compelling goals and follow new and more effective paths to a more sustainable future. When society's needs are big, where society is always active 24 hours a day, the government must respond quickly too; that is an agile government. Leaders who fight for justice and equality for everyone are needed. Democratic leadership needs to be translated into action. Synergy, Advocacy, and Activism challenge local authorities to do the independent work required to lead digital change and provide a roadmap for developing the skills necessary to elevate public leadership roles to support goals related to justice and equality.

Leadership is critical in investigating smart cities. Understanding the types of directions, meanings, and followers that smart cities are emerging can better inform policy, practice, and critical debates around the role of smart cities. Technology and data are ubiquitous in life (Grossi & Pianezzi, 2017). Therefore, as a product of local leadership and authorities, smart cities must play a key role as decision-makers in integrating every service into community needs. Smart leadership is about supporting the collaborative efforts of all elements of the organization and citizens to address key priorities most effectively. Standards are needed as the guidance that local governments need to be successful. These standards contain best practice guidance and expert knowledge that guarantees quality and performance so that everything in government governance runs smoothly and safely. A smart city could provide solutions and choose the best one for the needs of its citizens and allow each element to integrate solutions from different source. As a result, standards can help eliminate risks, cut costs, and make it easier for governments to develop effective city management.

Research on digital transformation in local government and local leadership studies is still scarce and limited to implementation and evaluation. Researchers collect research that is considered relevant to the theme so that it can be used as a comparison and improve existing research. One of them is research by Riska Sarofah (2022:372) on Local Government Transformation: Implementation of Smart Governance Through Collaborative Concepts in Indonesia. This study shows that the challenge in implementing smart governance is the need for regional leaders to integrate smart city policies between agencies and institutions. Furthermore, no guidelines for implementing digital principles in public services are supported by collaborative work patterns. Other research is literature study by Prio Kustanto and Rakhmadi Rahman (2020) regarding SMART Integrated Leadership (SMILE) for Smart Cities. The results show that smart cities must have a solid governance-oriented approach that emphasizes the role of social capital and relationships in urban development, not only on the diffusion of ICT but also on looking at people's and community's needs.

This research aims to take us on a journey, exploring the diverse impacts, successful case studies, existing challenges, and the balance between the potential risks and benefits of digital transformation in public policy related to the implementation of smart cities in the Deli Serdang district, simply a shift in tools or methodology. Rather, it represents a



cultural shift that encourages governments to continue to innovate and adapt in response to rapid societal change. This shift stems from the combination of advanced technology, big data, and artificial intelligence, collectively changing traditional policymaking methodologies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is based on qualitative research with a descriptive approach (Creswell et al., 2007). The ability of qualitative research to capture how social interactions are routinely performed is one of the strengths of qualitative research (Denzin, 2009; Tracy, 2014). This research uses in-depth interviews, case studies, and observations to capture routine social interactions as data collection techniques. Research informants consist of stakeholders in regional apparatus organizations (OPD) with various functions and communities who feel the impact of the smart city program. In addition, the secondary data used are supporting documents in journals, publications, smart city master plan and roadmap books, statutory regulations, and evaluation reports. This research focuses on indicators of access, participation, control over resources and decision-making, and the benefits of smart city policies. The goal is to ensure inclusivity across the city and provide comprehensive data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Digital Transformation in Realizing Smart City Policy in Deli Serdang Regency

Smart cities should be managed, and there are new challenges when public management is applied in a digital context. This research analyzes how local governments integrate digital transformation to realize a smart city in the Deli Serdang regency. According to Cohen (2014), 3 dimensions are used for local governments to transform digitally, namely: online services, infrastructure, and open data.

Online service

Cohen measures the implementation of smart cities in providing public services based on how citizens can access government services via websites or applications and sees how the benefits of digital innovation provide broad and fair access for the people of the Deli Serdang district. By the end of 2022, the Regional Government of Deli Serdang Regency has built at least 153 programs to implement SMAT City, that could be seen in the table.1

Table 1. Realization of the Smart City Program in Deli Serdang Regency

Dimension	Number of Programs	Achieved	Haven't Achieved
Smart Governance	45	35	10
Smart Economy	31	16	15
Smart Branding	17	10	7
Smart Society	14	10	4
Smart Living	34	18	16
Smart Environment	12	9	3

Source: Deliserdang Regency Communication and Information Service



Based on Table 1, information is obtained that the number of programs that the Deli Serdang Regency Government has realized is 98 programs. Meanwhile, 55 applications have yet to be realized. Among all the programs/applications built by the Deli Serdang Regency Government, several problems have occurred. Based on the analysis results from the program, the high euphoria felt by regional heads was due to the inclusion of Deli Serdang Regency in the Top 100 cities/districts towards smart cities, thus encouraging the government to build many applications. However, the smart city program in the field should still be integrated, starting from planning to individual performance. There still must be more overlap in using smart city policies. Due to the regional head's demand, each OPD proposes a regional innovation program so that the OPD creates many applications. What more important than just building an application is how data could be integrated well to minimize data input and make service easier.

Infrastructure

Smart City must have a fundamental foundation; the base infrastructure is IT that meets and supports various needs and can adapt to technological advances, such as Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, measurement, and analytical tools and is supported by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (Machine Learning). Cohen measures infrastructure in the smart city dimension by looking at infrastructure components installed with Wi-Fi, Broadband, and sensors and seeing how services are integrated into one integrated service, especially for community health, population, and safety services. It could be seen from the research findings that the availability of infrastructure such as networks, Wi-Fi availability in public infrastructure, and data security supporting devices still needs to be completed. The Deliserdang Communications and Information Agency, as the leading smart city sector, understands that the availability of infrastructure is currently an obstacle to implementing smart cities in the Deli Serdang district.

Furthermore, it must be accepted that building optimal infrastructure requires much capital. Smart city's IT infrastructure must be agile and flexible. Infrastructure that cannot be expanded will be wasted as smart city capabilities expand. Although modular components are an important component in implementing smart cities in the Deli Serdang Regency, the amount of data used to drive these modular components must be able to increase along with the rise in data-generating traffic.

The ineffective implementation of Smart City in Deli Serdang Regency is also influenced by gaps in digital infrastructure in several regions and disparities in facilities and infrastructure owned by each OPD, resulting in a lack of service system capabilities that the OPD can accommodate.

Open Data

Infrastructure provides a common foundation and offers advanced capabilities. Open Data weighs heavily on the success of Smart City projects, especially garnering public trust. Cohen sees open data based on the quantity/amount available to the public. However, researchers see that ease of access to data sources likewise influences the assessment of a city's data openness. The research results found that the data in a government portal needed more information regarding institutions and institutional work programs. It is also seen that



several regional apparatus websites do not update information according to community needs, so the information conveyed could be more dynamic. The interactive column only displays public complaints and does not display responses from competent web admins, officials, or bureaucratic staff. The Department of Communication, Informatics, Statistics and Coding (Diskominfo) of the Deli Serdang regency, specifically the Information Dissemination field, is responsible for Open data in Deli Serdang Regency. Open data has yet to become a Deli Serdang Government initiative to increase community participation in monitoring and providing input to the government. Low integration and interoperability of systems and data between Regional Apparatus will weaken the SPBE index value. Open data influences transparency and democratic control, increases public participation, strengthens independent repositories, and gives birth to innovations.

Understanding the Public Digital Transformation Landscape

The emergence of digital technology has triggered major changes in the public policy landscape. Digital transformation is a catalyst that can redefine government operations from data collection and decision-making to service delivery and public engagement. Navigating the complexities of digital transformation in the Deli Serdang district takes much work. It requires aligning business decisions from policymakers with strategic direction derived from society's ever-growing demands for fast and low-cost services. A complicated alignment process is often a scourge for the Deli Serdang district government where the results are not aligned with targets revenue, community participation, and stakeholder expectations, for example, serving as a clear road map to success or failure.

Smart cities require leaders who understand how smart cities work and must be able to make decisions based on real-time analytical data. An important part of any organization's digital transformation vision is collecting, storing, and analyzing large amounts of data to gain valuable insights about citizen behavior trends in public services. For example, regional tools can track people's browsing habits and accessibility to identify patterns and optimize their websites and marketing strategies.

However, in reality, it could be seen that there is still a high sectoral ego in the management of Smart City in Deli Serdang district, which seen from the hesitation in coordination between institutions in collecting data needs, resulting in miscommunication from each OPD in supporting data integration. Limited control vision mechanisms and coordination between OPDs at the level of government raise efficiency problems and participatory limitations. The lack of cooperation within the government and lack of coordination between OPDs supports the implementation of rigid structures that do not encourage open debate (Sharifi et al., 2010). It is reflected in the need for more development of appropriate government ICT policies to encourage the dissemination of information, appropriate planning for adoption and socialization of ICT network infrastructure development, and increasing productivity and creativity. It is influenced by a need for more synchronization of field data with data published by each OPD or government website.

Thus, the management of our smart city must prioritize appropriate data transparency and policy independence, be comprehensive, and not depend on the influence of someone or something, but must be guided by building public trust, and effective communication is the key. One of the obstacles of coordination between agencies is the dual function of



bureaucracy, which causes bureaucracy to overlap (Focus between the Ministry of Communication and Information, Bappenda, and Bappedalitbang).

Generally, the Deli Serdang regional government still considers a smart city the same as creating a website or application. As a result, the Deli Serdang government has flocked to create websites or applications to get the title of best innovation. However, the community's strategic needs in obtaining public services still need to be recognized. The number of applications available cannot be a benchmark for the government's success in determining the performance of public service delivery. Smart Cities should be used to demonstrate the development of completely new areas by using smart ICT to design and provide comprehensive solutions to its residents (Webb Henderson, 2015). The success of the Deli Serdang Government in implementing smart cities is not just about how much innovation there is in the form of digital or internet-based applications, but success in managing smart cities must look at how much impact regional innovation has on accommodating community needs, such as the level of community accessibility to applications compared to manual one.

Furthermore, to successfully navigate this landscape, a culture of openness to change, combined with strong project management skills, are beneficial and materially necessary. Creating a culture of change transformational shifts in any organization do not happen overnight. It requires local authorities to instill a change-friendly culture that treats change not as an occasional nuisance but as an inherent and constant business function. That perspective requires collaboration between all levels of the organization, from the digital development team, Command Live Center, and individual service owners to the layperson, senior leadership team, and CEO. This holistic approach not only fuels transformation but also ensures its sustainable implementation.

Local Leadership Commitment to Transformation

Public leadership is disparate from leadership in market-driven organizations. Digital transformation must be built based on core public values and provide results such as democratic legitimacy and public trust in the benefits of services received (Joyce, 2012). Maintaining high public trust in local democracy and the provision of welfare in the digital era, need to analyze and develop a new type of leadership in providing change because the organization currently influences regional leadership in digital transformation. There is a need for an analysis of leadership styles that combines the individual perspective of the public leaders with the perspective of the situation in which they act (Alvesson et al., 2017; Askim & Baldersheim, 2012).

Smart city implementation in Deli Serdang Regency shows low leadership commitment in their duties, especially in collaboration and communication relationships. One of the obstacles to communication between agencies is the dual function of bureaucracy, which causes bureaucracy to overlap, especially in regional apparatus organizations with the authority to run their own smart city operating systems.

There is a silo mentality in regional apparatus organizations in Deli Serdang Regency. They tend to be reluctant to share resources and ideas with OPD or other departments. They feel capable of solving problems with solutions they develop themselves. The various problems they face are often related to performance and problems at other institutions.



Likewise, some OPDs still use third parties to build their systems and servers. Like Bappenda, which handles tax matters, it will put more effort into protecting its data. Many regional officials still think that if, for example, they collaborate with the Communications and Information Service and place their servers with Kominfostan, there will be suspicions, meaning there is fear that Kominfo can intervene in their data. Differences in viewpoints and fear of intervention make integration and interoperability an urgent problem in allowing unclear data integration between different institutions/OPD units. Nevertheless, changes are unpredictable. Involving a third party in a database without a contract will be vulnerable to changes at any time, disrupting data flow and usage.

Moreover, in implementing smart city technologies effectively, concerted efforts are required to standardize data formats and protocols. It will pave the way for smooth data exchange and integration across multiple platforms, consolidating and optimizing shared infrastructure and services.

In addition, to successfully implement smart cities, regional leadership must assume overall competence in change management, especially in overcoming silos between institutions. Because organizations rely on the collaboration of each institution, each department within the institution must be motivated to focus on its responsibilities and core functions collectively, but separately without excluding other departments so as not to hinder personalization and value creation for service users.

A silo mentality will hinder the development of partnerships, where collaboration between departments and OPD will be limited. The transfer of information and knowledge between institutions will be hampered, even though the information and knowledge possessed by a division can be crucial for other institutions in developing smart city management. Intersectoral partnerships are critical to the success of a smart city strategy. Local leadership support for smart city initiatives should encourage collaborative partnerships in a Penta helix with local governments, researchers, small businesses, and industry leaders.

Lack of Scalability Arising from the Focus on Displaying Quick Wins

Leadership in the local digital transformation towards a Deli Serdang Smart City must be realized through strategic decisions and learning in many practices, such as information security policies, data integration, information access, and the benefits of smart city goals. Based on the findings, researchers gathered information related to Smart City implementation to oversee the integration, synchronization, and synergy program between Smart City development planning in the Deli Serdang regency. The results show that the regional government still needs to monitor and evaluate the accelerated implementation of the Smart Masterplan document. Document the city government and RPJMD in monitoring and evaluating the achievement of short-term program goals, including the Quick Win program, and ensuring that smart city development is effective, efficient and effective, comprehensive, participatory, and sustainable. The results of the smart city implementation can be seen in the table 2.



Table 2. Results of Smart City Implementation in Deliserdang Regency

Dimensions	Descriptions	Conclusion
Policy	Availability of legal documents for Smart City planning	Enough
	Synchronize Smart City development with the RPJMD and Smart City institutional activities and the availability of regulations that support Smart City development	Not Enough
Institutional	The existence and activities of Smart City management institutions (Smart City Council and Smart City Implementation Team)	Enough
	Regional financial capacity and availability of Smart City development budget	Not Enough
Infrastructure	Development of supporting infrastructure	Not Enough
Smart City Dimensions	Changes in the dimensions of smart governance, smart economics, smart society, smart environment, smart living, and smart branding before and after Smart City implementation, as well as community engagement in the Smart City program	Not Enough
	Participation of the community in the Smart City program	
Constraint	Formulation, implementation and sustainability of short-term, medium-term and long-term programs as well as the Quick Win program and identification and risk mitigation for Quick Win.	Better
	Identify and mitigate risks to Quick Win	Enough

Source: (Processed by Author, 2023)

From table 2 above, several notes were found regarding areas for improvement in the use of the application without being accompanied by an evaluation of its use. There are still barriers in the provision and performance of infrastructure, namely, 1) Synchronization of Smart City development with the RPJMD and Smart City institutional activities and the availability of regulations that support Smart City development still need to be improved. 2) The development of supporting infrastructure is inadequate, characterized by a substandard network; 3) Changes before and after the implementation of Smart City in the dimensions of smart governance, smart economy, smart society, smart environment, smart living, and smart branding, as well as community participation in the Smart City program are also still lacking. 4) Lack of socialization of application use to the public. Furthermore, Deli Serdang Regency is divided into three regions, which become obstacles in developing smart city services because some community demographics in areas are difficult to reach, and the infrastructure network is lagging or is not optimal. There has been no follow-up in monitoring the Smart City Masterplan and in carrying out its development, so in our opinion, there is a need for socialization of applications, HR management, and SOPs (for example, in the smart environment dimension), and the need to develop centers of excellence in areas that are geographically difficult to reach for development—infrastructure with approaches and methods that are appropriate to the conditions.

Regarding the development of Smart Government in Deli Serdang Regency, it still needs to show better performance. Several things need to be noted by local governments, including where at the emerging stage, the Deli Serdang government only displays the government website as an alternative source of information. No updated information meets



the community's needs, so the information conveyed could be more dynamic. The interactive column only displays public complaints and does not display responses from competent web admins, officials, or bureaucratic staff. Most discussion forums are still empty, and there is no activity. Some regional devices add website space but have no activity on it. Chat facilities are often only used between users, not as a means of dialogue between citizens and government officials about important matters such as public services; this confusion causes people to come to the website to get accurate information.

All digital innovations in the Deli Serdang district have yet to reach the transactive stage in supporting public services. Some websites/applications that display public service “menus” provide information on service requirements and procedures. Again, this proves that the formation of transactive stage still far from the ideals of developing a smart government in the Deli Serdang regency.

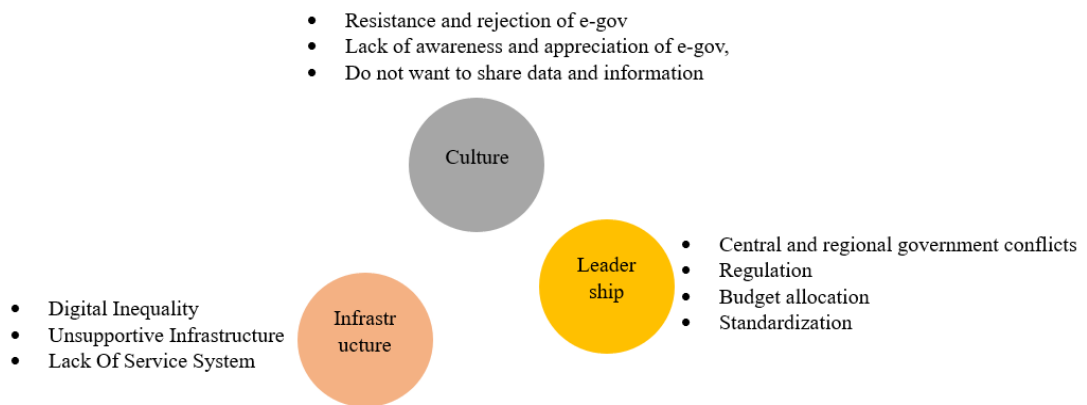


Figure 1. Problems of Implementing Smart Government in Deliserdang Regency
(processed by author, 2023)

Based on the figure 1, smart mobility must be capable enough to accommodate the population's needs. This finding is based on an evaluation of the implementation of the Deli Pedia application. Only 29.5% of the population perceives easy accessibility as assisted by applying digital information. However, it has yet to accommodate the community's needs because the Delipedia facility not fully provide accurate information yet. Apart from that, a smart economy with the Gallery P3UD innovation supports SME activities. This application contains prices for MSME products, but it must still be significant in accommodating residents' business information and support needs. Only 13.5% of the population has a positive perception of this. Even though the percentage of poor people in Deli Serdang Regency in 2022 is around 4.01% and the Human Development Index is 75.53, the existence of a smart economy has not become the main pillar in improving community welfare yet. The Deliserdang district government still needs to optimize marketing and programs related to the smart economy to increase the competitiveness of more advanced MSMEs. Likewise, uneven socialization delays the implementation of smart economy policies to the community and related parties and a lack of readiness of MSME actors in smart economy programs to increase competitiveness.



The strongest thing in the implementation of the smart city in Deli Serdang district is the smart environment image (Jumpa Madu) because, through this application, people can exchange rubbish or used goods for money that can be used to pay for electricity, credit, internet, and others. However, its implementation has yet to show significant results, even though the scope of implementation was still within the Lubuk Pakam sub-district. The number of people who used the service or accessed the Meet Honey application was minimal, only around 6 people in 8 months, so that the percentage could have been higher. Meanwhile, for operations compared to the definitive area, Deli Serdang Regency only covers 1 in 22 sub-districts, or still around 1%. In other words, implementing a smart environment does not indicate the effectiveness of sustainable environmental development.

The hurdles that cause ineffectiveness in most smart city operations in Deli Serdang Regency may be attributed to leadership characteristics. This factor is influenced by regional leaders' inability to regulate interactions between institutions, and regional officials' weak commitment as evidenced by a lack of awareness and appreciation for e-gov, as well as conflicts between central government and regional government policies, regulations that are still insufficiently supportive, insufficient budget allocations, and unclear system standards, all of which are determined by leaders' commitment. Much evidence shows that the dedication of regional governments has a big impact on the success of digital innovation in the regions.

CONCLUSIONS

Implementing a Smart City in Deli Serdang Regency has yet to fully touch all community needs. The availability of public service innovations in smart cities still needs to show that smart city implementation moves towards core public values. The availability of digital services still needs to be an option for the community due to the low level of socialization carried out by local governments, resulting in confusion and resistance at the community level. Smart cities require a government that is agile and able to respond to each community's needs quickly and nimbly. It is shown by the smart city command center, which still needs to be able to control data in an integrative manner, and the availability of government websites and public service applications is just a building that aims to fulfill ranking status in an outstanding government. The challenges that must be faced by the Deliserdang district government, through the regent and regional apparatus, must have harmonious policies and strong commitment.

In all interviews, respondents emphasized that digitalization is inevitable and requires adaptation that examines many aspects. Most respondents were unsure or felt that regional leadership competence needed to be improved to lead digital transformation in the Deli Serdang district. Likewise, inadequate digital infrastructure and inflexible legacy systems emerge as major obstacles to achieving scalability, impacting Deliserdang district's development and growth targets.

The researcher appreciate Deli Serdang Regency's implementation of the smart city policy, but efforts are needed to increase innovation and resources in understanding the objectives of the smart city policy. Increasing the program is, of course, not only to get an excellent rating score from the ministry but to act in line with the public's core values and to combine the values of digitalization with a welfare development context that prioritizes



equality, participation, and collaboration of institutions in building consensus. The long-term solution to practical problems in implementing smart cities may be reorganizing the division of tasks and responsibilities between public agencies in leading digital public transformation in the Deli Serdang district.

Apart from that, the researcher note several things that are the government's focus in implementing a smart city, namely the need to form regular smart city forums, especially increasing partnerships with the private sector to increase non-APBD financing sources in implementing a Smart City. This lack of understanding of regional innovation needs to be followed up by increasing smart city outreach to the public and the private sector. In addition, improving the integration and interoperability of systems and data between Regional Apparatus must be done to increase the SPBE index value in realizing One Data Indonesia (SDI).

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