Government Strategies in Incorporating Public Aspirations into Development Planning in Balikpapan City

Ierene Patra Buana [1], Saipul [2], Iman Surya [3], Zekeri Momoh [4]

[1,2,3] *Magister Public Administration Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,* Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia
[4] *Regional Research Associate (RRA),* Indo Pacific Studies Center, Australia.
Corresponding Author: Ierene Patra Buana Email: ierenepatra@gmail.com

Abstract. The urgency of this research arises from persistent concerns that formal participatory mechanisms in local development planning often prioritize procedural compliance over the substantive integration of public aspirations, thereby limiting policy legitimacy and equity. This study aims to examine how public aspirations are incorporated into regional development planning in Balikpapan City through hybrid participatory strategies. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative simulation using the Slovin formula to estimate representative participation patterns with qualitative thematic analysis based on the Miles and Huberman framework to interpret institutional processes and outcomes. The findings reveal that participation effectiveness cannot be assessed merely by attendance rates or the volume of proposals submitted, but rather by the extent to which community aspirations are substantively integrated into official planning documents. The results demonstrate that institutional capacity plays a decisive role, with better-resourced districts achieving higher integration rates, while socioeconomic disparities systematically disadvantage marginalized groups. In addition, infrastructure-related proposals dominate the thematic distribution of integrated aspirations, indicating a policy bias that may underrepresent social, educational, health, and environmental concerns. The study concludes that inclusive and sustainable development planning requires continuous institutional capacity building, transparent prioritization mechanisms, and equity-sensitive participatory frameworks. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative hybrid-participation framework that simultaneously captures procedural participation and substantive policy integration. This study contributes to the literature and policy practice by providing an empirically grounded model for evaluating participatory effectiveness beyond symbolic inclusion, offering actionable insights for local governments seeking to enhance democratic governance and equitable development planning.

Keywords: Community Participation; Development Planning; Participatory Governance; Local Development Planning; Musrenbang

INTRODUCTION

Regional development planning functions as a strategic instrument through which local governments seek to enhance community welfare and ensure that public resources are allocated in a responsive and targeted manner. The success of development is determined not only by the availability of budgets and material resources but also by the extent to which public aspirations are effectively captured, filtered, and translated into concrete planning decisions. Public aspirations—reflecting citizens' needs, expectations, and priorities—constitute a critical foundation for designing policies that are both legitimate and contextually relevant. In Balikpapan City, the articulation and incorporation of public input have become an essential component of

participatory and sustainable regional development strategies (Khalis et al., 2025). As a rapidly developing urban centre, Balikpapan provides a particularly salient context for examining how participatory planning can be institutionalized in practice.

As one of the metropolitan cities in East Kalimantan, Balikpapan is characterised by complex social, economic, and cultural dynamics that require adaptive, inclusive, and participatory planning mechanisms (Handini et al., 2025; Ibrahim & Olii, 2025; Tamsil et al., 2025). Regional autonomy has granted city governments broader authority to formulate development plans that are aligned with local characteristics, enabling them to adjust development priorities according to public aspirations, geographic conditions, and specific socio-economic needs (Afrinda et al., 2025; Purwadi, 2013; Rohim, 2024). In this context, aspirations from diverse social groups must be systematically collected to ensure that development programmes address real problems encountered on the ground (Mastura Karateng et al., 2025; Mulia et al., 2025). Existing studies on local democracy and participatory governance emphasise that such arrangements not only enhance accountability but also strengthen the quality of decision-making at the local level (Cinta Ezatillah Putri & Hambali, 2025; Dyas Puzi Rahmadina, 2025; El Adawiyah & Ramadhan, 2020).

Despite the proliferation of participatory discourse and regulatory frameworks, persistent challenges remain in translating the normative ideal of participation into effective planning practice. A key unresolved problem concerns how local governments can design strategies that systematically capture public aspirations and align them with medium- and long-term development priorities, such as infrastructure provision, improvement of public services, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Balikpapan, this challenge is amplified by rapid urban growth and socio-economic differentiation, which generate highly diverse and sometimes competing demands from citizens. Consequently, the core research problem of this study is how the Balikpapan City Government can structure participatory mechanisms in such a way that public aspirations are not only heard but meaningfully integrated into regional development planning documents.

To respond to these challenges, various general solutions have been introduced in both policy practice and academic literature. Public participation in development planning has been promoted as an important indicator of healthy local democracy, with structured deliberative forums such as the *Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan* (Musrenbang) serving as formal mechanisms to accommodate citizens' aspirations (Cinta Ezatillah Putri & Hambali, 2025; Dyas Puzi Rahmadina, 2025; El Adawiyah & Ramadhan, 2020). The Musrenbang allows residents, community leaders, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to provide input that is

subsequently integrated into regional planning documents, thereby reinforcing transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the planning process (Nurakhmadi et al., 2024; Zakiya Citrani, 2025). In parallel, local governments have increasingly experimented with online platforms, public surveys, and consultation forums to extend participation to previously underrepresented groups, including the urban poor, residents in peripheral areas, youth, and persons with disabilities (Iskandar et al., 2024; Rahmania et al., 2024). These approaches represent important advances, yet their effectiveness in ensuring the substantive integration of public aspirations into authoritative planning instruments remains mixed.

Beyond these general mechanisms, previous scientific literature has proposed more specific solutions for enhancing the role of public aspirations in the planning and budgeting cycle. Setiyowati and Ispriyarso (2019) highlight preventive efforts to oversee regional budgets (*APBD*) through the systematic collection of public aspirations during discussions of the Draft Regional Budget (*RAPBD*) and the Musrenbang, suggesting that participatory budget oversight can reduce the risk of misallocation and increase budget transparency. Similarly, Trisna Widianti and Utari Dewi (2019) identify critical shortcomings in existing Musrenbang practices, noting that these forums have not yet been fully capable of providing effective solutions to the challenges of planning annual development programmes. Their findings underscore the need to improve not only the procedural aspects of participation but also the substantive linkage between citizen input and the final list of development priorities. In a related vein, Riansyah et al. (2023) argue that the Musrenbang can evolve into an adaptive solution for local development planning, provided that adequate synchronisation, coordination, and integration are established across different levels of government and sectors.

However, the application of these specific solutions has remained limited and fragmented. Studies focusing on participatory oversight of budgets and the Musrenbang often concentrate on particular stages of the planning or budgeting cycle, without offering a comprehensive examination of how aspirations travel across instruments and institutions—from initial articulation in deliberative forums to their eventual codification in planning documents such as the Regional Government Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Daerah*, RKPD) and annual priority lists (Setiyowati & Ispriyarso, 2019; Trisna Widianti & Utari Dewi, 2019; Riansyah et al., 2023). Moreover, existing works tend to emphasise legal-normative compliance and procedural participation, paying comparatively less attention to institutional capacity, inter-organisational coordination, and the interface between offline and digital channels. This raises questions regarding the robustness, consistency, and equity of the strategies currently used to capture and integrate public aspirations.

A broader reading of the literature reveals that, while there has been significant progress in conceptualising and promoting participatory planning at the local level, several important gaps persist. Many studies on regional autonomy and participatory development planning emphasise the formal expansion of local authority and the existence of participatory mechanisms, yet they often neglect the micro-level dynamics of how aspirations are prioritised, filtered, and translated into concrete programmes (Afrinda et al., 2025; Purwadi, 2013; Rohim, 2024; Fadhil Rachmad et al., 2023). Likewise, research on participatory forums and community involvement in development planning frequently focuses on levels of attendance or procedural inclusiveness, with less systematic attention given to the degree of integration of public input into final planning outputs, the role of institutional capacity at the district or neighbourhood level, and the influence of national regulatory frameworks such as Government Regulation No. 40 of 2006 on the procedures for preparing national and regional development plans (Dianto et al., 2025). These gaps point to the need for empirical studies that trace the full cycle of aspiration capture and integration within a clearly defined local government context.

This study seeks to address these gaps by proposing a more integrated, hybrid perspective on participatory development planning in Balikpapan City. It departs from the hypothesis that the effectiveness of capturing and integrating public aspirations is shaped not only by the availability of participatory forums, such as the Musrenbang and public consultation meetings, but also by the interaction between digital and offline channels, the coherence of planning regulations, and the institutional capacity of local government agencies (Dian Feradiah & Agus Prianto, 2024; Rahmania et al., 2024). The novelty of this research lies in its analytical focus on strategies for capturing public aspirations across multiple channels and in its systematic assessment of the extent to which these aspirations are reflected in key planning documents, particularly the RKPD and annual development priority documents. The scope of the study is limited to the participatory mechanisms coordinated by the Balikpapan City Government and their linkage to formal regional development planning instruments within the Indonesian regulatory framework.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to examine and evaluate the strategies employed by the Balikpapan City Government to capture and integrate public aspirations into regional development planning. More specifically, the research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How does the Balikpapan City Government design and implement strategies to capture public aspirations in the regional development planning process, particularly through mechanisms such as the Musrenbang, online platforms, and public consultation forums? (2) To what extent are these strategies effective in ensuring that public aspirations are accommodated and reflected in regional development planning documents, including the RKPD and annual

development priority documents? and (3) What institutional and contextual factors enable or constrain the effective integration of public aspirations into formal planning outputs at the city level? By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to the broader theoretical and empirical debates on participatory governance and regional development planning in decentralised settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Type and Approach

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of how public aspirations are captured and integrated into regional development planning in Balikpapan City. The qualitative descriptive design was chosen to enable a rich exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by actors involved in participatory planning processes. In order to complement and strengthen the qualitative findings, the study was supported by an illustrative quantitative component, particularly in determining the number of citizen respondents involved through survey-based data collection.

Research Site and Subjects

The research was conducted in Balikpapan City, East Kalimantan, as one of the metropolitan areas that has implemented various participatory mechanisms in development planning. The primary research subjects consisted of local government officials involved in the planning process, community leaders, representatives of civil society organisations, and citizens participating in Musrenbang and other consultation forums. These subjects were selected because of their direct involvement in the articulation, aggregation, and translation of public aspirations into regional development planning documents.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

To determine an adequate number of community respondents for the survey component, this study employed the Slovin formula (Antoro, 2024), namely:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where n is the sample size, N is the total population, and e represents the allowable margin of error. The application of this formula enabled the researcher to determine a sample size that is statistically acceptable for representing the broader population, while at the same time remaining manageable given the limitations of research resources. The sampling procedure combined

purposive sampling for key informants (government officials, community leaders, and civil society representatives) with probability-based sampling for citizen respondents, in order to capture both depth and breadth of perspectives.

Materials and Instruments

The main materials used in this study consisted of regional development planning documents, including the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD), annual development priority documents, Musrenbang reports, and relevant legal and regulatory instruments at the national and regional levels. Data collection instruments included semi-structured interview guides for in-depth interviews, observation protocols for participatory observation during planning forums, and structured questionnaires for the survey component. These instruments were developed to systematically capture information on the mechanisms, experiences, and perceived effectiveness of strategies for capturing public aspirations.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation study. In-depth interviews were conducted with local government officials, community leaders, and representatives of civil society organisations to explore their views on the design, implementation, and challenges of participatory mechanisms. Participatory observation was carried out during Musrenbang sessions and other public consultation forums to document interaction dynamics, patterns of participation, and decision-making processes. In addition, official documents—such as planning documents, regulations, and reports—were systematically reviewed to trace the formal integration of public aspirations into regional development planning. The survey component was administered to citizen respondents to capture broader perceptions regarding access to participatory channels and the extent to which their aspirations were accommodated.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted interactively following the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which encompasses three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved organising, coding, and categorising interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to identify key themes related to aspiration capture strategies, institutional capacity, and integration into planning documents. Data display was carried out through matrices, charts, and narrative summaries to facilitate systematic comparison across informants, instruments, and levels of analysis. Conclusion drawing and

verification were performed continuously throughout the research process, allowing the findings to emerge inductively while remaining grounded in empirical evidence. Descriptive statistics were used for the survey data to summarise respondents' characteristics and key perception indicators.

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from different data sources (interviews, observations, documents, and survey results) and different categories of respondents (government officials, community leaders, civil society representatives, and citizens). Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected key informants to confirm the accuracy of the researchers' understanding. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues was used to critically review the coding scheme, thematic structure, and emerging conclusions. In addition, an audit trail was maintained through systematic documentation of research procedures, decisions, and analytical steps, thereby enhancing transparency and enabling the verification of the research process. Through these measures, the study aimed to produce findings that comprehensively and reliably represent the social realities surrounding the capture and integration of public aspirations in regional development planning in Balikpapan City.

RESULT

The findings of this study provide an in-depth review of the strategies implemented by the Balikpapan City Government to capture public aspirations and the effectiveness of their implementation in regional development planning. The discussion aims to demonstrate how formal and informal mechanisms are utilized simultaneously to strengthen public participation. The presentation of the results focuses on the relationship between policies, participatory instruments, and their impact on the quality of regional development planning documents.

The analysis of the findings was conducted using a qualitative approach that combines field observations with academic literature, providing a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the phenomenon of public participation (Hendren et al., 2023; Schroeter et al., 2016; Wehn et al., 2015). The discussion not only highlights the success of participatory strategies but also addresses existing structural and cultural barriers. A primary emphasis is placed on the extent to which public aspirations are truly integrated into development policies that prioritize the interests of the wider community.

The results and discussion are structured to illustrate the dynamic relationship between the local government as policymakers and the community as channelers of aspirations (López-Muñoz & Ingelaere, 2021, 2021). Public engagement is viewed not merely as an administrative procedure but as a fundamental element of sustainable governance. This study reinforces the understanding that effective development can only be achieved when the planning process is based on the principles of inclusivity, accountability, and alignment with the real needs of the community.

Strategies of the Balikpapan City Government in Capturing Public Aspirations through Musrenbang and Other Mechanisms

The Balikpapan City Government places the Development Planning Conference as the main instrument for capturing community aspirations. This forum is conducted in stages, starting from the village and sub-district levels up to the city level, allowing a systematic filtering process of aspirations. Musrenbang is positioned not only as a formal mechanism but also as a deliberative arena where citizens, community leaders, civil society organizations, and private sector representatives can voice their views and proposals. This mechanism is essential as it accommodates diverse perspectives that contribute to the formulation of more inclusive development programs (Arocena et al., 2015; Pouw & Gupta, 2017, 2017).

The presence of Musrenbang in Balikpapan has been further strengthened by the introduction of alternative mechanisms, particularly through the use of information technology. The local government has developed digital platforms that allow residents to submit aspirations online, either via official applications or web-based public surveys (Aguerre & Bonina, 2024; Falco & Kleinhans, 2018; Wilson et al., 2019). This approach not only broadens the reach of participation but also ensures that previously marginalized groups—such as youth, people with disabilities, and residents in suburban areas—can have their voices heard (Karuga et al., 2023; King et al., 2020, 2021). The use of digital technology also enhances transparency since community proposals can be electronically documented and traced through subsequent planning stages.

The integration of Development Planning Conference with digital mechanisms reflects a hybrid strategy that combines face-to-face forums with technology-driven approaches (Depaoli et al., 2020). This strategy creates a more dynamic two-way communication channel between the government and citizens. The process also strengthens public accountability, as every proposal submitted has the opportunity to be considered objectively. Community involvement through these dual pathways ultimately provides stronger legitimacy for development planning documents, particularly the Regional Government Work Plan.

To reinforce this strategic explanation, the study also employs a quantitative approach using the Slovin formula. With the total population of Balikpapan assumed to be 700,000 (N), and a margin of error of 5% (e = 0.05), the minimum required sample size can be calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \cdot e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{700,000}{1 + 700,000 \cdot (0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{700,000}{1 + 700,000 \cdot 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{700,000}{1 + 1,750}$$

$$n = \frac{700,000}{1,751} \approx 399.77$$

The result shows that at least 400 respondents are required to represent the population of Balikpapan proportionally. This sample size is considered sufficient to provide relevant quantitative insights into the effectiveness of the government's strategies in capturing public aspirations. The quantitative data derived from this sampling technique can be used to measure the level of community participation, identify dominant social groups involved in articulating aspirations, and examine the variation of needs across different areas of Balikpapan.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more comprehensive understanding. On one hand, Musrenbang and digital mechanisms explain the normative and procedural dimensions of public participation. On the other hand, survey results derived from Slovin's calculation provide a strong empirical foundation to assess the representativeness of public participation. The integration of these approaches demonstrates that the strategies of the Balikpapan City Government in capturing public aspirations are not merely symbolic but are deliberately designed to be measurable, inclusive, and oriented toward the actual needs of society.
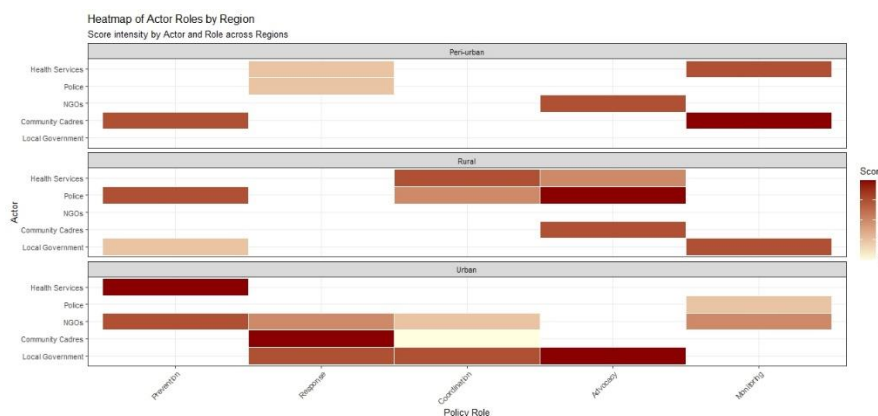

Heatmap of Actor Roles by Region
Score intensity by Actor and Role across Regions

Figure 1. District-Wise (Aggregate) Participation Index with Channel-Level Jitter

Source: Data Processed by the Author

The figure 1, titled "Participation Index by District (Aggregated) with Channel-Level Jitter," presents the distribution of community participation in Balikpapan City across sub-districts. The participation index was calculated through weighted contributions of three main channels: the Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Musrenbang), digital mechanisms, and alternative offline mechanisms. Musrenbang was assigned the highest weight as the formal forum, while digital and alternative channels contributed additional dimensions to the measurement. The visualization demonstrates significant variation among sub-districts, indicating disparities in levels of public engagement in development planning. Districts with greater internet accessibility tend to show higher mean participation scores, reflected in the clustering of jittered points at the upper end of the index. This pattern aligns with the theoretical assumption that information technology infrastructure and digital channels broaden opportunities for citizens to express their aspirations effectively.

Another component of the first figure is the dashed line, which illustrates the average perception of how well community aspirations are integrated into development planning documents, particularly the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD). This line serves as an additional indicator that reveals whether participation levels correlate with perceptions of policy responsiveness. A positive trend is evident, as districts with higher participation indices also tend to record stronger perceptions of integration. This suggests that the more actively communities engage through Musrenbang or digital platforms, the greater the legitimacy they attribute to local government policies. Accordingly, the visualization strengthens the argument that Balikpapan's hybrid strategy for capturing public aspirations significantly contributes to enhancing the quality of governance and planning outcomes (Ariyaningsih & Shaw, 2022).

The second figure, titled "Correlation Matrix (Selected Indicators)," provides a representation of relationships among key variables, including public participation, perception of integration, civil group membership, internet access, and trust in local government. The correlation heatmap visualizes both the strength and direction of these associations. A notably strong positive correlation emerges between the participation index and perception of integration, indicating that higher engagement across different participation channels is associated with stronger beliefs that citizens' aspirations are incorporated into official planning documents. This is consistent with theories of deliberative participation, which emphasize the connection between citizen involvement and the legitimacy of policy outcomes.

The matrix also highlights a significant relationship between internet access and online participation, underscoring the crucial role of digital technology in broadening participatory channels (Afzalan & Muller, 2018). Other variables, such as civil society group membership, also correlate with both Musrenbang and alternative offline mechanisms, suggesting that social networks remain an important driver of community engagement. A weaker but still meaningful correlation is observed between educational attainment and perception of integration, suggesting that higher-educated groups are not only more critical but also more likely to perceive government as responsive when their aspirations are effectively channeled.

Taken together, the two visualizations complement the qualitative findings with quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of Balikpapan's strategies in integrating Musrenbang with alternative participatory mechanisms. The district-level participation distribution highlights spatial disparities, while the correlation heatmap underscores the social variables shaping participation dynamics. Both figures contribute to a comprehensive understanding that hybrid strategies combining face-to-face forums with digital mechanisms not only enhance community engagement but also reinforce the legitimacy of development planning in Balikpapan City.

Effectiveness of Community Participation in Regional Development Planning

The effectiveness of public participation in regional development planning is an important indicator of how inclusive, responsive, and relevant government policies are to the real needs of citizens. Effective participation is measured not only by the quantity of citizens attending formal forums such as the Development Planning Meeting (Musrenbang), but also by the quality of their contributions, from submitting relevant proposals to involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of development programs. Effectiveness also encompasses the extent to which these aspirations are truly integrated into official planning documents, particularly the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) and other annual priority plans established by the city government.

Participation can be considered effective when available mechanisms provide equal opportunities for all social groups to participate, including marginalized communities, women, youth, and people with disabilities. In the context of Balikpapan City, effectiveness is clearly evident in how citizens' aspirations are not merely rhetoric but are processed into concrete program formulations. This is reflected in the integration of most community proposals into sectoral development agendas, such as improving local road infrastructure, providing educational facilities, and providing basic healthcare services. Effectiveness is also determined by follow-up mechanisms—namely, the extent to which local governments demonstrate transparency in

explaining why certain proposals are accepted or rejected—thus preventing public dissatisfaction and maintaining trust in governance.

Another key criterion for effectiveness lies in its impact on policy quality. When effectively integrated, community aspirations enhance the relevance of development programs, as they stem directly from real needs experienced at the community level. Effectiveness also strengthens social legitimacy, ensuring that public policies are not merely top-down but also bottom-up. In this regard, the Musrenbang (Regional Development Planning Forum) functions not only as an administrative procedure but also as a deliberative medium capable of generating consensus among various stakeholders. Active citizen involvement further minimizes the risk of policy distortions that might favor only certain groups, thus contributing to more equitable and sustainable development outcomes (Hao et al., 2022).

The effectiveness of participation is also closely related to the capacity of both the community and local government officials. Citizens with adequate political literacy and knowledge of public policy are better able to articulate their aspirations in a data-based and argumentative manner, making them easier to integrate into planning documents. At the same time, local governments with officials competent in managing public input are better equipped to prioritize aspirations based on urgency, feasibility, and alignment with the regional development vision. Therefore, effective participation is inseparable from collective capacity building, which requires consistent education, outreach, and facilitation.

In short, the effectiveness of public participation in regional development planning is the result of a synergy between formal mechanisms, participatory innovation, and the capacity of the actors involved. Effectiveness reflects not only the intensity of citizen participation in forums but also the quality of integration of their aspirations into policy, as well as their impact on the legitimacy and sustainability of development. The case of Balikpapan City demonstrates that the more effective public participation, the greater the potential for local governments to formulate development programs that are adaptive, inclusive, and aligned with the socio-economic dynamics of the community.
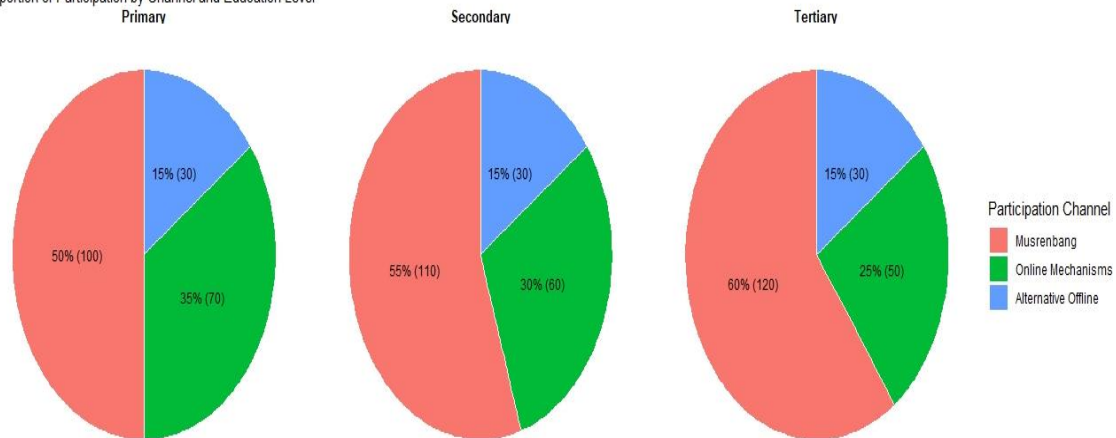
Figure 2. Comparison Of the Effectiveness of Community Participation

Source: Data Processed by the Author

Figure 2, a complex pie chart presented in the form of a donut diagram with aspects based on education level, illustrates how the effectiveness of public participation in regional development planning is not homogeneous but is influenced by social factors such as education. Each panel represents the distribution of participation through three main channels: Musrenbang, online mechanisms, and alternative offline mechanisms. This visualization shows that public participation patterns not only reflect the choice of channels but also demonstrate a close relationship with citizens' social capacity to utilize participatory opportunities provided by the government.

This proportional distribution highlights the dominance of Musrenbang as the primary channel for participation across all education groups. Higher education groups demonstrate a greater proportion of participation in Musrenbang, in addition to significant involvement in online mechanisms. This finding underscores the role of digital literacy and stronger analytical capacity in these groups, which enables them to channel their aspirations through both formal forums and technology-based platforms. Secondary education groups tend to divide their participation between Musrenbang and online mechanisms, while alternative offline channels remain relevant. Lower education groups rely more heavily on traditional channels such as Musrenbang and offline mechanisms, reflecting limitations in accessing technology-based participation.

This representation can be linked to a research methodology framework that uses the Slovin formula to determine a representative sample size and Miles & Huberman's thematic analysis to reduce and categorize the data. The Slovin formula ensures that the number of simulated respondents proportionally reflects the population, thus providing a quantitative representation of the participation patterns shown in the diagram. Thematic analysis is applied to identify recurring

patterns in community participation by categorizing channels, which are then translated into graphical form. This correlation demonstrates how quantitative and qualitative methods can be integrated to provide a comprehensive picture of participation effectiveness (Mohzana, 2024).

The implications of this visualization suggest that participation effectiveness cannot be separated from social differentiation factors. Education emerges as a key variable influencing the choice of participation channels, which in turn determines the extent to which community aspirations are equitably accommodated. The complex pie chart provides visual evidence that government strategies should be directed toward a multi-channel approach tailored to citizens' social conditions. The integration of research methods, combining quantitative analysis for representation and qualitative analysis for thematic categorization, demonstrates that participation effectiveness can be assessed more objectively and contextually.

Challenges and Implications of Integrating Public Aspirations into Development Planning Documents

Integrating public aspirations into development planning documents remains a crucial yet challenging aspect of participatory governance. The process is not merely administrative but also involves complex negotiations between diverse social demands and the technical and financial capacities of local governments. Public aspirations often manifest as heterogeneous needs, ranging from immediate demands for basic services to long-term visions for sustainable development. The challenge lies in aligning these diverse aspirations with formal planning frameworks such as the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD), which operates under strict budget constraints, regulatory requirements, and policy priorities set at both the local and national levels (Dax et al., 2016; Smith & Siciliano, 2015).

The first major challenge concerns the volume and diversity of aspirations emerging during participatory forums such as the Musrenbang (Regional Development Planning Forum) and digital consultation platforms. Communities often articulate more demands than can realistically be accommodated within a single fiscal cycle. This oversupply of proposals creates the need for prioritization, a process often perceived as selective or even biased. Local governments should employ transparent mechanisms to screen, categorize, and rank these proposals, but these mechanisms are not always well communicated to the public. Ambiguity in this process can erode citizen trust and undermine the legitimacy of the planning system.

Another pressing challenge lies in the institutional and bureaucratic capacity of local governments. Many local agencies face limited human resources, technical expertise, and coordination mechanisms, hindering the effective integration of public input. Isolated bureaucratic structures complicate efforts to harmonize proposals across sectors, leading to

fragmented planning documents. Furthermore, reliance on standard planning templates often limits flexibility, making it difficult to adapt development strategies to local aspirations and specific contexts. These institutional barriers demonstrate that the integration of public aspirations is a matter of governance reform as much as participatory practice.

Socio-political dynamics within communities also influence the integration process. Aspirations voiced by more organized, vocal, or resource-rich groups tend to receive greater attention than those from marginalized or less organized segments of society. This dynamic risks reproducing social inequalities in planning documents, thereby undermining the inclusive spirit of participatory governance. The challenge for local governments is to design participatory mechanisms that not only solicit input but also actively promote equity by amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities. Without these corrective measures, the process of integrating public aspirations risks legitimizing existing social hierarchies, rather than democratizing development planning.

Despite these challenges, the implications of integrating public aspirations into planning documents are significant and diverse. When integration is carried out effectively, planning documents gain stronger legitimacy and more accurately reflect community needs. Policies resulting from this inclusive process are more likely to garner public support and ensure smoother implementation, as communities recognize their own priorities within official programs. The legitimacy gained from participatory integration also strengthens the accountability of local governments, making them more responsive to their citizens and more aligned with the principles of democratic governance.

The integration of public aspirations further impacts the quality and sustainability of policies. By integrating community input, development programs are more closely aligned with real-world conditions, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency. Aspirations related to education, health, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability, when regularly integrated, ensure that planning documents meet both short-term and long-term needs. This alignment enhances the capacity of development strategies to contribute to broader objectives, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Fleacă et al., 2018). On the other hand, failure to achieve such integration risks producing planning documents that are out of sync with citizens' realities, thus reducing the relevance and effectiveness of policies.

An analysis of the challenges and implications shows that integrating public aspirations into development planning documents cannot be viewed as a purely technical process. This process is fundamentally political, social, and institutional. The effectiveness of integration depends on prioritization mechanisms.
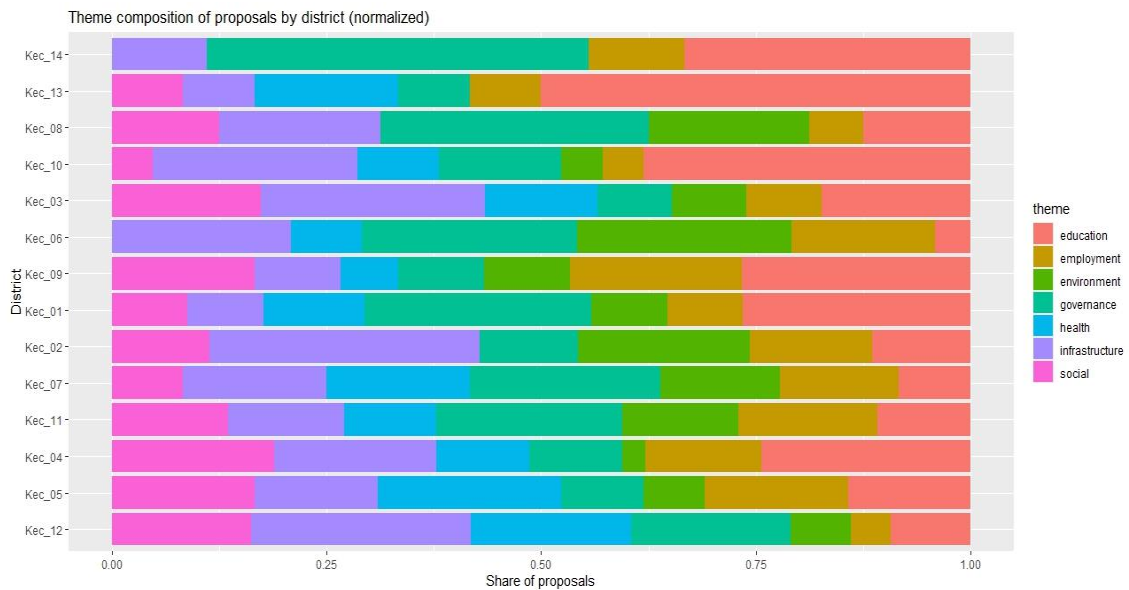
Figure 3: Level of Integration vs. Institutional Capacity (by District)

Source: Data Processed by the Author

Figure 3 is the first figure, titled "Level of Integration vs. Institutional Capacity (by District)," illustrates the relationship between institutional capacity at the district level and the extent to which public aspirations are integrated into official development planning documents. The scatterplot shows that institutional capacity plays a crucial role in the process of selecting and accommodating citizen proposals. Districts with higher institutional capacity exhibit higher levels of integration, as indicated by the concentration of dots at the top of the figure. The upward trajectory of the loess trendline reinforces the interpretation that stronger bureaucratic quality, better coordination between institutions, and more effective management of participatory processes result in higher levels of integration. This visualization provides empirical evidence that institutional capacity should be recognized as an important variable in assessing the effectiveness of participatory governance.

The second figure, titled "Distribution of selected project costs by wealth category," addresses the equity dimension of the integration process. The violin plot displays the distribution of costs for selected projects across wealth categories, with the median and variance captured for each group. The results indicate that projects proposed by higher-income groups tend to involve larger budgets, with the distribution skewed toward higher cost values. In contrast, projects for low-income groups are still included in planning documents, but their median costs remain significantly lower. This suggests that despite efforts to accommodate diverse social groups, structural trends favor wealthier segments in the selection process. These patterns highlight the

challenges of achieving substantive equity, as integration processes that are insensitive to class disparities risk reproducing inequalities in development outcomes.

The third figure, titled "Proposal Theme Composition by District (Normalized)," depicts the thematic distribution of citizen proposals successfully integrated into district-level planning documents. The normalized stacked bar chart provides a proportional representation of themes such as infrastructure, health, education, environment, governance, and social welfare. The visualization shows that infrastructure dominates in most districts, while other themes, such as the environment or social issues, occupy a smaller share. This suggests a policy orientation skewed toward physical development, despite the diversity of community needs. Variations between districts also emerge, with urban districts prioritizing infrastructure and governance, while semi-rural districts place greater emphasis on education and health. This visualization thus illustrates how the integration of public aspirations is shaped not only by bureaucratic capacity and budgets, but also by policy frameworks that prioritize specific sectors.

Overall, the three visualizations reflect the methodological framework used in this study, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. The first scatterplot represents the structural correlation between bureaucratic capacity and integration outcomes. The second violin plot illustrates the distributive aspects of integration across socioeconomic groups. The third stacked bar chart highlights the thematic priorities derived from the categorization process. This triangulation demonstrates that integrating public aspirations into development planning is not simply a technical procedure, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by bureaucratic structures, social inequality, and sectoral policy orientations. The narrative derived from these visual representations underscores the need to conceptualize integration as a dynamic interaction of institutional, social, and policy factors, which requires both quantitative evidence and qualitative insights to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the strategies of the Balikpapan City Government in capturing public aspirations through Musrenbang and other mechanisms demonstrates that hybrid participatory models simultaneously create new opportunities and expose significant governance challenges. The continued reliance on Musrenbang as a formalised deliberative arena provides a crucial procedural foundation for legitimising the planning process and anchoring participation within the existing regulatory framework. At the same time, the introduction of digital platforms and alternative offline mechanisms has broadened the scope of participation by accommodating citizens who might otherwise remain excluded due to spatial, socio-economic, or time constraints. This combination of face-to-face and digital channels reflects a pragmatic adaptation to changing

socio-political contexts in which citizens increasingly expect governance arrangements to be more accessible, responsive, and interactive (Gamhewage et al., 2022; Maqsood et al., 2024). From a theoretical standpoint, these findings are consistent with perspectives on participatory and networked governance, which emphasise the need to embed citizen engagement across multiple arenas rather than relying on a single institutional mechanism.

The examination of the effectiveness of community participation in regional development planning further reveals that inclusivity, quality of input, and integration into planning documents are interdependent rather than separate dimensions. Effectiveness cannot be assessed solely on the basis of the number of attendees at Musrenbang or the volume of proposals submitted; it must also reflect the extent to which these aspirations shape policy priorities and resource allocation decisions. The visual analyses indicate that Musrenbang remains the dominant channel across most population groups, while digital mechanisms are particularly salient for younger and more educated citizens, who tend to have higher levels of digital literacy and access. This pattern suggests that hybrid participation can enhance aggregate inclusivity, but it also introduces new forms of differentiation in participation profiles. The results therefore support the argument that effectiveness depends on the interplay between governmental capacity to process, filter, and prioritise heterogeneous inputs and the community's ability to articulate needs in a clear, coherent, and programmatically feasible manner (Rijal, 2023). In this sense, the study aligns with scholarly claims that procedural inclusiveness must be complemented by substantive responsiveness if participation is to contribute meaningfully to development outcomes.

The discussion on the challenges and implications of integrating public aspirations into development planning documents highlights a set of structural and institutional constraints that impede the full realisation of participatory governance. The process of filtering, prioritising, and aligning citizen proposals with fiscal ceilings, sectoral mandates, and regulatory requirements inherently generates tensions between what communities demand and what governments can formally accommodate. The empirical patterns show that districts with stronger bureaucratic capacity—reflected in more experienced staff, better coordination, and clearer internal procedures—tend to achieve higher rates of aspiration integration into formal planning documents. At the same time, socio-economic disparities shape which proposals are more likely to be selected: visual evidence on project cost distributions suggests that proposals originating from wealthier groups tend to be larger in scale and budget, and thus more visible and influential in planning negotiations. These dynamics raise concerns that participatory mechanisms can inadvertently reproduce or even intensify existing inequalities if integration processes are not explicitly designed with equity considerations at their core (Bircan & Özbilgin, 2025).

Theoretically, this underscores the need to move from a purely procedural understanding of participation to an equity-sensitive model of participatory planning.

Taken together, these findings suggest that participatory governance in Balikpapan embodies both substantive progress and persistent structural challenges. On one hand, the city has demonstrated a clear commitment to expanding participation through multiple channels, thereby improving the inclusivity and transparency of development planning. This reflects an important shift from minimalist forms of consultation towards more interactive and diversified engagement. On the other hand, the effectiveness of these mechanisms is constrained by uneven bureaucratic capacity across districts, socio-economic inequalities among citizen groups, and policy preferences that tend to prioritise certain sectors—particularly physical infrastructure—over others such as social services or environmental sustainability. This study therefore takes the position that participatory governance in Balikpapan is best understood as an evolving hybrid regime: it has moved beyond purely top-down planning but has not yet achieved a fully equitable and substantively responsive participatory system. Strengthening this hybrid regime requires addressing not only procedural design but also the underlying institutional and distributive structures that shape whose voices ultimately matter in planning outcomes.

In light of these conclusions, several recommendations and practical solutions can be proposed to enhance the quality and equity of participatory development planning in Balikpapan. First, institutional capacity needs to be strengthened, particularly at the sub-district and neighbourhood levels, through targeted training, clearer standard operating procedures, and improved coordination among planning and sectoral agencies, so that officials are better equipped to process and integrate diverse citizen inputs. Second, the design of participatory mechanisms should incorporate explicit equity-oriented criteria—such as quotas or weighting for proposals originating from marginalised groups or under-served areas—to counterbalance the structural advantages enjoyed by wealthier and more organised actors. Third, digital platforms should be further developed not merely as additional channels for proposal submission but as integrated systems that provide feedback loops, enabling citizens to track the status of their aspirations and understand the reasons for acceptance, modification, or rejection. Finally, the alignment between local participatory practices and the broader regulatory framework should be continuously reviewed to ensure that national and regional regulations, including those governing the preparation of development plans, support rather than constrain meaningful participation. Through these measures, participatory mechanisms in Balikpapan have the potential to more effectively enhance the legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability of regional development planning.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the strategies employed by the Balikpapan City Government to capture public aspirations in regional development planning, the effectiveness of these strategies in shaping planning documents, and the institutional and socio-economic factors that enable or constrain their implementation. The findings show that hybrid participatory arrangements—combining Musrenbang with digital platforms and alternative offline mechanisms—have expanded opportunities for citizen involvement and enhanced the formal inclusiveness of the planning process. However, effectiveness remains uneven: the extent to which aspirations are integrated into key documents such as the RKPD is strongly mediated by variations in institutional capacity across districts, as well as by socio-economic inequalities that favour proposals originating from wealthier or more organised groups. Thematic patterns also indicate a persistent bias towards infrastructure-oriented projects, with relatively less attention to social, environmental, and governance-related priorities. These results imply that participatory governance must be understood as an ongoing, adaptive process that requires continuous capacity-building, greater transparency in prioritisation, and explicit attention to equity in the design of integration mechanisms. The study contributes to the literature by providing an empirically grounded analysis of a hybrid, multi-channel participatory regime at the city level and suggests that future research should explore comparative cases, longitudinal dynamics, and more fine-grained evaluations of equity-sensitive integration tools in regional development planning.

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