

Mainstreaming sustainability into urban governance and planning in the global south: driving factors and challenges for Indonesian cities

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Efforts to advance urban sustainability in the developing countries are now at the acceleration stage as cities struggle to cope with and to benefit from urbanisation. Despite that cities have been central in planning literature and in the discussion on the mainstreaming of sustainability to on-the-ground measures, exploration of the urban sustainability concept within the context of developing world is still falling behind. There is an increasing gap between approaches addressing systematic implementation, structured based on the global North and planning realities in the South. It also remains unclear how local governments in the developing countries with their specific planning context and limitation can best integrate the triple bottom line of sustainability in a just and effective approach into development plans and policies.

Against this background, this paper focused on key areas for fostering sustainable development principles into local development planning by assessing urban green economy initiatives in Indonesian cities. It discussed the current state of local governance and reflected in the gap existed in planning practices vis-à-vis the idealised concept of the sustainable city within the Indonesian context. This research examined key characteristics (knowledge sharing, collaborative efforts and political support) of the local planning process, the institutional setup and national-provincial-local planning mandates to determine how they influence the local policies and promote the principles of sustainable development.

Two municipalities in Indonesia (Surabaya and Yogyakarta) were investigated. This research used plan content analysis as well as interviews with national, provincial and local stakeholders. A detailed examination of local policy initiatives reveals possible means by which economic, social and environmental sustainability might be balanced in practice. Based on the findings, factors influencing the mainstreaming of sustainability into existing planning processes and drivers existing as a platform for further integration are discussed.