

The Dynamics of Re-centralization and Local Government Governance in Indonesia: A Critical Review of the Shift in Authority and Leadership Style of West Java Governor Kang Dedi Mulyadi

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of recentralization in local government governance in Indonesia through a case study of the leadership of West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a narrative review method to analyze various literature on decentralization, regional autonomy, and public leadership. Previous research indicates that decentralization policies in Indonesia face various challenges, such as disparities in regional capacity, weak oversight, and conflicts of authority between the central and regional governments. On the other hand, several studies have also identified a trend toward re-centralization following the enactment of the Job Creation Law and Law No. 6 of 2023, which reclaimed a number of strategic authorities for the central government. The results of this study indicate that re-centralization aims to improve bureaucratic efficiency and investment, but has the potential to reduce local autonomy and public participation. In the local context, Dedi Mulyadi's leadership reflects a Sundanese-culture-based centralist model that emphasizes budget efficiency, accelerated development, and public communication through digital media. This leadership model is considered effective in producing responsive policies, yet it still faces challenges in institutional aspects, collaboration, and the sustainability of local government governance.

Keywords: decentralization, regional autonomy, governance, transformational leadership, cultural efficiency, Dedi Mulyadi.

1. Introduction

Indonesia's system of government has come a long way from the centralized model of the New Order era to the radical decentralization known as the "Decentralization Big Bang" in 1999 (Prayoga et al., 2023)

Since then, decentralization and regional autonomy have been central pillars of governance, aimed at bringing public services closer to the people and providing space for local creativity in development. However, over the past decade, there have been strong indications of a shift toward the central government reclaiming regional authority—a phenomenon often referred to as

"recentralization" or "soft centralization." (MPR, 2018)

This trend toward recentralization has become increasingly evident with the enactment of Law No. 11 of 2020 on Job Creation (the Job Creation Law). This regulation shifts the paradigm of spatial planning and permitting from a permit-based system to a risk-based approach. Constitutionally, this shift has sparked controversy as it is seen as eroding the foundation of the broadest possible autonomy mandated by Article 18 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Prabowo & Thahir, 2026)

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The facts show that, when it comes to spatial planning, local governments are now required to follow the norms, standards, procedures, and criteria (NSPK) strictly mandated by the central government, thereby limiting the scope for participation by indigenous and local communities in determining the future of their regions (Prabowo et al., 2025)

In addition to macro-regulatory aspects, the phenomenon of centralization is also reflected in leadership dynamics at the provincial level. West Java, under the leadership of Governor Dedi Mulyadi (KDM), presents a unique yet controversial picture. Dedi Mulyadi is known as a vocal, assertive leader with a very fast decision-making style and a tendency toward centralization. KDM's leadership style as Governor of West Java reflects a transformational approach focused on creating positive change and optimizing the community (Endah Sulistyorini, 2025)

Transformational leadership can also be defined as leadership in which leaders use their charisma, as well as intellectual stimulation, to bring about transformation and revitalize their organizations (Apriliinda et al., 2021)

Bass states that transformational leaders can earn the trust, respect, and appreciation of their team members by focusing on idealized influence, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation, which in turn involves serving as a charismatic role model and articulating a vision that can be realized (Drs. H Suriagiri, 2020)

Although he achieved remarkable breakthroughs, such as budget savings of 5.5 trillion rupiah and the acceleration of rural infrastructure development through the Ngaboseh ka Lembur program, his "one-man-show" leadership style drew criticism for a lack of institutional collaboration and meaningful public participation (Barokah et al., 2025)

In economic development, the Governor is responsible for directing strategic policies that align with the region's potential and needs. The duties of regional heads (Governors, Regents, and Mayors) in Indonesia are specifically regulated in Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, particularly in Article 65. In summary, the following are the primary duties of regional heads: Leading the implementation of government affairs within the region's authority in accordance with regulations and policies established jointly with the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD); Maintaining public peace and order; Drafting and submitting Draft Regional Regulations (Perda) and Draft Regional Budget Regulations (APBD) to the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) for joint deliberation; Promoting the development and conservation of agrarian resources and managing the environment; Exercising other authorities in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations (MENKUMHAM, 2015)

In the context of local government strategic policy, over the past year, the Indonesian public—particularly the people of West Java—has been treated to the "appeal" of various strategic policies implemented by Governor Dedi Mulyadi, affectionately known as KDM. KDM's distinctive

leadership style, rooted in Sundanese culture and a humanistic approach toward his constituents, seems like an oasis in a desert where there are still public leaders and officials who are dishonest toward their people (Barokah et al., 2025)

The leadership style of a regional head is not a fixed requirement prescribed by law, but rather a personal approach that is permissible in the performance of duties. Under Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, the primary duties of a regional head are to administer government affairs and oversee development. The leadership style employed is optional and flexible as long as it fulfills the following core functions: 1) Administrator of Government Affairs: Managing the bureaucracy, formulating regional policies, and serving the public. 2) Public Policy Maker: Enacting Regional Regulations (Perda) and work programs in collaboration with the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). 3) Development Leader: Driving the economy, improving infrastructure, and enhancing welfare. 4) Unifier and Public Servant: Being directly present to gather public aspirations and resolve residents' issues. KDM's well-known down-to-earth style, which prioritizes a cultural approach and includes frequent field visits, has become a signature strategy he employs to fulfill these governmental duties. Every regional head has their own managerial style, and this style is considered successful if it effectively addresses the needs and challenges of the region they lead. (Barokah et al., 2025) (MENKUMHAM, 2015)

Quoted from the West Java PPID website (<https://ppid.jabarprov.go.id/pages/berita/300>), the strategic policies recently implemented by KDM have had a positive impact on the community. These policies include the demolition of tourist attractions, the waiver of motor vehicle tax arrears and fines, the provision of compensation to owners of non-motorized vehicles, and the acquisition of land along riverbanks. These policies have succeeded in significantly increasing tax revenue. According to data from the West Java Regional Revenue Agency (Bapenda), tax revenue increased by Rp5.5 billion, rising from Rp19 billion to Rp25 billion. This increase resulted from tax payments for 50,300 motor vehicles within a single day following the implementation of these policies.

However, on the other hand, there have also been several KDM policies that have sparked controversy and drawn public attention, as well as coming under sharp criticism from education experts, economic analysts, and political observers. According to a report by Tempo (<https://www.tempo.co/politik/7-kebijakan-dedi-mulyadi-yang-menjadi-sorotan-warga-jawa-barat-1314630>), there are at least 7 controversial KDM policies, including: 1) A ban on study tours and the suspension of school principals who violate the rule; 2) The demolition of recreational facilities owned by state-owned enterprises; 3) A ban on road tolls; 4) The elimination of graduation ceremonies from kindergarten through high school; 5) Plans to send misbehaving children to military barracks; 6) The restructuring of the regional budget and environmental policies; 7)

The evaluation of mining operations and the Anti-Thuggery Task Force.

The tension between the need for national efficiency (which drives centralization) and the demand for local democracy (which underpins decentralization) lies at the heart of the current governance crisis. On the one hand, the central government argues that centralizing the permitting process is necessary to streamline bureaucracy and attract investment. On the other hand, local governments feel they are losing the tools to manage the environment and protect local knowledge (Puspitaningtyas, 2023)

Ironically, when licensing authority is centralized, the central government's capacity for on-the-ground oversight is often inadequate, while local governments are reluctant to conduct monitoring because they no longer hold licensing authority (Prabowo & Thahir, 2026)

Based on this data and information, a critical review of the shift in authority and the dynamics of governance is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of recentralization from the perspective of law and governance practices in contemporary Indonesia. This study is also important for evaluating the sociopolitical and legal implications of the withdrawal of concurrent governmental affairs from local governments to the central government (Hadi & Michael, 2021). In addition, this study critically analyzes Dedi Mulyadi's leadership as a case study of a centralized style of government management that remains focused on effectiveness and development outcomes. Ultimately, this study is expected to provide strategic recommendations for local governments on strengthening institutional capacity and governance amid a growing trend toward recentralization.

Research Gap

Based on a review of previous studies, most research on decentralization and recentralization in Indonesia has primarily focused on institutional arrangements, regulatory frameworks, the distribution of authority, central-local government relations, and their implications for public service delivery and regional development. Previous studies have also extensively examined the impact of regulatory changes following the enactment of the Job Creation Law, particularly regarding the reduction of local government authority in areas such as spatial planning, environmental management, mining, and investment licensing.

However, there remains a significant gap in the literature linking the phenomenon of recentralization with the dimension of local leadership. Most studies tend to view recentralization as a structural and administrative phenomenon, while relatively little attention has been given to how local leaders respond to changes in the distribution of authority through specific leadership styles.

Furthermore, studies on Dedi Mulyadi have largely concentrated on his personal branding, political communication, and Sundanese culture-based transformational leadership. Few studies have

positioned Dedi Mulyadi's leadership within the broader dynamics of local governance in the context of the growing trend of recentralization in Indonesia.

Therefore, a research gap exists in the integration of governance perspectives, recentralization dynamics, and cultural leadership in explaining how local governments adapt to shifting power relations between the central government and regional governments. This study seeks to address that gap by examining how cultural-based leadership functions as an adaptive governance mechanism amid increasing centralization of authority in Indonesia.

This study offers several academic and practical contributions to the development of governance studies in Indonesia.

First, this study extends the literature on decentralization and recentralization by examining changes in governmental authority not only as issues of regulation and institutional arrangements, but also as matters of public leadership. In doing so, the study provides a more comprehensive perspective on how local actors respond to shifts in power structures within an increasingly integrated governance system.

Second, this study integrates governance theory with a cultural leadership approach. Previous studies have generally examined these two concepts separately. This research demonstrates that local cultural values can function not only as instruments of political legitimacy but also as mechanisms for strengthening governance effectiveness in the context of increasing central government control.

Third, this study introduces the concept of "cultural-centralized leadership", defined as a culture-based centralized leadership model that serves as an adaptive response of local governments to the phenomenon of recentralization. Within this model, policy effectiveness is determined not only by the formal authority possessed by local governments, but also by the leader's ability to leverage cultural capital, social proximity, and public communication to maintain governmental legitimacy. Fourth, this study provides an empirical contribution through the case of Dedi Mulyadi in West Java, illustrating how local leadership can continue to generate policy effectiveness even within an increasingly centralized governance environment.

Overall, this study contributes to the advancement of governance scholarship by highlighting the interaction between institutional authority, cultural legitimacy, and leadership capacity in shaping local government performance amid contemporary recentralization dynamics.

2. Method

The research method employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained through a literature review, with analysis conducted using the narrative review model. The structure of the narrative review begins with a descriptive summary, interpretation, and analysis of the literature, followed by the development of an academic narrative based on the author's perspective.

This study is still limited to an exploration of the centralized KDM leadership model as it relates to local government governance. Using a narrative review approach, this study serves only as a starting point for further research. For future research, the focus should be on the impact of Kang Dedi Mulyadi's policies on the progress of West Java Province.

The citations used in this study follow the American Psychological Association 7th Edition (APA Style) guidelines, with the assistance of Mendeley.

3. Result

3.1. Theoretical Review

According to Gary Yukl (Yukl, 2013), there are several characteristics of strategic leadership, namely:

1. Having the courage to take decisive action

A strategic leader is characterized by the courage to make decisive decisions, especially when facing crisis situations that could threaten the organization's stability.

2. Possess the ability to bring about lasting change

A strategic leader must possess strong competencies in initiating and managing sustainable change.

3. Have a deep understanding of the situation at hand

A strategic leader must possess analytical skills and a deep understanding of the dynamics of situations and events occurring within both the internal and external environments of the organization.

4. Recognizing good performance

A strategic leader must recognize positive performance within the organization and avoid the tendency to blame external factors when faced with a decline in performance.

Meanwhile, Masoud & Basahal (Masoud & Basahal, 2023) identify six characteristics of public sector leaders (local leaders), namely: 1) passion and altruism, 2) organizational advocacy, 3) fostering community support, 4) focus and strategy, 5) trust and delegation, and 6) continuous self-learning and agility.

The Sundanese people have a strong attachment to the traditional values of their ancestors, which shape their identity and character through culture, customs, and life lessons. One expression that reflects these values is "Hirup sauyunan," which conveys a sense of togetherness and the spirit of mutual cooperation. In Sundanese proverbs, there is also the saying, "Sareundeuk saigel, sabobot sapihanean. Ka cai jadi salewi, ka darat jadi salebak," which emphasizes the importance of solid and harmonious cooperation in community life. This expression reflects a way of life grounded in responsibility, togetherness, and social solidarity within both family and community settings. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships in Sundanese society are rooted in the philosophy of "silih asah, silih asih, jeung silih asuh," which describes the importance of social relationships that involve mutual education (asah), mutual

assistance (asih), and mutual guidance (asuh) as expressions of harmony in social life (Pratama et al., 2022)

3.2 Synthesis of Previous Studies

A review of the existing literature indicates that studies on decentralization and recentralization in Indonesia can generally be categorized into three main themes.

The first group focuses on changes in the distribution of authority between the central and local governments, particularly following the enactment of Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government and the Job Creation Law.

The second group highlights the implications of decentralization for regional development, public service delivery, local democracy, and governance practices.

The third group examines local leadership, including transformational leadership and culture-based leadership approaches adopted by regional leaders.

Nevertheless, no previous study has specifically integrated these three themes into a single analytical framework. In other words, there remains an academic gap in explaining how culture-based local leadership operates within a governance environment characterized by increasing recentralization of authority.

This study seeks to address that gap by analyzing the interaction between governance dynamics, recentralization policies, and cultural leadership in the context of local government adaptation to shifting central-local power relations in Indonesia.

3.3. Theoretical Contribution

The findings of this study suggest that the phenomenon of recentralization does not necessarily lead to a decline in the effectiveness of local government governance. In the context of West Java, the leadership of Dedi Mulyadi demonstrates that governmental effectiveness can still be maintained through the strengthening of social and cultural legitimacy possessed by local leaders.

These findings extend the governance perspective, which has traditionally emphasized the importance of the formal distribution of authority across different levels of government. This study shows that governance capacity is also influenced by a leader's ability to build social legitimacy through local cultural values.

Accordingly, governance effectiveness is determined not only by structural factors such as authority and regulatory arrangements, but also by cultural dimensions that shape the relationship between government and society.

Furthermore, this study proposes that, within the context of developing countries such as Indonesia, recentralization should be understood as an interaction between institutional governance and cultural leadership. This relationship indicates that local leaders can utilize cultural capital as an adaptive instrument when their formal sphere of authority becomes constrained as a result of recentralization policies.

3.4. Previous Research

The following are 20 studies relevant to centralization, regional autonomy, and local government governance by West Java Governor Kang Dedi Mulyadi:

Table 1. 20 Previous Studies on Decentralization and Recentralization

No	Penulis (tahun)	Judul	Hasil
1.	Prabowo & Thahir (Prabowo & Thahir, 2026)	Decentralization of Spatial Planning in Indonesia Following the Job Creation Law: Shifts in Authority, Governance Dynamics, and Implications for Regional Autonomy	There has been significant centralization; it is recommended that central-local government coordination be strengthened.
2	Prayoga & Ananda (Prayoga et al., 2023)	Rethinking of local autonomy and fiscal decentralization policy: can it improve the quality of human capital? A case in eastern region of Indonesia	Fiscal decentralization improves the quality of human resources; recommendations for asymmetric transfers.
3	Wiryawan & Otchia (Wiryawan & Otchia, 2022)	The legacy of the reformasi: the role of local government spending on industrial development in a decentralized Indonesia	Local government spending stimulates industry; recommendations call for the budget to focus on the real sector.
4	Fauzan et al. (Fauzan et al., 2025)	Balancing Power and Resolving Conflicts in the Collaboration between Regional Heads and DPRD in Indonesia's Decentralized Governance	Political conflicts hinder service delivery; recommendations for reforming the oversight system.
5	Maksum, Irfan Ridwan, Lutfi, Achmad (Maksum & Lutfi, 2025)	In Decentralization we trust : 24 years of Research on the Decentralization governance and the future of the research agenda	a connection between the concepts of decentralization, regional government, and democracy in the decentralization policy in Indonesia specifically in environmental and multi-level

			governance issues.
6	Mukhlis (Muhammad Mutawalli Mukhlis, Hariyanto, 2024)	Regional Autonomy System: Delegation of Authority and Power of Regional Government in Indonesia in the Study of Fiqh Siyasah	Autonomy in harmony with the public interest: recommendations for restructuring delegated authority.
7	Geofrey (Geofrey, 2021)	Barriers to the Enforcement of Environmental Law: An Effect of Free Market Domination and Regional Autonomy in Indonesia	Autonomy is hindered by large capital requirements; recommendations for strengthening national standards.
8	Dasrun Hidayat (Hidayat et al., 2025)	Dedi Mulyadi's personal branding through "barracks" viral content	KDM uses Sundanese symbols for legitimacy; recommendations for cultural narratives in the public sphere.
9	Sambodo (Sambodo et al., 2023)	Towards a New approach to community-based rural development: Lesson learned from Indonesia	The success of a village depends on social innovation; recommendations for sociocultural design.
10	Muchlas (Muchlas, 2023)	Do Collaborative Governance Affect Village Community Empowerment And Village Development? Mustari	Collaborative Governance affected village community Village empowerment affected Village Development and Collaborative governance and community village empowerment affected Village development.
11	Triwahyuningsih et al (Putranti, 2025)	Asymmetric Decentralization in a Unitary State: Lessons from Pattani, Thailand	Study compares the constitutional design of asymmetric decentralization in Yogyakarta and Pattani and examines how each state applies the unitary principle in responding to

			autonomy claims grounded in local identity.			Media and Local Government in West Java	to secure special coverage spaces with positive content about governmental activities, not in the form of advertising or advertorial, but in the form of news
12	Irwani (Irwani, 2025)	Fiscal, Political, and Developmental Dimensions of Decentralization: Global Insights	These findings underscore that decentralization is not a uniform process; instead, its outcomes are shaped by systemic factors such as institutional design, political culture, and legal guarantees.	16	Andi Rahmat Hidayat (Termeer, 2025)	Why Democratization and Decentralization in Indonesia Have Mixed Results on the Ground: A Systematic Literature Review	actual processes of democratization and decentralization may undermine each other
13	Fadillah Ramadhani Asiri et al (Asiri et al., 2024)	Transactional and Transformational Leadership	Transformational leadership has a more significant impact on performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment compared to transactional leadership. However, transactional leadership remains relevant in situations that require strict structure and control.	17	Muhammad Salman Al-Farisi (Salman & Farisi, 2023)	Re-centralization of Authority Over Mineral and Coal Mining Management	The delegation of certain central government authorities to provincial governments for the issuance of IPRs and SIPBs means that district and municipal governments no longer have any authority over matters related to coal mining.
14	Qadri Al Jabri (Jabri, 2026)	Corporate Governance and Firm Performance: The Role of Capital Structure	The study's findings could help lenders assess a company's governance structure before making financial decisions. Similarly, investors should examine the quality of corporate governance and the company's capital structure decisions.	18	Anis Fuad et al. (Fuad et al., 2025)	The policy of mining re-centralization and its implications for governance Small-scale mining in Lebak Regency	Changes in mining regulations underscore the ongoing contest over control of mining operations. The government tends to favor large-scale mining companies (corporations) over small-scale miners.
15	Awang Ruswandi (Ruswandi, 2025)	Commodification, Spatialization, and Structuration in Collaboration Between Local	Findings reveal that local government media cooperation funds serve as a mechanism	19	M. Fernanda et. al. (Fernanda et al., 2023)	Decentralization and Regional Autonomy in the Pursuit of Good Local Governance	The hallmarks of good local governance are public service and the empowerment of community members in every development initiative.
				20	Priyatno Harsasto	Decentralization and Recentralization	Decentralization has indeed succeeded in

	(Harsasto et al., 2020)	n: Efforts to Balance the Central-Local Pendulum	enhancing the bureaucracy's capacity to provide public services, but the career advancement of bureaucrats often depends on personal connections rather than institutional ones.
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Source: Processed Data

3.5. Re-centralization and the Irony of Regional Autonomy

The current trend toward re-centralization is the central government's response to what is perceived as the failure of decentralization to provide legal certainty for businesses. However, this withdrawal of authority carries profound legal implications. Under the Job Creation Law, many concurrent government affairs that were previously shared between the central and regional governments are now under the authority of the central government (Hadi & Michael, 2021)

For example, in the mining sector, the authority to issue permits was fully centralized through Law No. 3 of 2020, which was subsequently reaffirmed under the Omnibus Law. Similarly, in labor matters, the approval of the Foreign Worker Utilization Plan (RPTKA)—which previously involved local governments—is now the exclusive domain of the central government (Hadi & Michael, 2021)

This centralization has raised concerns about moral hazard. On the one hand, the central government feels it has everything under control through digital systems like OSS, but on the other hand, it lacks the personnel to monitor every inch of land in the regions (Prabowo & Thahir, 2026)

In the current context, the phenomenon of recentralization refers to the trend of the central government regaining authority following a prior process of decentralization or the devolution of authority to local governments. Recentralization does not necessarily mean the complete abolition of local autonomy, but rather a restructuring of the distribution of power, regulation, fiscal authority, and decision-making to make them more concentrated at the central government level. In the development of modern governance, this phenomenon has emerged as a response to various issues deemed impossible to resolve optimally through a fully decentralized system (Harsasto et al., 2020)

At the outset of the reform era, decentralization was seen as a solution to reduce the central government's overwhelming dominance from the previous era. Through regional autonomy policies, local governments were granted broader authority in managing resources, public services, and regional development. The primary goal was to create a government that is more democratic, participatory, and responsive to local needs. However, in practice, the implementation of decentralization in Indonesia faces various challenges, such as

disparities in capacity among regions, the emergence of local elites, regional corruption, conflicts of authority, and weak coordination of national development (Wicaksono, 2012)

This situation subsequently gave rise to a trend toward re-centralization. The central government began reclaiming a number of strategic authorities previously managed by local governments, particularly in sectors deemed vital to national stability and investment. In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon has been evident since the enactment of Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, which reorganized the distribution of authority among the central government, provinces, and regencies/cities. Several strategic matters, such as mining, forestry, secondary education, maritime affairs, and investment licensing, have become increasingly concentrated at the central or provincial government levels. This shift is viewed as a form of "the paradox of centralization within decentralization." (Simanjuntak, 2015)

From a public administration perspective, re-centralization arises because the central government believes that excessive decentralization often leads to policy fragmentation and inconsistencies in development across regions. The central government requires stronger control mechanisms to ensure that the national development agenda proceeds uniformly and efficiently. Consequently, recentralization is often justified on the grounds of regulatory harmonization, improved effectiveness of public services, accelerated investment, and strengthened oversight of the bureaucracy (Fernanda et al., 2023)

The phenomenon of re-centralization has also grown stronger in the era of government digitalization. The use of national digital systems, big data, electronic licensing services, and financial system integration has given the central government greater control over local government activities. Digitalization ultimately creates a new form of technology-based centralization, where oversight, data collection, and decision-making can be carried out in an integrated manner from the center. In this context, local governments often serve merely as implementers of standardized national policies (Fernanda et al., 2023)

In contemporary scholarship, recentralization is understood not as the absolute opposite of decentralization, but rather as an effort to strike a new balance between national interests and regional autonomy. Modern states ultimately require two things simultaneously: local flexibility to address the needs of local communities, and strong central coordination to tackle global challenges such as digital transformation, economic competition, national security, and development disparities. Thus, the phenomenon of recentralization in the current context can be understood as a form of governance adaptation to the increasing complexity of an increasingly integrated modern world (Wicaksono, 2012)

In the environmental sector, Law No. 6 of 2023 further reduces the role of local governments. The removal of local governments' authority to determine Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) reduces them to mere

technical implementing agencies with no veto power over projects that could potentially damage local ecosystems. This change is seen as contrary to the principle of environmental decentralization, which assumes that the local government unit is the one that best understands the characteristics of its own environment. Consequently, local autonomy is no longer an instrument for community empowerment, but merely a rigid administrative extension of the central government (Puspitaningtyas, 2023)

Local governments, which are physically present on the ground, often lose motivation to carry out oversight because they no longer feel responsible for the permits. This disconnect can exacerbate environmental crises, as violations of land-use regulations are often only discovered once their impacts have already spread, while the chain of command for law enforcement becomes extremely lengthy and bureaucratic (Prayoga et al., 2023)

3.6. Dedi Mulyadi's Leadership: Between Centralization and Cultural Efficiency

Amid this trend toward macro-level decentralization, Dedi Mulyadi's leadership in West Java offers a unique perspective. From his time as Regent of Purwakarta to his current role as Governor of West Java, Dedi Mulyadi has consistently employed a leadership style that blends personal assertiveness with elements of Sundanese cultural symbolism (Hidayat et al., 2025)

He is known as a leader who actively engages with the community through programs such as "Ngaboseh ka Lembur," in which he cycles into remote villages to hear residents' concerns firsthand (Endah Sulistyorini, 2025)

However, behind his populist image lies a strong tendency toward centralization in his decision-making patterns. Analysis shows that Dedi Mulyadi prefers to maintain full control over policy direction without involving others in lengthy consultative processes. This makes the decision-making process highly efficient, as evidenced by his success in cutting media advertising budgets and eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy to redirect funds toward school and road infrastructure development (Barokah et al., 2025)

Dedi Mulyadi uses social media—YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram—as a tool to build a very strong personal brand, surpassing other public figures (Siahaan, 2025)

Through his digital content, he spreads the message "Silih Asih, Silih Asah, Silih Asuh," a Sundanese philosophy used to legitimize his decisive actions (Bekti et al., 2025). Although his leadership style has been criticized as a one-man show that neglects institutional strengthening, for the general public, this approach delivers tangible results that can be felt immediately, such as the repair of a suspension bridge or a reduction in the poverty rate from 12% to 7% in a specific region (Barokah et al., 2025)

Cultural efficiency is a concept that explains how values, norms, customs, and behavioral patterns within an organization or society can lead to more optimal resource utilization, increase productivity, accelerate work coordination, and

minimize social and administrative waste. In the context of modern organizations, cultural efficiency is understood not only as a disciplined and cost-effective work culture, but also as the organizational culture's ability to create a work system that is adaptive, collaborative, innovative, and oriented toward effectively achieving goals (Aktaş et al., 2011)

Conceptually, cultural efficiency stems from the understanding that culture is not merely a symbol or the identity of an organization, but rather a social mechanism that governs the behavior of its members. Organizational culture shapes the way individuals think, communicate, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and respond to environmental changes. When organizational culture aligns with the organization's goals, work processes become more efficient because members share relatively uniform understandings, values, and behavioral orientations. Conversely, a weak culture or one that is out of sync with the organization's strategy often leads to resistance, internal conflict, communication inefficiencies, and low productivity (Aktaş et al., 2011)

The lesson for other local governments is that effective leadership in the era of re-centralization requires the ability to engage in "cultural branding" while simultaneously "vaccinating against technocracy." Local leaders can no longer rely solely on individual heroism; instead, they must begin building transparent and accountable systems so that the innovations they have initiated do not disappear when their terms end (Siahaan, 2025). Dedi Mulyadi has demonstrated that centralizing responsibilities at the local level can be a solution to bureaucratic inefficiency; however, the challenge ahead is ensuring that public participation remains intact within a system that is heavily reliant on that single individual (Barokah et al., 2025)

4. Discuss

From the literature review above, it is evident that there is a tension between the central government's efforts to achieve efficiency through centralization and the regions' need to remain autonomous. An in-depth analysis shows that the recentralization of permitting and spatial planning often overlooks diverse geographical and social realities (Prabowo & Thahir, 2026)

This is exacerbated by the fact that local governments in Indonesia remain highly dependent on central government transfers, which weakens their bargaining position when authority is transferred (Irwani, 2025)

The case of Dedi Mulyadi teaches us that, even as the central government curtails formal authority, a regional leader must be able to make the most of "informal authority" through communicative and culturally grounded leadership (Hidayat et al., 2025)

The budget efficiency measures implemented by Dedi Mulyadi demonstrate that centralization within the provincial government can yield tangible results when accompanied by strict oversight and the elimination of parasitic bureaucracy (Barokah et al., 2025)

However, the key lesson is the need to transition from leadership based on "individual heroism" to "strong institutional capacity," so that such success is not merely temporary (Siahaan, 2025)

In the future, this challenge of re-centralization can only be addressed in two ways: by strengthening the digital capacity of local bureaucracies to align with the central system (such as the synchronization of Village SDGs) (Jaiz et al., 2025) and by strengthening political legitimacy through public services that reach the grassroots level, as exemplified by direct interaction with residents (Bekti et al., 2025)

Local governments must not remain passive; rather, they must continue to foster opportunities for dialogue so that national standards remain flexible enough to accommodate local characteristics (Prabowo & Thahir, 2026)

5. Conclusion

This literature review confirms that there has been a shift in the paradigm of power from decentralization toward recentralization, driven by the Job Creation Law and Law No. 6 of 2023. This centralization of authority is most evident in the sectors of spatial planning, environmental permitting, and the management of strategic resources, which aim to create investment efficiency but risk eroding local autonomy and public participation.

Decentralization creates an efficiency paradox: while permitting is streamlined at the central level, oversight at the local level weakens due to the loss of local government authority and the central government's limited capacity for on-the-ground oversight. This situation creates the potential for moral hazard and ongoing environmental crises.

The case study of Dedi Mulyadi's leadership demonstrates that a centralized, top-down leadership style at the local level can be an effective tool for development, particularly in terms of budget efficiency and infrastructure development.

However, this model relies heavily on the charisma of leaders and risks undermining the deliberative processes of democracy if not balanced by a robust system of transparency. The integration of local cultural values (such as Sundanese wisdom) with the demands of modern governance is key for local leaders to maintain their legitimacy and public trust amid the trend toward the centralization of national power.

Theoretically, this study extends the decentralization literature by demonstrating that central-local government relations are influenced not only by the distribution of formal authority, but also by the capacity of local leaders to build legitimacy through cultural approaches. This study proposes the concept of *cultural-centralized leadership* as a form of local leadership adaptation in response to the dynamics of recentralization. The concept enriches the governance literature by explaining that the effectiveness of local government can be sustained through a combination of formal authority, cultural legitimacy, and strong public communication.

6. Recommendation

Critically, the author argues that the current trend toward re-centralization constitutes a "step backward" from the spirit of reform unless it is accompanied by clear mechanisms for the division of roles between the central and regional governments. The central government cannot possibly manage the details of issues across 38 provinces and hundreds of regencies and cities solely through a rigid digital system.

Recommendations for Local Governments:

1. **Strengthening Technocratic Capacity:** Local governments must demonstrate that they are capable of managing government affairs professionally and free from corruption so that the central government has no reason to revoke those authorities.

2. **Optimizing Digital Media:** Local leaders need to adopt digital communication strategies, as Dedi Mulyadi has done, to bridge the gap with the public, ensuring that public participation remains vibrant even as decision-making processes become increasingly centralized.

3. **Collective Policy Advocacy:** Through local government associations (such as APPSI or APKASI), local governments should be more vocal in calling for flexibility in national standards to ensure they remain responsive to local characteristics.

Recommendations for the Central Government:

1. **Decentralization of Oversight:** The central government must grant local governments strong oversight authority, backed by adequate budgetary support, to ensure that permits issued by the central government continue to comply with the principles of environmental sustainability and regional spatial planning.

2. **Regulatory Harmonization:** The Local Government Law needs to be revised to align with the Job Creation Law, thereby preventing overlapping jurisdictions that confuse officials in the field.

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