



Digital Democracy: Disparity Between Urban- Rural Digital Democracy in North Banten and South Banten, Indonesia

 Bayu Nurrohman^{1*},  Gilang Ramadhan¹, and  Luki Oka Prastio¹

¹Departement of Government Studies, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author Email: bayu.nurrohman@untirta.ac.id ; Telp: +6282128480694

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Abstract

Digital platforms have now become a new avenue for citizens to express their opinions, hold those in power accountable, and engage in the political process. While it offers many benefits, digital democracy also faces significant challenges, including the digital divide. This research attempts to examine the disparity between urban and rural digital democracy in Banten Province, represented by North Banten and South Banten. The purpose of this research is to examine and understand the practice of digital democracy and its gaps in Banten Province. This research is urgently needed to examine how digital democracy is implemented in public spaces to encourage their participation in politics and government. The research is focused on Banten Province, as a significant gap in the implementation of digital democracy exists between urban areas (North Banten) and rural areas (South Banten). The research employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. The research findings indicate that the digital democracy gap between rural areas, represented by Lebak Regency and Pandeglang Regency, and the government in urban areas, represented by Tangerang City, Tangerang Regency, and South Tangerang City, is indeed present. The main gap is evident in the number of public spaces provided by the government for the public to participate in conveying aspirations, complaints, grievances, and even suggestions regarding the provision of public services. The gap also exists in the access that local communities have to the provided public spaces. Financial limitations affect the region's capacity to offer a more sufficient digital public space system.

Keywords: Urban-Rural Digital, Digital democracy, Comparative Study, Banten Province, Indonesia

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Introduction

The rapid development of technology, information, and communication is transforming various aspects of human life. One of the most significant changes is felt in politics and governance. In politics, widespread public involvement in political activities reflects the strong position of democracy in a region. One factor that can encourage broader public political involvement is the utilization of new digital spaces, which then creates a climate known as digital democracy (Gilardi, 2016). Today, digital democracy is a necessity that must be met by governments at the central, regional, and village levels. Public participation, as a cornerstone of good governance, requires direct public involvement in political and governmental affairs (Ottschalk, 2009). The rapid use of social media has also contributed to the acceleration of digital democracy in politics. In government, the use of technology, information, and communication is also encouraged to continue to develop in line with demands for improved quality of government administration, particularly in public services (Brill, 2018).

Digital democracy is a method used by government systems to improve public service performance, encourage public involvement, and enhance public trust through the use of technology and information (Yusuf & Sari, 2021). Technological and information developments require not only the public but also the government to adapt quickly to utilize digitalization as a means of increasing public access to government services. Various forms of adaptation within government systems include providing digital platforms to improve public service performance and opening up opportunities for public participation in governance at various levels (Kusumasari, Bevaola, Agus Setianto, Widodo, dan Pang, 2018).

In practice, digital democracy has had various impacts at the societal level. The positive impact is easier access and affordability for the public to participate in various political and governmental activities, such as expressing aspirations, providing input on decision-making and public policy, and acting as a social control mechanism in the implementation of regional government policies. This demonstrates that democratic life improves in a region when digital democracy is implemented and utilized effectively by the wider community (Dwifatma, 2021).

One of the challenges in implementing digital democracy is the creation of a digital divide within society. Many factors contribute to this digital divide, but the most important are gender, age, race, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. This digital divide will further exacerbate social disparities, as those unable to adapt and utilize digital democracy will continue to be left behind due to their neglect of the newly created public spaces (Mossberger, 2006).

The democratic divide will also result in politically marginalized communities within digital platforms. This divide creates a segmented digital democracy, accessible and usable only by those who understand and utilize it. This situation contradicts the spirit of digital democracy, which encourages more inclusive involvement of all levels of society in the public sphere. This demonstrates the challenges of digital democracy, which cannot be addressed by all levels of society (Athmay, 2015). Furthermore, it also reflects the negligence of government officials, who fail to capitalize on the opportunities that digital democracy offers to empower them and society to foster good governance and a more inclusive political system. Meanwhile, the challenges of transparency, accountability, and public involvement have always been key prerequisites for good and clean governance (Norris, 2001).

On the other hand, digital democracy also has negative impacts. The lack of digital literacy among social media users often leads to conflict and disagreement because an understanding of freedom of expression is not accompanied by an understanding of communication ethics (Nasution,

2020). Furthermore, various inaccurate reports spread through social media, which undermines the credibility and public trust in government officials, leading many to make unfair judgments and criticisms. Criticism based on something that did not occur makes the goal of public involvement in building good politics and governance less effective and efficient (Masduki, 2021).

The various impacts of digital democracy are a consequence of how technological developments in democracy must be accompanied by high levels of digital literacy among the public. The various challenges facing digital democracy in the regions are the persistence of numerous gaps in democracy, which in turn impact the digital democracy gap (Guandalini, 2022). In addition to inadequate digital literacy and varying societal adaptations due to regional and local characteristics, this also occurs because local governments have not been able to provide adequate digital infrastructure to support the implementation of effective digital democracy. This digital divide occurs in Banten Province, which is composed of both rural and urban areas, making the disparity in digital democracy a difficult challenge to avoid (Blasi et al., 2022).

This research is based on several issues related to the implementation of digital democracy. The first issue is the disparity in the implementation of digital democracy between regions, particularly in North Banten, represented by Greater Tangerang, and North Banten, represented by Pandeglang and Lebak Regencies. This gap is clearly evident in how the public utilizes new digital public spaces to participate in the political and governmental process. This disparity is a problem that certainly requires constructive and comprehensive analysis to understand the existing conditions and the ideal conditions that should be implemented and applied to the political and governmental systems in the regions (Shamsuzzoha et al., 2021). The second issue relates to the fulfillment of regional governments' obligations in providing and accommodating new digital public spaces to facilitate public access and involvement in public decision-making processes and the provision of public services. Meanwhile, the challenge of digital democracy itself is how governments and communities can utilize new digital spaces to expand access and communication for more efficient, responsive, and inclusive governance and public service delivery (Chen et al., 2021).

his research has an urgency to be carried out because it is to see how the application of digital democracy in public spaces in encouraging their participation in political and governmental aspects. Moreover, this research also captures the digital disparity of democracy in Banten Province which is divided into Urban areas, namely North Banten, with those occurring in Rural areas (South Banten). The comparative study conducted not only captures the digital divide of democracy between regions but more than that will produce an analysis of the various factors and impacts that occur with this digital disparity of democracy (Bouzguenda et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the need for political and governmental development is supported by how public participation is opened as widely as possible within the framework of justice and the fulfillment of citizens' rights to convey, be involved, or criticize the implementation of government politics in their area (Zhang et al., 2022).

Research on digital democracy has been conducted by many academics and practitioners in various perspectives and research viewpoints. The presentation of previous research is in order to clarify the differences in the position of our research on digital democracy with various relevant research that has been done before (Mergel et al., 2019). Previous research also provides a variety of different perspectives to provide more depth for us in carrying out this research. Research conducted to discuss and analyze the development of theory (Awoleye et al., 2014).

The first research is entitled "Rethinking Digital Democracy: From the Disembodied Discursive Self to New Materialist Corporealities." by Hans Asenbaum. The article captures current debates on new materialism that offers a new perspective with attention to other materialities. New materialist thinking has been successfully applied to online social interaction, but has not yet been applied to

political participation. By discussing three examples of digital democratic political participation based on race and based on gender, this article contributes to a new understanding of the embodied subjectivity of democracy in digital era (Asenbaum, 2021).

The second study entitled "Rethinking the digital democratic affordance and its impact on political representation: Toward a new framework" by Marco Deseriis. This research illustrates that the main ability of digital media is to reduce the cost of political participation. At the institutional level, the application of digital democracy allows elected representatives to monitor and consult with their constituents, thus closing gaps in the representational system. At the societal level, digital media allows constituents to organize and represent their interests directly (Deseriis, 2020).

The third research entitled "*How do we know that it works? Designing a digital democratic innovation with the help of user-centered design*" by Berg Janne, Lindholm Jenny and Högväg Joachim. This research captures new methods of community involvement in the decision-making process. The use of gadgets as a tool of democracy is important to be optimized along with the creation of various applications created by the government to bring various community participation closer to the policy-making space. However, if the management information systems built do not meet the expectations of the public and function poorly, the apps may go unused and fail to increase interest in public issues. Hence, there is a need to apply a citizen's perspective to the adaptive use of technology (Berg, 2021).

The fourth study is entitled "The Failure of Political Engagement: From Digital Gap to Democracy Gap" by Fairuz Arta Abhipraya and Bambang Eka Cahya Widodo. This research produces an overview of the existence of digital disparities that have an impact on the democratic disparities that occur in Bantul Regency. The disparity in democracy that occurs results in a lower public understanding of the various issues carried by regional head candidates in the contestation of the 2020 Bantul Regency regional head election (Abhipraya, 2021).

The previous studies described above are relevant studies to show that digital democracy is an interesting and important issue to study (Anderson, 2009). Digital democracy with all the problems that follow it is a need for researchers to continue to find the right formula and model in accommodating public interests and involvement through the available digital spaces (Arendsen et al., 2014). There are no studies that focus on the urban-rural digital democracy gap in Banten, None have looked at local government access to public digital spaces. Therefore, we feel the need to conduct research to fill that perspective in order to complement and continue the research that has been done before by portraying digital democracy disparities, especially those that occur in rural- urban areas, especially in Banten Province.

Research Methods

This research uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative research was chosen by the researcher because it is relevant for research on digital democracy, the uniqueness of two case in North Banten and South Banten, which requires in-depth observation and analysis, particularly regarding social issues. This research uses a case study approach. Case studies are used to comprehensively understand individuals in order to gain a deeper understanding of a research topic. The unique characteristics of the cases in North and South Banten can only be examined through case studies, particularly comparative case studies. This method is used to identify similarities, differences, or patterns emerging from North and South Banten, which face similar challenges but differ in their implementation of digital democracy. (Creswell, 2015).

In this study, the researcher used data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted by going directly to the field to directly observe how the digital democracy process occurs and to identify the various factors that contribute to disparities between regions in digital democracy. Interviews were conducted with various parties directly involved in digital democracy from various dimensions, including local governments Dinas Komunikasi dan Informasi Pandeglang Regency represented South Banten and Dinas Komunikasi dan Informasi Tangerang City represented North Banten for policy perspective data especially in digital services, the public as users for experience in using digital facilities provided by government, and various social communities, one of which focuses on democratic life to provide data about digital democracy in Banten. Meanwhile, the documentation study was conducted by collecting other secondary data to complement the data and facts obtained through observation and interviews.

The steps for analyzing the data through Data reduction in this study is conducted by sorting and simplifying data obtained from interviews, observations, and literature studies relevant to digital democracy in Banten. The research focus is directed toward critical aspects such as the digital policy process, the role of stakeholders, patterns of digital interaction within the community, and the emerging constraints. Data Display, The reduced data in this study is presented systematically through descriptive narratives, tables, and thematic matrices. This presentation encompasses the practices of digital democracy in rural and urban areas, the digital democracy disparities between North and South Banten, as well as the resulting theoretical and practical implications. Conclusion drawing in this study is conducted in stages and subsequently verified through source triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To ensure the validity and legitimacy of the data obtained by the researcher in the field, the researcher employed data analysis techniques using data triangulation. This technique involves re-examining the received data and then comparing and contrasting data from government, user, and communities that represented digital democracy ecology. Data triangulation was conducted using only source triangulation.

Results and Discussion

Digital democracy is a method used by government systems to improve public service performance, encourage engagement, and enhance public trust through the use of technology and information (Yusuf & Sari, 2021). Based on this statement, digital democracy is crucial to examine in the form of public spaces provided by the government for citizens to participate in the provision of public services. Digital democracy is unavoidable in the current state of governance. In fact, the government continues to encourage the optimization of the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE). In its implementation, digital democracy continues to develop with the emergence of various digital platforms issued by the government to bring public services closer to the community. There is one main principle in public participation services: the community (G. F. Khan & Park, 2013). Public participation in public services is crucial, especially in providing input, suggestions, and complaints, which will impact the quality of public services themselves. The public in public services is not limited to just public service users; it also goes beyond that, and the public participates by submitting complaints related to deficiencies or concerns they have during the service. The public also needs a space to provide input and suggestions to the government through a two-way, communicative model. The government must respond effectively to the public spaces provided, as this is where several corrective measures to enhance the quality of public services can be implemented (Kleinhans et al., 2015).

Given the importance of public participation in public spaces, the digital democracy discussed in this article will examine the aspect of providing a space for the public to participate in expressing

aspirations, input, and suggestions, particularly regarding the provision of public services (Z. A. Khan et al., 2015). The current situation in Banten Province clearly shows an imbalance in the form and implementation of digital democracy. This gap is particularly evident when comparing North Banten, represented by Greater Tangerang, with South Banten, represented by Pandeglang and Lebak Regencies.

Rural Digital Democracy (Lebak Regency and Pandeglang Regency)

There are several forms of digital democracy in public services in Lebak Regency. The first form of digital democracy relates to the public's accessible public space for submitting complaints regarding the provision of public services. Public services are inherently linked to the bureaucratic system, as bureaucrats are the ones who provide public services to the public. The first platform provided by the government as a public space for complaints is a website-based management information system managed by the Lebak Regency Inspectorate. The official website of the Lebak Regency Inspectorate can be found at <https://inspektorat.lebakkab.go.id/wbs>. The public of Lebak Regency can use this website to submit complaints about behavior within the bureaucratic system that they consider detrimental to their public service delivery. Examples of complaints that can be reported include deviations from bureaucratic duties and functions, conflicts of interest, bribery, violations of applicable laws and regulations, corruption, and other complaints deemed necessary for public reporting (Yusuf & Sari, 2021).

This website is accessible to anyone in Lebak Regency and has been accessed by dozens of people since its launch in 2024. The website provides ample space for the public to voice their concerns and complaints. However, according to the complaint procedure outlined on the website, reporters must clearly provide personal information, and the Inspectorate guarantees the confidentiality of the submitted personal data. However, some reporters expressed concerns about the risk of their personal data being leaked, especially since they were complaining about misconduct in public services. The personal data requested includes the reporter's full name, National Identification Number, and a telephone number linked to WhatsApp Messenger (Singgalen, 2021).

Another issue facing the public in accessing this complaint service is that their reports must include the location and time of the incident and provide a clear chronology. They are also asked to attach supporting data to support their complaints. In some cases, residents lack sufficient evidence due to limited access to data. Complaints are handled within 11 business days through this website-based information system. For other forms of public complaints that require more rapid handling and emergency situations, the Lebak Regency Government has provided an emergency call center,

112. This service has been available since 2018, and its launch coincided with the 120th anniversary of Lebak Regency. These 112 services makes it easier for the public to submit complaints and even request assistance in emergencies. This service brings public services closer to the community and will respond more quickly to help resolve the conditions reported by the public (Kannapadang et al., 2025).

The most effective service is the SPAN LAPOR application. This service is managed nationally by the Ministry of Home Affairs and then followed up in each region where the complaint is filed. This system not only allows for submitting complaints and aspirations but can also be used to submit requests for information related to the implementation of public services. The SPAN LAPOR service is the most widely used service by the public as a public space to participate in conveying aspirations and complaints to the government. Furthermore, the Lebak Regency Government recently launched an innovation called "Lebak RUHAY." Lebak Ruhay is an abbreviation of Responsive, Superior, Harmonious, Trustworthy, and Confident. Embracing the spirit of accountability and transparency in

public services, the Lebak Ruhay innovation is designed to make it easier for Lebak residents to express their aspirations and suggestions related to the implementation of public services in Lebak Regency. This service is also a form of superior innovation integrated with the Information and Documentation Management Officer in Lebak Regency. With community involvement, public services will certainly be faster and more responsive. However, because it has only recently been launched, there is not yet much data and information available on public assessments of this public service innovation (Satriadi, 2017).

The final public space that the public can use to express their aspirations and complaints about public services is through the social media accounts of the relevant agencies and agencies that provide public services. In today's digital era, to expand communication access with the public, the government has created official social media accounts as a means for public involvement in the provision of public services.

Meanwhile, in Pandeglang Regency, several government administration practices have been implemented that support the creation of digital democracy. One such innovation is Bebeja. Bebeja is an application used as a platform for the public to submit complaints to the government regarding public services. The Bebeja application is the only platform launched specifically for the public to submit complaints. Launched in 2017, this application makes it easy for the public to report anything related to the implementation of public services online, and the government responds promptly. Since its launch until 2019, this application has been downloaded by 1,258 Pandeglang residents who use public services. However, the Bebeja application has not developed significantly, resulting in a decrease in its use in responding to public services. Moreover, the introduction of SPAN LAPOR, which is managed nationally through the Ministry of Home Affairs, has made the previous platform less popular among the public. This is because SPAN LAPOR also has good quality as a digital platform for responding to public aspirations and complaints related to public services. This application is also integrated with the local government, allowing all public complaints to be immediately followed up and responded to, minimizing the wait time for users to hear about the progress of their reports (Lim, 2013).

Meanwhile, Pandeglang Regency also has a 112 call center, an emergency number accessible to the public, especially those in dire need of assistance and information. The Pandeglang Regency Government also has a smart room operating within the Pandeglang Regency Regional Secretariat. This smart room is designed to respond to public complaints, including those related to public service delivery, without requiring a direct visit. Pandeglang Regency also has a Public Service Mall, a development of the integrated one-stop service system. The public service mall offers a multitude of integrated options accessible simultaneously, all within a single room and door. The public service mall also provides a space for the public to submit criticisms, suggestions, complaints, and aspirations related to public service delivery (Nurrohman, 2020).

Furthermore, the Pandeglang Regency government's social media channels are available to directly convey public aspirations. In fact, every government agency under the Pandeglang Regency Government is also required to be active on social media to facilitate the public to obtain the latest information and become one of the media and public spaces to express opinions. However, the people of Pandeglang Regency are more likely to voice their aspirations and complaints to the government on large social media accounts managed by citizens such as @infopandeglang and @pandeglangeksis. This shows that digital activism in Pandeglang Regency is still low in accessing media provided by the government but is more active in voicing on social media platforms managed by the general public.

Urban Digital Democracy (Greater Tangerang)

Discussions on digital democracy in Greater Tangerang reveal several significant differences. These gaps can be seen in the type and number of public space platforms provided, adequate network infrastructure, more competent human resources providing services, and a more tech-savvy public using services, able to adapt quickly to convey their aspirations and complaints in public spaces. The Tangerang City Government began a major project to digitally engage the public with the launch of Tangerang Live in 2016. Tangerang Live is a platform that has made Tangerang a smart city because the system it builds and operates heavily utilizes adequate information technology. One of Tangerang Live's advanced features is the LAKSA application. This LAKSA application is a digital platform launched specifically to provide a space for the public to express their aspirations, complaints, and even information needed by the wider community. LAKSA can be accessed and used by anyone in a transparent manner.

The application itself is very easy to access and can be accessed through various channels. Those wishing to access this service can visit the Tangerang Live website or access it through social media accounts managed by the Tangerang Regency government. LAKSA is also available on various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X. This allows anyone to access LAKSA, not just those with specific social media accounts. This demonstrates the Tangerang Regency Government's commitment to providing a public space within the context of digital democracy, allowing the public to submit complaints, input, and suggestions more easily and affordably. Furthermore, the response from service personnel accessing this application is also fast.

Within the LAKSA application, the public can submit any complaints related to the provision of public services. They can submit complaints regarding infrastructure issues, security and order issues, and even any form of public service they feel is lacking or dissatisfied with the provision of the Tangerang City government bureaucracy. LAKSA itself can be very beneficial due to the high level of usage and access to this service. Public interest in using this feature is quite high. This is not only because the public feels a positive impact from the complaints service provided, but also because the human resources of service users in Tangerang City are sufficiently skilled in technology and information, allowing for the rapid adaptation of offline to online services to keep pace with changes and developments.

The LAKSA application has evolved from its previous form to its current widespread use by the public. When it first launched in 2016, the application did not utilize app-based technology and was only accessed and used by the public for 214 reports. However, since its transformation into an app-based digital platform, public participation in this feature has increased. The peak achievement occurred between May and August 2022, when, during the four months of operation, 869 people accessed the service, who wanted to participate in submitting suggestions, aspirations, and complaints to the Tangerang City Government regarding public service delivery. The LAKSA application itself now has over 80,000 users (Rizki & Hanafie, 2023).

Moving on to the Tangerang Regency Government's implementation of digital democracy to support public participation in public service delivery, the Tangerang Gemilang application-based digital platform was launched. To improve the quality of public services and implement an electronic government system, Tangerang Gemilang demonstrates the Tangerang Regency government's responsiveness to technological developments and utilization. Tangerang Gemilang is not only designed for online administrative public services, but also allows the public to submit complaints, criticisms, suggestions, and even aspirations that can improve the quality of public service delivery in Tangerang Regency going forward. Tangerang Gemilang continues to be developed, and currently offers several accessible services, including a platform for submitting complaints and aspirations

related to public service delivery, emergency services for those seeking a response to emergencies, information on government administration, information on local taxes, information on employment services, and an online queuing system.

However, some shortcomings in the implementation of Tangerang Gemilang lie in its accessibility to users. Despite its long-standing launch, its use by the Tangerang Regency community remains insignificant. Its utilization rate is still low, according to data received from the Tangerang Regency Communications and Informatics Office. In 2024, only 10,000 users downloaded the app, despite a population of over 3,000,000. This data indicates that the app has yet to achieve significant adoption among the wider Tangerang Regency population. (Alfirisi et al., 2024) Unlike Tangerang Live in Tangerang City, the Tangerang Gemilang app still requires extensive public awareness. The public is still largely unaware of Tangerang Gemilang, and digital literacy in Tangerang Regency is not yet fully developed among its users. Furthermore, at its launch, Tangerang Gemilang was only available for download from the Play Store, meaning only Android-based gadget users could access the service. However, the reality is that the public seeking to submit complaints and participate in public services online extends beyond just Android users. (Alfirisi et al., 2024)

Meanwhile, South Tangerang City also has several features that represent a form of digital democracy. The main feature, SIARAN TANGSEL, serves as a platform for public aspirations and complaints, an acronym for the South Tangerang City Reporting and Assignment System. With this application, the public can convey aspirations, input, suggestions, and even complaints, which will then be connected and integrated with relevant agencies or bodies. This demonstrates the ample public space available in South Tangerang. Meanwhile, the number of people using this application is also significant, indicating that digital literacy in South Tangerang is quite high.

Digital Democracy disparity between North Banten and South Banten

After explaining the conditions of the two forms of digital democracy implemented by governments in rural areas (represented by Lebak Regency and Pandeglang Regency) and in urban areas (represented by Tangerang City, Tangerang Regency, and South Tangerang City), various gaps can be seen. The first gap can be seen in the extent of public space provided by the government for the public to express aspirations, input, or even complaints related to the provision of public services. In South Banten, the Lebak and Pandeglang Regency governments have not created many public spaces based on websites or applications. The most effective public space for complaints is the digital platform managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, SPAN LAPOR, nationally. Meanwhile, several applications previously released by the Lebak and Pandeglang Regency governments are underdeveloped, so although public spaces exist, they are not regularly updated (B. H. Nugroho, 2025).

The lack of digital public spaces is also considered inadequate to reach all levels of society in South Banten. The typology of communities in rural and urban areas is certainly different. The level of digital literacy in the community is not as high as in North Banten. The lack of adaptation to the use of technology to access public services is also still suboptimal. This has also resulted in limited public accessibility to various public services managed online by the government. Some citizens even prefer to visit government offices for in-person services rather than utilize online public services, which can save time and costs (Kannapadang et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, network infrastructure in South Banten remains inadequate for accessing online public services. This also slows down the public's adaptation to digital public spaces. The gap becomes apparent when discussing digital democracy in North Banten. The governments of Tangerang City, Tangerang Regency, and South Tangerang City provide numerous public spaces for

expressing aspirations and complaints regarding public service delivery, both through website information systems, applications, and social media managed by the local governments. These public spaces are supported by several factors, particularly budgetary constraints, where the regional budget (APBD) allocated to urban areas is significantly disproportionate to the amount allocated to rural governments. Budgetary constraints impact the region's ability to provide a more adequate digital public space system. Tangerang City invested a substantial amount of its budget in developing Tangerang Live, which has had a significant impact on its residents. Tangerang Live has become a model for Smart City, where the use of information technology is crucial in governance, particularly in providing public services. Tangerang Live, which continues to thrive today, continues to be accessed by the public, benefiting from operational, financial, and even human resources benefits when accessing services through Tangerang Live. Models like Tangerang Live, which integrates with other supporting features and connects with relevant agencies, also add to the list of advantages of this Super App. A similar trend was observed in Tangerang Regency with the use of Tangerang Gemilang. Although not widely used by the public, the availability of a public space integrated with relevant agencies significantly facilitates access to public services, allowing the public to participate not only as users but also as providers of input and suggestions on the services provided (Shamsuzzoha et al., 2021).

South Tangerang City also has several applications to provide digital space, such as Siaran Tangsel (South Tangerang City Reporting and Assignment Application System). Not only is Siaran Tangsel available, but many other applications are available to access online public services managed by the City's Departments and Agencies. Public participation is also significant in accessing the digital space provided by the South Tangerang City government (Putri & Pratiwi, 2022).

The digital divide between urban and rural areas in Banten Province is very clear. Based on research findings, this occurs for several reasons. First, the Pandeglang and Lebak Regency governments are still lacking in providing a digital aspiration space for the public that is widely known and then accessed. The launch of various digital applications to accommodate suggestions, aspirations, and complaints has not yet made the public aware of their existence. Social media currently provides an opportunity to expand government performance campaigns, but so far it has not been optimally implemented in South Banten. Field findings indicate that some people still do not know where to report problems encountered when receiving public services. Official government accounts on social media are also unable to respond quickly to emerging issues related to government administration. Even for some issues to be addressed by the government, they must first be made viral by local accounts with large numbers of followers and high engagement, such as @pandeglangeksis and @infopandeglang. An example is when public complaints about waste disposal cooperation in Pandeglang Regency were only responded to when digital activism among the public grew widely on both accounts. Issues such as damaged roads, which led to accidents, and illegal levies in various tourist areas were also addressed with posts from local accounts in both Lebak and Pandeglang Regencies. This indicates that public trust in government-managed social media and the apps offered remains low, with many preferring to submit complaints through local community accounts, which easily amplify emerging issues (Suharno, 2012).

Secondly, there is the factor of organizational culture. One of the main challenges in public service innovation is an organizational culture that is still slow to embrace change. The bureaucratic system is key to the implementation of public service innovation in local governments. Pandeglang and Lebak Regencies have not yet fully implemented this professionally. Bureaucratic pathology persists, reflected in the slow response to government digitalization. Systems have begun to be developed, but they have not been able to consistently use them. The government's slow response to community issues through digital platforms is one example of how bureaucratic governance remains

slow. Meanwhile, the demands of today's society require rapid responses and solutions, as developments can be easily monitored on social media (Alim & Dharma, 2021).

Third, the public has not yet fully adapted to the use of technology to access digital government services. Public digital literacy remains low when using the various platforms provided by the government. This is evident when problems arise in public services, but the public remains confused about who to report them to, especially those living in remote areas with difficult internet access. This is also a challenge for the government to address, improving the public's digital literacy so they can more quickly adapt to the current digital government model. It would be futile if the government created a digital platform but the public lacked the literacy to use it (Syahputri & Katimin, 2024).

Meanwhile, in Greater Tangerang, the government appears ready to implement digital government. Field findings demonstrate the various super apps owned by the local government, and their rapid response. This is also reflected in reviews from residents who use community-managed digital services. These findings demonstrate that the bureaucratic system, in implementing public service innovation, is highly responsive to issues raised by the public. This factor is significant because the bureaucratic system is a key driver of the success of e-government systems (Yusuf & Sari, 2021).

Furthermore, digital literacy among the public in the Greater Tangerang area is also high. This is evident, according to research findings, in the number of people accessing digital services provided by the local government. The public also actively reports and monitors the progress of their reports until they receive a response from the local government. A more professional bureaucratic system and a high level of digital literacy in the public certainly optimize the performance of electronic government systems (M. K. Nugroho & Fahadayna, 2025).

The impact of the digital divide between South Banten and North Banten is the increasing disparity in local government performance. Well-implemented digital services will improve government performance, as suggestions, input, and complaints from the public are driving improvements in the local government system. Conversely, when local governments fail to effectively utilize digital governance, public engagement becomes somewhat passive. Suggestions, input, and complaints, which should be addressed by the government to improve the quality of public services, are hampered. Ultimately, local governments perceive public services as excellent, but in reality, many public complaints are limited to the digital space provided by the government, which transparently explains the progress of complaints until they are resolved (Dasaryandi et al., 2019).

Implications of Theoretical, Practical, and Policy

The analysis of digital democracy in Banten Province yields profound theoretical, practical, and policy implications that underscore the complexity of modernizing public services in a fragmented regional landscape. Theoretically, these findings challenge the conventional understanding of the digital divide by shifting the focus from mere infrastructure to the so-called second-level divide, which concerns how technology is utilized and the tangible benefits it produces. It suggests that in developing regions, digital democracy is not a linear progression but a multifaceted ecosystem where informal digital activism often emerges as a necessary substitute for failing formal channels (Ikhsan & Ramadhan, 2025). This highlights a critical need to re-examine bureaucratic ecology, confirming that while information systems serve as essential enablers, the ultimate quality of public service remains tethered to the responsiveness of human actors and the underlying organizational culture (Osella, M.Ferro & Pautasso, 2016).

On a practical level, the disparity between the urban north and the rural south demands a shift toward user-centric design and operational integration. The friction encountered by citizens in Lebak and Pandeglang—often caused by rigid reporting requirements and privacy concerns—suggests that government platforms must prioritize simplicity and data security to foster trust (Rose et al., 2015). Practical improvements should move away from the proliferation of fragmented, underutilized applications and toward the Super App model seen in Tangerang City. Furthermore, local governments in the south must pivot their social media strategies from one-way performance broadcasting to active, two-way engagement that mirrors the efficiency of community-managed platforms (Ramadhan & Nurrohman, 2024).

From a policy perspective, bridging this gap requires a departure from so called one-size-fits-all governance. State and provincial authorities must implement asymmetrical fiscal policies that prioritize infrastructure and command center development in underserved rural areas. Beyond physical hardware, policy frameworks must mandate sustained digital literacy programs to ensure that government investments do not become white elephant projects due to lack of public capability (Pereira et al., 201 C.E.). Finally, meaningful digital transformation requires institutionalizing responsiveness through strict Standard Operating Procedures that link digital grievance resolution to bureaucratic performance evaluations. By integrating these theoretical insights with actionable policy and practice, the regional government can ensure that digital democracy serves as a tool for social inclusion rather than a mechanism for further marginalization.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that a digital democracy gap exists between rural areas represented by Lebak Regency and Pandeglang Regency and urban areas represented by Tangerang City, Tangerang Regency, and South Tangerang City. The main gap is seen in the number of public spaces provided by the government for public participation in conveying aspirations, complaints, grievances, and even suggestions regarding the provision of public services. This gap also occurs in the access that local residents have to the provided public spaces. Residents in North Banten are more active and able to utilize information technology launched by the local government better than residents in South Banten. Research findings indicate that factors influencing this gap are the provision of digital spaces by the government, organizational culture in responding to change, and public digital literacy. The greatest impact of this gap is that government performance will become increasingly unequal because in South Banten, residents are less active in submitting suggestions, input, and complaints, resulting in delays in improving themselves and responding to problems. Efforts are needed to accelerate innovation in a more professional and responsive manner and to improve public digital literacy. This research is very important because its output can provide the government and the public with an overview of the gaps in the implementation of electronic-based government systems. The government and the public need to be aware of the limitations that exist to improve local government performance in digital services. This research can be continued at different locations in other regencies/cities in Banten Province, as several gaps in digital services exist, such as in Serang Regency and Cilegon City. Further research will provide a more comprehensive picture of digital governance in Banten Province.

The impact of these findings reveals that if the digital divide between North and South Banten is not addressed, it will lead to a performance paradox where rural governments remain disconnected from their citizens' actual needs. By shifting toward user-friendly platforms and responsive bureaucratic culture, the government can transform digital democracy from a source of regional inequality into a powerful engine for social inclusion and equitable public service delivery across the entire province.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology

This research doesn't use artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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Authors Bio*

Bayu Nurrohman (BN), Department of Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia, Lecturer in the Field of Government Science, Email: bayu.nurrohman@untirta.ac.id, and Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3188-3216>.

Gilang Ramadhan (GR), Department of Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia, Lecturer in the Field of Government Science.

Luki Oka Prastio (LOP), Department of Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia, Lecturer in the Field of Government Science, Email: luki@untirta.ac.id, and Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7644-180X>