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To cite this article: Primi Putri & Päivi Lujala (2023) Assessing the Transformative Potential of Extractive Sector Transparency Initiatives: Evidence from Local Oil Revenue Management in Indonesia, *The Journal of Development Studies*, 59:12, 1787-1806, DOI: [10.1080/00220388.2023.2244635](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2023.2244635)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2023.2244635>



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Published online: 10 Aug 2023.



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Assessing the Transformative Potential of Extractive Sector Transparency Initiatives: Evidence from Local Oil Revenue Management in Indonesia

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(Original version submitted November 2021; final version accepted July 2023)

ABSTRACT *Transparency initiatives are frequently proposed to enhance citizen participation in natural resource management and ensure that resource revenue spending meets its economic and social goals. Many transparency initiatives, however, have failed in achieving their goals. This article develops an analytical framework emphasizing information disclosure, citizen action, and state response in making transparency initiatives effective in promoting change. We portray these three dimensions in the transparency cube to illustrate their simultaneous roles and the different aspects of these dimensions. The article applies the framework to analyse a subnational revenue transparency initiative designed and implemented by the oil-rich Bojonegoro District of Indonesia. We find that the initiative's strengths were its requirements to disclose information related to the petroleum sector and its establishment of avenues for engagement. The information, however, did not address the public's needs and preferred ways of receiving information and engaging with their leader. Consequently, citizens did not actively seek to express their concerns about oil revenue management. The article concludes that transparency initiatives need to include context-specific measures to disclose relevant and actionable information and promote active citizenry and consider local political dynamics to sustain government responsiveness as part of its design.*

KEYWORDS: information disclosure; participation; natural resources; revenue management; subnational; Indonesia

1. Introduction

Transparency in the extractive sector has been vigorously promoted by international organisations such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Publish What You Pay (PWYP), and the World Bank as a key approach for sustainably managing natural resources and as a remedy for the resource curse (Gupta, 2008; Vijge, 2018). The underlying transparency narrative posits that increased public access to understandable, reliable, timely, and salient resource-related information will increase citizens' understanding of the sector and revenue

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spending, empower them to make informed assessments of the management of the sector and associated resource revenues, and demand change, thereby leading to better revenue management and enhanced economic and societal outcomes (Epremian, Lujala, & Bruch, 2016; Williams, 2011).

Many transparency initiatives have been successful in making public information on various aspects of the extractive sector. However, they often have had disappointing results, failing to have a transformative effect on natural resource governance and development (Rustad, Billon, Lujala, Le Billon, & Lujala, 2017; Yanuardi, Vijge, & Biermann, 2021). A key reason for this has been initiatives' tendency to equate transparency with information disclosure, without considering the complex contextual environment that may, for a variety of different reasons, make the disclosed information irrelevant or useless for the intended audience (Epremian & Brun, 2018; Kasimba & Lujala, 2019; Yanuardi et al., 2021). From these experiences, it has become clear that information disclosure is not enough in and of itself (Gupta, 2010; Lujala, Brunnschweiler, & Edjekumhene, 2020; Vijge, 2018), and that issues related to unequal power structures need to be addressed (Ciplet, Adams, Weikmans, & Roberts, 2018). Furthermore, research has so far focused primarily on national transparency initiatives, and we thus have little understanding of whether locally implemented transparency initiatives could play a transformative role in natural resource management.

To promote research and policy on transparency and accountability in the extractive sector, this article makes two important contributions. First, it develops an analytical framework to study the different dimensions and aspects needed for transparency initiatives to promote change through public engagement. We build the framework on research that views transparency holistically (Fox, 2015; Joshi, 2013; Kosack & Fung, 2014), arguing that any transparency initiative that seeks to entice change through a more informed and active citizenry—in addition to assuring that the information provided is relevant and accessible—needs to design and implement avenues for citizen action and include elements that ensure citizens' concerns are heard and acted on.¹ The transparency cube (Figure 1) illustrates the simultaneous roles of information disclosure, citizen action, and state response in designing and assessing a transparency initiative.

Second, the article applies the framework to a transparency initiative implemented by the government of Bojonegoro, an oil-rich district in Indonesia. We chose a local transparency initiative for three main reasons. First, sub-national units often receive substantial amounts of extractive sector-related revenues. Second, subnational transparency initiatives could potentially be more beneficial and effective than national ones, as the effects of the extractive sector are more strongly felt at the local level, ordinary citizens and local leaders have better knowledge of their area and their most pressing needs, and there is less physical and social distance between citizens and their leaders. Third, to date, only a few studies have focused on local transparency initiatives.

Bojonegoro District's transparency initiative targeted the general public and garnered applause both nationally and internationally (Abdullah & Karim, 2021). It was supported and promoted, among others, by international and domestic donors and by NGOs such as the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) and PWYP Indonesia (Prijosusilo, 2012; Winanti & Hanif, 2020). Focusing on revenue generation and spending,² our analysis shows that the initiative's strengths lay in the serious attempts to establish and anchor it through regulations and public participation channels. Its key weaknesses were its limited provision of salient and actionable information and inadequate encouragement of public engagement and meaningful government response. Importantly, the initiative did not adequately address the structural and institutional factors embedded within society. Consequently, the initiative had limited capacity to bolster substantive state–citizen communication and commitment.

Our findings confirm that the promotion of transformative transparency and, through it, better natural resource (revenue) management, is not a straightforward process as it is subject to contextual settings, normative rationales, and forces that work against it (Epremian et al., 2016;

Gupta & Mason, 2016; Magno & Gatmaytan, 2017). To counter these, and for transparency to play a transformative role in state–citizen dialogue, any transparency initiative that seeks to promote better natural resource management through public engagement needs to include context-specific measures that promote active citizenry and government responsiveness as part of its initial design—if these are not already embedded in existing governance structures.

This article contributes to five distinct bodies of literature. First, within the literature on local natural resource governance, this article is one of the first to study a sub-nationally designed and implemented transparency initiative in the extractive sector from the vantage point of communities. Second, we add to the literature on citizen engagement in local resource revenue management (Kasimba & Lujala, 2019; Ogbe & Lujala, 2021). Third, our article contributes to the literature on local natural resource management and the localised resource curse (Idemudia, 2012; Lawer, Lukas, & Jørgensen, 2017). Fourth, we complement the existing literature on extractive transparency by proposing a framework that can be used to study a transparency initiative's strengths and weaknesses. With time, as more transparency initiatives are implemented, the framework can also be used to form testable predictions about how the different aspects of transparency process impact the attainment of their goals. Finally, we contribute to a growing body of scholarship of extractive transparency initiative, by showing that context-specific barriers might have influenced the localisation and implementation of (global) transparency norms, especially in a place with little prior history of resource exploitation and in a post-authoritarian setting.³ Supporting the findings from studies of nationally implemented transparency initiatives (Epremian & Brun, 2018; Lujala et al., 2020; Yanuardi et al., 2021), even locally designed and implemented initiatives may find it difficult to provide relevant information and encourage active participation if they fail to include context-specific measures and overlook the needs and experiences of targeted audiences.

2. Dimensions of transparency

In the management of the extractive sector, transparency is intended to enable citizens to scrutinise and hold governments and extractive companies accountable for the economic, environmental, and social costs of extractive activities (Acosta, 2013; Haufler, 2010),⁴ with the ultimate aim of improving the management of the extractive sector, reducing corruption and revenue mismanagement, and promoting broader socioeconomic development (Le Billon, Lujala, & Rustad, 2021). While transparency is often considered to be synonymous with openness and disclosure (Etzioni, 2010; Heald, 2006), a transparency initiative that seeks to be transformative should not end at disclosing relevant information to the intended audience. Citizens must not only receive useful information but also be able to act on said information when needed and voice their concerns through different avenues that are feasible to them. Crucially, for a transparency initiative to be transformative, decision-makers must be genuinely willing and able to respond to citizens' demands meaningfully. To achieve this, the initiative's design and implementation must be responsive to the local political, institutional, social, and cultural context, as well as the specific opportunities and obstacles it presents (Lujala & Epremian, 2017).

A useful approach to thinking about the different elements necessary for transformative transparency that works through public engagement is the 'strategic approach' to transparency presented in Fox (2015), which focuses equally on citizens' collective action from below and government processes from above. Such an approach does not regard citizens only as targets of information dissemination but expects—and enables—they to express their concerns and actively participate in collective decision-making processes regarding the issues at hand. Fox's strategic approach is based on state–citizen relations, in which both have enforceable rights and obligations (Evans, 1996; Joshi, 2013). These include citizens taking specific roles in governance processes to ensure accountability (Fox, 2007) and guaranteeing that public decision-makers listen and respond to citizens' voices (Gaventa & Barrett, 2010; Gigler & Bailur, 2014). Notably,

Fox’s strategic approach emphasises the role of reform-minded leadership that genuinely seeks (and is able) to empower citizens and improve the institutional capacity and performance of decision-making in the public sector (Fox, 2015).

Based on the insight from Fox’s strategic approach and the literature that contest the straightforward assumption of transparency narrative (see, e.g., Heald, 2006; Kolstad & Wiig, 2009; Lujala & Epremian, 2017), we identified key features that determine a transparency initiative’s ability to be transformative and achieve its goals. We subsequently categorised these features into three dimensions: *information*, which is a critical resource for altering citizens’ perceptions of public sector performance; *action* taken by citizens to influence public sector performance; and *response*, which reflects ‘decision-makers’ institutional commitment and capacity to listen and respond to citizens’ action.

We illustrate these three dimensions—information, action, and response—with a cube (Figure 1). It portrays transparency as a process in which the three dimensions are simultaneously at work. The cube provides an alternative framework to the transparency ‘action-cycle’ (Fung, Graham, & Weil, 2007; Kosack & Fung, 2014), where the three dimensions are thought to work sequentially through the disclosure of information to (re)form citizens’ perceptions of government performance and mobilize them to voice their concerns and followed by a constructive response from the government and improved performance. This cycle, however, may fail at any phase. The cube, on the other hand, highlights the existence of all three dimensions simultaneously because each dimension is equally essential from the outset and must be developed and promoted in tandem.⁵ Although an initiative does not need to address all outlined aspects in order to be successful, in the case of salient information, for example, publicly available information that is not adequately accessible to the targeted audience, the potential of the

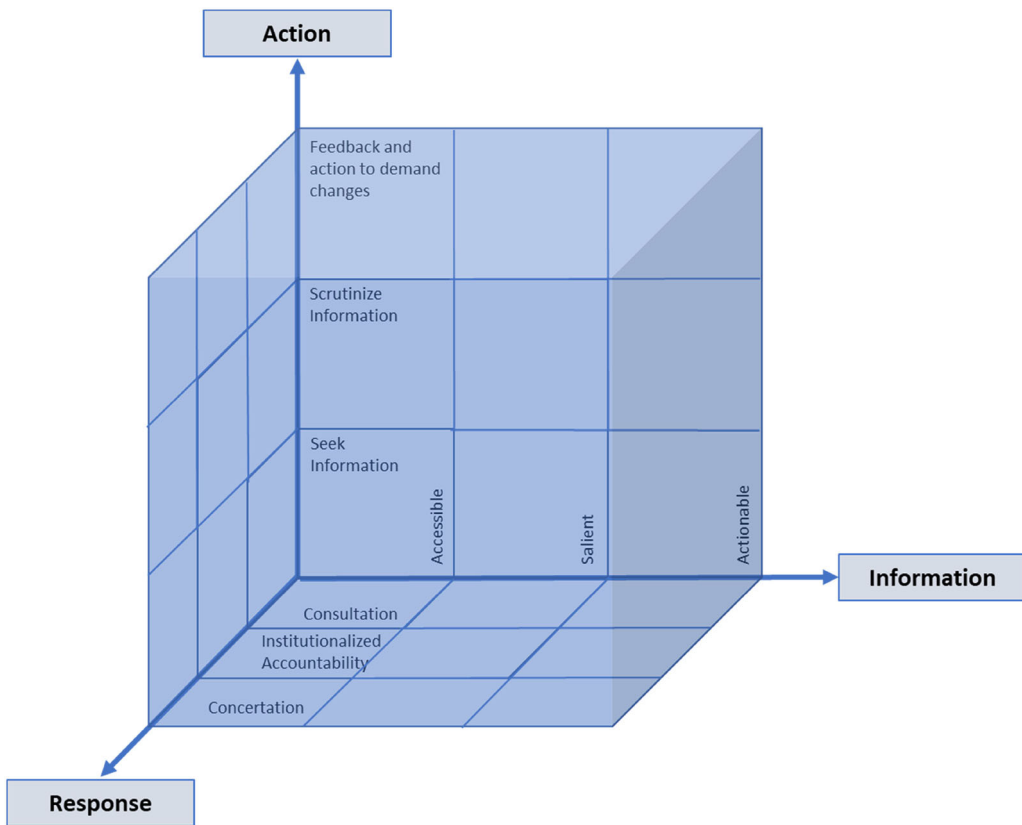


Figure 1. Transparency cube.

initiative to is likely to be limited. Further, depending on the initiative's goals (e.g., reduction in mismanagement, changes in how revenues are spent, and improvement of societal outcomes) and the context in which the initiative is implemented (e.g., the degree of accountability in governance), it is worth noting that for an initiative to be transformative, it can be achieved through different combinations of dimensions and their aspects, and through distinct, nonlinear, and contingent pathways.⁶

The framework does not explicitly include the potential negative aspects of transparency initiatives, such as misinformation or captured participation spaces. They are, however, included implicitly. Misinformation, for example, is a form of irrelevant information, and captured participatory spaces should not be considered meaningful participation. Therefore, the framework can be applied to initiatives implemented in societies in which the authorities are not (yet) or are only partially accountable to the citizens.

2.1. Information

Information is a critical resource for people to assess whether the state is acting in their interest or preying upon them (Fung, 2013). Information's accessibility, saliency, and actionability for its users determine its ability to perform such a role (Lujala & Epremian, 2017).

The *accessibility* of information is crucial. It means that information needs to be publicly available, for example, through a webpage. More so, it should be disseminated in such a way that it reaches the intended audience(s), for instance, through radio or television, community centers, meetings, or other channels usually used by the members of the target group(s) (Lujala et al., 2020). Public sector-related information is often complex and can exceed people's ability to process the information (Etzioni, 2010). Therefore, information needs to be accessible content-wise so that the intended target group members can understand it. This means that information must be provided in the local language and a suitable format (written, oral, pictograms, etc.), using clear, non-technical language, and without burying essential information under unnecessary details. Lujala and Epremian (2017) argue that it is crucial to identify the targeted audience(s)—to and for whom the information will be disseminated—because it will have significant consequences for a range of issues, such as how to disseminate, what information to disseminate, and for what end.

Information *saliency* means that the information must be relevant and valuable to the targeted audiences' concerns and issues (Fung et al., 2007; Kosack & Fung, 2014). To be regarded as salient, information needs to provide meaningful and new knowledge so that citizens can update their existing knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, local community members may find information on aggregate national oil revenues irrelevant if they have little means to influence how such revenues are managed. Meanwhile, they may find information on how much revenue local authorities receive from local mining companies or through sub-national revenue transfers from the central government very relevant and useful. As suggested by Fung (2013), governmental institutions should identify citizens' information needs, collect the information if it does not yet exist, and (re)package the information in a way that citizens can make sense of it. Intermediary stakeholders can be used to collect, interpret, and disseminate information (Fung et al., 2007). For example, a civil society organisation can help a local community understand the technical details of a revenue-sharing formula and (re)present revenue information in a more simplified form.

Finally, information needs to be *actionable*, that is, it should either be provided on issues that citizens can easily address as part of their everyday lives, or it should include information on feasible individual and collective actions (Fung, 2013; Vijge, 2018). For the former, for instance, the information provided about resource revenues or companies located in the area may enable local community members to discuss their concerns directly with local authorities or company representatives. For the latter, citizens could be informed about upcoming dialogue meetings

with bureaucrats and decision-makers, receive a list of telephone numbers they can call, or learn about civil society organisations that collect input from citizens and transfer it to different governmental offices.

2.2. Action

The second crucial dimension in determining a transparency initiative's potential to reach its objectives is citizens' exercise of voice through action (Fox, 2015). To exercise such action, citizens must be willing and able to invest their time and energy to seek and obtain the desired information, scrutinize it, and demand changes in the status quo.

Citizens need to be incentivised to actively *seek relevant information* that may or may not be publicly available. In some cases, they may be able to use the information made public by the EITI, the government, or other actors; in other cases, freedom-of-information (FOI) laws may provide opportunities. For example, Indonesia's 2008 Freedom of Public Information Law was designed to enable citizens to request information on every aspect of government institutions' activities, with the expectation that this would discipline state institutions and bring malpractices to light (Butt, 2013).

After accessing the desired information, citizens need to *scrutinise* it. This involves exploring and developing preferences and perceptions about specific issues, policies, or projects and forming an opinion of the status quo and whether it is satisfactory or requires change. Although citizens often have diverging interests, in this situation, they need to discuss and engage with each other to translate their preferences into a collective understanding of the issue on hand (Fung, 2006).

To exert pressure on public decision-makers, citizens need to have the space to express their concerns through *collective action*, actively providing feedback and demanding changes in the status quo. At this level, citizens must find an appropriate channel for action within the institutional decision-making framework (Fung, 2006; Joshi, 2013). Such activities may take different forms and may include reporting through online platforms, reporting directly to the person in charge, contacting nearby leaders, participating in protests, or voting differently in elections.

2.3. Response

A transparency initiative is unlikely to be effective if public sector decision-makers and authorities do not foster, listen, and provide a meaningful response to citizen action and are not open to change (Fung, 2006; Goetz & Gaventa, 2001). In the transparency framework, state response is characterised in three ways according to the extent they distribute power to citizens in decision-making: consultation, institutionalised accountability, and concertation (Figure 1).

In *consultation*, the state provides a space for conducting dialogue and sharing information with citizens on matters affecting them (Goetz & Gaventa, 2001). The consultation process involves officials and authorities who are committed to listening and collecting people's opinions, advice, and other input but who still intend to preserve their power and control by not committing to act on the input they receive (Fung, 2006). Within natural resource management, consultation could be used by governments to collect people's input on how they would like to spend revenues locally or nationally or how the resource sector should be managed or (not) developed. Such input could be collected through different channels, including surveys and community meetings, or as part of existing consultation mechanisms such as the multi-stakeholder consultation forum, *musrenbang*, in Indonesia.⁷

Institutionalised accountability is a state response beyond consultation, often to increase its obligation to respond to citizens' actions. To do so, authorities and government officials make structural changes and create mechanisms that oblige the state to respond constructively to people's concerns. This can be imposed, for example, through the 'vertical' accountability

mechanisms that connect citizens directly with their leaders or elected representatives by giving them the power to select representatives they trust to act on their behalf and sanction leaders and representatives whom they perceive as performing sub-optimally (Fischer, 2016; Fox, 2015). Elections offer one way of holding representatives accountable; other ways include administrative sanctions, such as positional transfers or employment dismissals, threat of judicial action, or reprisals. Transparency and accountability should also be institutionalised in laws and regulations to ensure that changes are carried over when leadership changes.

The state response can also take the form of *concertation*, in which state actors—in addition to being accountable and engaging with citizens through two-way dialogue—also include citizens directly in policy design and decision-making (Ackerman, 2004; Loureiro, Cassim, Darko, Katera, & Salome, 2016). For the extractive sector, this can mean that citizens are allowed to decide how to spend (a part of) the resource revenues distributed to their area, what information government and company actors must disclose, or what environmental standards an extractive company should meet.

3. Resource revenue governance and transparency in Bojonegoro

Bojonegoro District is located in northern Java, approximately 110 km west of Surabaya, the capital of East Java Province (Figure 2). The district's large oil and gas fields were discovered in 2001. The district was among the poorest in the province until the district's largest oil field, the Banyuurip field (with estimated reserves of 450 million barrels), came on stream in 2008. As of 2018, the field produced 200,000 barrels of oil per day, representing 25 percent of Indonesia's total national oil production (ExxonMobil, 2018). That same year, the district received US\$149 million through a national natural revenue transfer scheme, providing 47 percent of the district's annual budget (Bojonegoro District, 2019).

3.1. Oil and gas revenue transfer scheme

Following the fall of the centralised authoritarian regime in 1998, Indonesia initiated a comprehensive decentralisation process through major political, institutional, and fiscal reforms, with a vision of establishing democratic and accountable subnational governance institutions. Among other things, the measures included democratic elections at the province, district, and village levels and the establishment of a natural resource revenue-sharing scheme (the latter of which was implemented in 2005).

Under the revenue sharing scheme, a portion of the extractive sector revenues collected by the central government are transferred back to the subnational territories in which the extraction takes place (Lewis, 2017). For oil, the transfer rate is 15.5 percent of the state's tax and non-tax revenues; for natural gas, it is 30.5 percent. Of this subnational share, 20 percent is allocated to the provincial government, 40 percent to the producing districts, and 40 percent to the non-producing districts within the province. Subnational authorities have discretionary power to manage these revenues. In many places, these revenues have unfortunately fueled corrupt behavior amongst the local elites (Lewis, 2017). As a result, the extractive sector has often not benefited the wider population of these areas, while a broad range of resource governance issues remains unresolved (Buehler, 2020).

3.2. Bojonegoro's transparency initiative

The discovery of large oil and gas reserves in Bojonegoro coincided with a rise in global demand for transparency in resource governance. Therefore, right from the start, the district attracted the attention of several international organisations and donors working on resource revenue transparency and accountability (Winanti & Hanif, 2020). In 2008, the Revenue Watch

Institute (now NRGJ) and the Open Society Foundations' Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (OSF-LGI), Pattiro (a national NGO and a member of the PWYP Indonesia coalition), and Bojonegoro Institute⁸ (BI; a local NGO) formed a coalition to assist the Bojonegoro government in designing policies that would prevent the district from experiencing the negative socioeconomic and institutional effects of natural resource revenue that have been prevalent in other parts of Indonesia with substantial natural resource production (Prijosusilo, 2012; World Bank, 2010). Later that year, the CSO coalition started to collaborate with Suyoto, the first-ever democratically elected district head of Bojonegoro.

Two important factors facilitated the collaboration between the district head and the CSO coalition: local demand for accountability in natural resource management and civil society's opportunity to participate in decision-making. As Bojonegoro District had suffered from rampant corruption under previous political elites (Abdullah & Karim, 2021), in his election campaign Suyoto was able to embrace an agenda of accountability by putting himself in opposition to the previous district head, promising to be a leader dedicated to preventing conflict, corruption, and other resource curse-related problems (Winanti & Hanif, 2020). Meanwhile, the CSO coalition benefitted from the post-authoritarian decentralisation process that allowed civil society to become substantially involved in policy-making and implementation (Rosser & van Diermen, 2016). After winning the election, Suyoto adopted the transparency agenda promoted by the CSO coalition and developed (with the coalition) a range of governance reforms oriented towards establishing transparency as a norm and implementing measures to support transparency in natural resource revenue management (Prijosusilo, 2012).⁹ These include several regulations passed between 2008 and 2018 to increase budgeting transparency and accountability, improve resource revenue management, and encourage public participation in local budget and petroleum revenue management.

As part of these reforms, the district government designed a formula in 2009 to redistribute 12.5 percent of the oil and gas revenues it received through the national natural resource revenue transfer scheme to villages as part of their annual budget. Of these funds, 40 percent were distributed proportionately based on 'villages' proximity to the production site, as follows: 5 percent to producing villages (located at the site of extraction), 6 percent to Ring I villages (within 600 meters of the site), 7.5 percent to Ring II villages (within a 600–1200-meter radius of the site), and the remaining 81.5 percent shared equally amongst other villages. The remaining 60 percent (of the aforementioned 12.5 percent) was shared evenly amongst all villages in the district. This redistribution of funds was intended to compensate villages for the adverse impacts of extraction activities, mitigate tensions, and support development in the villages close to extraction sites (Bojonegoro Institute, 2015).

In 2012, a key transparency regulation was enacted through *Peraturan Daerah* (local regulation) No. 6/2012 on Transparency in the Management of Revenue, Environment, and Corporate Social Responsibility during Oil and Gas Activities. It required the district to disclose information about the petroleum sector, including the amount of oil and gas produced, revenues received from the central government, management of the sector, and 'the impact of extraction on the environment. The district government used several platforms to make information and relevant documents available to the public, including official government websites and district-owned radio broadcasts. To extend transparency to all sectors and levels, the district government also required village governments to publish their overall budget allocations and expenditures on large banners placed in public places, thereby allowing people to track the funds received by villages and monitor village governments' spending (Novenanto, 2017).

Together with the CSO coalition, Suyoto also designed several platforms for public engagement and monitoring, such as the ability to reach the district head through his mobile telephone and a weekly 'Friday Dialogue' held in the district capital. This Friday Dialogue functioned as a channel for direct and unmediated two-way communication between citizens and high-level government officials. During a typical session, the district head and senior bureaucrats would

listen to, collect, and address attendees' inputs, questions, and aspirations (Abdullah & Karim, 2021; Novenanto, 2017). This dialogue was broadcasted live through district-owned radio, and video recordings were uploaded to YouTube.

4. Research material and methods

To study the different dimensions and aspects in Bojonegoro's transparency initiative, we collected our research material data through repeated visits to Bojonegoro District and the targeted villages near the Banyuurip Oil Field (see Figure 2): two producing villages (Gayam and Mojodhelik) and three Ring 1 villages (Ringintunggal, Bonorejo, and Begadon). These villages have received substantial amounts of oil revenues through annual transfers from the district government. At the same time, as people who live close to extraction and production facilities, they are continuously exposed to large-scale extraction activities that affect their surrounding environment and their livelihoods. In total, the lead author undertook five field trips, which included a short time living in one village and frequent travel to other villages, to establish contact and build trust with informants prior to the actual interviews and discussions.¹⁰

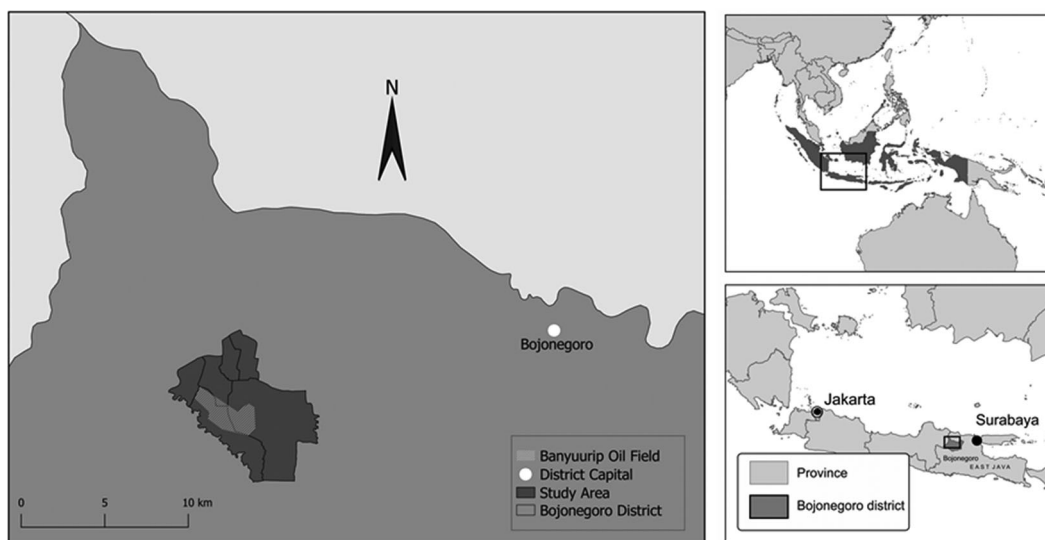


Figure 2. The study area and approximate concession location for the Banyuurip Oil Field.

Main fieldwork took place in December 2018 and April 2019 through individual interviews (N = 15) and informal group discussions (N = 5), all of which were semi-structured. Individual interviews in the studied villages targeted opinion leaders: a local journalist, a local activist, two heads of youth groups, two teachers, two religious leaders, and two heads of villages. Three representatives of Ademos, a local CSO working with local communities around the Banyuurip Oil Field, were also interviewed, while one representative of BI and one from IDFoS—another local CSO working with local communities—were interviewed in Bojonegoro City. The selection of informants was based on the lead author's knowledge of key actors who served as opinion leaders in their communities and who presumably had better access to information and the capacity to use it. One major drawback of our approach was the selection bias toward opinion leaders. To balance this, we held informal group discussions with youth group members at their secretariat, community members at local coffee shops, and teachers at a local school.

All informants were asked for oral consent before the interview and permission to record the interview. Interviews and discussions were conducted in Indonesian and Javanese languages,

both of which are spoken fluently by the lead author. All interviews were transcribed and kept anonymous. We used NVivo software to code the transcripts into themes related to the dimensions of transparency (information, action, and response) and their corresponding aspects. Using qualitative content analysis to explore the implicit and explicit messages in the materials (Cope, 2010), we analysed the categorized data to identify strengths and weaknesses related to the different dimensions of the initiative.

Observation of three village information dissemination events provided valuable insight into the interactions between local community members and leaders. Background material for the study included previous research, international organisations, and donors' reports, documents provided by Bojonegoro District's Information Desk (PPID), local policies and regulations, and YouTube videos from Friday Dialogue events.

5. Results

We used the transparency framework to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the transparency initiative implemented by the Bojonegoro District government and to understand the factors affecting them. The initiative's strengths were its ability to make information on the oil and gas sector publicly available and provide consultation forums between citizens and their leaders. The initiative had the potential to build more substantive state-citizen interaction. However, its limited ability to increase public awareness of oil and gas revenue management and encourage citizens to act on their concerns challenged the initiative to incite public engagement and monitoring effectively. Further, local political dynamics sidelined attempts to anchor the initiative through local regulations and state-citizen engagement mechanisms. Below, we provide more details on these findings.

5.1. Information

5.1.1. Accessibility. Bojonegoro provides an exceptional case of a subnational government's proactive effort to disseminate information on the extractive sector. Information on oil and gas revenues was made publicly available through multiple avenues, i.e., official websites, media releases, social media, and local media. Despite these different avenues of disclosure, information on the district's oil and gas sector and revenue management did not reach people living close to extraction sites. Interviews and group discussions revealed that only CSO representatives and village heads had accessed information on oil revenues.

Two interrelated reasons explain the inaccessibility of information. First, our group discussions in coffee shops and local schools suggest that the district's information channels were not embedded in the usual ways people seek and obtain information. Our participants consistently noted that casual local-language discussions in public settings were the most effective and favorable way of circulating and exchanging information. This view was echoed by both village heads, most opinion leaders, and a CSO representative, who thought that a better approach would involve the district disseminating information through governance structures to village officials, who could then disseminate it further, for example, by visiting people where they live and through informal gatherings such as *arisan* (microfinance groups) and casual talks in traditional coffee shops.

Second, the information provided by the district often involved aggregate numbers and charts, all of which used technical terms without any simplified interpretation. The heads of the villages and the CSO representative who had accessed the information found that it was difficult to grasp the content of disclosed information due to its presentation format. One of the village heads noted that they needed 'someone or some organisation [...] to help interpret those numbers from the district [government], so we know what we should do'. These findings imply that the district's information dissemination was not specifically targeted to people living close

to extraction sites and that the avenues and formats chosen for the dissemination did not match their ways of obtaining information and capacity to process and use it.

5.1.2. Salience. When designing a transparency initiative, assessing citizens' informational needs is crucial for information to be meaningful and suited to citizens' priorities and realities. Our interviews indicated that the information provided by the district government did not meet these criteria. More than half of the interviewed opinion leaders, including both village heads, would have preferred information on the district's allocation of petroleum revenue to villages¹¹ and how petroleum revenues are spent in the district. In particular, the village heads noted that knowing the district's petroleum revenue-sharing redistribution formula would have helped them to estimate the village's revenues and develop better budget plans. Although the district government had planned to train village officials to calculate their village's share of oil revenue as part of the district's transparency initiative (Bojonegoro Institute, 2015), neither of the interviewed village heads had received such training.

As for community members, people would have preferred to get information on how oil exploitation and revenue impacted their communities and households. All discussions and interviews in studied villages revealed that people would have preferred receiving information regarding compensation, employment opportunities, infrastructure projects, and other issues that could benefit them. Nevertheless, this information was not available through the district's information platforms or through village banners on revenue management. Regarding these banners, one informant summarised a feeling shared by many when stating that 'the banners have nothing to do with our current and future livelihoods'. Five opinion leaders and one village head provided similar views and suggested that the public should receive more precise information on whether it had been the oil company—through its CSR activities—or the district that had funded certain activities and infrastructure projects. They thought such information could increase people's interest in and understanding of how resource revenues are allocated and spent.

5.1.3. Actionability. The provided information should not only be relevant but also *actionable*. This may be realised, for example, by simply including information on feasible actions as part of the information dissemination. Although Bojonegoro District's transparency initiative had, to a certain extent, designed avenues for the public to express their concerns directly to the district leader, the disclosed information did not include details on these possible actions. Except for the village heads and CSO representatives, none of the informants had received information on how to join the Friday Dialogue or call the district head. As a result, no one in the studied villages had ever attended the dialogue or contacted the district head's phone number. Another way to make information actionable is to provide information that people can use as part of their daily lives. In Bojonegoro, the disclosed information on the petroleum sector was aggregated and thus did not present opportunities for its use at the village level or directly vis-à-vis the petroleum companies. Informal discussions revealed that even the information on how the village budget was spent did not enable them to use it to address their needs. Due to these reasons, the Bojonegoro District's transparency initiative was not able to provide the affected communities with information that would allow them to act on issues related to the district's oil and gas sector.

5.2. Citizen action

5.2.1. Seeking information. Although the interviews and group discussions indicated that management of the extractive sector was of great interest to host communities, the government-led information campaign was not successful in drawing people's interest in a way that they would willingly spend their time searching for more information about the district's oil and gas sector

management. As put by one CSOs representative: ‘it might be that people are uninformed about open [access to such] information, or they are simply uninterested’.¹² However, the interviews and discussions revealed that physical and social distance was important for the people seeking information. Several interviewees and discussion participants mentioned that people would contact their closest leaders, elected representatives, or village officials for information. The village heads, however, felt that their knowledge was too limited for them to serve as ‘intermediates’ between villagers and policymakers at the district level when it came to the oil and gas sector. Obtaining such information was also difficult. One of the village heads had visited the responsible district office to obtain more information after several villagers had asked him about how much petroleum revenues the village received, but to no avail: ‘I have tried to ask them [the district bureaucrats] about it, but they always make excuses and tell me that this is too complicated for me’.

5.2.2. Scrutinising information. In the absence of relevant information, and as a proxy for it, people assessed revenue management based on the development of tangible projects. When the notions of ‘transparency’ and ‘information disclosure’ were brought up during informal discussions, almost all participants acknowledged the presence of transparency in the form of tangible infrastructure projects that were, for them, evidence of how (well) the government and village officers were managing petroleum revenues. As one informant put it: ‘There is transparency here; we can see the nice roads, buildings [referring to village hall and community health center], and other facilities that other [villages] may not be able to have as readily as us’. This infrastructure development, however, did not mean that all villagers were satisfied or felt heard, and people often had different expectations of how resource revenues should be spent. For instance, several opinion leaders and teachers argued that revenues from the extractive industries should fund non-infrastructure projects such as education and poverty alleviation programs.

5.2.3. Action. People in Bojonegoro had concerns regarding the development of the oil and gas sector and spending of revenue, but except for the protests during the early stages of exploitation and the construction of oil facilities in Banyuurip, there had not been individual or collective action in recent years, nor had communities used the different spaces of participation opened by the district government—such as the weekly Friday Dialogue and the chance to engage with the head district directly. According to the informants, attending the Friday Dialogue was not feasible due to the distance to the capital (30 km).¹³ Instead, most interviewees and discussion participants mentioned that the closest leaders in villages should facilitate community members’ engagement.

However, in voicing concerns at the village level, there was little action as well. Analysis of the study material indicates that a key reason for this inaction is the perceived roles within the community that stem from the hierarchical relationship between the ordinary citizens and their leaders that detaches people from decision-making. All informants involved in informal discussions perceived efforts to voice their concerns to go beyond their role as community members. Illustrating this, a teacher noted that her role was to teach, and it was not her part to involve in decision-making processes or criticise what had been decided by the leaders. Such a division of roles was exacerbated by the way formal participatory activities were organised in the villages. They tend to take place during office hours, when most villagers are working in their fields and are unable to attend and most participants are invited as part of their position, e.g., as village elders, religious leaders, village officials, and village council members. In reality, most community members are usually unaware of such village activities.

Another key reason for inaction was that the people perceived expressing their grievances as meaningless. Such a perception was derived from past experiences with leaders’ inability to handle their concerns and needs in the best possible way. For example, an interviewed teacher and religious leader complained (through their village heads) to the district government and

extraction company about hazardous gases from a flaring facility causing health issues. They decided not to push the issue further because they felt that their concern had not been taken seriously and only led to a superficial and limited response (e.g., a one-time food package and hospital visits for affected people). A lack of response, as in these cases, can easily contribute to apathetic and indifferent behavior toward government-led activities.

5.3. *Government response*

5.3.1. *Consultation.* Throughout its existence, the initiative was not able to address the inaccessibility of the district's feedback and input platforms, for example, by designing more accessible engagement platforms for affected villages. At the village level, one avenue for consultation and collecting people's concerns and inputs was village-level multi-stakeholder consultation forums known as *musrenbangdes*. In the studied villages, village heads noted that the *musrenbangdes* meetings had not been used to discuss the management of the oil sector or how villagers would have liked to allocate funds. One reason for the latter is that, although decentralisation has given village governments the authority to manage their annual budget, they were still required to follow the laws and regulations set by the national government for their budget allocations. As a result, village governments are often left with limited resources to fulfill people's demands beyond providing basic services. In such conditions, village heads and officials often decided what issues to prioritise, leaving limited room for citizen input.

5.3.2. *Institutionalised accountability and concertation.* The fact that the district head decided to work with the CSO coalition in designing and undertaking the transparency initiative, i.e., disclose information on a range of issues related to the petroleum sector and establish several avenues for voicing concerns, and anchored these reforms in local regulation No. 6/2012 on Transparency of Revenue, Environment, and Corporate Social Responsibility of Oil and Gas Exploitation, reflects district head's commitment to institutionalising accountability at the district level. Furthermore, the participation of the district head and key district officials in the Friday Dialogue can be seen as an effort to directly engage with the people, as their perspectives and responses were shared with media, officials, members of the public, and civil society. The dialogue upheld norms regarding openness among district officials. It underscored the importance of listening to and acting on citizens' perspectives, potentially leading to greater accountability and even concertation. The Friday Dialogue, thus, could have generated a push for district government's commitment to transparency in petroleum sector management. Nevertheless, samples of Friday Dialogue's attendance list provided by Bojonegoro District's PPID recorded no discussion regarding district petroleum sector management nor any attendees from villages host of extraction sites.

However, Bojonegoro District's commitment to the transparency initiative was highly personalised. Many interviewees called the initiative as 'Kang Yoto's [Suyoto's nickname] policy'. This distanced the initiative from other stakeholders, such as the local CSOs outside the CSOs coalition, non-elected political elites, and the political opposition. For example, even though interviewed representatives from local CSOs outside the transparency coalition agreed that resource revenue transparency is important, they felt that the transparency agenda 'belonged' to the CSO coalition, and thus they decided to focus on 'other tasks' in the villages. Meanwhile, the CSO coalition members worked very closely with Suyoto in designing and institutionalizing transparency for district's petroleum sector management. As a result, when Suyoto ended his second term and the opposition's candidate won the district head office in the 2018 election, most of the reforms were rescinded, and the CSO coalition was unable to continue the initiative's institutionalization under the new district head (Winanti & Hanif, 2020).

6. Discussion

The transparency approach we propose does not see transparency as a process that treats information disclosure as the starting point from which other stages follow in a specific order (see Epremian et al., 2016; Hauffer, 2010). Instead, it sees the transparency process as consisting of three dimensions (i.e., information, citizen action, and government response) that form a system in which each element is equally essential from the outset and must be developed and promoted in tandem. Our study demonstrates that transparency initiatives designed for specific places should address context-specific aspects regarding each dimension to deliver relevant and actionable information effectively, mobilise active citizenry, and encourage comprehensive state response. In the case of Bojonegoro, the district's transparency initiative was weak in identifying target audiences and assessing their informational needs. Likewise, the provided participation and engagement platforms were not rooted in citizens' everyday lives (e.g., traveling to the district capital was unfeasible), nor did they reflect people's preferred manner of engaging with leaders and public officials (e.g., face-to-face meetings in informal settings).

Our findings show that two underlying factors explain the weaknesses of the Bojonegoro District's 'initiative: the underlying state-citizen relationship and the role of local leaders'. Regarding state-citizen relationship, the initiative fell short in addressing the political and structural challenges stemming from the power imbalances within society. In post-authoritarian Indonesia, power relations have remained hierarchical and continue to detach ordinary citizens from the decision-making processes and decisions that concern them (Bebbington, Dharmawan, Fahmi, & Guggenheim, 2006). Such cultural and political traditions have resulted in citizen empowerment often being limited to elections. This is seen in rural Bojonegoro District, where citizens tend to surrender their decision-making powers to their closest leader(s) or village elites, taking for granted that they are not entitled to receive information or influence decisions that concern them. In such settings, people often feel that their socio-political status precludes them from demanding accountability and asserting their right to participate (Antlöv & Wetterberg, 2011). Therefore, the District's initiative most likely overestimated the capacity and opportunity of the public in general to engage in the transparency process, as has happened in other contexts as well (Brunnschweiler, Edjekumhene, & Lujala, 2021; Epremian & Brun, 2018).

Our study also shows that the initiative's weaknesses are linked to the role of the district leader in defining the initiative's goals and implementation. The district head's narrative presented the initiative as a means of increasing public knowledge and allowing the public to monitor and seek accountability regarding the petroleum sector (see Abdullah & Karim, 2021). However, there was a dissonance between the transparency initiative's stated processes and end goals and its implementation. The implementation focused on the district capital and revolved around the district head without developing any more extensive forms of empowerment for citizens or improving village governments' institutional capacity to contribute to the transparency process and its design. Instead, the district head was able to capture and personalise the policy's narrative and implementation process to showcase himself as an accountable leader who was able to bring local natural resource revenue management in compliance with international transparency norms for his personal and political interests (Winanti & Hanif, 2020). While strong leadership is necessary to bring about transformative transparency (Fox, 2015), our study highlights how elite's interests and associated political dynamics at the local level influence the way how extractive sector transparency initiatives unfold and the extent to which said initiatives are capable of delivering societal and governance reforms on the ground.

7. Conclusion

This article developed an analytical framework for assessing transparency initiatives that seek to improve natural resource governance through more informed and active citizenry, and

applied it to a subnational transparency initiative designed and implemented by an oil-rich district in Indonesia. As a case study, this article adds to previous studies with rather pessimistic results when it comes to transparency initiatives' ability to improve resource governance through public engagement. However, we argue that before dismissing such transparency initiatives as useless, one needs to design and test approaches beyond merely disclosing information. Crucially, we argue, to be transformative, a transparency initiative needs to address the triple challenge of making salient information available, promoting citizen action, and cultivating decision-maker sensitivity and responsiveness in a way that addresses the context-specific challenges related to these. The proposed framework, we believe, provides a dynamic approach to designing such transparency initiatives, analyzing their strengths and weaknesses, outlining potential improvements, and, as more initiatives are implemented and assessed, forming predictions about transparency initiatives' impact.¹⁴

This study is unique in its focus on a subnational transparency initiative. It provides an in-depth snapshot of one initiative, from the point of view of a few villages located close to a major oil extraction site. Further studies are needed to evaluate other subnational transparency initiatives and ascertain the usefulness of the proposed approach from the experiences of both the citizens and government representatives.

Despite its limitations, our study provides some tentative ideas on how the design of transparency initiatives can be improved. First, target groups must be carefully identified, and the information disseminated needs to be relevant, easily understandable, and actionable. It is, therefore, indispensable to consult targeted audiences regarding their informational needs and preferred platforms for information disclosure already when designing the initiative. It may also be necessary to explain to the targeted audience why they should note and act on the disseminated information. One way is through bottom-up approach to overcome traditional power imbalances and extend the initiative's reach by working with intermediary actors, such as local, national, and international CSOs that (among other things) seek to educate people about their rights and provide means for action, including approaches that facilitated citizens' ability to grasp and understand the proposed and implemented policies. Second, policymakers and leaders should encourage people to engage in natural resource management by paying close attention to the resource-related issues faced by people. Third, public sector decision-makers should consider moving beyond formal platforms to consult and collect citizen input and consider approaching people in more informal settings. Fourth, transparency initiatives must include mechanisms for institutionalising transparency and accountability within the existing governance structures so that elected and non-elected officials—including those not yet in power—must follow up and respond to citizens' concerns. This includes measures to counter backlash and reprisal by public officials.

This article has argued that equating transparency to mere access to relevant information is insufficient. In particular, it has sought to highlight the importance of focusing on state–citizen relations in governance processes as transparency initiatives must consider how transparency and accountability work in the relational dynamic wherein groups and individuals with unequal power relations interact as they pursue conflicting interests in resource wealth distribution. In this context, disclosing (more) information will never be sufficient; without making it actionable, identifying feasible approaches for citizen engagement, encouraging citizens to use those options, and ensuring constructive responses to their concerns, transformative transparency will not emerge.

Notes

1. What constitutes the 'citizenry' will depend on the specific context and objectives of the transparency initiative. It may include all inhabitants of a certain area (e.g., nation, country, municipality, etc.) or a subset of them (e.g., based on distance from a mining operation, ethnicity, etc.). In our analysis, 'citizens' refer to residents of

Bojonegoro District, regardless of ethnicity or any other primordial identity, who live close to petroleum extraction sites.

2. The district also sought to address issues related to the socio-environmental impacts and risks of oil and gas exploitation and corporate social and environmental responsibilities (Winanti and Hanif, 2019).
3. We thank the reviewer for pointing out this fifth contribution.
4. Transparency can work through other channels as well. See, for example, Le Billon et al. (2021) and Tienhaara (2020).
5. Appendix 1 provides a set of questions that can be used to operationalise the framework in designing an initiative or to analyze an existing one.
6. We thank our reviewer for pointing out these issues.
7. *Musrenbang* is an annual participatory development planning and budgeting process that was introduced in Indonesia in 2004. It takes place at the national, provincial, district, and village levels. At the village level, residents meet in the community center, discuss local development needs and priorities, and articulate those needs and priorities to their local government.
8. BI was established in 2005 to combat rampant corruption and the lack of accountability in district government (Abdullah & Karim, 2021).
9. Suyoto's drive to increase transparency and accountability in the resource sector provided him political support that helped him to secure reelection in 2013 (Winanti & Hanif, 2020). He continued working with the CSO coalition on the transparency agenda until the end of his second term in 2018.
10. The second author participated in one of these visits, joining a group discussion with the district head, senior district officials, and a BI representative. She also participated in a group discussion in Gayam with community members from villages around the Banyuurip Oil Field and representatives from Ademos.
11. The Bojonegoro district government included the percentage of oil revenue redistributed to villages through the Village Fund Allocation (ADD) scheme without specifying the amount. ADD refers to the funds allocated by district governments to villages that amount to at least 10% of the general allocation funds (DAU) and natural resource revenue sharing (DBH) received by the district government from the central government. Despite the fact that district governments in Indonesia receive detailed information on the amounts and sources of transferred funds, they manage it in one general pool, and thus village governments in Indonesia—including Bojonegoro with its oil revenues—receive their portion of funds as a lump sum with no details on the sources of the transferred funds.
12. The District Information Desk's (PPID) log of information requests for 2016–2021 showed no information requests related to the district's petroleum sector.
13. The sample lists of Friday Dialogue attendees shows that the participants mostly came from areas close to district capital and included village heads and government officials who had received official invitations.
14. We note that the framework is not suitable to evaluate transparency initiatives that seek to improve natural resource governance through other pathways, such as technical reforms (Le Billon et al., 2021). Further, had the Bojonegoro initiative targeted the civil society at the village level (e.g., the CSOs working in the villages), the initiative should have been assessed from this perspective.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the Editor and two anonymous referees for their valuable comments on the earlier version of this paper. We are grateful for all informants, and helpful comments by Ståle Angen Rye, Nanang Kurniawan, Diana Vela-Almeida, participants of the 8th Nordic Geographers Meeting in Trondheim, Eudaimonia Doc Day workshop in Oulu, UNIPID Docnet seminar in Espoo, and Finnish University Network for Asian Studies Doctoral Seminar on previous drafts of this paper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

Academy of Finland 314143; Academy of Finland 309206; Academy of Finland 322097.

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Appendix 1 Guidelining questions to design and assess transparency initiatives

Dimension	Aspect	Scope
Information	Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the initiative’s target audience? How and by whom is it defined? • How is the information made available to the target audience? In what ways is it ensured that the information reaches the intended audience? • Prior to the dissemination of information, what steps are/were taken to ensure that the information is understandable for the target audience? (e.g., focus group meetings) • What support and tools do the target audience need to receive and understand the information? Is this support in place? • After starting the dissemination of information, what methods are used to check that i) the target audience receives the information and ii) can understand it? (e.g., interviews, focus group meetings, surveys)
	Saliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the target audience’s information needs regarding the issue at hand? How and by whom are these information needs defined? How is the target audience included in the process of defining information needs? • Does the required information exist already? If yes, can it be accessed and used in the dissemination? If not, who will collect it? • If the required information is accessible but needs to be repackaged for the target audience to make sense of it, who will do it and how will they do it? • Who has the responsibility to provide more information and how is this instance (person, institution, etc.) accessible to the target audience?
	Actionability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the target audience easily use the information in their everyday lives? If so, in which ways they can do so? If not, what support and tools do the target audience need to easily use the disclosed information in their everyday life? • Does the information include information about the avenues that are available for individual or/and collective action? If yes, what are these avenues? If not, how is it assured that the target audience gets knowledge of these avenues?
Action	Seek relevant information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the target audience be incentivised to seek relevant information? Why should they care about the issue at hand? Is the importance of the issue communicated clearly to the target audience? • Does the target audience perceive that they have the right to information concerning the issue at hand? How can they be assured of their rights? • Is the relevant information publicly available? If yes, what are the available information platforms and does the target audience know about them? If not, how can the information be made available?
	Scrutinize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through which processes does the target audience process and assess the disseminated information? Do they discuss it primarily with family members, friends, and colleagues, or do they discuss it in gatherings (e.g., microfinance, village, or religious gatherings) or with their immediate community leaders? • What would be the optimal ways for information scrutinisation in this particular transparency initiative? How are these processes supported? • What are the steps from the scrutinisation process to action? How can these steps be supported?

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Dimension	Aspect	Scope
	Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What spaces/avenues are available for the target audience to express or voice their concerns regarding the issue at hand? How can the target audience be incentivised to use the available space to voice their views and concerns on the issue at hand? • What are the target audience's preferred ways of expressing their views and concerns? How are these incorporated into the initiative? • What factors limit the target audience's willingness to spend their time and energy to express their concerns? How can these obstacles be addressed? • Has the target audience participated in any individual or collective action in the past? What were the outcomes of said action(s)? Does the target audience perceive their previous action(s) as having influenced decision-making? How can these previous experiences impact the current initiative positively and negatively?
Response	Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the available state–citizen consultation mechanisms (e.g., village/community meetings and citizen report cards)? How are the existing mechanisms incorporated into the transparency initiative? • How and by whom is the consultation platform organised? How is it ensured that the target audience participates and that their concerns and inputs are collected? • What factors limit state actors' consultation with the target audience? How are these challenges addressed? • How do state actors respond to the target audience's concerns and inputs?
	Institutionalise accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which mechanisms are in place to ensure that state actors respond constructively and timely to the target audience's input? How are accountability mechanisms institutionalized? • What mechanisms exist to sanction actors who perform unaccountably or sub-optimally? How and by whom are these mechanisms imposed? If no sanction mechanism exists, how is it assured that the state actors act on behalf of the target audience? • How is it assured that these accountability mechanisms are applied by decision-makers and authorities, both elected and non-elected? • What factors challenge the institutionalisation of accountability mechanisms and the survival of the overall initiative? How can these be addressed?
	Concertation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the transparency initiative allow the target audience to collectively decide on issues that concern them? If yes, on what issue(s) (e.g., how resource revenues are spent, what information is disclosed)? Who represents the target audience in decision-making? • If the target audience is not allowed to co-decide on issues that concern them, what are the reason(s) for this? • What factors hinder the state actors and the target audience in achieving mutual understanding and co-deciding on the issues at hand? How can these factors be addressed? • How do state actors engage with the initiative's target audience? How can this engagement process potentially lead to collective decision-making?