RESEARCH ARTICLE

Localizing Global Energy Norms: Agency and Modality in Nusa Penida's Bottom-Up Energy

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Abstract

This article examines how non-state actors orchestrate bottom-up localization of energy transition norms in Indonesia, using Nusa Penida as a case study. Drawing on Acharya's norm localization framework and employing qualitative analysis of secondary data, the study explores how norm entrepreneurs mobilize cultural, strategic, and financial modalities to create conditions for localization. The Nusa Penida Initiative (NPI), initiated by a network of local non-state actors, demonstrates an emerging success through cultural framing, systematic roadmap planning, and community-based financing. The findings underscore that the formulation of an effective strategy for localization depends critically on the role of non-state agency, funding modality, and local adaptive capacity. The article concludes that centering local actors and leveraging endogenous modalities are essential for inclusive and sustainable energy transitions in peripheral regions.

Keywords: Energy Transition, Global Norms, Norm Diffusion, Non-State Actors, Nusa Penida, Renewable Energy

I. Introduction

Current debates in international relations have identified norm diffusion not merely as an external pressure, but as a central mechanism through which global standards influence the behavior of state and non-state actors. This is particularly apparent when global norms are adapted to fit domestic contexts. The concept explains processes where norms are transmitted from global to domestic arenas through persuasion, imitation, pressure, or strategic adaptation, often led by international organizations, government at the developed countries, and/or transnational networks (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Drawing on Acharya (2004), localization is framed not as a process of passive adaptation of external norms. It is a process where local actors put deliberate effort in orchestrating the adoption of global norms, to fit local beliefs, practices, and modalities (Acharya, 2004). Using this perspective, we examine how local non-state actors in Nusa Penida play the role of active agency and utilize endogenous modalities to reshape global energy transition norms within culturally and institutionally local context.

Over the past two decades, energy transition has emerged as a global norm driven by climate concerns, energy security, and sustainable development objectives. The 2015 Paris Agreement strengthened international commitments to decarbonization and accelerated renewable energy adoption worldwide. These efforts have generated measurable outcomes, with energy-related CO_2 emissions in advanced economies declining by 1.1%, including reductions of 5.7% in coal-related emissions and 0.5% in oil-related emissions (IEA, 2025).

The diffusion of energy transition has taken diverse forms in the Global South. China leads in new eco-friendly technologies, India shows strong renewable goals, Southeast Asia is divided between fossil exporters and importers, South America leads in clean solutions, while Africa holds potential in renewables (Butler-Sloss & Singh, 2022). Although diverse in forms, energy transition in the Global South generally faces finance, technology, and trade challenges. This process is largely shaped by the interrelated issues of structural dependencies, financing conditions, and technology transfer from the Global North. In addition, problems of persistent inequalities in investment flows, governance capacity, and access to technology have constrained Southern countries in transitioning their energy (Goldthau et al., 2020). In the case of Nusa Penida, for example, challenges for energy transition are basically centered not only around technical and financial but also institutional and social, particularly in aligning global decarbonization objectives with local development priorities. Alocating it within the biggest context of effort put by the government of Indonesia in its energy transition mission, Nusa Penida is particularly unique because of its isolated grid, its reliance on diesel, its orientation towards tourism, and its renewable energy potential, make Nusa Penida as a distinctive case for norm localization.

Different cases discussed above, shows the necessity of formulating a strategy to localize the norm of energy transition. Not just any strategy which presumably will work in any case in any place, but a strategy that fits, respects, facilitates, and accommodates the local context where it will be applied. This is to include acknowledging the role of multi-actors, leveraging local modalities, while making the most of possible external opportunities. The context of Nusa Penida highlights the importance of having such strategy. Despite Indonesia's ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commitments, the domestic diffusion of energy transition norms continues to face institutional, policy, and socio-political barriers that reinforce fossil fuel dependency and limit inclusive planning. These constraints have hindered previous initiatives, including early renewable energy projects in Nusa Penida (2007) and

the Sumba Iconic Island program, both of which struggled with weak institutional integration and limited community ownership.

Furthermore, national funding mechanisms like the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) largely support grid-connected, large-scale projects, with minimal distribution to remote, off-grid communities. Collectively, these historical barriers highlight the impediments faced by centralized models in achieving effective and just energy transitions, creating a context where alternative approaches become necessary. At the same time, a notable bottom-up initiative has emerged in Nusa Penida, which distinctively utilizes local cultural and financial modalities to drive transition. Triggered by the launch of the Bali Net Zero Emissions (NZE) 2045 initiative, a coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) supporting the provincial government, called the NPI Coalition (discussed below), has committed to transforming the island into a 100% renewable energy territory by 2030.

To date, despite the critical importance of decentralized governance in the Global South, few studies have systematically examined the distinct role of local non-state actors in championing bottom-up localization processes of global energy transition norms, particularly within complex emerging economies like Indonesia. This article investigates how transnational and national norm entrepreneurs orchestrate localization efforts in Nusa Penida by creating institutional, cultural, and financial conditions for future norm localization. Guided by this objective, this study revolves around one question: while state actors remain relevant in regulation and implementation, how does the agency of non-state actors; serving as primary local architect, shape the bottom-up localization strategy of global energy transition norms in peripheral regions through specific local initiatives and endogenous local modalities? By answering the question, this study contributes to the deepening of concepts on norms localization by Acharya (discussed in the Conceptual Framework section below), in a way that it provides elaborations on how the actors do what they do in localizing the norms. While the initial concept focuses on the three possible outcomes of the localization process, the addition which central on the actor's behaviors in order to achieve the outcomes will increase the applicability of the theory.

II. Conceptual Framework & Methodology

a. Conceptual Framework

This research discusses the process of developing the strategy for localization of global norm taking the case of energy transition norm in Nusa Penida, a

peripheral island in the Province of Bali (illustrated in Figure 1). As the intellectual basis of our research, we refer to Amitav Acharya's concept of norm localization (2004). This concept provides logics to explain how local actors reacts to the global norms imposed from the external in a situation where local beliefs and practices, whose values are incompatible to the global norms, does exist. According to Acharya, in their attempt to make the norms accepted, local actors applying three key mechanisms to the global norms namely framing, grafting and pruning. This will lead to three possible outcomes, namely norm resistance, norm localization, or norm displacements. However, Acharya misses to explain what exactly is the local actors do in their attempt to frame, graft, and prune the norms, what are their modalities, who they partnered with, etc. This research will elaborate on these particular aspects of the localization process.

The decision to take Acharya's Norm Localization as the main conceptual reference in this research is not without justification. Despite the above limitations, compared to the other existing norms localization concepts, Acharya's is the closest to explain the situation in Nusa Penida. Other concepts are not applicable mainly because the assumed character and behavior of the actors do not match the actors of Nusa Penida. Norm Vernacularisation (Merry, 2006) argues that the global norms are localized by actors who 'have one foot in the transnational community and one at home' (p.42); Norm Propagation (Dubash, 2009) portrays the alignment between government, civil society, and private sectors together for the deliberation of the global norms; Norm Empowerment (Checkel, 1997) explains how norms localization is centralized on the interest of society and elite; Norm Reproduction (Florini, 1996) sees norm localization as about the change of state's behavior; Spiral Model (Keck & Sikkink, 1999) focuses on the role of the transnational advocacy networks (TANs) during the cycle of five different situations which put pressure on the government to fully adopt the global norms; lastly, Norm Interpretations (Sundrijo, 2021) argues that norms localization happen within the context of the dynamic actions and interactions of both national and regional 'authoritative decision-making'. Acharya himself have developed two other concepts related to norms localization, those are Norm Subsidiarity (2011) which highlight the role of local actors as norm makers, and Norm Circulation (2013) focuses more on how the less powerful actors become marginalized in the norm localization process as the more powerful actors have become abusive to the new adopted norm during the implementation stage.

The reference to Acharya's (2004) norm localization allows us to assess the involvement of local actors and local modalities, in addition to the partnerships

developed by the local actors with various different other actors, including the transnational actors. The analysis followed Acharya's four stages: pre-localization, local initiative, adaptation, and amplification to trace the evolution of norms across policy and social layers with specific attention to how local actors centered themselves in each stage of the process. While Acharya's framework encompasses all local actors, this study specifically isolates non-state actors to analyze their distinct capacity to localize norms in the absence of strong central state directives. It includes local civil society organizations such as the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR), customary village institutions, community groups, tourism stakeholders, and local residents, as well as the transnational actors with whom the local actors develop partnership, those are World Resources Institute (WRI) Indonesia, New Energy Nexus Indonesia, philanthropic organizations such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, IKEA Foundation, Sequoia Climate Foundation, ClimateWorks Foundation, Tara Climate Foundation, and Viriya ENB.

All and all, Acharya's Norm Localization is referred to in this research as it acknowledges the central role of the local actors without getting to deep in explaining the details of their behavior. The weakness of this concept; the lack of the details which has become the opportunity of academic contribution of this research.

b. Methodology

To understand the construction of the strategy of the localization of global energy transition norms in Nusa Penida, this research employs a qualitative case study design. It involves the use of non-numerical data in order to explore and interpret social phenomena (Lamont, 2015). By linking conceptual frameworks with empirical findings, this approach allows researchers to evaluate the relevance and coherence of existing concepts in explaining specific cases (Neuman, 2014). The case was selected for its regulatory relevance under Bali Provincial Regulation No. 45/2019 and its geographic disconnection from Indonesia's main power grid conditions that make it an ideal laboratory for localized transition processes.

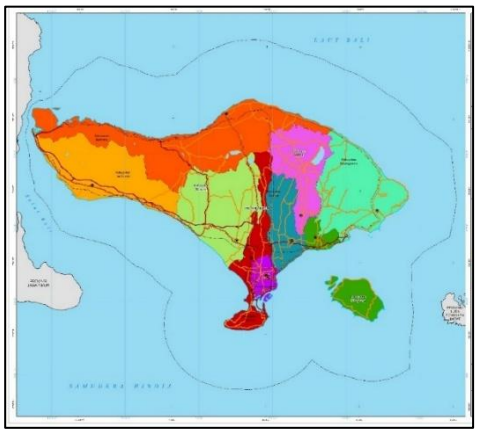

Fig. 1. Map of Nusa Penida in Bali Province
Source: Sistem Informasi Wilayah dan Tata Ruang Bali (Pemerintah Provinsi Bali, n.d.)

The study relies entirely on secondary data covering the period of 2007-2025, starting from the launch of Nusa Penida's first renewable pilot to the ongoing implementation of the Nusa Penida 100% Renewable Energy Roadmap. Data sources include national and provincial policy documents, documents published by Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PT. PLN (Persero) or State Electricity Company) mainly PLN's RUPTL (Rencana Usaha Penyediaan Tenaga Listrik or Electricity Supply Business Plan) year 2025-2034, government regulations, NGO and donor reports, international agency publications, peer-reviewed journals, and local media. The selection was following two criteria: direct relevance to Nusa Penida or comparable subnational energy transition cases, and credibility of institutional or scholarly provenance. Relying on secondary data is not unintentional. While it does not permit ethnographic assessment on community-level norm acceptance or behavioral change, this type of data provides rich empirical evidence on the discourses, policy frameworks, planning instruments, and institutional strategies through which norm entrepreneurs seek to localize global energy transition norms. As the NPI remains at the planning and coalition-building stage, these sources are particularly valuable for tracing localization efforts, actor interactions, and modality formation prior to implementation. Documents were assessed and later categorized to trace the agency of local actors and the utilization of local modalities, specifically cultural, institutional, and financial resources, within bottom-up localization processes. While global norms provide the bigger picture, the analysis focuses on how bottom-up initiatives drive the localization process through adaptation and framing.

To establish a linkage between findings that have been categorized, this study employs process tracing method. This method fits our needs as it allows us to craft explanations based on events and mechanisms (Collier, 2011) which further lead to a particular outcome (George & Bennett, 2005) The outcome does not necessarily prove that certain theory, in this case, Acharya's Norm Localization, is correct, but it can be justified as the best possible explanation (Beach & Pedersen, 2019) of what happened based on the researcher specific observations. To ensure rigor and credibility, this study applied several validation strategies. First, we conducted data triangulation for cross-checking key facts across source types, such as corroborating NGO project claims with government reports and press coverage. Triangulation of data sources served to ensure the credibility of the reported bottom-up mechanism. We also involved multiple methods in data collection and analysis, as well as reduced individual bias through peer review. We sought disconfirming evidence (e.g. local

resistance or project failure) to challenge our interpretations.

III. Discussions

a. Contextualizing the Bottom-Up Initiative

Indonesia's energy transition efforts have gained stronger coordination and consistency since the launch of the G20 Energy Transition Forum in February 2022 (Pribadi, 2022). Beyond representing a domestic policy agenda, Indonesia's energy transition reflects the diffusion of broader global norms emphasizing decarbonization, renewable energy deployment, and NZE pathways. These norms have increasingly shaped national and subnational development strategies as governments seek to align economic growth with climate commitments. At subnational level, Bali has positioned itself as a frontrunner in energy transition through the Bali Net Zero Emissions 2045 declaration that was announced in August 2023 under the Governor Regulation No. 45/2019. The initiative supports low-carbon development, clean energy autonomy, and electric vehicle uptake (Kasih, 2023).

Initial efforts to localize global energy transition norms emerged through the involvement of IESR and the Bali NZE Coalition, consisting of WRI Indonesia, and New Energy Nexus Indonesia (Simanjuntak, 2023). Acting as norm entrepreneurs, these organizations introduced and promoted renewable energy transition pathways that were compatible with Bali's development priorities. IESR contributed energy system planning and advocacy, WRI strengthened governance integration, and New Energy Nexus expanded clean technology entrepreneurship and financing access. Rather than framing energy transition solely as a climate mitigation agenda, these actors linked renewable energy development to Bali's aspirations for sustainable tourism, environmental preservation, and long-term economic resilience. This process marked an initial stage of localization in which global norms were translated into narratives and objectives that resonated with local priorities.

Within this broader context, Nusa Penida emerged as a strategic site for advancing localized energy transition efforts. One of the key efforts to achieve the Bali NZE 2045 target is to accelerate the 100% renewable energy transition in Nusa Penida by 2030. As one of Bali's leading tourism destinations, attracting up to 6,000 visitors daily during peak seasons (Wiguna & Lazuardi, 2024), Nusa Penida faces rising electricity demand while possessing abundant renewable resources, including solar, biomass, biofuel, and wind energy. It also has abundant renewable energy resources, including solar energy, biomass from municipal waste and gamal plants, biofuel from castor plants and seaweed, and wind energy. The expansion

of tourism infrastructure, such as hotels, restaurants, and supporting facilities, has significantly increased electricity demand, while the aging diesel power plants continue to generate noise, vibration, and air pollution (IESR, 2025). These conditions created an opportunity to connect global decarbonization objectives with local concerns regarding energy security, environmental sustainability, and tourism development.

Recognizing this opportunity, IESR and its partners sought to translate Bali's broader net-zero ambitions into a more concrete and place-based initiative. According to study conducted by IESR and CORE Udayana, to achieve 100% renewable energy in Nusa Penida requires the development of a supportive ecosystem that positions local communities not only as energy consumers but also as participants in the transition process. This vision culminated in the establishment of the NPI, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding signed at the 2024 Indonesia International Sustainability Forum in Jakarta. The initiative brought together key stakeholders in Indonesia's energy sector, including PLN, the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Indonesian Renewable Energy Society, the Indonesian Solar Energy Association, the Indonesian Wind Energy Association, and PT Bali Kerthi Development Fund Ventura (Simanjuntak & Hasjanah, 2024).

The NPI was further supported by global and national institutions, such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, IKEA Foundation, Sequoia Climate Foundation, ClimateWorks Foundation, Tara Climate Foundation, and Viriya ENB. For the purpose of this research, hereafter, this coalition of actors engaged in Nusa Penida's energy transition will be referred to as the NPI Coalition and are treated primarily as norm entrepreneurs that provide funding, expertise, advocacy, and technical planning support. On the other hand, local actors in Nusa Penida are incorporated into the planning process as prospective agents of localization. Given that the NPI remains at an early planning stage, this study does not assume that renewable energy norms have already been fully internalized or translated into local practices. Rather, the analysis focuses on how transnational and national actors seek to create enabling conditions for future localization through stakeholder engagement, cultural framing, and institutional arrangements.

b. Orchestrating Localization: Cultural, Strategic, and Financial Modalities

To achieve this objective, the NPI Coalition employs bottom-up strategies which include three interrelated modalities. The first modality is cultural, seeking to enhance the local legitimacy of the energy transition by embedding it

within Tri Hita Karana (THK) a Balinese philosophy emphasizing harmony among spirituality (parhyangan), society (pawongan), and nature (palemahan) (Disbud Buleleng, 2021). The principle of palemahan is used to frame renewable energy as consistent with environmental stewardship and sustainability. Pawongan informs stakeholder engagement and capacity-building activities, while parhyangan provides an ethical narrative linking environmental protection to the preservation of the island's cultural and spiritual heritage. In this sense, THK functions as a cultural modality through which global energy transition norms are translated into locally meaningful narratives.

By linking renewable energy development to THK values, the NPI Coalition attempts to graft global decarbonization norms onto existing local cultural understandings. As argued by Acharya (2004), external norms are more likely to gain local legitimacy when they are adapted to existing values and social contexts. Accordingly, the significance of THK in this case lies not in demonstrating the successful internalization of renewable energy norms, but in illustrating how norm entrepreneurs seek to make those norms culturally resonant and socially acceptable. This process is further reinforced through efforts to position Nusa Penida not only as a tourism destination but also as a prospective energy-independent island aligned with Bali's broader eco-tourism agenda (Yasa et al., 2025).

The second modality is the development of a 100% Renewable Energy Roadmap for Nusa Penida (shown in Figure 3) based on a study conducted by CORE Udayana, grafting onto local values and the island's potential as mentioned earlier.

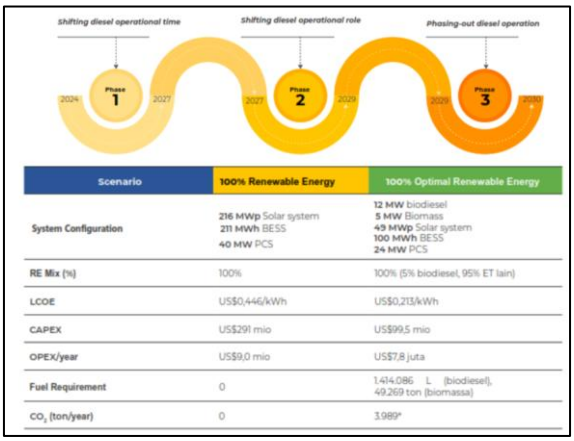

Fig. 2. Nusa Penida 100% Renewable Energy Roadmap
Source: IESR (Sisdwinugraha & Riyandi, 2024)

The Roadmap consists of a three-phase strategy: Phase I (2024-2027) targets the elimination of daytime diesel usage by prioritizing solar photovoltaic and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS); Phase II (2027-2029) introduces biomass power plants to reduce nighttime diesel reliance, relegating it to a backup role; and Phase III (2029-2030) focuses on integrating additional sources such as biodiesel and tidal energy. The strategy was designed based on the island's abundant renewable potential to meet its own demand and potentially export power to Bali. Nusa Penida's grid operates

independently from the JAMALI system (the Jawa-Madura-Bali interconnected grid (Indonesia's largest electricity system), thus, the island offers a strategic testing ground for a fully renewable island model (Sisdwinugraha & Riyandi, 2024).

Rather than constituting evidence of completed norm localization, the Roadmap functions as a planning instrument through which global energy transition norms are translated into locally relevant objectives, priorities, and implementation pathways. Its significance therefore lies in institutionalizing decarbonization goals within a locally grounded development strategy rather than demonstrating that renewable energy norms have already been internalized by local communities. To ensure the implementation of the Roadmap, IESR maps key stakeholders and their expected contributions across various sectors (as shown in Figure 3).

Fig. 3. Multi-stakeholders in Nusa Penida 100% Renewable Energy Development
Source: IESR (Sisdwinugraha & Riyandi, 2024)

The collaborative design of the Roadmap with PLN, provincial and sub-district authorities, civil society organizations, and tourism actors aims to embed the 2030 transition agenda within local governance structures. This potentially will reduce the perception of an externally imposed agenda. Public campaigns that frame renewable energy within THK values and Bali's eco-tourism identity seek to translate abstract decarbonization goals into culturally resonant narratives and encourage future community engagement. Moreover, detailed technical planning based on fieldwork, including the phased substitution of diesel generators with renewable-based electricity, and rooftop installations on commercial and community facilities, aims to build public confidence in achieving the energy transition goals. Local communities, including traditional councils, village heads, and farmer groups, are envisioned as future participants in renewable energy governance and the potential management of technologies such as rooftop solar, biomass, and biodiesel systems. At the current stage, however, these actors should be understood as prospective participants in future localization processes rather than as actors who have already fully internalized renewable energy norms.

The third modality concerns financial arrangements that support the long-term feasibility of the transition.

Financing remains a major challenge in peripheral regions such as Nusa Penida. Given the limited reach and disbursement constraints of national funding mechanisms such as JETP (Hakim, 2025), the NPI Coalition mobilizes philanthropic support for feasibility studies, planning, outreach, capacity building, and pilot projects, including rooftop solar installations currently under procurement. According to the Roadmap, achieving a 100% renewable electricity system by 2030 requires approximately USD 291 million in investment. Philanthropic organizations and NGOs therefore play a key role in financing, project development, and stakeholder coordination while encouraging community involvement in renewable energy initiatives. Learning from previous state-led off-grid projects that faced sustainability challenges due to limited local management capacity (MEMR, 2018), the Coalition incorporates community engagement into its financial design. Rather than demonstrating established economic ownership, this modality seeks to create institutional and financial conditions necessary for future localization and long-term sustainability.

IV. Conclusion

This study advances literature on norm diffusion by demonstrating how giving agency to local actors and leveraging local modalities can be a strategy which facilitates the bottom-up process of localization of energy transition norms in peripheral contexts. It takes Nusa Penida as a focused case to show how a coalition of non-state actors serves as the primary catalyst in guiding state and community actors to initiate and lead the processes. Referring to Acharya's (2004) norm localization concept, the findings suggest the potential effectiveness of the bottom-up strategies in adapting global energy transition norms to local contexts, through three initiatives: (1) integrating local values and cultures in the frameworks; (2) developing a roadmap as a systematic and measurable scenario, involving a larger multi-stakeholder participation; and (3) applying community-based, decentralized financial governance. Collectively, these initiatives illustrate that effective localization requires centering agency with local architects who can adapt norms using culturally and financially resonant modalities.

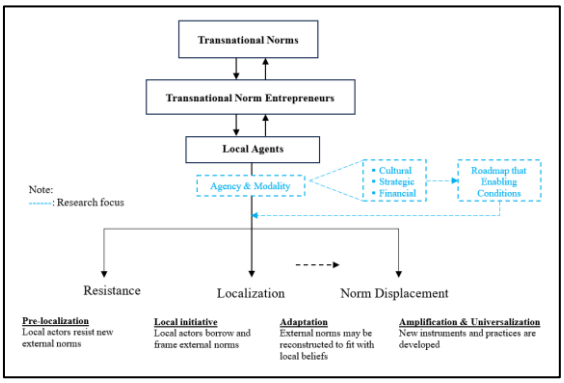

Fig. 4. Local Agents' Strategy of Norm Localization (an adjustment of Acharya's (2004) model)
Source: Constructed by author based on research findings.

The primary strength of this research lies in the mapping of actor configurations, funding modalities, and localized adaptation mechanisms, supported by policy and institutional analysis. The integration of cultural and local values into energy transition discourse demonstrates conceptual and practical relevance, especially in peripheral areas that have often been excluded from centralized planning. Furthermore, this study underscores the roadmap's role as a solid foundation for anticipating and mitigating energy transition failures. Its potential effectiveness is reinforced by philanthropic support as a catalyst to decentralize financing. Community involvement ties energy transition with local values, hence contributing to its long-term sustainability.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. As this study relies on secondary data, it is unable to capture local realities and community perceptions. Additionally, technical and regulatory feasibility of fully transitioning to 100% renewable energy in Nusa Penida requires further empirical investigation, especially after the target year is reached in 2030. Therefore, future research should prioritize the application of more field-based, participatory methods to evaluate the long-term social legitimacy and institutional embeddedness of bottom-up initiatives. By situating the Nusa Penida initiative within broader theoretical and policy debates, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how global norms are internalized through local agency, institutional adaptability, and culturally resonant narratives in the context of energy transition in the Global South.

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