

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: SHAPING POLICY CHANGES IN INDIGENOUS VILLAGES' STRUCTURAL REGULATIONS IN ROKAN HULU, RIAU PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the significant role of community engagement in influencing policy changes within traditional villages, focusing on Regency Rokan Hulu, Riau Province. Employing qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and discussions, the research sheds light on the impact of community input on policy formulation. The study reveals that when communities actively craft regulations for traditional villages, these regulations become more aligned with the community's aspirations and necessities. The data collection process involved thorough field visits, where researchers interacted with community members and stakeholders in policy-making. Findings underscore the transformative effect of community participation on policy outcomes. Communities play a crucial role in driving effective policy changes by collectively drafting profiles that articulate the essence of traditional villages and supporting governmental initiatives in their establishment. In conclusion, this study emphasises the integral role of community involvement in shaping policy changes within conventional village settings. In Regency Rokan Hulu, Riau Province, the collaborative approach between community engagement and policy formulation leads to regulations that genuinely resonate with the community's desires. Thus, embracing community participation is a pivotal factor for the successful evolution of policies impacting traditional villages.

Keywords: *Participation, Policy Change, Customary Village, Rokan Hulu, Traditional Village, Aspiration.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menggali peran signifikan dari keterlibatan masyarakat dalam memengaruhi perubahan kebijakan di desa-desa adat, dengan fokus pada Regency Rokan Hulu, Provinsi Riau. Melalui metode kualitatif seperti wawancara, observasi, dan diskusi, penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman tentang dampak masukan dari masyarakat terhadap penyusunan kebijakan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketika masyarakat secara aktif terlibat dalam

merumuskan regulasi untuk desa-desa adat, regulasi tersebut lebih sejalan dengan aspirasi dan kebutuhan masyarakat. Proses pengumpulan data melibatkan kunjungan lapangan yang mendalam, di mana para peneliti berinteraksi dengan anggota masyarakat dan pemangku kepentingan yang terlibat dalam proses pembuatan kebijakan. Temuan penelitian menegaskan efek transformasi dari partisipasi masyarakat terhadap hasil kebijakan. Melalui penyusunan profil desa secara bersama-sama yang menggambarkan esensi desa-desa adat serta mendukung inisiatif pemerintah dalam pembentukannya, masyarakat memainkan peran penting dalam mendorong perubahan kebijakan yang efektif. Sebagai kesimpulan, penelitian ini menekankan peran integral partisipasi masyarakat dalam membentuk perubahan kebijakan di lingkungan desa-desa adat. Di Regency Rokan Hulu, Provinsi Riau, pendekatan kolaboratif antara keterlibatan masyarakat dan penyusunan kebijakan menghasilkan regulasi yang sesuai dengan keinginan masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, penerimaan terhadap partisipasi masyarakat muncul sebagai faktor kunci untuk evolusi kebijakan yang berhasil memengaruhi desa-desa adat..

Kata Kunci: *Partisipasi, Perubahan Kebijakan, Desa Adat, Rokan Hulu, Desa Tradisional, Aspirasi.*

INTRODUCTION

The history of village legislation in Indonesia spans a substantial timeframe. The evolution of village laws, from their inception post the proclamation of August 17, 1945, until the early months of 2014, has traversed a course marked by fluctuations that mirror the shifts in political, social, and economic currents. Notably, the practical execution of these regulations has encountered challenges in fully accommodating the diverse community interests and needs (Elfis et al., 2020; Law Number 6 of 2014 Concerning Villages, 2014; Wicaksono et al., 2022). Furthermore, the operationalisation of existing village regulations has ceased to align with the contemporary landscape, particularly regarding the standing of customary law communities, democratisation,

diversity, community participation, and the drive for progressive and equitable development. This misalignment has, in turn, given rise to regional conflicts, inequities, poverty, and societal concerns, with cultural variances even threatening the unity of the Indonesian Republic (Maria, 2018).

A need arises for comprehensive regulatory frameworks to be enacted by both central and local governing bodies. This is crucial for fortifying the role of villages within the national governmental structure (Grimmelikhuijsen & Feeney, 2017; Cai, 2008). Recognised as pivotal economic engines and the vanguard of national development (Badaruddin et al., 2021; Goodhand, 2000), villages warrant acknowledgement and empowerment as the foundational units of governance. The proximity of

village governance to the grassroots level uniquely positions it to comprehend community needs, societal dynamics, and local traditions (Astuti, 2022). The outcome lies in villages instrumental in steering national progress and achieving communal prosperity. Consequently, enacting legislative regulations is indispensable in orchestrating effective village governance.

Preliminary observations reveal the Regional Government of Rokan Hulu Regency's selection of 89 traditional villages. Subsequently, under the guidance of sub-district heads, village chiefs are tasked with convening orthodox communities and crafting profiles of customary villages. These profiles delineate the customary practices and traditions of the villages, which are then submitted for consideration by the local authorities.

In this context, the engagement of stakeholders beyond the government, encompassing community members, indigenous groups, and non-governmental organisations, becomes imperative. This external participation materialises to bolster policy changes aimed at formalising customary villages. After a selected village drafts its community profile and pledges support for recognition as a customary village, the local government of Rokan Hulu Regency takes the lead in formulating draft regional regulations. These drafts are subsequently presented to the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of Rokan Hulu

Regency to declare customary village status.

Therefore, in the researcher's view, including the Participation dimension within policy change is vital. This addition aims to enrich this study's theoretical framework of policy change, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the policy dynamics governing indigenous villages in Rokan Hulu Regency, Riau Province, specifically in 2015. This analysis verifies the extent of community participation in shaping village regulations.

This research elucidates the pivotal role of community involvement in policy formulation within indigenous villages in Rokan Hulu, Riau Province, in 2015. The emphasis is on discerning the degree of community participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "participation" derives from the English word "participation" and can be elucidated as the act of engaging emotions and actively involving oneself or taking an active role in the operational dynamics of an organisational framework (Ngongare et al., 2019). Participation transcends mere presence within community engagement in developmental processes, encapsulating a proactive and engaged presence. Community participation involves a collaborative contribution to shaping the trajectory of developmental policy strategies orchestrated by governmental bodies (Meadowcroft, 2004; Simpson, 2001).

The robust involvement of communities significantly facilitates the intricate facets of policy formulation and subsequent implementation. The manifestation of community or social support serves as a hallmark of meaningful participation. Broadly construed, social support encompasses the reservoir of social resources individuals can draw when confronted with life's exigencies and stressors (Thoits & Thoits, 2014). This support can manifest organically through interpersonal relationships or assume the form of institutionalised aid dispensed by authorised entities, such as government welfare initiatives or the judicature system (Kort-Butler, 2017).

In the domain of development and policy discourse, community participation is a dynamic and multifaceted process that envelops a mere presence and an active engagement in the triad of decision-making, policy implementation, and evaluative scrutiny. Effective community participation engenders a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members, fostering a collaborative ethos that proves instrumental in grappling with challenges and realising developmental objectives. This participatory ethos harmonises seamlessly with principles of good governance, transparency, and inclusivity, ensuring that policies remain highly attuned to the varied exigencies and aspirations of the community. It embodies a bottom-up vantage point where localised insights,

knowledge, and concerns intricately shape the contours of the policy landscape.

Furthermore, the fabric of community participation is woven intricately with the tenets of social capital and cohesion. The provision of social support and the establishment of intricate networks within communities serve not only to enhance individual well-being but also to fortify the social tapestry that binds societies. Ultimately, community participation emerges as an impelling force underpinning sustainable development. It facilitates the identification of contextually apt solutions, amplifies the bedrock of accountability, and nurtures a collective sense of stewardship for the holistic betterment of society.

METHOD

This study was conducted using qualitative methods as outlined by Guion et al. (2002), Horspool (2016), Renz et al. (2018), and Schaik (2014). Qualitative research is characterised by its focus on processes, understanding, and meaning. The researcher is the primary data collection and analysis instrument, following an inductive approach that culminates in richly descriptive outcomes (Jick, 2016; Tellis, 1997). Research methods are employed to navigate problem-solving endeavours. This research adopts qualitative methods, recognising that they are employed to explore and comprehend the meanings attributed to

social or humanitarian issues (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Qualitative approaches can play a pivotal role in reshaping dominant narratives, shifting from causal pathways and individual-level problems to perspectives encompassing the power dynamics and resources of individuals and communities actively involved in addressing and reshaping systemic, overarching issues (Jason & Glenwick, 2016).

Within this study, research informants serve as primary sources of information, contributing essential data and insights. The verbal expressions and actions referenced encompass the statements made by informants, and the behaviours of the individuals observed and interviewed, constituting primary data. As defined by Lofland, qualitative research primarily employs interviews as the central source of data or primary data source.

The informants are individuals directly altering village regulatory policies to establish customary villages. They encompass the Chairman of the Regional People's Representative Council of Rokan Hulu Regency for the 2014-2019 period, who leads the institution participating in the policy change discussions regarding regional regulations for establishing customary villages. The Rokan Hulu Regency DPRD members, including the special committee chairperson responsible for formulating regional regulations for customary village establishment, are also considered informants.

Additionally, the Regional Secretary of Rokan Hulu Regency, possessing insights into the policy's genesis, and the Head of the Rokan Hulu Regency Village Community Empowerment Office, engaged in village and customary village guidance, contribute to the pool of informants.

Moreover, the head of the designated customary village—the Malay customary institution of Rokan Hulu Regency—is included as an informant, considering their pivotal role in the process. Rigorous adherence to appropriate data collection techniques is crucial to study validity. After all, research aims to procure data. Data collection techniques are iterated progressively from general to specific to ensure comprehensive insights (Sugiyonno, 2011). Information collection methodologies aim to uncover informant insights aligned with the study's scope. In line with the research design, data is garnered in natural settings from primary data sources through observation, in-depth informant interviews, documentation analysis, and focused group discussions. The staged data collection process involves in-person visits to the research site and interactions with designated resource individuals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Dimension of Participation in Policy Change

Since the advent of the Reform Era in Indonesia until today, the Indonesian government has

endeavoured to reform its political system towards democracy. The preceding regime (Orde Baru) had entrenched authoritarian rule, reducing citizens to passive subjects of development. During that period, society often felt compelled to be a catalyst for change. Thus, a fundamental shift occurred in societal involvement across social, economic, and political processes, transitioning from a top-down policy approach to a bottom-up one. In essence, the political transformation towards democracy during that time necessitated the active involvement of citizens in public policy-making, often framed as "community participation."

Participation involves discussing government-established agendas (Rahim, 2004). Politically, participation should be understood as an act exercised by citizens as members of a democratic society. Participation entails more than merely accepting or rejecting government policy proposals; it also encompasses suggesting specific policies, even those not yet put forth by the government.

In this context, it is essential to clarify that in this discussion, the term "participation" need not be limited to participation in government agendas. According to Chandaoke (1995), one of the prerequisites for social order in the public policy-making process that involves the participation of societal political forces is strengthening civil society. Meanwhile, citizen participation pertains to various forms

of involvement in policy formulation and decision-making across key domains that impact their lives (Suryani, 2019).

Local governments possess a degree of autonomy in carrying out their responsibilities, evident in the many local regulations they produce. However, decentralisation, which aims to bring local communities closer to the decision-making process, has yet to yield significant changes in participatory policy-making. Furthermore, the divergence of interests between local and national decision-makers has given rise to challenges in implementing policies at the grassroots level. Participation becomes necessary to align the direction and objectives of policies with their implementation.

Participation is a crucial aspect of policy implementation. It encompasses both technical aspects and the execution process. Brinkerhoff (1996) states participation involves providing policy design and implementation input. In policy change scenarios, participation can influence political dynamics and policy implementation practices. In the context of the policy dynamics surrounding the designation of villages as customary villages, participation is manifested through the support extended to the government in transforming regular villages into customary ones. Indigenous communities prepare profiles and letters of support for submission to local authorities.

The research reveals that in the policy dynamics of transforming villages into customary villages in Rokan Hulu Regency, Riau Province, there is evidence of participation from community leaders and citizens facilitating proposed policy changes initiated by the Regional Government of Rokan Hulu Regency. This underscores the significance of community support in changing village names to become customary villages. This support is the foundation for the local government to amend village regulations. The community's support is communicated directly to the local government through the village community empowerment office and conveyed in person to the Regent. Additionally, support comes from the Malay Customary Institution of Rokan Hulu Regency and the Village Customary Institution; both participate in socialising the plan to transform village settings into customary villages and compile profiles of customary practices and institutions.

From the statements above, it is understood that customary institutions and indigenous communities participate in the policy dynamics of designating villages as customary villages by supporting the changes in village regulations in Rokan Hulu Regency. M. Zen's statement further reinforces this assertion:

"The original village community wholeheartedly supports the establishment of customary villages. In Rambah Hilir Timur, most of its

inhabitants are indigenous to the swamp. The community actively formulates customary profiles and establishes the village's history and customary institution structure. Subsequently, a letter of support is composed and submitted to the local government, which we deliver directly to the Regent. This support represents our consensus regarding the change in name and the transformation of the village into a customary village in Penyengat Village (Original Village of Rambah Hilir Timur)."

From the interview excerpt above, it is evident that the indigenous community supports the establishment of customary villages. This support is pivotal, serving as the basis for the Rokan Hulu Regency local government to create local regulations concerning the transformation of village names and the establishment of customary villages. This contrasts with the case of Rambah Hilir Timur, where support is only given by the indigenous community, which constitutes a minority within the broader ethnic community.

Additionally, the interview with Martinus, an official of Rambah Hilir Timur Customary Village, reveals:

"The establishment of customary villages, particularly Rambah Hilir Timur, is only supported by the indigenous community, which is not the majority. This village is situated in a transmigration area with a highly heterogeneous population.

The original village was located at the estuary of Rambah Hilir Timur. However, its inhabitants were relocated to new lands or settlements due to the entry of external companies and workers, including many people from Java. Nevertheless, the community continues to provide support despite the small number of immigrant communities. Efforts are made to garner support and seize the benefits of the customary village."

The interviews unveil that community participation is one of the dimensions influencing policy change. However, participation does not solely emanate from the majority of the community. Community participation in creating local regulations for establishing customary villages, which transform the village's structure, is paramount. As local regulations are primarily based on the needs and interests of the community, they are more likely to reflect the reality on the ground and fulfil the expectations of the local populace. Moreover, communities tend to adhere more closely to regulations they have been actively involved in. During the creation of local regulations (planning, drafting, discussions, enactment, and promulgation), community aspirations can be integrated from the planning stage onwards.

This practice enhances the quality of policy-making since the community is affected by and targeted by such policies. Therefore, it is hoped

that the executive and legislative branches can solicit the views and needs of the community, which can subsequently be incorporated into local regulations. Similarly, the local regulations concerning transforming village names into customary villages and establishing customary villages in Rokan Hulu Regency pertain directly to indigenous communities and carry broader societal implications. This is because the implementation involves altering the village's structure into a customary village, encompassing social life, the governance system of the customary village, and the observance of customary legal norms.

Therefore, the establishment of customary villages must garner cross-sectoral support to foster community well-being and enable the transformation from regular villages to customary ones. Community participation is of utmost importance in realising the designation of customary villages in Rokan Hulu Regency, serving as a pivotal dimension influencing these transformative changes. Various forms of community participation are essential in creating the Rokan Hulu Regency Regulation No. 1 of 2015 concerning the *Designation of Villages and Customary Villages*.

This underscores the crucial role that community involvement plays in shaping policies that directly impact their lives. By actively engaging communities in policy-making processes, policies are more relevant to

their needs and more likely to be embraced and effectively implemented. In the context of the transition to customary villages, community participation transcends mere consultation and extends to co-creation and collaboration. It empowers local communities, fosters ownership of decisions, and aligns policies with the lived realities of the people they affect.

In conclusion, the dimension of participation in policy change is integral to the democratic evolution of Indonesia. From shifting societal roles in policy-making during the Reform Era to the present-day emphasis on community involvement, the journey towards democracy continues to be sculpted by the active participation of citizens. As exemplified by transforming villages into customary villages in Rokan Hulu Regency, community participation is more than a procedural requirement—it is a catalyst for inclusive and impactful policies that drive sustainable development and empower local communities.

Developing and Formulating the Profile of the Customary Village.

Based on the research findings obtained from interviews with informants and key informants, it is revealed that the formulation of the profile of the customary village, which serves as a crucial consideration in the policy shift from regular village regulations to customary villages in Rokan Hulu Regency, is a collaborative effort undertaken by the indigenous community. This organisational

structuring is achieved through communal deliberations facilitated by customary institutions. Notably, the indigenous community members and prominent figures actively craft the customary village's profile. This profile embodies a comprehensive framework encompassing the institutional structure of customary practices, customary legal norms for addressing societal issues linked to traditions, ceremonial rites, land cultivation, childbirth rituals, and customary rituals conducted during significant religious festivities.

The process of creating the customary village profile is based on a highly participative methodology, which is in line with the principles of democratic governance. The process entails actively participating in diverse stakeholders, such as indigenous community members and esteemed traditional figures, who offer their valuable ideas, perspectives, and traditional knowledge. Consequently, the profile effectively encompasses the complex institutional structure of the traditional village and reflects the fundamental aspects of the indigenous culture and history.

Moreover, the profile encompasses more than just administrative documentation. The statement mentioned above effectively encompasses the fundamental aspects of the indigenous way of life, encompassing the various traditions, behaviours, and ceremonial observances that possess profound

cultural importance for the group. Incorporating customary law standards in the profile underscores the indigenous community's capacity to address internal issues through their traditional legal system.

The creation of the customary village profile serves as evidence of the proactive role played by the indigenous community in determining their future. This technique serves as a prime example of a bottom-up approach that surpasses bureaucratic procedures and delves deeply into the cultural and social dynamics of the community. The profile that emerges from this process is a valuable tool for governance and serves as evidence of the diverse cultural heritage that the customary village represents.

In summary, the creation and establishment of the customary village profile exemplify a significant amalgamation of participatory democracy with an indigenous cultural legacy. The demonstration highlights the community's inherent capacity to self-govern while valuing its cultural heritage. The methodology above serves as the foundation for developing traditional villages in Rokan Hulu Regency, highlighting the long-lasting importance of community policy-making and cultural heritage preservation.

Providing Support to the Government Regarding the Establishment of Customary Villages.

The indigenous community's endorsement is a tangible manifestation

of their approval for the formal designation of customary villages. Notably, each village transforming into a customary village extends a written declaration of support to the Local Government of Rokan Hulu Regency. The influence wielded by indigenous leaders can be harnessed to sway community sentiment and urge the village authorities to articulate their backing for establishing a customary village. Considering the relatively minor indigenous population, they do not constitute a majority within their respective locales, as with Rambah Hilir East Customary Village.

Providing support takes on multifaceted dimensions, ranging from symbolic gestures to active advocacy. Through this demonstration of unity, the indigenous community communicates their alignment with the principles and aspirations underpinning the establishment of a customary village. It affirms the community's willingness to partake in the governance process and uphold their cultural heritage within the framework of the customary village.

Prominent individuals within the indigenous community exert substantial influence in mobilising efforts to garner support. Being esteemed traditional leaders, these individuals utilise their authority to mobilise community members and facilitate the transformation process. The support provided by their endorsement carries significance for the cause. It promotes unity among

community members, thereby contributing to a collective stance favouring the customary village designation.

It is essential to acknowledge that the numerical minority of the indigenous group does not reduce the significance of their support. On the contrary, their endorsement serves as compelling evidence of the significance attributed to preserving their cultural heritage and establishing their position within the dynamic realm of local administration. Although their population may not be the largest, this group's cultural history and accomplishments have immense importance and should not be underestimated.

In summary, assisting the government in constructing customary villages is crucial to achieving the desired transformation. The statement mentioned above highlights the unwavering dedication of the indigenous population towards preserving their cultural legacy and their proactive involvement in building the framework of their government structure. The endeavours of prominent indigenous individuals, in conjunction with the unified expression of the community, demonstrate a harmonious alignment of objectives that surpasses mere numerical superiority and emphasises the lasting importance of safeguarding cultural heritage and exercising self-determination.

CONCLUSION

Community participation in formulating regional regulations to designate distinctive villages that transform from regular villages into customary villages holds immense significance, as these regulations are primarily rooted in the interests and needs of the community. The forms of community participation in this policy change encompass:

Developing and Formulating Customary Village Profiles:

1. The crafting and articulation of customary village profiles are pivotal in transforming policies from village regulations to customary villages in Rokan Hulu Regency. These profiles are meticulously developed and formulated by the indigenous community. The process entails communal deliberations and engagements, serving as a collective dialogue and consensus-building platform.
2. Extending Support to the Government for Customary Village Establishment: The support extended by the indigenous community to the government constitutes a formal endorsement of establishing customary villages. Notably, each village transitioning into a customary village submits a written declaration of support to the Local Government of Rokan Hulu Regency. This endorsement underscores the community's

consensus and commitment to the new governance model.

The role of governmental support and the endorsement of indigenous community leaders from the designated customary villages significantly influence and reinforce the Local Government of Rokan Hulu Regency's decisions concerning customary village formation. The voices of the village authorities and revered indigenous figures echo the collective aspiration of the indigenous community. These factors carry substantial weight in shaping the government's policy stance and approach to establishing customary villages.

Government and community engagement interplay is pivotal in realising this policy change. The alignment of interests, the acknowledgement of cultural significance, and the collective determination to shape the governance trajectory coalesce to create a collaborative and purpose-driven framework. This synergy ensures that the transformation from conventional villages to customary villages is grounded in local values, responsive to community needs, and empowered by participatory decision-making.

In conclusion, the active involvement of the indigenous community in crafting customary village policies represents a powerful embodiment of democratic principles and localised governance. Through profile development, community engagement, and formal endorsements,

a cohesive and harmonised effort emerges that bridges community aspirations with the policy-making landscape. This collaborative approach underscores the essence of community participation in shaping the contours of policy changes and fostering a governance model that resonates with the values and aspirations of the indigenous population in Rokan Hulu Regency.

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