

RESEARCH PAPER

Multi-Level Governance In Sea Transportation Development Through Special Authority Funds In South Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province

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ABSTRACT

The development of maritime transportation in South Sorong Regency is a crucial aspect in improving connectivity within the archipelago and supporting equitable development. However, the implementation of policies through the Special Autonomy Fund (OTSUS) still faces various obstacles, such as limited regional authority, inconsistencies in spatial fit, and low participation of non-governmental actors. This indicates that Multi-Level Governance (MLG)-based governance has not been optimal. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Multi-Level Governance in the development of maritime transportation through the OTSUS Fund in South Sorong Regency. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study strategy. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies, using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Analysis was conducted using an interactive model. The results show that decentralization is still limited and dependent on the central government, spatial fit is not optimal due to a gap between planning and implementation, and participation remains at a consultative level. Interaction between levels of government has not yet fully resulted in effective coordination in maritime transportation development.

Keywords: *Multi-Level Governance: Development, Special Autonomy, Maritime Transportation*

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Introduction

The development of maritime transportation in eastern Indonesia, particularly in South Sorong Regency, is a non-negotiable necessity to improve regional connectivity and strengthen community economic activity. The region's geographical location, dominated by coastal areas and islands, and limited land access, makes maritime transportation the backbone of the mobility of goods and people. However, in practice, the maritime transportation system in this region still faces various limitations, both in terms of infrastructure, services, and governance.

Empirically, one policy instrument expected to address these issues is the Special Autonomy Fund (OTSUS). This fund is designed to provide greater fiscal space for regional governments to

determine development priorities according to local needs. In the context of South Sorong Regency, the substantial allocation of the Special Autonomy Fund and the Additional Infrastructure Fund in recent years actually demonstrates significant potential to stimulate development in the maritime transportation sector. However, its utilization has not yet fully aligned with actual needs on the ground.

Field findings indicate that budget allocation for the maritime transportation sector remains relatively limited compared to other sectors, such as road infrastructure. This indicates a problem in determining policy priorities at the regional level. While regional governments have the authority to manage the Special Autonomy Fund, these decisions are not always based on the strategic needs of the

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region, particularly in the context of maritime connectivity.

Besides budgetary issues, another prominent challenge is weak coordination between levels of government. In practice, maritime transportation development involves various actors, from the central government to provincial governments and district governments. However, the relationship between these levels is not yet fully synergistic. Differences in authority, overlapping regulations, and the lack of effective coordination mechanisms often result in poorly integrated policies.

Another emerging issue is limited institutional capacity at the regional level. Limited human resources, weak data-driven planning, and a lack of information system integration are factors that impact the effectiveness of policy implementation. In some cases, designed policies are not supported by adequate data, resulting in poor program targeting accuracy. Furthermore, technical operational issues reflect a suboptimal maritime transportation system. High operational costs, low service frequency, and the phenomenon of ships returning empty-handed indicate an imbalance in the logistics system. This situation impacts not only service efficiency but also the price of goods and public welfare.

A broader perspective reveals that these various issues are not isolated but interconnected within a complex governance system. Issues such as budgeting, coordination, participation, and institutional capacity demonstrate that the primary challenges in maritime transportation development lie not only in technical aspects but also in how policies are managed within a governance system involving multiple levels of government and actors.

The literature explains that the theory of Multi-Level Governance (MLG) developed in response to the increasingly complex decision-making and implementation of public policy, which is no longer exclusively confined to one level of government. Multi-Level Governance (MLG), developed by Gollata and Newig (2017), explains that this theory focuses on three main elements: decentralization, spatial fit and jurisdiction, and participation. Decentralization relates to the delegation of authority and responsibility from the central government to local governments. The higher the level of decentralization, the greater the need for local capacity. Spatial fit (jurisdiction) relates to the fit between regulations and their implementation, as mismatches often lead to inefficiencies and policy conflicts. Participation relates to the involvement of communities and stakeholders in the decision-making process at every level of government. The level of participation determines the legitimacy and sustainability of policies.

This study aims to examine the application of Multi-Level Governance in maritime transportation development through Special Autonomy data in South Sorong Regency. It will identify the extent to which decentralization, spatial fit, jurisdiction, and participation contribute to the effectiveness of maritime transportation development, as well as the challenges posed by inter-governmental coordination.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study strategy to deeply understand the dynamics of Multi-Level Governance in the development of maritime transportation through the Special Autonomy Fund (OTSUS) in South Sorong Regency. The case study strategy is used because this research focuses on one specific case with unique characteristics, namely South Sorong Regency as a special autonomy region with unique geographical and institutional challenges. The focus of this research is directed at three main dimensions of Multi-Level Governance, namely decentralization, spatial fit (jurisdiction), and participation. These three dimensions are operationalized as units of analysis to understand how authority is distributed, how policies are adapted to regional conditions, and how non-governmental actors are involved in the policy process. Informants in this study were selected purposively, namely based on the consideration that they have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the process of maritime transportation development in South Sorong Regency. The informants of this research consisted of officials and staff of the Southwest Papua Province Transportation Agency, officials and staff of the Teminabuan Class III UPP Office, officials and staff of the Sorong Class 1 Navigation District, members of the Papuan People's Assembly, representatives of the Sorong City KSOP, members of the Southwest Papua Province DPRD, Chairman of the Memate Indigenous Community Institution, Deputy Chairman 1 of the Imeko Tribe, Ship Operators/Business Actors and indigenous people. Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis in this study used the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes three main stages, namely data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To maintain the validity of the data, this study used credibility testing techniques through triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, and increased diligence in observation.

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of data collection and research findings conducted, to understand the phenomena

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related to the development of maritime transportation through Special Autonomy (Otsus) funds in South Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province, this study uses a multidisciplinary approach. *Multi-Level Governance* which was put forward by Gollata and Newig (2017) which emphasizes 1) Decentralization, 2) Spatial Fit: Jurisdiction, 3) Participation.

This distribution of authority not only reflects the structure of authority between levels of government

but also determines how interactions between actors occur in the process of policy formulation and implementation. Therefore, mapping authority is a crucial step in identifying the characteristics of Multi-Level Governance, particularly in assessing the extent to which decentralization, coordination, and actor involvement can be effective. The following table presents government authority in port and maritime transportation management.

Table 1. Government authority in managing ports and maritime transportation

Aspect Authority	Central Government (Ministry of Transportation, Directorate General of Sea Transportation, KSOP/UPP)	Provincial government	Regency/City Government
Regulations and Policies	Establish national shipping and port policies and shipping safety standards	Explaining national policies at the provincial level	Implement policies according to regional authority
Determination of the Port Master Plan (RIP)	Establishing the National Port Master Plan & port locations	Provide area recommendations	Providing proposals for port needs
Port Development	Granting permits for port construction and controlling the construction of strategic ports	Involved in regional feeder ports	Proposing the construction of a local port
Port Classification	Determine the main ports, collectors, regional feeders	Managing regional feeder ports	Managing local feeder ports
Port Management	Through KSOP/UPP as the main regulator and supervisor of the port)	Managing regional ports through OPD	Managing local ports (limited operations)
Safety and Security of Shipping	Full authority through the Harbormaster (central official at the port)	Does not have primary authority	Have no authority
Ship Operational Licensing	Large-scale and national/international cross-border vessels	Inter-district ships within the province	Small/local ships (limited, depending on central regulations)
Supervision and Law Enforcement	Carried out by Harbor Master & Directorate General of Sea Transportation	Coordinating	Indirect (through the center)
Infrastructure Funding	APBN, national strategic projects, Special Autonomy	Provincial Budget	District Budget (limited)
Port Management	Can be carried out by BUMN (Pelindo) or business entities with central permits	Can be through BUMD	Can be done through BUMD/cooperation
Inter-Level Coordination	The main coordinator of the national shipping system	Central-regional link	Local implementers

Source: processed data, 2026

The table shows that authority in the port sector remains dominated by the central government,

particularly in the areas of regulation, licensing, and shipping safety. Meanwhile, regional governments have more limited authority and tend to be operational in nature. This reflects an unbalanced

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decentralization process, which has implications for regional capacity to develop maritime transportation independently.

Decentralization

Decentralization, based on the multi-level governance theory proposed by Gollata and Newig (2017), is highly relevant in the context of developing maritime transportation through Special Autonomy funds in South Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province. This element of decentralization emphasizes the delegation of authority and responsibility from the central government to regional governments.

The research findings show that The authority granted by the central government to regional governments, namely, that shipping areas can only be managed and administered with a capacity of 7 Gross Tonnage (GT). If the criteria are above 7 GT, the central government will have full authority and cannot change. Meanwhile, ships with criteria above 7 GT will be serviced through the Harbormaster. This division of authority illustrates the multi-level governance of maritime transport, where responsibilities are divided based on operational scale and risk level. Management of large vessels is centralized at the national level to ensure consistent safety standards, oversight, and regulation, as these vessels generally have greater technological complexity, greater safety considerations, and broader economic implications. Meanwhile, local governments can oversee smaller vessels operating locally to promote regional connectivity and community mobility.

From a multi-level governance perspective, ship procurement and port development are critical areas requiring collaboration across multiple levels of government. While final decisions and funding are made at the provincial and federal levels, local governments are responsible for identifying and initiating local needs. This pattern has the potential to hinder growth if higher-level funding priorities do not align with local government demands, but it can also ensure that development aligns with national policies. Improving accessibility, particularly in island regions, is highly dependent on port facilities and the availability of vessels. Regional responses to urgent transportation demands can be hampered by dependence on funding and actions from higher levels of government. South Sorong Regency's dependence on provincial and central budget systems limits its implementation authority, as seen in port development. The success of infrastructure development is determined by fiscal imbalances, despite strict implementation regulations. Therefore, to better and sustainably meet regional maritime transportation needs, coordination between levels of government must be strengthened and planning and budgeting must be harmonized.

Research findings also indicate that a hierarchical and tiered framework for managing authority governs the growth of maritime transportation at the regional level. As territorial owners, regencies and cities have the authority to determine needs, formulate ideas, and convey objectives for maritime transportation development in accordance with local conditions and potential. Furthermore, provincial governments collect, harmonize, and facilitate these recommendations before submitting them to the central government, as well as carrying out monitoring and oversight roles. To ensure that district/city initiatives align with regional and national development planning, provinces act as policy mediators. In the maritime transportation sector, the provinces' supervisory and guidance positions also demonstrate an obligation to maintain uniformity in planning, program synchronization, and compliance with national laws and policies. However, the central government retains final authority in decision-making and implementation of strategic infrastructure development, particularly for large-scale and cross-regional projects. This suggests that while regions play a role as drivers and implementers at a certain scale, the authority structure in maritime transportation development tends to be centralized in terms of strategic decision-making.

In implementing maritime transportation development, the provincial government also plays a role in determining priority maritime programs. Through evaluations, which are based on proposals from district governments and technically, the Transportation Agency will review which programs are prioritized by the district/city governments. The evaluation procedures carried out by the Provincial Transportation Agency are an institutional example of how planning ideas are oriented towards needs and performance. Although proposals from districts and cities provide initial input that reflect local needs, these proposals are often not fully accommodated. During technical reviews, the provincial government considers a number of indicators, including the urgency of the need, the impact on the economy and society, the level of regional connectivity, the readiness of documents, land and planning, compliance with spatial plans, and integration with national planning documents such as the National Port Master Plan (RIPN).

The central government also has authority over national port management. This is because the central government holds full authority over regulation and policymaking, including the development of national port regulations, the Port Master Plan (RIP), and determining port status. Furthermore, regarding licensing, the central government fully controls routes and ship permits, as well as overseeing shipping safety, traffic, and port operations.

When compared with the literature, this condition aligns with the view of Hooghe and Marks (2001), who stated that in a Multi-Level Governance system, authority is not entirely transferred to the regions, but remains dispersed and interdependent across levels of government. Furthermore, this finding also reinforces Piattoni's (2010) argument, which emphasizes that decentralization in practice is often characterized by an unequal distribution of authority. Nevertheless, this study provides a more contextual empirical contribution by demonstrating how technical boundaries and sectoral regulations serve as concrete instruments in limiting the scope of local governments, particularly in the maritime transportation sector in archipelagic regions.

Spatial Fit (Jurisdiction)

Spatial fit (jurisdiction) based on the multi-level governance theory proposed by Gollata and Newig (2017) is highly relevant for use in the context of developing maritime transportation through Special Autonomy funds in South Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province. This spatial fit (jurisdiction) element emphasizes the alignment between regulations and their implementation.

Based on the research findings, it shows the development of maritime transportation in South Sorong Regency is directed at coastal areas. This is because Southwest Papua has five coastal regions. Maritime transportation development is essential because it serves inter-island transportation within Southwest Papua Province. The emphasis on coastal areas from a regional planning perspective represents a spatial strategy based on geographic demands and potential. Coastal areas serve as inter-island transit hubs and logistics distribution gateways. Consequently, the growth of maritime transportation in this region aims to strengthen regional integration at the provincial and national levels and improve local accessibility. In other words, coastal areas are positioned as growth centers that can stimulate local trade, public services, and economic activity. The functional connectivity of the archipelago is evident in maritime transportation planning in the coastal districts of South Sorong Regency. In Southwest Papua, maritime transportation is the most practical and efficient means of connecting islands and districts due to inadequate topography and land infrastructure in many areas. Therefore, plans to reduce inequitable access and promote equitable development include the construction of piers, ports, and other supporting facilities in coastal communities.

Regional government policies prioritizing coastal areas demonstrate an effort to accommodate the unique characteristics of the region. The South Sorong Regency Government helps identify the actual needs of coastal areas and coordinates them with provincial and national goals through the

Transportation Agency. This planning encompasses the broader maritime transportation infrastructure in West Papua Province, which facilitates inter-island travel at the regional level. Economic growth is also influenced by the growth of maritime transportation in coastal areas. Coastal areas have the potential to become centers for inter-island trade, fishery product distribution, and other maritime services with improved transportation access. From this perspective, maritime transportation is seen as a tool for economic development based on maritime potential and mobility. An integrated strategy that takes environmental and spatial planning factors into account is also needed in coastal planning as maritime transportation grows. Coastal areas are vulnerable to environmental changes and the demands of development. The sustainability of coastal ecosystems, compliance with regional spatial planning (RTRW), and coastal disaster risk reduction must be considered in development programs.

Infrastructure planning is not carried out simultaneously but is based on spatial analysis and local needs, as evidenced by the proposed modification of the pier based on district needs. Geographic factors, population density, economic potential, and mobility patterns vary from district to district. Therefore, pier development is positioned as an adaptive policy response to the jurisdiction and spatial uniqueness of each district. This aligns with the principle of decentralization, which empowers local governments to design development plans tailored to the unique needs of their regions. Pier construction in water areas serves as a connectivity node connecting residential areas, logistics distribution centers, and inter-island areas from a regional and spatial design perspective. In addition to functioning as physical infrastructure, the pier also serves as a spatial integration tool that shortens the distance to access essential services, the distribution of goods, and community mobility. The population of South Sorong Regency is highly dependent on sea transportation because five of its districts are located on waterways. In this regard, the port is considered a crucial connecting hub that facilitates population mobility, logistics distribution systems, and access to essential services, not just physical infrastructure. Therefore, adapting the pier construction plan to the unique needs of each district demonstrates a spatial planning strategy sensitive to local geography.

In terms of spatial fit (jurisdiction), this study demonstrates that conceptually, maritime transportation development policy in South Sorong Regency has been directed in accordance with the region's geographic characteristics, namely by prioritizing development in coastal areas and water-based districts. This approach reflects an effort to align policies with the real needs of the community,

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considering that most areas of South Sorong Regency depend on maritime transportation as the primary mode of mobility.

However, at the implementation level, there remains a gap between planning and implementation. Some infrastructure projects do not fully meet established technical standards, and some facilities are even not functioning optimally. This situation indicates that despite alignment at the planning stage, limited technical and fiscal capacity is a barrier to achieving optimal alignment between policy and regional needs.

These findings align with the views of Young (2002) and Cash et al. (2006), who highlight the importance of matching policy scale to local conditions, as well as the risk of mismatch in cross-level policy implementation. However, this study adds to the literature by demonstrating that in the Papuan context, spatial fit is influenced not only by geographic factors but also by socio-cultural aspects, such as the existence of customary rights and indigenous community structures. Thus, policy fit must consider not only the technical and administrative dimensions but also the social and cultural dimensions inherent in the region.

Participation

Participation, based on the multi-level governance theory proposed by Gollata and Newig (2017), is highly relevant to the development of maritime transportation through Special Autonomy funds in South Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province. This is because transportation development requires the involvement of various levels of government, as well as the involvement of the community and other stakeholders in decision-making. The level of participation determines the legitimacy and sustainability of policies.

In terms of participation, research findings indicate that actor involvement in maritime transportation development has been facilitated through various formal mechanisms, such as development planning meetings (*musrenbang*), cross-regional coordination forums, and communication with indigenous community institutions. These mechanisms demonstrate that procedurally, participation space is available and utilized in the policy planning process.

However, participation still tends to be at a consultative level, with communities and local actors primarily acting as voices of aspirations, while decision-making remains dominated by the government. On the other hand, indigenous communities, despite lacking formal authority within government structures, play a crucial role in determining the sustainability of policies, particularly regarding land use approvals and the social legitimacy of development.

This situation demonstrates a duality within the governance system, namely between formal government structures and informal, customary-based structures. In this context, policy legitimacy is determined not only by administrative procedures but also by social acceptance from indigenous communities. This finding reinforces the concept of participation proposed by Arnstein (1969), which states that participation is not solely determined by the existence of formal mechanisms but also by the extent to which actors influence the decision-making process. Furthermore, this finding is also relevant to the concept of collaborative governance by Ansell and Gash (2008), although in the context of this research, such collaboration has not yet been fully realized substantively.

Conclusion

The Multi-Level Governance research in the development of maritime transportation through the Special Autonomy Fund (Otsus) in South Sorong Regency, can be concluded that the governance that has been formed systematically has reflected the division of roles between levels of government, but has not yet been fully implemented effectively at the practical level.

In terms of decentralization, this study shows that the delegation of authority remains limited and has not been accompanied by strengthening fiscal capacity and implementation authority at the regional level. District governments primarily act as policy proposers, while strategic decision-making and resource control remain at a higher level. This indicates that decentralization has not yet fully achieved substantive autonomy, but rather remains a significant vertical dependency.

In terms of spatial fit, the designed policies have essentially taken into account the geographic characteristics of coastal and island areas. However, this suitability has not been fully reflected in implementation on the ground. Limited technical capacity, funding, and reliance on central standards have resulted in a persistent gap between planning and implementation. This demonstrates that policy suitability is not solely determined at the planning stage but also heavily depends on implementation capabilities at the local level.

In terms of participation, although formal mechanisms have provided space for participation, the involvement of non-governmental actors still tends to be consultative and has not yet reached a collaborative level. On the other hand, indigenous communities play a significant role in providing social legitimacy to policies, even though they are not formally involved in decision-making. This situation demonstrates a duality in the governance system, where formal and informal structures operate simultaneously and influence each other.

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Overall, this study shows that the implementation of Multi-Level Governance in the context of maritime transportation development in South Sorong Regency still faces challenges in terms of integration between levels of government, policy alignment with regional conditions, and strengthening actor participation. These three dimensions do not stand alone but are interrelated and collectively influence the effectiveness of Multi-Level Governance in maritime transportation development

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