



THE DYNAMICS OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE: THE ROLE OF THE PAPUAN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY IN GUARDING THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PAPUANS

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Abstract

The expansion of the New Autonomous Region (DOB) in Papua introduces fresh dynamics to Indonesia's asymmetrical regional governance. This study comprehensively analyzes the role, institutional position, and strategies of the Southwest Papua People's Assembly (MRP PBD) in safeguarding the political rights of Papuan Indigenous People (OAP) amidst political marginalization caused by clashes between national procedural law and cultural affirmation rights in plural urban areas. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive-analytical case study design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 15 purposively selected informants and documentation studies. Data validity was verified via source and technical triangulation, while analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The results reveal that MRP PBD remains structurally marginalized as a mere "rubber stamp" institution due to weak institutional bargaining power against dominant national political parties and KPU regulations that override customary recommendations. Facing regulatory vacuums and demographic pressures, MRP PBD employs a network governance strategy through vertical lobbying to central ministries and the mobilization of local civil-indigenous alliances. In conclusion, OAP political rights protection remains suboptimal without an independent legal veto for cultural institutions. Consequently, this study proposes the concept of "Culture-Based Negotiable Democracy" to strengthen special autonomy.



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INTRODUCTION

After the expansion of the territory in the land of Papua which resulted in several New Autonomous Regions (DOB), the dynamics of *local governance* in Indonesia are facing a complex new chapter. One of the DOBs that has unique geopolitical characteristics is Southwest Papua Province, which was formed based on Law Number 29 of 2022. As a logical consequence of the inherent special autonomy status (Otsus), the presence of the Southwest Papua People's Assembly (MRP) has become a very vital pillar of cultural representation. The MRP holds a constitutional mandate to protect the basic rights of the Indigenous Papuans (OAP), especially political rights in the arena of local contestation. The urgency of this research emerges as the implementation of local political agendas draws closer, where tensions between demographic migration flows, the interests of national political parties, and the protection of OAP political rights often create institutional friction. If the role of the MRP is not critically analyzed in the early phases of the formation of the DOB, then the risk of political marginalization of the OAP has the potential to trigger sasisocial instability and the delegitimization of the Special Autonomy formula itself.

Previous studies on government asymmetry and the role of MRP in Papuan land have generally focused on two major currents. First, the literature highlights the institutional weaknesses of MRPs due to overlapping regulations and limited executive authority in decision-making (Firman, 2024). Second, research that evaluates the effectiveness of Special Autonomy in general in reducing political conflicts without specifically dissecting the role of cultural institutions in new expansion areas (Lestari & Tualeka, 2025). In addition, several researchers have also examined how the political representation of OAP women in the MRP structure after the revision of the Special Autonomy Law (Barriers et al., 2026). The experience of the parent province shows that without a strong bargaining position, the cultural recommendations of the MRP are often ignored by local election commissions and national political party coalitions (Anreas M.W. Lesnusa, Amelia Diamanantina, 2024).

Although the above literature has provided a rich foundation, there are research gap significant. The majority of previous studies were conducted on the locus of the parent province (Papua and West Papua) before the era of massive expansion in 2022. There has been no in-depth study that specifically dissects how the MRP in new provinces such as Southwest Papua is sociologically characterized by urban-coastal areas with a high plurality of establishing legitimacy and negotiating the political rights of OAPs in the midst of the dominance of transmigrant political actors (Hidayat, 2024).

The novelty of this research lies in the contextual analysis of the formation of the Southwest Papua MRP institution as a "new institution" that is directly faced with the electoral examination of the national simultaneous elections and regional elections, as well as how *the power relationship* is built horizontally with the local government and vertically with the central government.

Based on the background and gaps of the research, the formulation of this research question is: What is the role, position, and institutional strategy of the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP) of Southwest Papua in guarding and negotiating the political rights of the Papuan Indigenous People (OAP) in the midst of the dynamics of *local governance* after regional expansion? In line with these questions, the purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze the effectiveness of the role of MRP in Southwest Papua, identify the structural and cultural barriers faced, and formulate a model for strengthening the institutional position of MRP in the asymmetric local government system in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical case study design. This approach was chosen because it is considered the most relevant for exploring in depth and thoroughly (*holistic*) about dynamics *local governance* and power relations in the escort of the political rights of the Papuan Indigenous People (OAP) by the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP) in Southwest Papua Province. Through the design of the case study, the researcher was able to capture the uniqueness of the phenomenon of the formation of new cultural institutions in the DOB (New Autonomous Region) area and unravel the interaction between actors involved in local elections and elections (Poltak & Widjaja, 2024). The focus of the analysis is directed at the bargaining position, formal authority, and sociopolitical obstacles faced by the Southwest Papua MRP in carrying out its cultural protection function.

The research subjects or informants were determined using *the purposive sampling technique*, where the determination of the sample was based on the criteria of expertise, direct involvement, and structural authority related to the issue of political rights of OAP. The number of informants in this study was set at 15 people who were classified into three levels to maintain the objectivity and depth of the data. First, *there are 4 Key Informants*, consisting of the Chairman/Leader of the Southwest Papua MRP, the Chairman of the Special Committee on Political Affirmation of the OAP, the Head of the Southwest Papua Provincial Police Department, and the Academics of Law/Government of the University of Papua. Second, *Intermediate Informants* amounted to 5 people, consisting of Members of the Commissioners of the Southwest Papua Provincial KPU, Members of the Southwest Papua Provincial Bawaslu, and 3 leaders of local/national political parties at the provincial level. Third, *the Common Informants* amounted to 6 people, consisting of Southwest Papuan customary/cultural leaders, representatives of OAP youth organizations, and representatives of OAP women activists.

The main data collection instrument in this study was the researcher himself (*human instrument*) assisted by *in-depth interview guides*, *field notes*, and digital recording tools. The interviews were conducted *face-to-face* by applying typical Papuan cultural communication protocols to build trust (*rapport*). In order to ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative data, this study applies the Source Triangulation and Technical Triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing statements from the categories of key, intermediate, and ordinary informants. Meanwhile, technical triangulation was carried out by reconfirming the results of the interview using documentation studies, such as the regulation of Law No. 29 of 2022, Law No. 2 of 2021 concerning Special Autonomy of Papua, as well as official decision/recommendation documents issued by the Southwest Papua MRP.

The procedure for processing interview data is carried out gradually and systematically through several mechanical steps before being analyzed. First, all voice recordings of interviews are converted into written text in their entirety without reduction through the verbatim transcription process. Second, the transcript data is cleaned from the repetition of meaningless words (*data cleaning*). Third, the researcher carried out the *Coding*, which is labeling or categorizing pieces of transcript text based on research variables, such as "Regulatory Barriers", "Political Party Intervention", and "MRP Negotiation Strategy". The results of this coding are then grouped into a data categorization matrix to facilitate mapping patterns of relationships between actors.

After the data is processed and categorized, the data analysis procedure is carried out by adopting an interactive analysis model (Poltak & Widjaja, 2024). This analysis process runs in a circular and simultaneous manner through three main stages: (1) Data Reduction (*Data Reduction*), namely summarizing, selecting, and focusing the raw data from the most crucial and relevant interviews with research questions on the political rights of OAPs; (2) Data Presentation (*Data Display*), i.e. presenting data that has been reduced to the form of a logical expository text narrative, a chart of relationships between actors, or a comparative table of institutional functions so that it is easy to understand; and (3) Conclusion Drawing and Verification (*Conclusion Drawing/Verification*). In this final stage, the meanings that emerge from the presentation of the data are tested for truthfulness, matched with theories *local governance* and asymmetric autonomy, to produce a solid and valid conclusion regarding the real position of the Southwest Papua MRP in guarding the political rights of the OAP.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal-Formal Existence and Institutional Position of MRP Southwest Papua as DOB

As a New Autonomous Regional Province (DOB) formed based on Law Number 29 of 2022, Southwest Papua Province bears the constitutional responsibility to implement asymmetrical governance. The main foundation of this specificity lies in the establishment of the Southwest Papua People's Assembly (MRP PBD) as the cultural representation institution of the Indigenous Papuans (OAP). Legally-formally, the existence of MRP PBD is supported by the marriage of regulations between Law No. 29 of 2022 and Law No. 2 of 2021 concerning the Second Amendment to Law No. 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua Province. These two regulations give an absolute mandate to the MRP PBD to give consideration, approval, and protection to the basic rights of OAPs, especially in the aspect of local

political rights protection. In order to map the position and effectiveness of this newly formed institution, the following is a table of articulation of the formal mandate and operational reality of the MRP PBD:

Table 1. Articulation of the Constitutional Mandate vs the Operational Reality of the MRP PBD

Number	Regulation Aspects	Legal-Formal Mandate (Law 2/2021 & Law 29/2022)	Operational Reality in the Field
1	Political Legitimacy	Provide consideration and approval for prospective Governor and Deputy Governor candidates who must be OAPs.	Cultural recommendations often rub shoulders with the pragmatic interests of national political party coalitions.
2	Regulatory Independence	Prepare internal rules and form an affirmation commission/special committee independently.	The facilitation process by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Provincial Government's Legal Bureau took a long time, triggering functional stagnation.
3	Fiscal Autonomy	Have a special budget allocation attached to the Provincial Budget as a DOB.	Full dependence on the initial grant scheme from the Provincial Government; The slow disbursement of bureaucracy hinders fieldwork.

Source: Processed by the Author, 2026

Although the constitutional mandate on paper appears to be very strong, findings on the ground suggest that this early phase of the formation of this "new home" is faced with the challenge of a multidimensional institutional transition. As an institution that is only as old as corn, MRP PBD must crawl in the midst of limited facilities, infrastructure, and bureaucratic sectoral egos. The main obstacles that emerged were the complexity of the preparation of internal Rules (Tatib) and the slow disbursement of the operational budget. This transitional condition was confirmed directly by the Chairman of the Southwest Papua MRP who explained the initial institutional situation as follows:

"We are like being told to sail, but the ship has not been completed. At the beginning of the inauguration, we did not have a permanent office, and the secretariat staff was still assisted by the parent province. The most difficult is the preparation of the Tatib. Every article regarding the political affirmation of OAP is always debated at length because it must be adjusted to the rules of the Ministry of Home Affairs. As a result, our energy is exhausted for institutional domestic affairs, even though the stages of the regional elections and elections are already running in front of our eyes." (Interview with Key Informant 1, Chairman of MRP PBD, March 12, 2026).

The above statement indicates that this institutional delay is not just a technical problem, but there are bureaucratic blockages at the regional executive level that are not fully ready to facilitate the rapid movement of this cultural institution. This reality was strengthened by an explanation from the Head of the National Unity and Political Agency (Kesbangpol) of Southwest Papua Province. From the perspective of local governments, this obstacle is more due to the strict state financial regulations for a DOB, as stated as follows:

"The provincial government is fully committed to supporting the MRP, but we must be realistic that as a DOB, our budgeting is still very rigid. The grant mechanism for MRP must go through a layered verification at the Ministry of Home Affairs so that it does not become a legal finding in the future. This bureaucratic obstacle sometimes translates as a lack of support. In addition, synchronization between regional legal products (Perdasus) and MRP Rules does take time

because we must be careful not to run afoul of the national Election Law." (Interview with Key Informant 2, Head of Kesbangpol PBD Province, March 15, 2026).

If analyzed in depth, the empirical findings regarding the complexity of the institutional transition of the MRP PBD reflect the incompatibility between the spirit of asymmetric autonomy and the practice of daily governance (*daily governance*). Theoretically, asymmetric autonomy (*asymmetric autonomy*) is applied to provide a wide discretionary space for regions with special characteristics in order to be able to protect the identity and rights of minority/indigenous groups (Nurfurqon, 2020). However, the fact that the MRP PBD experienced structural obstacles in the preparation of the Rules and the disbursement of the budget shows that the central government still applies a symmetrical-uniformist approach to governance in the aspects of financial administration and bureaucracy. As a result, the MRP PBD's institutions are mired in a sociopolitical dilemma: demanded by indigenous peoples to immediately protect the political rights of the OAP, but its hands are "tied" by formal bureaucratic chains (Sofian, 2025).

This brings us to a crucial theoretical question: has the position of the MRP PBD so far been transformed into an institution with strong *institutional bargaining power*, or is it trapped as just a "cultural stamp" (*rubber stamp*) in order to legitimize executive interests? The findings of this study tend to lead to the conclusion that the MRP PBD is still in the shadow of the *rubber stamp institution*. The institutional bargaining power of the MRP PBD becomes weak when dealing with the Acting Governor and the political party elite. This is because strategic political decisions, including the filling of public positions and election regulations, are predominantly determined by the parameters of national law controlled by Jakarta, not by cultural considerations issued by the MRP.

This weakness of the bargaining position is in line with the argument from previous research by (Effendy, 2023) which states that the revision of the second Special Autonomy Law (Law No. 2/2021) ironically strengthens fiscal centralization and weakens the veto of civil cultural institutions in Papua. Rather, these findings debate the optimistic assumptions of those who see the formation of the DOB as a golden opportunity for clean deconstruction of power (Scott, 2023). This research proves that in urban-coastal areas such as Southwest Papua, the plurality of local political interests actually makes the position of new cultural institutions such as the MRP very vulnerable to being co-opted by the electoral-pragmatic interests of the holders of executive power.

Thus, the scholarly contribution of this discussion confirms that in the local governance ecosystem in the DOB area, the legal-formal legitimacy provided by special laws will never automatically mutate into real institutional bargaining power as long as the financial architecture and administration of local government are still locked by a national symmetrical pattern. The Southwest Papua MRP will not be able to guard the political rights of OAPs independently and firmly if this institution continues to be positioned as subordinate to the bureaucratic structure of the provincial government and vertical ministries.

Dynamics and Contestation of Power Relations in Controlling the Political Rights of OAPs

This section is at the heart of the field findings that dissect how the contest of interests occurs when the Southwest Papua People's Assembly (MRP PBD) operates its cultural authority. The main focus of this dynamic is centered on the process of verifying cultural authenticity for prospective regional heads and Papua Indigenous legislators (OAP). In practice, the process of selecting and recommending is not carried out in a sterile vacuum, but is filled with friction of interests, political intervention, and very sharp regulatory clashes. To map the institutional tensions that occur horizontally, the following is presented a matrix of regulatory overlap that is the main trigger for friction in the field:

Table 2. The Matrix of Clash of Cultural Regulations vs National Regulations

Number	Contestation Dimensions	Cultural Regime/Special Autonomy (Authority of MRP PBD)	National Regime (KPU & Bawaslu)	Legal & Implications on the Ground
1	OAP Definition	Emphasizing the paternalistic (<i>patrilineal</i>) lineage of Papuan customs that are valid through genealogical considerations.	It tends to be normative-administrative (unilateral recognition through customary declarations without in-depth genealogical verification).	The passage of candidates whose cultural validity is doubted by the lower indigenous peoples.
2	Nature of Recommendations	Final and binding decisions are an absolute condition for the fulfillment of the political rights of OAP.	Based on PKPU where the final decision is on the determination of the commissioner plenary based on the administrative requirements of the election.	The MRP's recommendation is ignored or annulled if it contradicts the formal requirements of the KPU.
3	Candidacy Intervention	Protect the political rights of marginalized groups and the representation of OAP women from non-indigenous domination.	Prioritizing the universal human right of citizens to vote and vote without strict ethnic boundaries.	There was a lawsuit and social polarization between pro-Special Autonomy and pro-Universal Democracy groups.

Source: Processed by the culvert, 2026

Based on data collected through cross-testing (*triangulation*) between informant categories, the first friction arises at the stage of determining the cultural authenticity of the candidate. The MRP PBD is faced with a political dilemma when it has to reject candidates who are genealogically doubtful of their OAP, but are massively supported by the power of capital and large political parties. The Chairman of the Special Committee on Political Affirmation of the OAP explained how the pressure worked to intervene in the independence of this cultural institution:

"During the factual verification process, we found that there were candidates whose traditional genealogy was very vague, his mother was Papuan but his father was non-Papuan, and customarily he was not recognized by the local customary council. However, the intervention to us was very strong. There was a call from Jakarta, there was pressure from the local elite for us to pass under the pretext of 'for the sake of regional conduciveness'. This is a real abuse of the OAP's real political rights. We stand by our customary commitments, but as a result we are politically hostile to the candidate's supporters." (Interview with Key Informant 3, Chairman of the Special Committee on Political Affirmation of OAP MRP PBD, March 18, 2026).

The friction did not stop at the internal level of the MRP PBD, but expanded into horizontal tension with the election organizing institutions, namely the KPU and the Southwest Papua Provincial Bawaslu. This tension is rooted in the insynchronization between national laws (KPU/PKPU Regulations) and cultural decisions issued by the MRP. When the MRP issues an ineligible decision (TMS) against certain candidates based on customary parameters, the KPU is often in a position to ignore these considerations

in order to avoid lawsuits over election disputes at the Constitutional Court. The perspective of the election organizers was confirmed by the Southwest Papua Province KPU Commissioner:

"We at the KPU are in a very dilemmatic position. On the one hand, we respect the existence of Special Autonomy and MRP. But on the other hand, the principle of holding our elections is bound by the principle of national legal certainty regulated in the PKPU. If we disqualify candidates only based on cultural recommendations that are not supported by rigid population administration documents, we will be sued by national political parties to Bawaslu or the Constitutional Court. The pressure from the central management of political parties in Jakarta is massive; They threatened to criminalize the commissioners if their candidate's political rights were thwarted by a verdict they considered non-legal-formal." (Interview with Medium Informant 2, Member of the PBD Provincial KPU Commissioner, March 22, 2026).

This horizontal tension proves that the disregard for the MRP's recommendations is not just a technical administrative problem, but a product of an unequal power relationship in which the power of pragmatic national political parties dominates the arena of *local governance*. The dominance of national political parties oriented towards short-term electoral victories directly collided with the cultural protection and political rights of the OAP fought for by the lower indigenous peoples, especially Papuan women's groups. This phenomenon is felt directly by representatives of OAP women activists who see their political space being eroded by the party oligarchs:

"The national political party in Sorong has never seriously regenerated our OAP women. They only need us to meet the quota of women's representation on paper. During the regional elections or legislative elections, the order number and the main recommendations are always given to people who have a lot of money, most of whom are non-OAPs or OAPs who are already affiliated with the interests of Jakarta. We complained to the MRP, but the MRP itself was powerless against the decision of the KPU which had been co-opted by the will of the major parties. Our political rights as owners of this customary land are like being slowly evicted legally." (Interview with Ordinary Informant 3, Representative of OAP PBD Women's Activists, March 26, 2026).

When analyzed using the theoretical knife of government science, the dynamics of the power relations contest in Southwest Papua confirm the validity of the Multi-Level Governance (MLG) theory which sees the fragmentation of authority in the management of special regions. In MLG's perspective, the failure to protect the political rights of OAPs occurred due to the existence of *mismatch* (mismatch) of interests between the orientation of actors at the national level (central political parties and the Indonesian Election Commission) and the needs of local-cultural actors (Rahakratat et al., 2025). Power is no longer distributed vertically-monolithic, but fragmented into a network of interdependent actors. However, in the case of Southwest Papua, the MLG's structure is uneven because local institutions such as the MRP are forced to submit to the rules of the western procedural democratic game that are uniformly applied by national institutions (Rakia, 2021).

The findings of this study enrich the treasures of the political sociology of local government by strengthening the study of the (Rais et al., 2023) Regarding the weak execution of cultural institutions' decisions due to the legalistic trap of national elections. On the other hand, the results of this study expressly refute theoretical optimism *inclusive governance* which assumes that the establishment of ethnic representation institutions (such as the MRP) will automatically give birth to political inclusivity for indigenous peoples in post-expansion conflict areas (October, 2021).

On the contrary, the scholarly contribution of this section shows an antithesis: in a DOB area with a high rate of urbanization and demographic plurality such as Southwest Papua Province, the establishment of cultural institutions without the right of independent legal veto over national election regulations will actually give birth to *"institutionalized political marginalization"*). Here, customary and cultural

institutions are deliberately maintained not to protect indigenous rights, but only as cosmetic instruments in order to dampen social turmoil and legitimize the circulation process of the political elite controlled by the forces of the national oligarchy.

Structural-Cultural Barriers and Negotiation Strategy of the Southwest Papua MRP

Carrying out the affirmation mandate in the midst of the dynamics of *local governance* of the New Autonomous Region (DOB) requires the Southwest Papua People's Assembly (MRP PBD) to operate between structural and cultural obstacles. Structural obstacles stem from the chaotic synchronization of national and regional regulations that give birth to legal ambiguity. On the other hand, cultural barriers are rooted in the sociological transformation of the Southwest Papua region—especially urban areas such as Sorong City—which is colored by the high demographic plurality due to the massive flow of non-OAP migration. In terms of structural (legal-formal) barriers, the reduction of interview data reveals the existence of a post-expansion legal vacuum. Derivative rules in the form of Special Regional Regulations (Perdatus) that regulate the technical execution of MRP PBD recommendations have not been fully discussed. As a result, other political institutions such as political parties and election organizers often consider decisions or recommendations issued by the MRP PBD to be *non-legally binding*. The phenomenon of this void of operational legal umbrella was complained directly by the Chairman of the Southwest Papua MRP:

"We are facing a big wall called the ego of formal legalism. The constitution says we have the right to protection, but when we issued a TMS (Not Eligible) decision for a non-original candidate, we were debated because it was considered that there was no technical Perdatus that regulated it in this new province. Other political institutions are taking advantage of this loophole in the legal vacuum to oust our role. Our recommendations are underestimated, only considered as moral advice or a supplementary administrative file, not an absolute legal decision." (Interview with Key Informant 1, Chairman of MRP PBD, March 12, 2026).

The weak structural situation is exacerbated by cultural-sociological obstacles on the ground. The characteristics of the Southwest Papua region that serves as the epicenter of the economy and transmigration in the head of Papuan birds create real demographic challenges. The growth of the population of non-OAP citizens in urban areas who have massive voting rights is gradually shifting the configuration of electoral political power. This condition makes the political bargaining position of the local OAP very vulnerable. This sociological dilemma is confirmed by representatives of political party leaders at the provincial level:

"Sociologically-electorally, the reality on the ground cannot be lied to. In Sorong City and its surroundings, the mass base of non-OAP voters is very large and solid. Political parties that want to win must be pragmatic by accommodating figures who have electoral proximity to the mass base, or OAPs who are considered compromising towards multiethnicity. When the MRP tries to limit this space with a cultural shield, there is a clash with the reality of the sound market. The MRP is often accused of triggering social segregation, even though they are only carrying out the duties of Special Autonomy." (Interview with Medium Informant 3, Leader of Political Parties at the Provincial Level PBD, March 28, 2026).

Responding to this double squeeze, the research data shows that the MRP PBD does not stay silent and implements a number of bargaining *strategies* to strengthen its institutional bargaining position. The first strategy is to conduct continuous vertical political lobbying to the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) and Commission II of the House of Representatives to urge the acceleration of the legality of DOB derivative regulations. The second strategy, which is considered most effective at the local level, is to build horizontal strategic alliances with civil society coalitions, Indigenous Peoples' Institutions (LMAs), and tribal councils. The use of customary-based mass pressure and mass media publications is used to cover up the weaknesses of their formal legality. The effectiveness of this grassroots consolidation strategy was explained by Southwest Papuan Indigenous Leaders:

"We are aware that if we debate legal articles in court, the MRP will definitely lose because the rules of the national election are very strict. Therefore, when the MRP's cultural recommendations related to the political rights of OAPs are ignored by the KPU or political parties, we in the customary council immediately move to close the ranks behind the MRP. We make a statement of attitude, we mobilize the indigenous masses peacefully, and we voice it through social media and the local press. When the indigenous forces unite and threaten to boycott the election process, only then will the local government and the election organizers sit back and listen to the MRP's decision." (Interview with Ordinary Informant 1, Southeast Papua Traditional Leaders, April 3, 2026).

Through an analytical interpretation of the above findings, the pattern of institutional defense shown by the MRP PBD reflects the adaptation of Network Governance theory. In conditions where *hierarchical power* weakened by the national legal system, local institutions must be able to harness network authority (*network power*) to survive (Scott, 2023). The strategy of the MRP PBD that marries vertical bureaucratic lobbying with horizontal cultural mobilization proves that the existence of *local governance* in asymmetrical areas it is highly dependent on the actor's ability to manage *social capital* and to rally informal public legitimacy as a substitute for the weaknesses of formal legality (Wakarmamu & Suwandi, 2016).

When compared to the treasures of previous research, these findings expand the analysis of the (Anugerah, 2024) which previously stated that cultural institutions in Papua tend to be resigned and helpless when dealing with the KPU's decision. This research in the Southwest Papua DOB provides the antithesis that institutional limitations actually trigger institutional political creativity (*institutional creativity*) through the use of media pressure instruments and civil society alliances. However, these findings also support the main thesis of the (Amelia Arisety, CAntika Bintang Aprilani Sinaga, 2024) Regarding the latent danger of urban sociological demographic clashes on the effectiveness of indigenous people's affirmative rights.

The position of this research finding provides a significant scientific contribution to the study of social sciences and government science, especially in the sub-theme of conflict resolution studies and political dynamics of special autonomy by formulating the concept of *Cultural-Based Negotiative Democracy*. This concept emphasizes that in the newly developed and pluralistic asymmetrical realm of government, the wheels of government cannot be forced to run in a mechanistic-procedural manner based on national written law alone. Inclusive local government stability will only be achieved if there is a space for periodic negotiation that accommodates cultural-informal power instruments outside the formal legal corridor in order to realize contextual political justice for the indigenous Papuans.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the existence of the Southwest Papua People's Assembly (MRP PBD) as a new cultural representation institution in the DOB area has not succeeded in optimally transforming the legal-formal mandate of the Special Autonomy Law into a solid *institutional bargaining power*. In guarding the political rights of the Papuan Indigenous People (OAP), the position of the PBD MRP tends to be trapped as a "cultural stamp" institution (*rubber stamp*) due to the subordination of bureaucratic administration and the insynchronization of horizontal regulations with the election organizers (KPU and Bawaslu). The power relations contest shows that the original recommendations of the OAP issued by the MRP are often ignored or annulled for the sake of the certainty of the national election law and the pragmatic interests of political parties. However, in order to overcome structural obstacles in the form of gaps in Perdasus and cultural obstacles in the form of urban demographic pressure in Sorong City, MRP PBD creatively implements a network governance strategy through a combination of vertical lobbying to the Ministry of Home Affairs and horizontal consolidation with Indigenous Peoples Institutions and civic coalitions to rally informal legitimacy.

The scientific implications of this research provide a new theoretical contribution through the concept of "Culture-Based Negotiative Democracy", which asserts that governance in asymmetrical areas cannot be forced to run in a mechanistic-uniform manner without granting independent legal veto rights to local indigenous institutions. Practically, this finding is a strong alarm for the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Southwest Papua Provincial Government to immediately complete post-expansion technical derivative regulations so that the political affirmation rights of indigenous people are not eroded by the circulation oligarchy of the national elite. The main limitation in this study lies in the observation locus that still focuses on the initial phase of the institutional transition of the DOB and the crucial stages of simultaneous elections/regional elections, so that it has not been able to capture the long-term effectiveness of the internal MRP commissions after the bureaucratic structure is definitive.

Based on these limitations, the concrete suggestion for the next researcher is to conduct a longitudinal study that focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of local legal products (such as *Perdasus* or *Perdasi*) born from the womb of MRP PBD after this institution is fully operational. Future researchers are also advised to expand the research loci by conducting a comparative study of the sociology of governance between MRPs in urban-coastal DOB areas (such as Southwest Papua) and DOBs in inland-mountainous areas (such as Mountainous Papua) in order to map the variation in the resilience of cultural institutions in responding to the penetration of national political parties more comprehensively.

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