

INITIATING INTERGOVERNMENTAL NETWORKS IN BORDER AREAS FROM A SOUND GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

An intergovernmental network is a requirement that the region must meet in order to improve the well-being of its communities in this decentralized era. However, in its implementation, many areas in Indonesia do not do so or do not maximize cooperation, including in the border areas involving the districts of North Central Timor, Belu, and Malaka. Using explorative methods, this research was conducted to find out why cooperation between local governments was not carried out and how to promote cooperation among local governments from the perspective of sound governance. To reveal this, data is collected through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation studies, and focus group discussions (FGD). Research informants are selected from actors who are confronted with the question studied and use the method of purposive sampling. The results of the research showed that: first, maximum cooperation has not occurred since there are local governments in the border region that do not know, do not want, cannot, do not have an interest, and do not need to cooperate with other regions; however, awareness has begun to emerge to do so. Second, the process towards cooperation between regions in the border area is carried out by following a series of processes of interdependence, the convergence of objectives, accommodation, and reconciliation of goals, in which the exploration of factors causing a lack of cooperation and the identification of problems and potential in border areas are carried out.

Keywords: Decentralized, Intergovernmental networks, Sound Governance.

Introduction

The regional autonomy that was rolled out at the beginning of the reformation has brought changes in governance from centralization to decentralization. This decentralization policy has made the Regional Governments strong authority in managing and managing their households following the interests of the community within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This policy also has implications for shifting the format of inter-governmental relations and the management of inter-governmental relations, both between the Central Government and Regional Governments, as well as between Regional Governments. The Central Government no longer relies on coercive, hierarchical, and legal-based dimensions dealing with Regional Governments. Likewise, Regional Governments no longer rely on a formal legal basis which can make a region feel that it has a higher structure compared to other autonomous Regional Governments (APEKSI, 2006).

More generally, the decentralization policy in Indonesia is inseparable from the paradigm shift in governance globally from the government to governance, which has resulted in a transformation in government management. This paradigm shift starts from the notion that the government can no longer be the sole actor in administering the government because the government's burden is increasing and heavy in dealing with various very complex problems along with the times and environmental changes that are very fast and difficult to predict (Rukmana, 2020) and therefore must also involve other parties, namely the public and the private sector. Even more sharply, it can be said that in administering the government, the government only functions as a catalyst, where the government becomes a provider or provider of services to the community. Meanwhile, matters that can be taken care of by the community should not be managed entirely by the State (Osborne, 1996). Therefore, decentralization of local government is required to meet the needs of its citizens, starting from basic needs to other needs (Pranata et al., 2014).

Two sides arise from the implementation of the decentralization policy. On the one hand, the regions have the authority to regulate and manage their households, which allows them to have discretionary power in carrying out their interests so that there are opportunities to develop innovations according to the potential and capabilities of the regions. It is to the objectives of regional autonomy, namely to empower the region and prosper the people (Sumaryadi, 2006). On the other hand, there are implications where greater regional authority creates symptoms of egocentrism. Most of the regions have a perspective that tends to be inward and always view their territory as administrative with strict jurisdictional boundaries. It makes the region itself a reference in policy making and views neighboring regions as rivals (Savirani, 2007)

In the government administration, there are known administrative area boundaries (according to laws and regulations) and functional area boundaries (according to socio-economic relations across administrative boundaries). Thus, it should raise new problems. Each region has administrative boundaries that are determined formally through laws and regulations. However, in reality, many problems and interests often arise as a result of functional relations in the socio-economic field that cross the boundaries of these administrative areas.

In this context, inter-governmental networks are required. For various problems across administrative areas can be solved simultaneously. Vice versa, the potential can be utilized for the common good (Keban, 2009). In addition, in the development of a region, there are various consequences of development in a certain area which often have to be borne by the surrounding regions. It will be effective if overcome through cooperation between regions, where the interests of the area can be realized without sacrificing other parties (Pamudji, 1985).

Inter-regional cooperation can also be a solution in efforts to accelerate regional development so that regions do not depend on the central government. Many important strategic issues implement inter-regional cooperation, as stated (Djaja, 2018), namely: improving public services, developing border areas, sustainable spatial management, disaster management and potential conflicts, poverty alleviation, and reducing disparities regionally, as well as the creation of independent regional expansion. Alignment between Regional Governments allows the network formation between Regional Governments in optimizing their potential and negating problems that arise related to one another.

The urgency of regional cooperation is regulated in various regulations, including Government Regulation Number 28 of 2018 Regional Cooperation. Based on considerations of the efficiency and effectiveness of public services as well as mutual benefit the main objective is to improve people's welfare. It is expected that the existence of the above regulations can become new ammunition in the implementation of cooperation between regional governments. Even Government Regulation stipulates mandatory cooperation that is coercive, ordered, and even requires.

The efforts to build cooperation between local governments in border areas are problematic. The collaboration between regional governments, which should be a fundamental need to be fulfilled by the regions in the region of effectiveness and optimization of public services, has not been implemented. The emergence of various inter-regional cooperation institutions at the national and local levels in several regions should be a good example (best practice) that can massively open up space for cooperation in all regions. However, this did not happen. Collaboration even seems easy to implement (forced) when the dominance of the central government over regional governments in development planning

and funding is still strong. However, the role was delegated to the regions; cooperation should be a necessity and is not easy to do (Prasetya, 2013). It has been proven that regions in the border areas that have strategic potential in developing both national and international trade so that they can become centers of economic growth through inter-regional cooperation mechanisms are reluctant to cooperate, including in the border areas of North Central Timor, Belu and Malacca. Therefore, it is very important and necessary to initiate a concept and a process toward inter-regional cooperation in these border areas.

The idea of this cooperation follows the opinion put forward by Ali Farazmand (2004) in his concept of preconditions for building effective partnerships in sound governance theory. According to Farazmand, there are Start-Up Conditions in building cooperation which include 4 (four) important things, namely: interdependence convergence of objects, accommodation, and reconciliation of goals. These start-up conditions are the initial conditions before the cooperation is formed and greatly influence the success or failure of the cooperation. At this early stage, activities and actions are carried out that can open the door to cooperation.

In general, the term cooperation is often compared with the meaning of partnership. However, referring to the dictionary, there is a difference in meaning between cooperation and partnership. According to the Indonesian dictionary published by the Ministry of National Education, cooperation is interpreted as an activity or effort carried out by several people or institutions to achieve a common goal. While the partnership is defined as a matter of relationship as partners (2001).

Ali Farazmand, in his book *Sound Governance Policy and Administrative Innovations*, uses the concept of partnership to explain cooperation. According to Farazmand (2004):

Partnership implies joint and voluntary endeavors toward a common purpose. In the context of sound governance, a partnership is essential and requires genuine participation of the stakeholders, meaning all citizens who have stakes in the governance process. The leading role of the state is very important for encouraging and building meaningful partnerships among various sectors of society at all levels because many countries lack strong, independent private sector and civic organizations.

Through this statement, Farazmand emphasizes that partnership always implies a joint and voluntary effort toward a common goal. Therefore, the essence of an effective partnership is sharing strengths, responsibilities, and achievements.

Farazmand added that building effective partnerships around the world through sound governance is one of the most important developments in politics and administration. The partnership that has been done so far has not been able to answer global problems due to environmental

degradation, poverty, education crisis, malnutrition, health crisis, and others. New concepts in governance with the principles of good and proper governance are not automatically adopted and followed by the government. On the contrary, most countries under capitalism do not accommodate the new principles of good and healthy government. Therefore, it is very important to redefine the concept of partnership in collaboration.

In the development of the study of government and public administration, sound governance emerged as a new alternative to provide criticism by providing solutions to the good governance approach in the last decade was considered a correct concept in democratic countries to organize and manage governance properly (Andhika, 2017). It is undeniable that the presence of good governance is quite revolutionary in the social sciences arena by carrying out a total revision of the term public administration or government that has been institutionalized so far (Sanusi, 2019). However, in its application, the word 'good' becomes "something" that is hegemonic and uniform and is rarely done by force (Putra, 2009). It is what then gave rise to a lot of criticism of the implementation of good governance.

In the context of initiating cooperation between regional governments, Farazmand (2004) suggests preconditions for building effective partnerships. According to Domai (2011), there are many conditions for building and maintaining successful and effective partnerships at all levels of government. Among them are the initial conditions (Primary, Start up conditions)

Increased awareness and recognition of the interdependence between the government and other actors in society (private sector, non-governmental organizations, and other cooperative organizations) is an important starting point for building effective cooperation. The initial conditions that allow for the formation of collaboration are interdependence, the convergence of objects, accommodation, and the reconciliation of goals. These four conditions are important in creating effective cooperation. The creation of collaboration must start from an awareness of interdependence that arises from the ability to identify factors that cause non-cooperation, identify needs (problems and potentials) and identify actors. Then proceed with convergence, namely the unification of targets or perceptions; followed by accommodation, namely the willingness to work together, and ending with reconciliation, in which differences are combined for the common good. The four initial conditions must be framed in a connecting mechanism called a network and facilitated by an independent broker.

The initial condition expressed by Farazmand (2004) is almost the same as Ansell & Gash (2008) regarding the process of building government cooperation. Ansell and Gash prefer to use collaborative governance in explaining government cooperation. According to him, the success of a

collaborative process is determined by 3 (three) factors, namely, the initial conditions (starting conditions), institutional design, and leadership (facilitative leadership). The initial conditions before establishing cooperation will determine the success or failure of such collaboration. 3 (three) Issues are important aspects in the early stages, namely: there is an imbalance of resources and knowledge between collaborating actors, there must be clear incentives for cooperation, and there is a fear of conflict if collaboration is carried out (Islamy, 2018).

Method

The approach used in this research is qualitative research with explorative methods. The explorative method is used because inter-regional cooperation has never been carried out in border areas. Therefore, it is included in the initial type of research. It is in line with the opinion expressed by Morissan (2017):

Research with an explorative approach is carried out if the research topic is a new topic that has never been done before. Explorative research is initial research that aims to get an overview of a research topic that will be examined further.

The data sources used are primary data sources carried out through data collection with observation instruments, interviews, field notes, and documents. In addition, the researchers used data sources obtained through literature studies, documentation, books, magazines, and the Internet that related to the object under the study. Data collection techniques were carried out by using interviews with informants, observation, and documentation studies, although Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Research informants were selected from actors related to the issues studied and used a purposive sampling method. The research data was then analyzed by following the interactive Miles and Huberman model that included data collection, data presentation, data reduction, and drawing conclusions or verification.

Research Results and Discussion

1. Why is there no intergovernmental networks in the border area

The main requirement in building inter-regional cooperation is to build consciousness of the interdependence of both actors and resources. Interdependence shows the recognition of the mutual need and intelligence to communicate consistently. Such acknowledgment will only emerge if the regional governments in the three districts realize the underlying reason for the lack of cooperation.

The research result shows that there are 5 (five) fundamental reasons why cooperation between regions in the new border region does not yet

exist formally and is only at the ordinary communication stage without a cooperation agreement binding the parties who work together.

a. The local government doesn't know

Indeed, the issue of cooperation is not new in governance because this issue is a logical consequence of the regional autonomy policy. However, the implementation of this policy has not been massive, and only a few regions have cooperated. It means that there are still many regions that do not know or understand inter-regional cooperation, including regions in border areas. Regional cooperation has been carried out but only between the Regional Government and the private sector. Many times, it is only limited to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Meanwhile, following up on the MoU in a cooperation agreement is rarely done. The main reason is the government's lack of understanding regarding inter-regional cooperation regulations that are relatively new and minimal socialization.

b. Local Government Doesn't Want To

The regional governments in the three regencies do not want to cooperate. Even though it is undeniable that the development of this border area must be integrated, and become a unified region, and cannot work alone. It happened for several reasons. First, there are regional egos/sectoral egos/regional leadership egos that are too high which results in the absence of political will to build cooperation; second, the unwillingness of regional governments to share power, share authority, and share responsibility caused by a large amounts of authority given to regional heads for their regions; third, there are concerns regarding benefits; fourth, there is experience related to cross-sectoral cooperation which is still in shambles, fifth, always using territorial logic, not economic logic; sixth, only willing to cooperate if it is financially profitable; seventh, they do not yet feel that there are common issues that can be cooperated with; eighth, cultural and mental factors. What stands out here is the practical-pragmatic aspect. The regional government's way of thinking is more towards the practical aspect so that they always think about what will be done in the collaboration, what will be the results, and what are the benefits for the region. Perhaps the cooperation that is carried out will only benefit certain areas. Or cooperation is just a waste of time. At this point, cooperation is not seen as a means to improve the regional economy but rather as a burden. Even worse, the burden arises due to a sense of distrust of other regions.

c. Local Government is not interested

Another reason is the lack of interest from the Regional Government to build cooperation. Even if required to cooperate, the Regional Government will prefer to cooperate with the private sector rather than with other Regional Governments. It happened because, first, there were many administration technical matters that had to be taken care of;

second, there are differences in orientation/regional policies; third, there is an assumption that inter-regional cooperation is taking care of other regions' problems; fourth, regions stay more in the comfort zone because cooperation between regions is risky; fifth, the regions are more satisfied with receiving transfer or balancing funds from the Central Government; sixth, many times the arguments brought for inter-regional cooperation are more political in nature and not research-based.

d. Local Government is Not Capable

Another reason is the regional inability to build cooperation. In order to work together, regions need to prepare natural, human, capital, and technological resources. So that they can have a bargaining position (bargaining) in front of other areas. Regions in the border areas do not have this bargaining position so each region feels incapable and insecure about cooperating. Based on the results of interviews with several informants regarding the reasons for regional inability related to inter-regional cooperation, it can be concluded that cooperation between regions in border areas is only at the usual communication stage because: first, there is no experience of partnering with other regions; second, there is a lack of confidence from the Regional Government; third, limited resources, both human resources, natural resources, and capital resources.

e. Local Government Don't Need

Even though inter-regional cooperation is important, it turns out that the Regional Governments in the border areas do not yet need it. The main factor is the existence of rigidity in the management of intergovernmental relations. Local Government is still struggling with coercion-based and hierarchical management of relations. It closes the space for collaborative and networked relationship management patterns. As a result, the Regional Government does not perceive inter-regional cooperation as a necessity that must be met. The existence of greater authority in the areas, actually creates a big ego attitude, especially in the management of natural resources. Even more, the regions see other regions as rivals. Thus, regions build walls to limit themselves to other regions. In addition, the term of regional leadership for this period was short (only three years and each regional leader would be more focused on managing their region.

logical consequences of the 5 (five) reasons that lead to low formal inter-regional cooperation in border areas are:

a. There are no regional regulations or at least regent regulations governing inter-regional cooperation.

b. The description of regional cooperation in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan is brief and even more of a formality so that it is not empty.

c. Inter-regional cooperation programs have not yet been included in regional budget planning.

d. No regional cooperation coordinating team should be formed to assist regional heads in preparing regional cooperation.

Even though there are many reasons underlying the lack of inter-regional cooperation, the results of the interview revealed that cooperation is urgent and a necessity to be implemented. The problem is local governments sometimes don't know where to start.

2. Initiate Intergovernmental Networks

The idea of intergovernmental networks follows the following stages:

a. Interdependence: Mutual dependence

The main requirement in building intergovernmental networks is to build awareness of the interdependence of the actors and resources. Interdependence shows the recognition of the mutual need and intelligence to communicate consistently. This acknowledgment will only emerge if the regional governments in the three regencies can provide answers to the questions of what are the basic reasons why the cooperation process did not continue until the cooperation document was signed. What are the problems in the regions? What are the potentials in the region? The answers to these questions serve as a baseline for regional governments to become more familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of their region as well as recognize the advantages and disadvantages of other regions. This recognition and understanding are the basis for growing awareness of interdependence.

Each local government must identify problems and potentials because this kind of identification process is a key factor as well as an adhesive factor for inter-regional cooperation. It requires supporting instruments, namely regional baseline data which contains complete information about regional conditions in the context of the potentials and problems of the region. Knowledge and understanding of regional problems and potential will strengthen the position of each region to cooperate.

b. Convergence: Target Convergence

After knowing the problems and potentials of each region, the next step is a unification of targets through equalization of perceptions so that targets between parties do not collide each other. At this stage, there are 3 (three) important things to do, namely dialogue/communication, coordination, and building trust between actors.

➤ Dialogue/Communication

One important component in the initial process of collaboration is dialogue or communication. Communication is important and has two

sides. It can build strength between parties who will work together or can destroy it, depending on how to build communication effectively. According to Islamy (2018), the form of communication between actors who work together will be better if it is done face-to-face so that an equal space appears for obtaining information. This face-to-face interaction is carried out to build commitment and trust in the collaboration process.

Therefore, a space must be created that allows for a good communication process so that an understanding or perception can be created to build the direction of this cooperation. The space can be formal or non-formal and can present and bring together parties who will work together as well as all stakeholders, both government and non-government, namely community leaders, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and academics.

The results of interviews with informants indicated that meetings between regional leaders in these three regencies had even been held frequently, but it was just ordinary meetings. The communication that is built is ordinary communication that occurs incidentally. But no one has ever mentioned cooperation. This ordinary communication seems to be more effective in bringing together leaders because here the regional leaders are in a relaxed atmosphere so they are more flexible and straightforward in greeting one another, but it is inefficient to discuss serious matters in a formal setting. Regional leaders seem stiff and unable to speak in official forums. Moreover, it relates to development problems in their respective regions. Even local leaders sometimes don't know where to start. This condition is also exacerbated by the existence of personal conflicts between regents.

Facing this situation, it is necessary to have key actors who can pave the way for initial communication toward cooperation. The key figure who became the determining actor in initiating inter-regional cooperation in the border region was the local Catholic Church leader, the Bishop of Atambua. 3 (three) reasons make the Bishop of Atambua a key actor. First, geographically, these three districts are within the pastoral/service area of the Atambua diocese which has a work program covering the three districts. Second, three regional leaders were elected for the 2021-2026 period before competing in the upcoming regional election process and asking for blessings from the Bishop who is considered a charismatic and very influential figure. Third, the three regional leaders are Catholics who from a hierarchical perspective are bishops (leaders of local churches within the diocese).

➤ Coordination

Communication must be built regularly so that the things discussed can be included in the priority scale to be implemented. Because of this, it is necessary to build coordination among stakeholders as a process, so that opportunities and processes for cooperation can be maintained and

implemented. As a process, input coordination is giving each other information about certain things through the communication process. Coordination is needed to follow up the communication that has been built so that the differences that arise can be directed to a particular specialization. Therefore, in coordination, the responsibility lies with the leadership to be able to create and maintain a climate and attitude of anticipatory responsiveness, among different interdependent and independent work units, so that the success of one work unit is not undermined by the success of another work unit, through effective information and communication networks. In this case, coordination is understood as part of an effort to equalize perception, not the unification of motion (Ndraha, 2011).

The interview result with informants shows that the pattern of coordination built between these 3 (three) regencies is led by the Bishop as the person in charge of coordination. The Bishop creates space and maintains a climate that allows for coordination. In this case, the Bishop with authority as the leader of the local Church invites regional leaders along with their staff and other community leaders to talk more seriously about what has been communicated before. The Bishop through the diocesan work program called 'Atambua Eden' provides a collaborative work perspective by showing the results of identifying problems and regional potentials carried out by the diocesan team specifically in the agricultural sector as well as opportunities to build cooperation in the three districts. This collaborative work perspective is given to trigger regional leaders to start thinking out of their comfort zone and seeing various problems from a cross-administrative perspective.

In this coordination, regional heads are encouraged to identify all the problems and potentials of their regions and then will jointly determine the objects to be cooperated with. This process was not easy, because each regional head came up with ideas, programs, and priority activities from each region that differed from one another. In addition, regional heads are not used to cross-regional collaborative work. As a result, small conflicts arose in the process. Here the role of the bishop as a key actor becomes very important to be able to create a conducive climate and to be able to influence stakeholders with his authority so that these conflicts can be resolved.

➤ Building trust between actors

The communication and coordination which is conducted must be able to grow and build trust between the actors who will work together. All three are processes that go hand in hand and cannot be separated from one another. Good communication and coordination will generate trust. On

the other hand, trust is attached to how to carry out communication and coordination.

Trust in a collaboration or efforts to build cooperation is a fixed price. Cooperation initiated without trust will only be in vain. Trust creates a positive work climate, builds performance, keeps away from mutual suspicion, and strengthens commitment. Therefore, trust must be built on an attitude of integrity, competence, loyalty, consistency, and openness.

As an area that still lives in strong traditional, cultural, and religious traditions, belief is very important and is always lived by the people in these three districts. Many problems can be solved in society only by mutual trust. It is the capital for the government to be able to build cross-regional cooperation.

c. Accommodation: Willingness to cooperate- Build commitment

Accommodation in this context is the willingness to work with other parties on a limited basis. Here it takes commitment and willingness to get out of oneself or out of the comfort zone of each region to be able to work with other regions. This willingness and commitment are a continuation of the initial series of collaboration processes that have been built from communication and coordination.

Commitment from all parties involved in this collaboration is very important to ensure that all ongoing processes can be continued and implemented. Coordination is the result of several things that become collective agreements, and it is absolutely all stakeholders with different interests and views that should follow what has been decided together consequently.

Based on the research results, it was found that there was a tone of doubt from regional heads to build commitment in cooperation. It is feared that even if this cooperation is implemented, it will not last for a long time. Moreover, the term of office for regional heads in this period was only 3 (three) years. Because of this, the government is worried that the cooperation will only be completed at the communication stage. In addition, the absence of local government experience in inter-regional cooperation makes the government not too brave to develop such cooperation. More than that, cooperation is also only completed at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. It is an obstacle to building commitment to cooperation in the border region. For this reason, it is necessary to have the ability to identify the value of the benefits that will be obtained from cooperation so that all actors involved can be confident and have the goodwill to work together.

d. Reconciliation: Goal Reconciliation

Reconciliation of objectives relates to how the different objectives of each regional leader are combined into one goal. It means that in cooperation,

what is to be achieved is a common goal, which is the same, not the goal of one group of people.

This shared goal will be formulated in detail in the vision and mission of the cooperation. In this case, regional leaders are with the stakeholders involved in cooperation and must develop a shared understanding of the shared vision, mission, and goals. In the context of building cooperation in border areas, the big goal to be achieved is increasing people's welfare through agricultural development. Therefore, cooperation is directed at efforts to minimize problems as well as efforts to maximize potential in border areas.

The fact that regional leaders in border areas have not yet had a strong awareness of the importance of building inter-regional cooperation has resulted in each regional government still taking care of cross-regional issues on its own, even though it is not effective. It is also not uncommon for misunderstandings to occur between local governments when dealing with cross-regional issues. Therefore, the existence of a common understanding to identify various cross-regional problems being faced is something that cannot be negotiated.

Conclusion

There is no formal cooperation between regions in the border region involving the districts of Timor Tengah Utara, Belu, and Malacca, so an initial process toward such cooperation is needed. This process in the dimension of sound governance is an initial stage (start-up conditions) in which there are a series of activities starting from interdependence, a convergence of objectivity accommodation, and a reconciliation of goals that must be built and developed. Interdependence is a condition that shows mutual dependence between regions that will work together. And these conditions must be accepted and acknowledged. This is done by first exploring the factors that have caused the cooperation between the regions to not be maximized, identifying problems in border areas, and identifying potentials in border areas. The results of the identification show that there are similarities both in terms of problems and potential aspects in the three districts. What is different is the determination of regional development priorities. After all, has been identified, the next step is convergence through the equalization of perceptions. This was done through dialogue/communication initiated by a local figure who became a key actor, namely the Bishop of Atambua (a Catholic religious figure), then strengthened by coordination and building trust between actors. The next stage is accommodation to build commitment. The next step is to reconcile with the target to unify the goals.

The non-maximum cooperation between regions shows the low political will of regional leaders who do not see cooperation as a priority due to ignorance, unwillingness, and lack of interest. It can be overcome by

strengthening outreach, seminars, and workshops related to the urgency of inter-regional cooperation by the central government and provincial governments or also by professional parties.

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