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Daftar Isi (Table of Content)

Journal of Government & Civil Society

169 – 190	From Data Visualization to Institutional Sequence: Dashboard Governance and Vertical Accountability in Indonesian Local Government Dewi Sekar Kencono^{1,2}, Achmad Djunaedi³, Yuyun Purbokusumo⁴ <i>(¹ Department of Public Policy and Management, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Department of Government Affairs and Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia)</i> <i>(² Department of Architecture and Planning, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia)</i> <i>(³ Department of Public Policy and Management, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia)</i>
191 – 214	Implementing Population Administration Policy in Border Regions: Evidence from the Indonesia–Malaysia Border Imelda Hutasoit¹, Wiwik Roso Sri Rejeki², Arifin Sulaeman Hutasoit³, Amreylia Irnadianis Hana Saputri⁴ <i>(^{1,2,3,4} Institute of Home Affairs Governance, Indonesia)</i>
215 – 241	Political Party Engagement on Social Media: Trends, Challenges, and Dynamics of Digital Campaigns Akhmad Habibullah¹, Nooraneda Mutalip Laidey², Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi³, Sylvester Cortes⁴, Aulia Kartika Putri¹ <i>(¹ Government Science Study Program, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia)</i> <i>(² School of Business, Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation, Malaysia)</i> <i>(³ Department of Religions and Peace Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria)</i> <i>(⁴ Cebu Technological University, Philippines)</i>
242 – 257	Citizen Trust and Digital Governance Transformation: Ethical Challenges and Artificial Intelligence Governance in the Public Sector Sukwan Hanafi¹, Achmad Nurmandi¹, Herman Lawelai², Muhammad Younus³ <i>(¹ Department of Government Affairs and Administration, Jusuf Kalla School of Government, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia)</i> <i>(² Department of Government Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Indonesia)</i> <i>(³ Department of Product Research and Software Development, TPL Logistics Pvt Ltd, Karachi, Pakistan)</i>

258 – 281	Negotiating State and Customary Authority: Hybrid Governance in an Indigenous Village of Eastern Indonesia Telly Muriany¹, Victor Sanjak Ruhunlela², Ali Roho Talaohu¹, Mohammad Daud Marasabessy¹, Fernandes Simangunson³ <i>(¹ Government Science Study Program, Universitas Darussalam Ambon, Indonesia)</i> <i>(² Government Science Study Program, Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia)</i> <i>(³ Institute of Home Affairs Governance, Indonesia)</i>
282 – 298	Corruption Network in Bank BJB Advertising Procurement: An NVivo Content Analysis Raira Chandara Wanda¹, Salahudin², Saiman³ <i>(^{1,2,3} Magister Government Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang)</i>
299 – 318	Muslim Students Trust in Government Institutions: The Role of Religiosity, Administrative Transparency, and Public Service Quality in a Muslim-Majority Context Rahmad Hidayat¹, Muhammad Naim², Cahyadi Kurniawan³ <i>(¹ Department Public Administration, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Indonesia)</i> <i>(² Department Business Administration, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Indonesia)</i> <i>(³ Ph.D in Social Science, FESIS, Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia, Malaysia)</i>
319 – 344	Institutional Rightsizing under Fiscal Constraints: Evidence from Regional Government Reform in Indonesia Petrus Tekege¹, Fernandes Simangunsong¹, Urbanus Wihaiwar¹, Rahayu S. Mistina¹ <i>(¹ Institute of Home Affairs Governance, Indonesia)</i>
345 – 371	From Digital Vote Recapitulation to Democratic Legitimacy: Electoral Governance Innovation in Serang Regency, Indonesia Muhammad Asmawi¹, Martitah², Dani Muhtada² <i>(¹ Pancasila and Civic Education, Universitas Banten Jaya, Indonesia)</i> <i>(² Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia)</i>
372 – 403	Immigration Governance Under Developmental Stress: Policy Implementation and Foreign National Supervision in East Kalimantan Kus Indarto¹, Paisal Akbar², Andi Luhur Prianto³, Rusliadi⁴ <i>(¹ Public Administration, Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia)</i> <i>(² Government Science Study Program, Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia)</i> <i>(³ Department of Government Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia)</i> <i>(⁴ Departement of Public Administration Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia)</i>

Negotiating State and Customary Authority: Hybrid Governance in an Indigenous Village of Eastern Indonesia

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Abstract

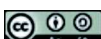
This study examines how state and customary authority interact in the governance of Negeri Hative Kecil, Ambon City, and how these interactions shape hybrid governance. A qualitative descriptive approach with an explanatory design was employed, using in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, involving 12 informants from the Negeri Government, Saniri Negeri, and customary and community groups. Data were thematically analyzed using NVivo through four main categories: State Authority, Customary Authority, Legitimacy Negotiation, and Institutional Hybridization. The findings show that state authority is grounded in legality, formal recognition, and administrative authority. In contrast, customary authority derives from genealogical legitimacy, customary norms and traditions, traditional leadership, and community recognition. These two sources of authority interact through communication, deliberation, recognition, and accommodation in local decision-making. Such processes generate institutional hybridization through functional adaptation, role transformation, and institutional integration, particularly in the roles of the Saniri Negeri and Raja Negeri. The study demonstrates that hybrid governance in Hative Kecil is not merely the coexistence of state and customary institutions but a dynamic process that links formal authority, social legitimacy, and institutional transformation within local governance.

Keywords: Hybrid governance, state authority, customary authority, legitimacy negotiation, institutional hybridization

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana kewenangan negara dan adat berinteraksi dalam penyelenggaraan pemerintahan di Negeri Hative Kecil, Kota Ambon, serta bagaimana interaksi tersebut membentuk tata kelola hibrida. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain deskriptif-eksplanatori melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi yang melibatkan 12 informan dari unsur Pemerintah Negeri, Saniri Negeri, serta tokoh adat dan masyarakat. Data dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan NVivo dengan empat kategori utama, yaitu Kewenangan Negara, Kewenangan Adat, Negosiasi Legitimasi, dan Hibridisasi Kelembagaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kewenangan negara bertumpu pada legalitas, pengakuan formal, dan kewenangan administratif, sedangkan kewenangan adat bersumber dari legitimasi genealogis, norma dan tradisi, kepemimpinan adat, serta pengakuan masyarakat. Kedua sumber kewenangan tersebut berinteraksi melalui komunikasi, deliberasi, pengakuan, dan akomodasi kewenangan dalam

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pengambilan keputusan pemerintahan. Proses tersebut mendorong hibridisasi kelembagaan melalui adaptasi fungsi, perubahan peran, dan integrasi kelembagaan, terutama pada Saniri Negeri dan Raja Negeri. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa hybrid governance di Hative Kecil bukan sekadar koeksistensi antara institusi negara dan adat, melainkan proses dinamis yang menghubungkan kewenangan formal, legitimasi sosial, dan transformasi kelembagaan dalam tata kelola lokal.

Kata Kunci: *Hybrid governance, kewenangan negara, kewenangan adat, negosiasi legitimasi, hibridisasi kelembagaan*

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of local government does not always occur by strengthening state institutions to replace preexisting social institutions. In various communities, formal government structures operate alongside customary institutions that have their own sources of authority, norms, and bases of legitimacy. This situation makes government practices determined not only by laws and administrative procedures but also by social relations, genealogy, local norms, traditional leadership, and community acceptance. This phenomenon is important in the study of *Hybrid Governance*, especially when formal state institutions and community-based institutions carry out government functions within the same institutional space (Abbott & Faude, 2022; Boege et al., 2009).

In the development of literature on Hybrid Governance, it is no longer enough to understand it as the coexistence of formal and informal institutions. Attention is increasingly directed to how authority from different sources interacts, forms role boundaries, and gains acceptance in government practices. The state gains authority through laws, regulations, administrative structures, and institutional recognition, while customary authorities can gain authority through community history, genealogy, customary norms, traditions, and social recognition. These differences in base can result in complementary relationships, but they can also create intersections when state and customary institutions influence the same issues. (Wenner, 2021), showing that legitimacy in hybrid governance arrangements has to do with the relationship among authority, society, and the state, whereas (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024), indicate that the relationship between government and traditional authority can take many forms, including cooperation, consultation, mediation, and cross-referencing.

These issues are relevant to the development of Local Governance in Indonesia following decentralization and the increasing recognition of customary law communities. Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages provides a basis for regulating villages based on the right of origin and creates space for customary villages within the national system of government. The framework was later amended by Law No. 3 of 2024, which updated several provisions

governing the implementation of village government. Normative recognition does not, in itself, eliminate the problem of how customary authority is situated within the state's administrative structure. In the process, customary institutions are confronted with formal rules, administrative procedures, and the demands of contemporary government. At the same time, the sustainability of their authority remains dependent on relationships with the communities that are their social base. Studies on the journey of customary law recognition in Indonesia show that such recognition occurs within a state legal framework that still places customary institutions in a complex relationship with the national legal and administrative system (Anggoro & Negara, 2021).

The diversity of relationships between formal institutions and customary institutions is also seen in research on village governance in Indonesia. A comparative study covering 18 villages in nine provinces shows that village governance is shaped not only by formal rules, but also by family networks, informal norms, social relationships, and patterns of local power that differ between contexts (Aspinall et al., 2025). Research on indigenous institutions in Indonesia also shows that the influence of traditional institutions on local government can vary depending on their institutional character, including participation, supervision, accountability, and relationships between indigenous leaders and village officials (Hasanah et al., 2025). Meanwhile, research in North Tapanuli Regency shows that traditional practices can operate in tandem with modern governance mechanisms in local political processes (Simanihuruk et al., 2023). These findings show that the relationship between customary institutions and formal governance cannot be understood solely by the existence or absence of legal recognition, but rather by how institutional authority and functions are exercised in a concrete local context.

Maluku is an important context in this issue because *customary land*. It has an institutional character rooted in community history, genealogical relationships, and customary structures that remain influential in the life of the community, while the administration of its government is within the framework of local government and state administration. Research on local government policies in Maluku also shows that the recognition and protection of customary law communities face institutional issues, including in the process of determining customary authorities, as well as issues related to customary law. *The Eyes of the House of Commands* (Umar et al., 2023).

This problem has a real empirical dimension in Ambon City. The Ambon City Government noted that there are 22 customary lands, while in 2025 there will still be six countries without a definitive king. The process of determining leadership is related to recognition *The Eyes of the House of Commands*, customary deliberation through *Saniri Negeri*, as well as local government facilitation (Ambon.go.id, 2025). This condition shows that the issue of state government has both administrative and socio-genealogical dimensions, because the ratification of leadership is not only related to government procedures but also to recognition within customary structures.

The Land of Small Settlements is a relevant empirical context to examine this relationship. This study found that the administration of government takes place through the state government, together with *the state king*, *Saniri Negeri*, *baileo*, and *the house of parentah*. The decision-making process involves the state government, *members of the Saniri Negeri*, and traditional leaders through a deliberative mechanism. At the same time, *the baileo serves as a deliberative space with* social and cultural significance for the community. In implementing development, the government still relies on formal procedures, but it also takes into account customary values, kinship relationships, and community deliberation. In conflict resolution, traditional leaders and *Saniri Negeri* are also involved as mediators before the issue is brought to a formal legal mechanism.

The intersection of authority is increasingly visible in the issue of government legitimacy. State formal authority derives its basis from legal recognition and administrative structure, while customary authority derives legitimacy from genealogical relationships, cultural values, traditions, and public acceptance. The study's findings show that these two sources of legitimacy do not always yield the same form of authority. State recognition provides an administrative basis for government administration, but does not automatically result in social acceptance. Similarly, customary recognition provides strong social legitimacy, but does not automatically confer administrative authority within the state government system. In determining leadership, for example, the government's formal mechanism interacts with genealogical recognition through *the eyes of the house of command* and public acceptance of *the country's king*.

This condition places legitimacy as a relational process. In perspective (Wenner, 2021), legitimacy is not solely an inherent attribute of an institution, but is formed through the relationship between the ruling authority, the ruled society, and the state. This perspective is relevant to reading the Small Town government because the acceptance of authority is determined not only by formal legality but also by the conformity of government decisions and actions to the social norms and structures recognized by the community. The findings of the study show that formal legitimacy and customary legitimacy interact in the decision-making process, leadership determination, and day-to-day administration of government.

These interactions also result in changes in the function of customary institutions. *Saniri Negeri* still has a customary basis but, in practice, carries out functions related to development supervision and community participation. Position: King of the Land. It is also at the intersection of genealogical legitimacy and formal government responsibilities. From an institutional perspective, this condition can be understood as a form of institutional adjustment when old rules, functions, and mechanisms interact with the demands of contemporary governance. (Abbott & Faude, 2022), explaining that institutional arrangements can be shaped through interactions among various formal and informal actors. At the same time, the concept of Institutional DIY (Cleaver, 2017) helps explain how institutional arrangements can be formed through adjustments between existing practices and new needs.

The literature on customary governance in Indonesia has provided insight into legal recognition, the existence of customary institutions, and the relationship between traditional institutions and modern governance structures. Research in Maluku has identified issues of recognition and administration in the structuring of customary villages, while comparative research in Indonesia shows variations in the influence of customary institutions on village governance (Aspinall et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2025; Lainsamputty & Omara, 2025). Studies of the relationship between government and traditional authority have also shown the importance of legitimacy and the division of authority space in *Hybrid Governance* (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024; Wenner, 2021). However, studies that specifically explain how state and customary authority are negotiated in daily state-level government practices, as well as how these negotiations relate to changes in customary institutional functions, remain relatively limited. This gap is important because the existence of customary institutions in the government system is not only related to recognition but also to the processes of establishing legitimacy and institutional adjustment when two sources of authority operate in a single arena of government.

Based on these issues, this study focuses on the negotiation process between state and customary authorities in the implementation of the government of the Small Town District, Ambon City. The focus is on analyzing how the formal legitimacy of the state and the social legitimacy of the indigenous people interact in local government practices, and how these interactions relate to changes in the function and role of customary institutions. This study aims to analyze how state and customary authority are negotiated in the implementation of the government of the Small Town Country, and to explain how these processes form hybrid governance practices through institutional hybridization.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Hybrid Governance and State–Indigenous Authority Relations

The concept of hybrid governance develops from a critique of views that place the state as the sole source of authority in government administration (Miller et al., 2020). In many local contexts, particularly in societies with strong traditional institutional histories, formal governance can coexist with customary institutions, traditional authorities, and social norms that have their own bases of legitimacy (Zaidan et al., 2025). (Boege et al., 2009) using the concept of hybrid political orders to explain the political order formed through interactions between state institutions and non-state structures, including traditional mechanisms (Bøås & Strazzari, 2020). This perspective is important because it shows that the existence of traditional states and institutions does not necessarily result in substitutionary relationships, but can instead lead to institutional arrangements with mixed characteristics. In subsequent developments (Abbott & Faude, 2022), it is shown that hybrid arrangements can consist of formal and informal institutions with different characteristics, sources of authority, and functions, yet operate within a single governance space.

From a more contextual perspective, hybrid governance is not merely the coexistence of two types of institutions. The main problem lies in how the authority of each institution interacts and how its boundaries are formed in practice (Mulligan et al., 2020; Vakkuri et al., 2021). (Wenner, 2021), shows that the sustainability of a hybrid governance order is tied to the relationships among local authorities, the governed community, and the state. Thus, hybrid configurations are dynamic because different authorities must constantly adapt to the demands and expectations of other actors. (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024) It also shows that the relationship between government and traditional authorities can take various forms, ranging from partners and advisors to mediators and actors whose interests or authority intersect with the government. These relationships are not always linear towards full integration, but can change according to the issues, actors, and context of the government at hand.

The framework provides space to understand state authority and customary authority as two sources of authority that do not always reside in hierarchical relationships. State authority rests on laws, regulations, administrative structures, and formal recognition, whereas customary authority is rooted in community history, genealogy, customary norms, traditional leadership, and social acceptance. (Baldwin, 2025), is important to use in this context because it draws an analytical distinction among state recognition, *de facto* power, and the downward accountability of traditional authority. The three cannot be treated as the same concept. An institution can gain formal recognition from the state without achieving the same level of social acceptance. In contrast, an authority with strong social influence does not necessarily have administrative authority within the state system.

In the context of local governance, the relationship between the two sources of authority becomes increasingly important when customary institutions are integrated or recognized in formal governance structures (Chandra & Triwidaryanta, 2022). Such recognition can create space for customary institutions to carry out public functions, but it can also bring new demands, including adjustments to administrative procedures, government responsibilities, and relations with state authorities (El Darman, 2025; Tory & Pradipta, 2025). Therefore, hybrid governance in this study is understood as a local government arrangement formed through the interaction between the formal authority of the state and customary authority, when both operate in the same arena of government and continue to adjust the limits, functions, and legitimacy of their respective authorities. This perspective is relevant to the context of the Small Land, which shows the existence of a formal government structure with customary institutions in the decision-making process and in the administration of government.

Negotiating Legitimacy and Institutional Hybridization

In hybrid governance, legitimacy is an element that determines whether certain authority can be accepted and exercised effectively in society (Villa et al., 2021). Legitimacy needs to be distinguished from legality because an authority can have a clear legal basis without automatically gaining social acceptance (Rosser et al., 2022). (Wenner, 2021) makes an important contribution by placing legitimacy as a relational property, which is a quality that arises from the relationship between the party that runs the government, the society that is ruled, and the state. In this framework, legitimacy is not seen as an attribute permanently attached to an institution, but rather as something that can strengthen, weaken, or change in response to public perception and relations between parties. Therefore, authorities must be able to adapt their actions, decisions, and roles to different sources of legitimacy.

The perspective of relational legitimacy aligns with the character of a government with more than one basis of authority. The formal legitimacy of the state can come from recognition of laws, administrative authority, and government procedures. In contrast, customary legitimacy is formed by recognition of the norms, genealogy, history, traditions, and leadership that live within the community. The two forms of legitimacy do not always contradict each other, nor do they automatically strengthen each other (Bruckermann, 2021; Komujuni & Büscher, 2020). (Baldwin, 2025), emphasizing the importance of distinguishing state recognition from capacity for authority and accountability to the community. This distinction helps explain why formal recognition of a traditional institution does not necessarily mean that it has the same level of public acceptance as it did before it entered the state structure.

Under such conditions, legitimacy negotiations are an important mechanism in the implementation of local government. Negotiations do not have to be open conflicts or formal negotiations; they can take place through daily practices such as deliberation, decision-making, leadership determination, development implementation, conflict mediation, and consultation with the community. (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024), shows that interactions between governments and traditional authorities can shift among several power spaces and change depending on the governance issues at hand. This perspective allows negotiations to be understood as a process in which actors with different sources of legitimacy adjust their positions and roles so that decisions gain both authority and acceptance within the social environment in which governance takes place.

Negotiation of legitimacy is also closely related to institutional change. When customary institutions must operate within formal governance structures, maintaining the old form intact is often not possible. Institutional functions, procedures, and relationships can undergo adjustment without eliminating customary identity. (Abbott & Faude, 2022) explains that formal and informal institutions can form hybrid institutional complexes through relationships characterized by institutional diversity, functional differentiation, and overlapping arrangements. This view can be strengthened through the concept of institutional bricolage (Cleaver, 2017),

which sees institutions as the result of a gradual interplay among old practices, accepted norms, and new arrangements. In the process, traditions are not simply preserved or removed, but can be reused and adapted to meet changing governance needs.

Based on this perspective, institutional hybridization in this study is understood as the process by which customary institutions adjust their functions, roles, and operating mechanisms to operate within formal governance structures while maintaining their social legitimacy. Hybridization does not mean that customary institutions transform entirely into state institutions, but rather indicates a change in functional configuration due to the interaction between the two institutional orders. This concept is relevant to the findings in Hative Kecil, where the State Saniri retained its customary base but also served to oversee development and community participation, while the state monarch stood at the intersection of genealogical legitimacy and formal government responsibilities. Thus, the relationship between legitimacy negotiation and institutional hybridization can be understood as an ongoing process: changes in authority relations encourage adjustments to institutional functions, while newly formed functions can, in turn, re-influence how legitimacy is acquired and maintained.

Research Analytical Framework

From the perspective of *hybrid governance*, this study views the government of the Small Nation as an arena of interaction between the state's formal authority and customary authority. The two forms of authority have different sources of legitimacy, but operate in the same government space. State authority derives its basis from legality and formal recognition, while customary authority is rooted in customary norms, genealogical relationships, traditional leadership, and community acceptance.

The meeting of the two forms of authority is analyzed through the concept of legitimacy negotiation. Negotiation is understood as an interaction process in which the state, customary institutions, and communities adjust the recognition, roles, and limits of their respective authorities in government practices. The process is then analyzed further through the concept of institutional hybridization to examine how the interaction between the two orders of authority encourages adjustments to the functions and roles of customary institutions within contemporary governance structures.

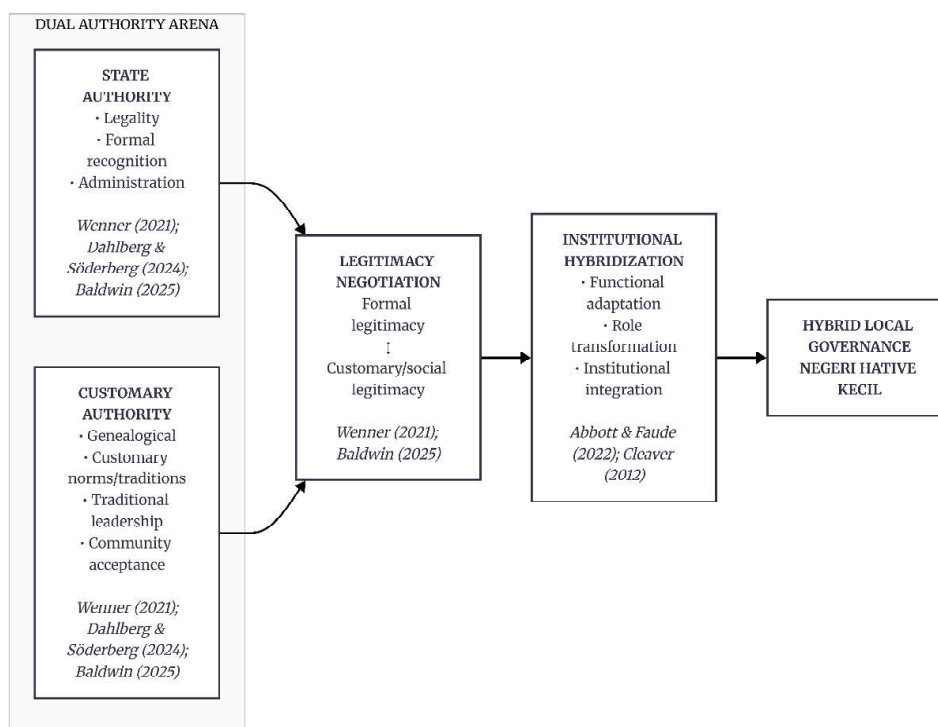


Figure 1. Research Framework

Based on these conceptual relationships, this study identifies state and customary authority as two sources that interact in the legitimacy negotiation process. The process is further related to the adjustment of institutional authority and functions that form institutional hybridization in the implementation of local government. The analytical framework is used to examine how state formal authority and customary authority interact in the practice of Small Native Land government, how legitimacy is negotiated among the actors involved, and how the process affects the function and role of customary institutions in the implementation of local government.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-explanatory design to analyze the practice of hybrid governance in Negeri Hative Kecil, Ambon City, particularly the relationship between state and customary authority, the legitimacy negotiation process, and changes in customary institutional functions. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on social processes, authority relations, and institutional practices that need to be understood in the context of interactions among local government actors.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The interviews involved 12 informants, including heads and state government officials, members of the State Saniri, traditional leaders, and community members. Observations were made of government activities, deliberation processes, the use of *baileo* as a deliberation

space, and social interaction in government administration. Documentation includes state regulations, government documents, customary archives, and local government regulations related to customary state government.

Data analysis was carried out using NVivo to organize, code, group, and trace patterns of relationships between themes. The coding process uses an analytical framework derived from the literature on *hybrid governance*, authority relations, legitimacy, and institutional hybridization. Four *mother nodes* serve as the main coding units: State Authority, Customary Authority, Legitimacy Negotiation, and Institutional Hybridization. *Child nodes* are used to identify the empirical dimension of each concept. *Hybrid Governance* is not coded as a mother node but is used as an analytical synthesis derived from the linkage among the four coding groups. The validity of the data is strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation.

Table 1. Operationalization of Data Coding Using Nvivo

Mother Node	Child Node	Empirical Indicators	Theoretical Basis	NVivo Coding Criteria
STATE AUTHORITY	Legality	Legal basis, regulation, legitimacy based on state provisions	Wenner (2021); Dahlberg & Söderberg (2024)	Encoded when data shows that a government's authority or action is based on a country's formal laws, regulations, or provisions.
	Formal Recognition	Government endorsement, recognition, or authorization	Wenner (2021); Baldwin (2025)	Coded when the government grants or requires formal recognition of an indigenous institution, leader, or authority.
	Administrative Authority	Implementation of administration, services, development, and formal government functions	Dahlberg & Söderberg (2024); Baldwin (2025)	Encoded when data shows authority exercised through government structures, procedures, and administrative functions.
CUSTOMARY AUTHORITY	Genealogical Legitimacy	Lineage, <i>point of the house of command</i> , origin	Wenner (2021); Baldwin (2025)	Coded when authority or leadership is associated with genealogy, lineage, or indigenous origins.
	Norms and Customary Traditions	Customary norms, rules, customs, values, and practices	Boege et al. (2009); Wenner (2021)	Coded when customary norms or practices are used as the basis for actions, decisions, or arrangements of people's lives.
	Indigenous leadership	<i>The King of the Land</i> , the Traditional Ruler, <i>the Guardian of the House of Commons</i>	Dahlberg & Söderberg (2024); Baldwin (2025)	Encoded when data discusses the position, role, influence, or authority of traditional leaders.

	Community Recognition	Community acceptance, trust, respect, and support	Wenner (2021); Baldwin (2025)	Coded when the legitimacy of an institution/leader comes from community acceptance or recognition.
LEGITIMACY NEGOTIATION	Interaction of Authority	Communication, consultation, coordination, government-customary relations	Wenner (2021); Dahlberg & Söderberg (2024)	It is coded when there is direct interaction between government and customary actors in the exercise of authority.
	Recognition and Acceptance	The process of obtaining, giving, or retaining recognition	Wenner (2021); Baldwin (2025)	Encoded when data shows the process by which an authority is received, recognized, questioned, or needs to gain legitimacy from another party.
	Deliberation and Deliberation	Deliberation, consultation, joint discussion, decision-making	Wenner (2021); Dahlberg & Söderberg (2024)	Coded when decisions or policies are formed through a process of joint discussion between formal and customary actors.
	Accommodation Authority	Adjustment of boundaries, positions, rules, or practices of authority	Wenner (2021); Dahlberg & Söderberg (2024)	Coded when there is an adjustment or compromise between the administrative demands of the state and customary norms/authorities.
INSTITUTIONAL HYBRIDIZATION	Adaptation of Institutional Functions	Adjustment of the function of customary institutions to the needs of modern government	Abbott & Faude (2022); Cleaver (2012)	Coded when customary institutions maintain their existence but adapt their functions to contemporary governance structures.
	Institutional Role Changes	Expansion, shift, or addition of roles	Abbott & Faude (2022); Cleaver (2012)	Coded when there is a change from traditional functions to functions of governance, development, participation, supervision, or mediation.
	Institutional Integration	The inclusion of customary mechanisms into formal government practices	Abbott & Faude (2022)	It is coded when customary institutions or mechanisms become part of the formal governance process without completely losing their customary identity.
	Overlapping Functions	Intersection or intersection of functions of state and customary institutions	Abbott & Faude (2022); Dahlberg & Söderberg (2024)	Coded when two institutions or actors have intersecting functions, influences, or power spaces.

In this structure, the analysis process moves from identifying sources of authority, to tracing the process of legitimacy negotiation, and finally to identifying adaptations and changes in institutional functions. The relationship between codes is used at the interpretation stage to compile a synthesis of *hybrid governance* in Small Communities. This structure is in line with research findings that formal governments and customary institutions interact in decision-making, leadership, development, and conflict resolution. In contrast, customary institutions undergo functional adjustments within contemporary governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Configuration of State and Customary Authority in Small Tribal Governments

The administration of government in the Negeri Hative Kecil brings together the formal authority of the state with the customary authority. The State Government administers public services and development through formal procedures. At the same time, the Raja Negeri, Saniri Negeri, Baileo, and Mata Rumah Parentah continue to play a role in leadership, decision-making, deliberation, and social relations. In practice, the two systems do not run separately; formal rules remain the basis of government, but their application takes into account customary norms, kinship relations, community needs, and social acceptance. The configuration obtained an institutional basis in the Regional Regulation of Maluku Province Number 14 of 2005, which stipulates that the state, as a unit, recognizes customary law communities with the right of origin and customs to regulate their households within the framework of the state. This regulation also recognizes the institutional elements and characteristics of customary law as part of the country's existence (Lainsamputty, 2019; Makaruku et al., 2021). Thus, the state government is not only formed by administrative arrangements but is also rooted in the community's social and customary structure.

In the practice of government administration, state authority is reflected in legality, administrative order, and government functions. The state government still makes formal regulations the basis for administration, services, and development, but its implementation is not mechanical. When decisions concern the interests of the community or customary structures, the government communicates with Saniri and community leaders and adjusts its application to local conditions. This condition shows the difference between the source of authority and the way it is exercised: the government derives its authority from the formal system, but its implementation takes place in an arena that also encompasses social and customary authority. This pattern is in line with (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024), which suggests that the state and traditional authorities can share a space of influence through cooperation, mediation, and adjustment of authority.

Customary authority rests on genealogical legitimacy, norms and traditions, customary leadership, and community recognition. The position of the Parentah House Mata is important in the country's leadership. The Ambon City Government notes that the Lesser Village is

customary land with two Parentah Houses, so the leadership mechanism needs to align with the formal procedures for the appointment, election, and inauguration of the head of the state government (Ambon.go.id, 2021b). In the research data, the legitimacy of the King is also related to the Mata Rumah Parentah, genealogical relationships, and public acceptance, so formal recognition of the state does not fully explain the entire source of his authority. This is in line with (Baldwin, 2025), What Makes the Difference *State recognition*, *De facto power*, and *downward accountability* in understanding traditional authority.

Saniri Negeri shows a stronger intersection between customary authority and government. Saniri remains rooted in customary structures, but is involved in discussions of development, community interests, decision-making, and government supervision. The informant's statement shows that Saniri performs these functions while still taking customary considerations and community interests into account. These findings are consistent with (Titaley et al., 2025), which places Saniri as a traditional government institution in Maluku with functions in the preparation of programs, regulations, the election of the King, and the supervision of development. The Ambon City Government also places Saniri as an actor who gathers the aspirations of the community, drafts state regulations, and determines the eyes of the house of the rulers who have the right to become the King according to customary provisions (Ambon.go.id, 2021a).

The meeting of the two authorities is most visible in decision-making, development, and solving social problems. The government, Saniri, traditional leaders, and the community can be involved in discussions, while Baileo functions as a cultural space as well as a deliberative space. Development programs still follow a formal framework, but their implementation takes into account community needs, kinship relationships, customary norms, and the results of deliberations. In resolving social problems, traditional leaders and Saniri can also play the role of mediators before problems are directed to formal mechanisms.

The findings are in line with (Wenner, 2021) who view legitimacy in *Hybrid Governance* as a relationship between the authorities and the community, as well as with (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024), which places traditional state-authority relations as negotiable relations (Jaya et al., 2025), also shows that the meeting of bureaucratic demands and local norms can change the way authority is exercised without eliminating its customary basis. In the Lesser Empire, the pattern is seen in the simultaneous operation of formal and customary authority in leadership, development, deliberation, and social relations.

Thus, the configuration of authority in the Lesser Communities shows that the state remains a source of formal legality, while the customs maintain genealogical, normative, and social legitimacy. The two intersect through communication, deliberation, and adjustment in government practices. Therefore, the main problem is not just the existence of the two institutions, but how formal and customary authority gain acceptance and can be carried out simultaneously.

Negotiation of Legitimacy between State Authority and Customary Law in Small Tribal Governance

Thematic coding *analysis* using NVivo shows that the relationship between state authority and customary authority in Small Communities is primarily concentrated in the legitimacy-negotiation process. The results of *the Crosstab Query* at the *mother node level* show that the Legitimacy Negotiation category has the highest number of *coding references* across the three informant groups: 77 in the State Saniri, 64 in the State Government, and 53 in the Traditional Leaders and Communities. At the same time, the Customary Authority category recorded 66 *references* to the State Saniri, 53 to the Customary Leaders and Communities, and 37 to the State Government; while the State Authority reached 46, 31, and 38 *references*, respectively. Institutional Hybridization was recorded at 47 in the State Saniri, 31 in the Traditional Leaders and Communities, and 28 in the State Government. This figure is the number of *coding references*, not the number of informants or the percentage of the community, so it should be read as the density of a theme's emergence in coded data, not as a measure of social prevalence.

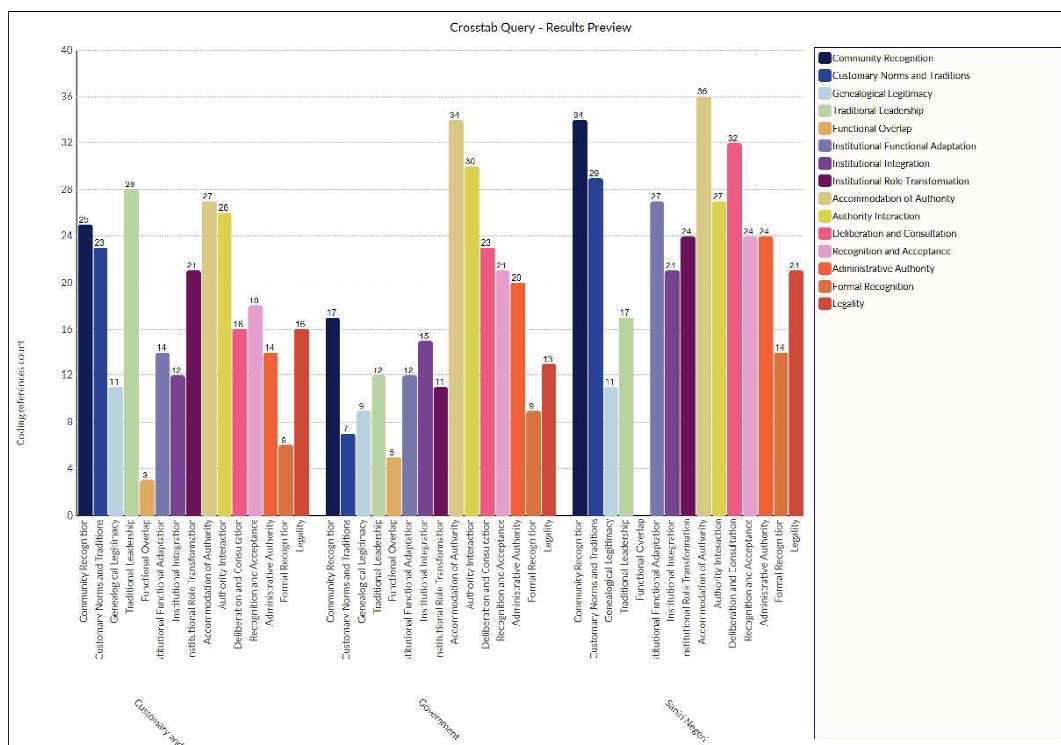


Figure 2. Crosstab Query Results on Child Nodes
Source: Results of the Researcher's NVivo Data Processing

At the *child node* level, the coding pattern shows a difference in emphasis between groups. The State Government codifies the most Accommodation of Authority (34), Authority Interaction (30), and Deliberation and Consultation (23), which reflect the need to adjust administrative

authority to the customary context. Saniri Negeri stands out in Accommodation of Authority (36), Community Recognition (34), Deliberation and Consultation (32), Customary Norms and Traditions (29), and Functional Overlap and Authority Interaction (27), showing its position at the intersection of customary and government functions. Meanwhile, Indigenous and Community Leaders are most encoded in Traditional Leadership (28), Accommodation of Authority (27), Authority Interaction (26), and Community Recognition (25), which affirm the importance of leadership and social acceptance in customary legitimacy.

These differences show that authority negotiations are understood differently by each group. In the State Government, negotiations mainly concern adjusting the exercise of formal authority through communication and discussion with Saniri and traditional leaders. In Saniri, negotiations take place through deliberation and involvement in decisions on government, development, and supervision, in line with Saniri's function as a traditional governance institution in Maluku (Titaley et al., 2025). In Indigenous and Community Leaders, legitimacy is more strongly associated with customary leadership, norms, genealogy, and community recognition. Thus, the same negotiation process has different emphases: accommodation in the government, cross-functional in Saniri, and socio-customary legitimacy in the community.

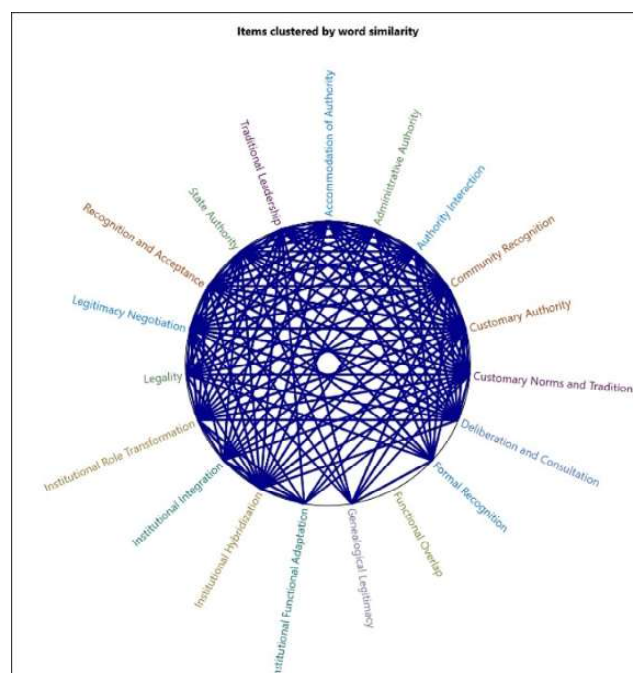


Figure 3. Items Clustered by Word Similarity
Source: Results of the Researcher's NVivo Data Processing

Word similarity *visualizations* show a very dense inter-term interconnectedness, with terms such as State Authority, Customary Authority, Traditional Leadership, Accommodation

of Authority, Authority Interaction, Community Recognition, and Legitimacy Negotiation all in one adjacent network. Substantively, the density shows that the vocabulary used in the research data does not form a completely separate category. The concepts of authority, legitimacy, leadership, recognition, and accommodation emerge in an environment of interrelated meanings. However, the visualization of *word similarity* should be read with caution because the proximity of the network mainly reflects the similarity of the use of words or terms; it does not by itself prove that the two concepts have a causal relationship.

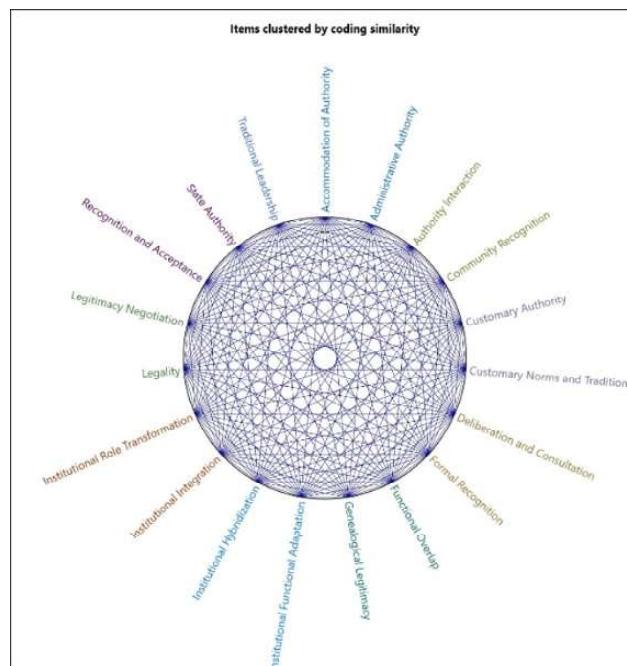


Figure 4. Items Clustered by Coding Similarity
Source: Results of the Researcher's NVivo Data Processing

The visualization of *coding similarity* provides a more substantive reading because it shows the proximity between codes based on the similarity of coding patterns. A very dense network shows that research codes often appear in data segments that have more than one analytical dimension. Accommodation of Authority, for example, is substantively adjacent to Authority Interaction, Deliberation and Consultation, Recognition and Acceptance, and Community Recognition. This kind of pattern is in line with the interview's findings that decisions are not only discussed, but also discussed because there is a need to adapt formal rules to social and customary conditions. Thus, *the results of similarity coding* reinforce that legitimacy negotiations do not take place as a single action, but as a series of interrelated processes.

However, the network density in Figures 2 and 3 also has methodological implications. When almost all codes have very dense connections, these visualizations are less appropriate

to state that there is a completely separate group of concepts or that one code is the cause of another. Its main function in this study is more appropriate as evidence that the thematic structure of research is overlapping and relational. This is precisely in accordance with the character of hybrid governance, when a single act of government can simultaneously contain dimensions of legality, recognition, interaction, deliberation, and accommodation.

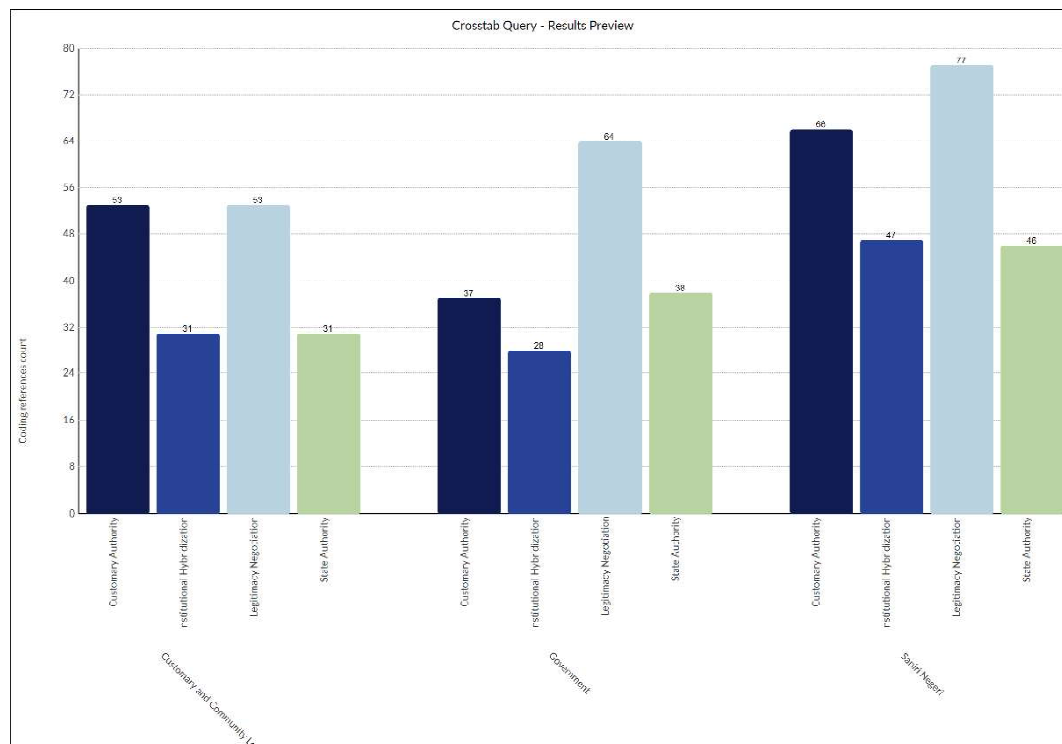


Figure 5. Crosstab Query Results on Mother Nodes
Source: Results of the Researcher's NVivo Data Processing

The results of the *Crosstab Query* on the *mother node* provide a clearer picture of the thematic distribution between groups.

Table 2. Distribution of Coding References on Mother Nodes by Group of Informants

Informant Group	State Authority	Customary Authority	Negotiation of Legitimacy	Institutional Hybridization
Indigenous Leaders and Communities	31	53	53	31
Government	38	37	64	28
Saniri Negeri	46	66	77	47

Source: Results of the Researcher's NVivo Data Processing

Crosstab Query *analysis* shows that Legitimacy Negotiation is the most prominent theme in all informant groups, with 77 *references* to Saniri Negeri, 64 to the State Government, and 53 to Traditional Leaders and Communities. However, the focus of each group is different. The State Government emphasizes more on accommodation and interaction of authority, Saniri on deliberation, community recognition, customary norms, and overlapping functions, while Traditional Leaders and Communities emphasize leadership and customary recognition. This pattern supports the view of Wenner (2021) that legitimacy in hybrid governance is *relational*, because it is formed through the relationship between formal authority and community acceptance, not just through institutional legality. In the State Government, State Authority (38) is only slightly higher than Customary Authority (37), while Legitimacy Negotiation is much higher (64). In Saniri, Customary Authority (66) is higher than State Authority (46), while Legitimacy Negotiation reaches 77 and Institutional Hybridization 47. The high *Functional Overlap* (27), *Institutional Functional Adaptation* (24), and *Institutional Role Transformation* (24) show Saniri's position as a crossing point between customary structures and formal government. This finding is in line with Jaya et al. (2025) that the meeting of bureaucratic and customary authorities can encourage changes in institutional functions without eliminating their local base.

In Indigenous Leaders and Communities, Customary Authority and Legitimacy Negotiation both reached 53, higher than State Authority and Institutional Hybridization, which were 31 each. Height *Traditional Leadership* and *Community Recognition* shows that authority is more understood through leadership, norms, and social acceptance. Thus, legitimacy negotiations in the Lesser Hative do not primarily take place as a conflict between the state and customs, but through communication, deliberation, recognition, and adjustment of the boundaries of authority. This is in line with (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024), which sees the relationship between traditional government and authority as one that can involve cooperation, mediation, and the sharing of space of influence. The findings also clarify the distinction (Baldwin, 2025) between *State recognition*, *De facto power*, and *downward accountability*. The state's formal recognition of indigenous institutions or leadership does not fully explain its influence at the local level, as authority also depends on community recognition. The high level of Community Recognition, especially for Saniri and Indigenous and Community Leaders, shows that social legitimacy remains an important element in the sustainability of indigenous authority.

Overall, the NVivo results show that state and customary authority are not only side by side but are connected through negotiation mechanisms. The State Government is mainly faced with the need to accommodate and interact with customary authorities; Saniri is in a deliberative position with a higher level of overlap and institutional adaptation, while Indigenous and Community Leaders emphasize leadership and social recognition. Legitimacy negotiation is therefore a mechanism that brings formal legality together with social/customary legitimacy

in daily government practice, as well as being the basis for the emergence of changes in institutional functions and roles.

Institutional Hybridization and Hybrid Governance *Synthesis* in Small Communities

Institutional hybridization in the Land of Lesser Settlements takes place through the adjustment of customary institutions to the demands of formal government without eliminating their social and cultural base. This process does not replace customary institutions with state bureaucracy, but takes place through functional adaptation, role changes, and integration of customary practices into administration, development, community participation, and social problem solving. This process is most visible in Saniri Negeri, which remains rooted in customary structures but carries out increasingly broader functions in the discussion of development, community interests, decision-making, and supervision. Thus, what changes is not the customary identity, but the space and function of its institutions in contemporary governance. In perspective on *hybrid institutional arrangements*, this condition suggests that formal and informal institutions can maintain their respective identities while forming new patterns of work in a single arena of government (Abbott & Faude, 2022).

The same thing is seen in the Raja Negeri, who is at the intersection between genealogical leadership and formal government responsibilities. This position makes the King carry out administrative functions while maintaining authority derived from the Mata Rumah Parentah and public recognition. Thus, *State recognition* is not entirely identical to *de facto authority*, since the influence of the leader is also determined by social relations and community acceptance (Baldwin, 2025). Hybridization is also seen in Baileo, which continues to function as a cultural space as well as being used for deliberation and discussion of common issues. This means that the integration of customary practices into government takes place through the expansion of the function of customary practices and spaces, not through the elimination of their identity. Thus, institutional hybridization in Small Communities is formed through the interconnectedness of legitimacy negotiations, functional adaptation, role changes, and institutional integration. Legitimacy negotiations open up space for the coexistence of state and customary authority, while hybridization translates these relationships into changes in institutional functions and positions in the administration of government.

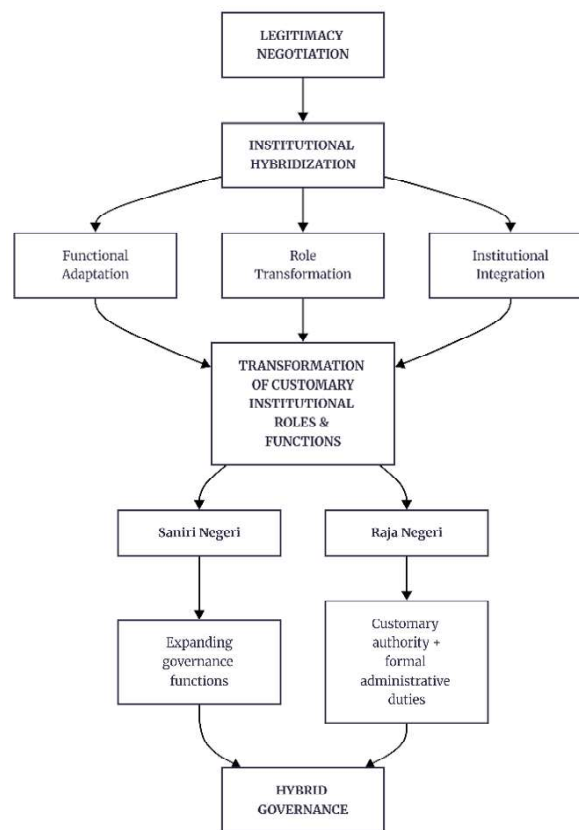


Figure 6. Institutional Hybridization in Small Estate Governance

Source: Processed by Researchers based on NVivo Analysis and Theoretical Synthesis of Research

The picture shows that institutional hybridization is a process that takes place through functional adaptation, role changes, and institutional integration, rather than separate stages after negotiation. In Saniri, this process is seen in the widespread involvement in governance and development, while in the King it is seen in the meeting of customary authorities with formal responsibilities of governance. Thus, the sustainability of customary institutions takes place through adjustment to the changing governance environment. This pattern shows a form of selective integration, as customary elements are not fully merged into the bureaucracy, and formal mechanisms do not completely replace customary practices. Elements that retain social legitimacy are retained, but their functions are adapted to the needs of government. This pattern is in line with Dahlberg and Söderberg (2024), who show that the relationship between the state and traditional authorities can shape a variety of work configurations, including cooperation, mediation, and the sharing of influence space.

In this study, hybrid governance is understood as a synthesis of these relationships: state authority provides a legal-administrative framework, customary authority maintains social and genealogical legitimacy, legitimacy negotiations connect the two, and institutional hybridization translates it into changes in institutional functions and roles. Thus, the existence

of customary institutions in Lesser Hative is not just a coexistence, but a transformation process that maintains its relevance in modern governance. These findings broaden the understanding of *Hybrid Governance* by demonstrating that authority negotiations can result in institutional transformation. In line with (Wenner, 2021), about the relational nature of legitimacy and (Dahlberg & Söderberg, 2024) regarding traditional state-authority relations, the case of Hative Kecil shows that such interactions can lead to concrete changes in the functions and roles of customary institutions. Thus, government hybridity is formed through a series of legitimacy negotiations, functional adaptation, role changes, and institutional integration.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the administration of government in the Land of Hative Kecil, Ambon City, takes place through the configuration of state and customary authority that intersect. State authority provides a legal-administrative basis for the implementation of government, services, and development, while customary authority rests on genealogical legitimacy, norms and traditions, customary leadership, and community recognition. The two sources of authority do not operate as two completely separate systems, but meet in the practice of decision-making, development, deliberation, and social problem-solving.

The results of NVivo's analysis show that Legitimacy Negotiation is an important mechanism in bringing together formal and customary authority. Negotiations take place through the interaction of authority, recognition, and acceptance, deliberation, and accommodation of authority. The difference in emphasis between groups of informants shows that the government is more faced with the need to adjust administrative authority. Saniri is at the intersection of customary and government functions, while Indigenous and Community Leaders emphasize leadership and social recognition. These findings show that the legitimacy of government is not only determined by formal legality, but also by public acceptance of the authority exercised.

Furthermore, legitimacy negotiations have implications for Institutional Hybridization through functional adaptation, role changes, and institutional integration. Saniri expands its functions into governance, development, and supervision, while the King exercises customary authority as well as formal governance responsibilities. Customary practices and spaces such as Baileo also gain functions in the process of government deliberation. Thus, *hybrid governance* in Hative Kecil does not merely demonstrate the coexistence of state and customary institutions, but is a process of institutional transformation that maintains local legitimacy while adjusting to the demands of modern governance. This research confirms that governance hybridity is formed through the dynamic relationship between authority, legitimacy negotiation, and institutional adaptation.

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