



# The Role of Diversity in Public Policy Development for Environmental Sustainability in The Southern Papua Region

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## Abstract

This research explores the role of cultural and ecological diversity in public policy development for environmental sustainability in the South Papua region. Using a qualitative approach, this research examines local knowledge and traditional practices of indigenous peoples and how they can be integrated into public policies to create more effective and sustainable solutions. This research uses qualitative research methods to examine the role of diversity in the development of public policies for environmental sustainability in the South Papua region. Data collection techniques were literature study and in-depth interviews with informants, namely: local community leaders; policy makers; academics; and environmental activists. The results showed that the involvement of local communities in the policy formulation process is very important to increase the acceptance and success of the policy. Indigenous peoples are often not adequately involved in the public policy formulation process. Many policies are implemented without adequate consultation with local communities in South Papua, such as climate change; deforestation; and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. This research provides recommendations for a more inclusive and participatory policy approach that recognises the value of diversity in achieving environmental sustainability in South Papua.

**Keywords:** cultural diversity; public policy development; environmental sustainability

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran keanekaragaman budaya dan ekologi dalam pengembangan kebijakan publik untuk keberlanjutan lingkungan di wilayah Papua Selatan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengkaji pengetahuan lokal dan praktik-praktik tradisional masyarakat adat dan bagaimana hal tersebut dapat diintegrasikan ke dalam kebijakan publik untuk menciptakan solusi yang lebih efektif dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif untuk mengkaji peran keanekaragaman dalam pengembangan kebijakan publik untuk keberlanjutan lingkungan di wilayah Papua Selatan. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah studi literatur dan wawancara mendalam dengan para informan, yaitu: tokoh masyarakat lokal; pembuat kebijakan; akademisi; dan aktivis lingkungan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan masyarakat lokal dalam proses perumusan kebijakan sangat penting untuk meningkatkan penerimaan dan keberhasilan kebijakan. Masyarakat adat seringkali tidak dilibatkan secara memadai dalam proses perumusan kebijakan publik. Banyak kebijakan yang diimplementasikan tanpa konsultasi yang memadai dengan masyarakat lokal di Papua Selatan, seperti perubahan iklim, deforestasi, dan eksploitasi sumber daya alam yang tidak berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi untuk pendekatan kebijakan yang lebih inklusif dan partisipatif yang mengakui nilai keberagaman dalam mencapai keberlanjutan lingkungan di Papua Selatan.

**Kata Kunci:** keanekaragaman budaya ; kebijakan publik; keberlanjutan lingkungan

## 1. Introduction

In South Papua, interactions between local communities and their natural environment have been ongoing for centuries, resulting in sustainable natural resource management practices [1]. This local knowledge is often more effective in maintaining ecosystem balance than modern approaches that are uniform and sometimes inappropriate to local conditions. Integrating traditional knowledge and practices into public policies is therefore a crucial step towards achieving holistic and sustainable environmental sustainability [2].

Diversity in public policy development refers to an inclusive process that considers the various perspectives, backgrounds, and interests of all groups in society. In this context, diversity is not only related to ethnicity and race, but also includes gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, and socio-economic background [3]. According to John W. Kingdon in his theory of the policy agenda, diversity of perspectives can enrich the public policy agenda-setting process by providing a more comprehensive and in-depth range of viewpoints [4]. This is important to ensure that policies are not only relevant to the majority, but also to the needs and rights of minorities.

In addition, the Habermasian theory of the public sphere emphasises the importance of inclusive and participatory communication in public policy development. Jurgen Habermas argues that good public policy should be the result of a rational discourse in which all voices, especially marginalised ones, have the opportunity to be heard and considered equally [5]. In this context, diversity becomes essential to create a dynamic and substantial dialogue, so that the resulting policies are not only fair but also have strong legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

However, the challenges faced in developing inclusive and diversity-based public policies in South Papua are many. Economic inequality, limited access to education and technology, and social injustice are some of the obstacles that must be overcome. In addition, climate change and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources continue to threaten environmental sustainability and the well-being of local communities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to formulate public policies that not only protect the environment but also empower local communities as the primary custodians of their ecosystems.

The urgency of writing this article is to highlight the important role of diversity in the development of public policies aimed at environmental sustainability in South Papua. By recognising and harnessing the richness of local cultures and knowledge, policymakers can formulate more targeted and sustainable strategies. This article aims to provide in-depth insights into how diversity can be integrated into public policy and to encourage constructive dialogue between various stakeholders, including the government, local communities, and environmental organisations.

The main objective of this article is to underline the relevance of diversity in formulating sustainable public policies and offer practical recommendations for their implementation. Through in-depth analyses and case studies from South Papua, this article is expected to serve as a reference for policy makers and related parties in their efforts to preserve the environment while empowering local communities. Thus, environmental sustainability in South Papua can be achieved in an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable manner.

## 1. Literature Review/ Theoretical framework

In achieving sustainability in Merauke, a policy needs to accommodate the diversity, whether its communities; tribes; customs and traditions. The reason is Merauke, a south area where located in South Papua consist of multikultural people, it can be seen from the ethnic. To analyse this research concept of diversity is needed. Not only that, a concept which include public policy development also needs as a tool in analyzing how the diversity are accommodated in the public policy.

This research is not only discusses about public policy concept in general, but also making sure that public policy development is the main focus. Public policy development needs a public sphere in order to make its rule accepted in all people. Here is why this research needs Jurgen Habermas of public sphere. According to Habermas, public policy can be effective if the rules are accommodated all people. In other words, a good public policy must inclusive, not exclusive. Haberman said that the conception extensively accommodates aesthetic-affective modes of discourse, a move from unitary conception to plurality of contesting publics [6]. This is the reason why this research needs such theoretical framework about a public sphere to accommodate societies in plurality. Plurality synonym with diversity, diversity means the presence of differences within a group. Diversity includes inclusivity aspect on it, because when the public policy tends to accommodate such exclusive people, it is mean that only few people who received the policy. So, a public sphere here become an urgent concept to use in analyzing the issue of diversity to maintain sustainability in Merauke.

Diversity in an organization is a phenomenon that describes the existence of various elements such as gender, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, age, religion, and so on among its members. According to Jackson & Ruderman in Ambarwati, et.al., 2024 [7], diversity challenges in organizations include:

a. **Discrimination and Prejudice:** Although organizations may strive to be inclusive, discrimination and prejudice persist. This can hinder employee development and create inequities in terms of promotions and compensation. Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or other characteristics is a serious problem and must be combated.

b. **Inequality in Access and Opportunities:** Not all members of an organization have equal access to career and development opportunities. Diversity is only effective if everyone has equal opportunities. Employees from certain

backgrounds may face barriers to achieving high positions or obtaining strategic projects.

c. **Resistance to Change:** Often, employees who have long worked in less diverse environments may feel uncomfortable with changes to a more inclusive organization. This can result in resistance to change and resistance to diversity efforts.

d. **Ineffective Communication:** Diversity brings a variety of communication styles. Misunderstandings and conflicts can arise if there is no understanding and appreciation of various ways of communicating.

e. **Difficulties in Creating an Inclusive Culture:** Creating a culture that promotes inclusivity is a challenge in itself. This requires commitment from leadership, appropriate training, and ongoing supervision.

In order to accommodate diversity in public policy, we need few concepts to analysis this research. The first one is multi-stakeholder, is often used in contexts where complex challenges require diverse expertise, resources, and perspectives. Multi-stakeholder is the integration of diverse stakeholders such as universities, industry, government, civil society, media, and NGOs enhances policy responsiveness and effectiveness, addressing societal challenges holistically [8]. The second is 'Indigenous Knowledge Systems', which originated in ancient China, India and Africa, and are now very common. Indigenous Knowledge Systems cover a wide range of everyday issues, including water, health, agriculture, food processing and conservation. Indigenous Knowledge Systems are context-specific intellectual resources and should be integrated directly into identification and evaluation[9]. Technology development should keep in mind local knowledge as a component of the Indigenous Knowledge System.

## 2. Methods

This study uses qualitative research methods to examine the role of diversity in public policy development for environmental sustainability in the South Papua region. A qualitative approach was chosen as it allows researchers to understand in depth the complex social, cultural and ecological dynamics and interactions between various stakeholders. This research mainly focuses on exploring and interpreting the meaning of the data collected, which involves narrative and descriptive analyses to gain deep insights into the topic under study.

The main source of data in this research came from a literature search that included policy documents, government reports, academic studies, journal articles, and publications from non-governmental organisations related to environmental sustainability and diversity in South Papua. The literature search aimed to gather comprehensive information on traditional practices, existing environmental policies, and challenges and opportunities in public policy development in the region.

Data collection techniques in this research include literature review and in-depth interviews with key informants, including local community leaders, policy makers, academics, and environmental activists. These interviews were conducted to obtain direct perspectives from those involved or affected by public policies in South Papua. The data analysis technique used was content analysis, in which the collected data was categorised, interpreted, and synthesised to identify key themes relating to the role of diversity in public policy. The results of this analysis are then used to formulate policy recommendations that are more inclusive and sustainable, in accordance with the local context and the needs of the people of South Papua.

## 3. Result & Discussion

### 3.1. Result

The results of this study show that cultural and ecological diversity in South Papua has an important role in the development of sustainable public policies. Literature studies and interviews with key informants revealed that indigenous peoples in South Papua have deep local knowledge on sustainable natural resource management. Traditional practices, such as rotational farming systems and the use of natural medicinal plants, have proven effective in maintaining the balance of local ecosystems. This knowledge has been passed down through generations and is an integral part of their cultural identity.

However, the data also shows that there is a significant gap between this local knowledge and the public policies implemented by the government. Many environmental policies adopted in South Papua often ignore or lack consideration of these traditional practices. Policies that are more often based on modern and uniform approaches do not always fit the local context, which can lead to incompatibility and even environmental damage. For example, some conservation and reforestation programmes supported by governments and international organisations take little account of indigenous vegetation types that are better suited to local ecological conditions.

The research also found that indigenous peoples are often not adequately involved in public policy formulation processes. Many policies are implemented without adequate consultation with local communities, leading to a lack of acceptance and participation from them. This disengagement hampers the effectiveness of policies and creates tensions between the government and indigenous peoples. Key informants from local communities raised the importance of dialogue and active participation in the decision-making process to ensure that policies implemented truly reflect their needs and values.

In addition, this research identified that the success of sustainable public policies also depends on education and capacity building at the local level. Many communities in South Papua still have limited access to education and modern technology, which hinders their ability to fully participate in sustainability initiatives. Training and education

programmes that focus on natural resource management and environmental sustainability can increase community participation and effectiveness in conservation efforts.

**Table 1.** Various External Challenges Affecting Environmental Sustainability In South Papua

External Challenges	Description	Policies Taken	Data Source
Climate Change	Rising average temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and increased frequency of natural disasters such as floods and droughts threaten local ecosystems and livelihoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of climate change adaptation programmes at the community level.</li> <li>- Implementation of environmentally friendly agricultural technology.</li> <li>- Climate awareness campaigns in schools and communities.</li> </ul>	Local government, academics
Deforestation	Exploitation of mining and marine resources without considering sustainability, causing environmental damage and social conflicts with indigenous communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moratorium on new logging licences.</li> <li>- Rehabilitation of critical land through reforestation programmes.</li> <li>- Strengthening the role of indigenous peoples in forest management.</li> </ul>	Environmental activists, traditional leaders
Unsustainable Exploitation of Natural Resources	Illegal logging and land expansion for oil palm plantations and mining activities are causing biodiversity loss and soil degradation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishment of local regulations on sustainable natural resource management.</li> <li>- Improve monitoring and enforcement of illegal exploitation practices.</li> <li>- Multi-stakeholder dialogue to find a common solution.</li> </ul>	Environmental activists, local government policy makers, academics

<sup>a</sup> Processed from interview results

Data obtained from the literature also shows that there are various external challenges affecting environmental sustainability in South Papua. Climate change, deforestation and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources are serious threats to local ecosystems. Policies that only focus on economic aspects without considering long-term environmental impacts have the potential to worsen the situation. Therefore, a holistic and integrated policy approach is needed that covers social, economic and environmental aspects in a balanced manner.

The research also highlights some successful examples where diversity and local knowledge have been successfully integrated into public policy. One example is a community-based conservation initiative that involves indigenous communities in the management of protected forests. The programme has not only succeeded in protecting biodiversity but also improved the economic welfare of the communities through the development of ecotourism and non-timber forest products.

From the results of this research, it is clear that the integration of diversity in public policy development has great potential to create more effective and sustainable sustainability solutions. The cultural and ecological diversity of South Papua is an invaluable asset that needs to be recognised and utilised in every policy step. By engaging local communities and adopting an inclusive and participatory approach, public policies can be more successful in achieving the goals of environmental sustainability and community well-being.

### 3.2. Discussion

The discussion of this research further explores the role of diversity in public policy development for environmental sustainability in the South Papua region, and relates it to relevant theories and concepts. The research highlights how cultural and ecological diversity can make a significant contribution to more adaptive and sustainable policies.

One of the key relevant concepts is the "multi-stakeholder" approach to public policy development. This theory emphasises the importance of involving various stakeholders, including local communities, government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector, in the decision-making process [10]. In South Papua, the involvement of indigenous communities who have deep local knowledge of their environment is crucial. The findings of this study show that when indigenous peoples are actively involved in policy formulation, the results tend to be

more effective and sustainable. This is in line with the theory that inclusive and participatory policies tend to be more accepted and supported by the affected communities.

In addition, the concept of "indigenous knowledge systems" is relevant in this context. Research shows that traditional practices passed down through generations have important value in sustainable natural resource management. For example, rotational farming systems and the use of natural medicinal plants have been used by indigenous people of South Papua for centuries. This concept supports the argument that public policies that integrate local knowledge will be more appropriate to local ecological and cultural conditions, and more effective in the long run.

The discussion also relates the research findings to the concept of "sustainability," which advocates an interdisciplinary approach in addressing sustainability issues [11]. In South Papua, environmental sustainability challenges are complex and require an approach that combines ecological, social and economic aspects. Public policies that only focus on one aspect, for example, the economy, without considering environmental and social impacts, have the potential to fail [12]. This research shows that a holistic approach that recognises diversity and leverages local knowledge can provide more comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

The research also found that education and capacity building at the local level are critical to the success of sustainable public policies. The concept of "capacity building" emphasises the importance of providing local communities with the skills and knowledge they need to participate effectively in sustainability initiatives [13]. In South Papua, training programmes that focus on natural resource management and environmental sustainability can empower communities and increase their participation in conservation efforts. This is in line with the theory that local capacity building can strengthen community engagement and improve policy effectiveness.

In addition, the concept of "resilience" is also relevant in this context. Research shows that indigenous communities in South Papua have high resilience to environmental change due to their adaptive traditional practices. Public policies that integrate resilience approaches can help local communities address challenges such as climate change and deforestation [14]. By recognising and promoting practices that enhance ecosystem and community resilience, policies can become more robust and responsive to change [15].

The research also relates the findings to the theory of "ecological economics," which advocates a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. In South Papua, policies that emphasise the exploitation of natural resources without considering environmental impacts often disadvantage local communities and damage ecosystems. The research findings suggest that a more balanced approach, which integrates the principles of economic and ecological sustainability, will be more effective in the long run.

Finally, this discussion underlines the importance of "good governance" in public policy development. Transparent, accountable and participatory governance is key to ensuring that policies truly reflect the needs and aspirations of communities. In South Papua, social injustice and unequal access to education and technology are major challenges. Public policies that prioritise good governance principles can help address these challenges and create a more equitable and sustainable environment.

Overall, this discussion shows that the role of diversity in the development of public policies for environmental sustainability in South Papua is crucial and needs to be recognised. By integrating cultural and ecological diversity and involving local communities in the decision-making process, public policies can become more adaptive, inclusive and sustainable. The findings of this research provide valuable insights for policymakers and other stakeholders in their efforts to preserve the environment and improve the welfare of communities in South Papua.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research concludes that cultural and ecological diversity in South Papua has a very important role in the development of public policies for environmental sustainability. The integration of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and practices into public policies can result in more targeted, effective and sustainable solutions. This finding confirms the importance of an inclusive and participatory approach in the policy formulation process, where the involvement of local communities is key. Policies based on the principles of good governance, education and local capacity building are also proven to improve effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a more in-depth study on concrete mechanisms that can be used to integrate local knowledge into public policies. In addition, further research also needs to focus on evaluating the long-term impact of these diversity-based policies on community welfare and environmental sustainability. By continuing to develop and refine approaches based on diversity and active community participation, it is hoped that sustainability efforts in South Papua can be more successful and become a model for other regions facing similar challenges.

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