

Understanding Local Governance in the Circle of Interest: A Literature Review

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Abstract: Local public administration is a field that positively reflects organizational needs. As a result, public administration is required to provide concrete representation of its suitability to be called a public organization. Paradoxically, when local government public administration emphasizes representation, it has no substantive meaning.

Purpose: This is the result of the interests of actors who have carved out administrative boundaries.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study uses a literature review that raises local issues conditioned in the form of specific subheadings with limitations. Maximizing data based on relevant research and sources forces this study to extract metadata from the data. To maximize metadata conditions, this study limits several relevant notes to support the main focus on public governance in the arena of interest.

Findings: The results of the study show that pragmatic governance under pressure from capital owners has defeated senior policy experts, intellectual groups, and even political actors themselves. This existence is reflected in selective diction. This confirms the next finding, a shift from potential policies to administrative violations. The procurement of goods and services has become the most distributive consequence, ensuring that the basis for selective implementation is accommodated in concrete terms. Restoring the spirit of independence of supervisory institutions and involving external civil society-based

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institutions are areas that need to be considered in both the process and implementation.

Originality/value: The conditioning of public governance does not ensure that it has been addressed by different actors with diverse focuses.

Keywords: public governance; local government; public interest

Paper Type: Article-Research

Introduction

Public governance by local governments is an undeniable part of any bureaucratic body. The purpose of public governance is none other than to regulate, manage, position, and provide the right composition for the needs of public organizations, both in the short and long term (Ahn & Chen, 2022; Rosenbloom et al., 2022; Safdar et al., 2022). This is intended to ensure the appropriate measure of a main objective in establishing a regional organization, or what we sometimes refer to as a vision, so that governance can provide concrete policies with consideration of the capabilities of regional organizations (Alasiri & Mohammed, 2022), which is oriented towards the capacity and competence of available resources, including human resources, financial resources, natural resources, and even technological resources that are needed at present. This journey is a partial consequence, as regional organizations will inevitably change in the future by following the dynamics occurring in the social environment of the community. The hope is that public administration that is directly related to the community will be able to discipline what is not justified and reduce unconditional policies (Beerepoot et al., 2023).

This hope then faded away when it became clear that the connotation of management could to be actualized by state institutions, not only in terms of implementation but also in terms of representation. This means that it should not only be oriented towards the needs of the community, but also touch on the right to have all primary and secondary needs fulfilled after the fulfillment

of obligations, whether through democratic contestation leading to elections (Gebrihet & Eidsvik, 2024; Jang & Kreiss, 2025), tax payments in various products, to comply with all state regulations as stipulated in other local government policies (Clifford et al., 2024; Papyshv, 2025; Xu et al., 2025). This relevance was then conveyed Vasan et al. (2022), considering unmet social needs, when community resources are available but not properly conditioned. Furthermore, in other public governance issues, by (Cao et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2021) in the same context, given that the needs of the elderly are not being seriously addressed by the government, with as many as 50% experiencing unmet needs, the provision of services is no longer based on need. As a result, governance tends to be paradoxical in responding to the interests of service recipients.

The implementation of unrepresentative governance then becomes a contradiction that needs to be addressed, namely that siding with the people as the recipients of services and political promises only becomes an opportunity to break the chain of objectives for the formation of government in general. Chumo et al. (2022) which previously justified that if local resilience strategies in realizing inclusive urbanization were not subsequently developed, this trend would strengthen as unmet needs tended to increase along with worsening vulnerability and marginalization. This connotation encourages local government governance schemes to be fully consistent and significant in ensuring that adverse impacts are suppressed in the vortex of local interests (Chong et al., 2022; Ke et al., 2021), when local governments are categorized as bringing the distant closer (de Benedictis-Kessner et al., 2025; Koinova, 2025). Before the shadow of globalization intervened in various products, particularly touching on the context of digitization and transformation.

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Shifting to a more micro level, based on records that have carved out the existence of unrepresented public interests in the Indonesian context, in recent years, as shown in the table

Indicator	Current/latest conditions	Trends / Key issues
Indeks Persepsi Korupsi (Corruption Perceptions Index, CPI) - Transparency International	2024: score of 37/100, ranked 99th out of 180 countries. (Purnamasari, 2025)	After two years of stagnation at a score of 34 (2022-2023), the increase to 37 is somewhat positive. However, it is still far below the global average (average score ± 44) and below several neighboring ASEAN countries. (Purnamasari, 2025)
Rule of Law Index - World Justice Project	Indonesia's score was around 0.52-0.53 (on a scale of 0-1) during President Jokowi's administration, ranked 66th out of 142 countries in 2023. (Nastitie, 2023)	Stagnation: no significant improvement since 2015; several indicators such as "absence of corruption," "government transparency," and "basic rights" received relatively low scores and have not changed much. (Nastitie, 2023)

Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) - World Bank	One of the weakest indicators is Control of Corruption and Political Stability & Absence of Violence. The WGI scores for several indicators are still low compared to benchmark countries.	Several indicators have improved in the long term (government effectiveness, regulatory quality), but progress in law enforcement and corruption control has been much slower. Even for "Political Stability," scores often fluctuate or tend to be weak. (World Economics Research, 2025)
Good Governance Index (GGI) - LSI Denny JA, Maret 2025	Skor GGI RI ≈ 53,17 (skala 0-100)	It still lags far behind compared to developed countries in Asia such as Singapore (~87.23), Japan (~84.11), and South Korea (~79.44) according to the same survey. (Dwi, 2025; Fahrurozi, 2025)

Figure 1. 1. *Aggregate Dynamics of Public Governance in Indonesia*
 Source : (Dwi, 2025; Fahrurozi, 2025; Nastitie, 2023; Purnamasari, 2025; World Economics Research, 2025)

As mentioned above, the journey of public governance in Indonesia has been varied. The conditioning of public governance does not ensure that it has been addressed by different actors with

diverse focuses. From the first perspective, the corruption perception index has increased, but this does not mean that there has been a positive and satisfactory transformation, as it is still below the global threshold of 37/100. In the previous year, 2023, it reached 34/100, which is the same as in 2022 (Corruption Perceptions Index, 2024). A very slight increase in the clean-up agenda - even paradoxical to the objectives pursued through intervention and bureaucratic lobbying by the Jokowi administration at that time through program agendas and activities (Carolina, 2025; Kurlantzick, 2024; M. W. P. A. Wahyu, 2025). Furthermore, the corruption index is not the main benchmark for public governance that is impartial to marginalized and populist networks. There are still three ongoing issues that serve as benchmarks for the implementation of public governance. This issue has prompted literary research into the causes of management practices that still do not show impartiality towards marginalized and peripheral communities.

The limited space provided in the conceptual perspective for mapping the agenda of public governance interests, which ultimately leads to pathological bureaucratic actions, encourages this research to enrich the relevant context. Because the carving that supports local interests to continue running is based on tiered institutionalization, through level one and two regions, which in fact encourage the implementation of complex policies, even though their implementation does not depend exclusively on patronage networks (Fossati, 2016). This is in line with the contrasting position of governance, which must take responsibility for all the inevitabilities of contemporary vulnerabilities and crises, because it can explain why the desired reform efforts and programs have been unable to peel away the layers of root causes (Soesastro, 2003). Although the existence of e-government is said to rehabilitate the identity of government

services, it remains a formality and even an unrepresentative symbol (Hartanto et al., 2021).

Therefore, maximizing knowledge enrichment about the importance of public governance is very important, especially when the grand themes of Asta Cita and Indonesia Emas 2045 are not just a mere illusion. The autonomy of local governments needs to be corrected after academics oversee the reform process, if the reincarnation of pathologies in the form of corruption, collusion, nepotism, and fragmentation of diction continues to grow rapidly. This is especially true in the context of corruption in the procurement of goods and services that directly intersects with the dynamics of local communities.

Methods

The journey of public governance in recent decades has received serious attention, an assumption that is in line with public dissatisfaction with government services. To reinforce this assumption, this study uses a high-quality research method, namely a literature study. The main reference is that literature studies have been conducted by several academics, such as (Sihidi, 2025) who has reviewed the practice of authoritarianism in the era of digitalization, further literature studies were also conducted by (Sapta, 2025) which discusses authoritarianism and even supports it as the identity of Thai civil society in relation to the achievement of decentralization in the current political dynamics (Sujarwoto, 2017). The notes were then adapted to a different focus, reviewing content that intersected with the idea that public governance is nothing more than the result of intervention by political power circles. This intersection becomes a consequence when governance practices require consistent criticism of the governance that is being implemented.

The main data in this study was compiled from journals and several documents that provide insight into public governance. By not limiting the information conveyed in the form of journals and

documents, it is assumed that the alignment of interest groups is not a short-term process, meaning that reciprocity in achieving a management system is a long process resulting from a dialectical scheme behind the scenes of vested interests. This study also inherits the thematic analysis that has been voiced by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The reason behind this inheritance in writing is to make it easier for readers to understand the division of themes that have been accommodated according to the findings in the literature.

Discussion and Findings

Pragmatic governance under pressure from capital owners

Pragmatic governance is more conditioned by practical and short-term interests, which are not public idealism or good governance principles. This decision is oriented towards accommodating dominant interests in the pursuit of "global hegemony." (Agnew, 2005; Hancock, 1989; Wallerstein, 2003), It is not based on the lower-middle class, who are essentially defined by their electoral identity, but rather on capital owners who have agreed to political loyalty after the democratic process. In practice, the values of transparency, accountability, and public participation have become political compromises rather than moral principles, because the true expression of public interest values is still conditioned in the form of appendices that are cut off from the flow of formalities. The taboo of representing governance differently from pragmatism has taken root in the balance of elite demand. In short, the idealism that has been cooked up in the form of laws and regulations that touch on each local government policy is still far from optimal in maintaining excellent service, due to the sidelining of public affairs amid political pressure.

The root of this problem is dominated when politics becomes an entity that has a diction above government

bureaucracy. This axis is visualized in the following image, Figure 1. 1;

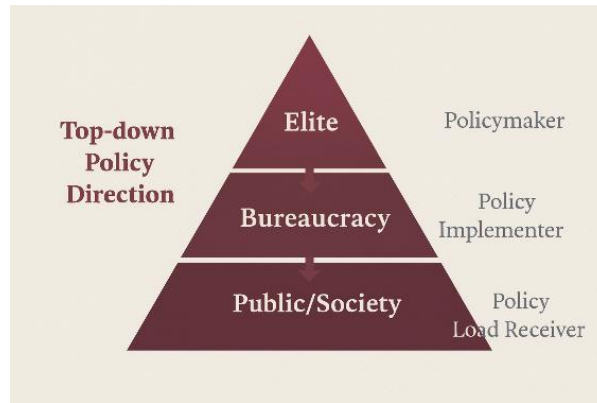


Figure 1. 2 Triangle of Power
Source: Research Findings 2025

The elite position, as illustrated above, is described as policymakers. The elite does not merely refer to policymakers, but rather an accumulation of actors who can influence the interests of policymakers to align with what is desired by capital owners. A clearer mapping of the elite is shown in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1. 2 Mapping the Elite

Elite type	Core composition and distinguishing feature
Programmatic Elites	Policy-minded groups of officials and experts who promote coherent policy programs and frames and act as new custodians of the state.
Bureaucratic elites	Senior civil servants and administrative cadres who shape

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	implementation and often dominate operational decision-making
Political elites	Elected officials, cabinet members and partisan leaders who set major priorities and formal decision gates
Transnational policy elites	Networked experts, international organizations, and cross-border coalitions that diffuse norms and policy models across jurisdictions
Philanthropic and interstitial elites	Foundation leaders, financial actors, and civic elites who influence policy via funding, program placement and brokerage across sectors

Source : (Arrigoni, 2023; Genieys & Hassenteufel, 2012; Henriksen & Seabrooke, 2021; McGuire, 2013; Wibisono, 2010)

Elite institutions that exert significant influence on policy formulation are concentrated among those who have certain opportunities in various professions. Simply put, Jessop & Morgan (2022) The core argument is that if institutions are selective social relations, the lack of broader opportunities to engage civil society becomes a key point in the context of pragmatic governance. This argument refutes the argument that vulgarizes civil society and electoral networks as aggregates of government institutional interests (Malik et al., 2022), even with the justification that participation in the public interest is prioritized as a representative arena playing the role of government institutions under normative orders. Furthermore,

Jessop & Morgan (2022) consider that government institutions do not work equally for everyone, but continue to focus on the elite when financial gains contribute significantly to income, rather than contributing to the alleviation of increasingly sharp inequalities. This means that government institutions are embedded in the cycle of capital accumulation rather than acting as independent key players.

This situation is very unfortunate. Regardless of their identity, whether they are policy experts, senior civil servants, or cabinet members, everyone will be subject to financial suppliers. Therefore, it is inevitable that a paradigm shift will force public institutions to play a competitive role, just like the logic of the market, profitability, and even investment attractiveness. Through this process, Jessop & Morgan (2022) refer to as a relational strategy in governance. The government treats institutions as if they were neutral in determining direction. This approach is often conceptualized in a direction that is justified by scientific records. This paradox contrasts with when institutions become selective social containers, which means prioritizing certain actors, strategies, and interests based on economics while ignoring the existence of others. Therefore, the actual expression is not openly stated. Selectivity that is political and power-based places administrative instruments and technical regulations to prioritize the interests of economic actors (Jessop & Morgan, 2022). As a result, social conflicts are easier to control so that they do not interfere with the operation of the market.

This study confirms that the concept of profitability is linked to the relationship between key decision-makers, especially political actors. Although governance often involves three major institutions, ultimately, the executive branch is the most respected. Building harmony and understanding of regional interests then becomes easier without abandoning the main tools of rhetoric and dialectics. On the same occasion (Bevins, 2020), calling it a

consequence of democracy because it makes it easier for capital networks to access resources through political bribery. Even without the necessary resources, the ability to build false legitimacy will be a major consideration, by planting nominal amounts of political bribery money among constituents, regardless of whether they are local figures or recognized for their experience in social movements.

This impact further strengthens the position of the executive branch, as the government's governance apparatus cannot play a discretionary role based on social interests. The moral burden of capital domination through pragmatic politics compels them to understand the importance of prioritizing the interests of the oligarchy. Putra & Arif (2001). Previous research has justified that after the first three years of the reform process in Indonesia, the Western model of bureaucratic reform was not entirely capable of creating representative governance because available public offices became instruments of political patronage. This view emphasizes that control of resources is more centralized in the hands of those in power in each region, and this activity is regenerated every five years in various forms and using different instruments (Wahyu, 2025).

Relevance in building seats of power, justified by (Kitschelt, 2011), which refers to it as a clientelistic relationship. Capital dominance not only has the potential to play a role in the vortex of regulatory structures and policies, but is also infiltrated within the structure itself. Kitschelt (2011) views this domain as a direct and conditional exchange between political actors and citizens, the term conditional exchange usually refers to positions in exchange for votes or services in exchange for loyalty. Regardless of the nature of clientelism as opposed to bureaucracy, its existence has been perpetuated and serves as one of the instruments for distributing state resources. This means that rational strategies built on the primary relevance of maintaining relationships

between elite actors necessitate centralized control. Thus, it can be said that bureaucracy is not a neutral representation of actors, but has been conceptualized as a selective area with a more formal and legal network. Thus, pragmatic governance is indeed a necessity in the contemporary era. Abandoning a selective agenda in favor of the interests of capital owners is not easy because the main traffic of a system has transformed into binding habits and culture.

Inevitable Administrative Deviations

The limits of governance are basically mapped out in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs). This results in limited authority over the resources of each institution. These limitations on authority do not guarantee that management practices will have a positive impact on the translation of core tasks and functions. This correlation is closely related to the infiltration of pragmatic interests within the government bureaucracy. In short, this control forces the competitive nature of the procurement process to give more space to selectively chosen networks. As an enrichment of (Jessop & Morgan, 2022) if the state can no longer position itself as a neutral actor, but instead provides facilities and privileges before the formation of government policy to selected actors, even in the guise of competition, this inevitability cuts across the most frequently mapped flow if failure always occurs at the implementation level rather than far behind before the formation of legal products.

The authority to organize the fulfillment of irregularities is carried out before the tender or procurement process begins. First, through determining whether a project requires procurement or not; second, through targeted budgeting issues, until the technical specifications are locked in for selected actors, with the provisions of the authority holder. This issue has become widespread after the shift from centralization to decentralization, because local governments have greater power and autonomy, both in terms of formal and informal relationships (Silitonga et al., 2015). This

condition has been proven by (Hidayat & Tambunan, 2025) His latest research reveals a fundamental insight with multiple meanings. Decentralized management practices are indeed intended as one of the instruments for producing development and infrastructure development. A pragmatic understanding to create micro-level growth, but on the other hand, it opens up opportunities for political commodities that are accommodated in formal regulations as the main legal umbrella in perpetuating rent production. This means that the term unfairly identifies rent practices by default to formalize political-economic interests in regional development planning documents and manipulate regulations to carry out a development program.

Administrative product irregularities have been identified in the last three years, as shown in Table 1.2 below;

Table 1.2 Handling Cases of Bureaucratic Irregularities

Type of matter	Year of the Matter		TOTAL
Purchase of Goods / Services	Year 2023	62 Things	151 Things
	Year 2024	68 Things	
	Year 2025	21 Things	
Gratuities / Bribes	Year 2023	85 Things	164 Things
	Year 2024	63 Things	
	Year 2025	16 Things	

Source : (KPK, 2025)

The two main factors that are conveyed become representative fields if the purchase of goods or services and gratuities or bribes experience a downward trend. This does not mean that it informs a positive trend in the occurrence of appropriate and proportional enforcement practices. In short, if administrative irregularities still occur at the regional level, it remains a bad record of local government management practices. This is because it disregards positive values above the selective interests of formal plans. Moreover, this indicates the

government's failure to follow up on the issue of bureaucratic pathology to continuously execute innovative reforms to address irregularities in formal planning. Jessop & Morgan (2022) provides an initial reflection, even though the procurement competition has been carried out competitively. The actors involved in the competition are more often than not affiliated with the same entity, which means that the emphasis is on physical representation rather than substantive representation. This phenomenon often causes irregularities in the process of formalizing infrastructure development programs.

In essence, ensuring that practices are substantively organized in policy packages requires external organizations to be involved in oversight. So far, oversight practices of local government bureaucracies have been carried out by a single state agency, such as the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK), the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), and the inspectorate. The fundamental impact is that oversight will feel bland and unable to provide satisfaction in terms of surprises and sting operations (OTT). Placing independent organizations outside the government that tend to make suggestions and criticisms on the dynamics of public governance is the healthiest composition. Or what we currently have is to radically reform the function of the KPK as an independent institution. The element of surprise in wiretapping, searches, and seizures without the permission of the supervisory board facilitates the enforcement process. However, in the current context, the re-centralization of control over anti-corruption law enforcement has made the KPK too effective and disruptive to economic and political stability, which ultimately needs to be controlled normatively, given that selective considerations require guarantees in the process of sustainable development (Jessop & Morgan, 2022). In the long term, the KPK will not lose its main duties and functions, but will transform from an extraordinary body into a regular supervisory agency.

The next resolution after reinstating the KPK's independence is to grant external civil society organizations, such as ICW and its affiliates, broader authority in the administrative oversight process, specifically in the context of oversight before the development planning process. In a narrower sense, Malang City, for example, already has an external civil society-based supervisory institution accommodated in the MCW, but it has not been able to achieve intervention. Massifying this movement in each region allows intellectual groups to be accommodated in a single interest to actively contribute to supervising practices before and during the implementation of planning and governance. This attention is highly considered as an example of one of the abilities to produce facts in scientific networks by (Hamdhani & Susilo, 2024) from outside the government, if the distribution of power in Batu City forces the elite to concentrate on actors who have been selected before the planning product is formed. This finding reveals the results of enforcement, and is very necessary to reveal oversight in the context of pre-planning in the form of policy. Thus, administrative irregularities at the regional level will only become an aggregate of interests that cannot be denied.

Conclusion

This study reveals conceptually that the existence of a pragmatic government is an implication of pressure from capital owners. This process clearly prioritizes selective functions that have become culture and necessity in the contemporary era. This is achieved by placing the interests of politically and structurally selected actors as the main reference. Thus, when public policies are formulated and designed, they are intended to accommodate the interests of certain actors in terms of access to resources. This means that social interests become a secondary consideration. The second finding is that unavoidable administrative irregularities become the next implication. When moving from centralization to

decentralization, control and autonomy place the interests of selected actors. This network spreads, in line with the weakening of the KPK's independence and the absence of intervention by public organizations that have a countervailing channel to oversee, both in the context before and during the implementation of regional planning.

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