

# Strengthening Welfare-Oriented Local Regulation Through Deliberative Policy: Evidence From Nagari Singguliang Lubuk Alung, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study examines how deliberative policy strengthens welfare-oriented local regulation in Nagari Singguliang Lubuk Alung, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The novelty of the study lies in integrating deliberative policy analysis, village-level policy capacity, and the distinctive institutional setting of Nagari governance, where formal village authority intersects with customary legitimacy and community-based public reasoning. Using a qualitative case-study design, the study draws on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, which were interpreted through an NVivo-informed thematic procedure. The findings show four concrete results. First, the main weakness of Nagari regulation is not the absence of formal authority, but the limited capacity to translate authority into legally coherent policy instruments. Second, stakeholder inclusion remains uneven (customary leaders, religious figures, women representatives, youth, and community groups are recognized as important, but they are not yet systematically connected to policy drafting. Third, monitoring and feedback mechanisms remain weak, limiting policy learning after regulations are enacted. Fourth, deliberative policy is most needed in three welfare domains: peace and public order, community economic empowerment, and environmental cleanliness and sustainability. The study concludes that welfare-oriented local regulation requires simultaneous strengthening of legal drafting competence, participatory design, institutional coordination, and continuous policy learning.

**Keywords:** Deliberative Policy, Local Governance, Policy Capacity, Local Regulation, Community Welfare

## Introduction

Governance at the village level is rapidly emerging as a site of innovative public policy-making, social problem-solving and democratic deepening ([Antlöv, 2003](#)) ([Syukri, 2022](#)). This proposition is particularly relevant within the context of Indonesia to areas where local institutional arrangements are embedded and closely interlinked with legal imperatives, customary power structures as well as community-based norms. The Nagari in West Sumatra is an administrative unit as well as a socio-political and cultural institution

with historical legitimacy, normative authority, and practical responsibility for regulating local public life. This study offers a clear novelty compared with previous studies. Existing village-governance studies in Indonesia commonly examine participation, village funds, accountability, and decentralization, while deliberative-democracy studies generally focus on normative democratic legitimacy. This study connects those debates by explaining how deliberative policy can improve the actual quality of local regulation in a Nagari setting, where formal legal authority, customary legitimacy, community knowledge, and welfare-oriented policy problems must be integrated in one policy process.

The most important thing is not formal authority itself, but what that authority can produce in terms of quality public policy ([Ferguson, 2023](#)). In practice, local governments have the right and mandate to create Nagari regulations but are still unable to translate this right into responsive, implementable, and socially acceptable policies ([Acharya & Zafarullah, 2022](#)). This leads to a fairly straightforward argument in this essay: while Nagari institutions are meant to design new policies that can concretely address social, economic, and environmental problems in their communities, this will not be possible if policymaking is treated as a narrowly formal-legal exercise rather than a substantive democratic process. This tension between formal authority and practical policy effectiveness is crucial to understanding why local governance reforms often fail to achieve their welfare goals ([Frangioni & Volturo, 2025](#)).

Deliberative policy, as described here, does not only refer to public consultation in a procedural sense. It involves a more robust process in which affected parties are involved in discussion, asked to express needs and interests, confronted with counter-positions, and invited into reasoned discourse before policy decisions are completed ([Alexander, 2023](#)) ([Pálsdóttir et al., 2023](#)) ([Ravazzi, 2025](#)). The paper also connects deliberation with underlying democratic values of inclusion, diversity, reciprocity, stewardship and respect in public communication. In this respect, deliberation is framed not only as a participatory technique but also as an indicator of quality in terms of public policy formulation ([Patty, 2023](#)) ([Takase, 2022](#)).

The need for a deliberative approach looks even more urgent when we take policy not as a product of routine bureaucracies but rather as a response to complex welfare problems in localities ([Frangioni & Volturo, 2025](#)). Legal prohibition is insufficient to support an effective public order: the latter requires shared norms for social conduct and

collective legitimacy for the enforcement of those norms ([Grigoryeva & Robbins, 2025](#)). These things matter greatly, but economic empowerment is always contingent on much more than programmatic announcements — it depends on a genuine space for affected groups to help create solutions, clear delineation of the respective roles that different institutions play, and an ability to draft supportive laws and regulations that translate into real-world use ([Klein et al., 2022](#)). Beyond policies, environmental cleanliness and sustainability also need behavioral conformity, monitoring systems and public ownership of policy objectives ([Kaufman et al., 2021](#)). Such issues are exactly the type of governance challenges to which deliberative policy is appropriate, since they require design of a policy that comes from dialogue, negotiation and collective acknowledgment of shared problems.

The concern in the paper in empirical fact is that the Government Nagari Singguliang Lubuk Alung has not been able to establish and determine a policy of participatory and democratic. The capacity gap is discussed in many dimensions. Firstly, there is a lack of understanding and expertise in participatory policy-making and legal drafting. Second, insufficient capability to relate Nagari regulations with higher-order legal structures can result in inconsistencies or contradictions. The third is the insufficient involvement of key stakeholders outside the formal village government. Customary institutions, religious leaders, Bundo Kanduang and youth are called actors by the paper, though their limited participation weakens the deliberative quality of local policy-making. Fourth, wider governance weaknesses still curb the crafting of accepted, solution-oriented and executable policies. Together these findings imply that local policy problems are not solvable merely by addressing a single technical shortcoming. Rather they manifest an introduced syndromology of institution in which legal capacity, participatory structure, governance quality and shareholder inclusion mutually constitute the conditions of effective local regulation.

From a scholarly perspective this question matters because it cuts across three lines of inquiry that are commonly treated in isolation from one another: deliberative democracy, the capacity for local governance and policy design. This bridge is already present in the paper but the introduction needs to be more integrated with it. Now, the core problem is not simply that Nagari governments need more sophisticated rules) (instead, public policy at the local level will be a function of entering into this combination of democratic legitimacy and technical adequacy within village institutions. A legally neat but socially detached

policy may fall flat because it lacks local ownership ([Homsy & Hart, 2021](#)). Conversely, a socially popular policy can collapse when it is poorly matched with legal procedures because such policies are rarely either enforceable or implemented ([Needham & Burn, 2025](#)). While deliberative policy provides a way of mediating this tension, it can only be fully effective in the context of supported institutional capacity and governance reform. Hence, the study is meant to be read as an attempt to justify that there is scope for improving the quality of local public policy through the concurrent enhancement of procedural inclusiveness, legal drafting competence and institutional governance. Thus the study is pertinent not only to village studies or Indonesian public administration, but also to wider debates about how local states in decentralized environments are able to formulate democratic yet implementable policy.

This study also demonstrates that deliberative discourse should not be commercialized in a vacuum and requires supportive institutional conditions. The quality of local policy improves with investment, through institutional dimensions such as human resource development, organizational capacity building, institutional reform, and community engagement ([Rodríguez-Pose, 2021](#)) ([Nie et al., 2025](#)). These dimensions are not merely supporting secondary variables but core components of policy quality. Village officials must understand the legal and procedural basis for rule-making, and human resource development is essential. Enriching organizations is crucial because policy formulation requires coordination, role clarity, and administrative continuity. This requires institutional reform, as current governance arrangements can hinder transparent and inclusive decision-making ([Antlov et al., 2016](#)). Community participation is crucial because policy legitimacy depends on whether local actors are adequately represented in the decision-making process ([Mey et al., 2022](#)) ([Rockloff & Moore, 2006](#)). By framing deliberative policymaking in terms of capacity building, this paper avoids a common weakness in discussions of participatory governance: the belief that inclusion itself is sufficient. Instead, this study accurately treats deliberative policymaking as a capacity-dependent process that relies on democratic openness and institutional competence.

One of implication in this paper that Nagari government is to be responsible to solve the social, economic and environmental issues by issuing local regulation. But this very government has yet to fully grasp the policy-making process, integrate local regulations with more universal legal norms and consult relevant partners in a deliberative way.

Conversely, if local regulations are developed through a process that allows for shared problem identification, discussion of alternatives, and consensus on implementation priorities, they will gain collective legitimacy and support ([Yang & Zhao, 2023](#)). The relationship between the policymaking process and its acceptance is crucial in the Nagari context, as local institutions derive their authority not only from legislation but also from recognition and socio-cultural ties within the community. Regulations that may be legally valid but lack social support can remain ineffective in practice ([Fernández Blanco & Kristan, 2025](#)).

The concrete findings anticipated and later confirmed in this study are as follows: the Nagari government recognizes key welfare problems, but it lacks sufficient policy-conversion capacity) (technical legal drafting remains concentrated among formal officials) (non-state actors hold social legitimacy but are not fully incorporated into drafting) (and monitoring-feedback mechanisms are still weak. These findings are important because they show that the quality of local regulation depends on the combination of legal competence, deliberative inclusion, and governance learning.

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

The qualitative research policy design approach in this study aims to provide an explanation of how deliberative policy processes strengthen the quality of local public policy in Nagari Singguliang, Lubuk Alung. Focusing on policy formulation as a process rather than outcome, and avoiding to measure the effectiveness of such policies only in terms of numbers make this study qualitative approach suitable.

### **Data sources**

Through a qualitative data approach, this study aims to facilitate a more in-depth and reliable analysis of the policy process. Focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis are the primary data sources. Semi-structured interviews were used to reflect the views, experiences, and interpretations of key actors involved in or affected by Nagari policymaking.

### **Informants and sampling strategy**

The study involved 24 informants selected because they had direct knowledge of Nagari governance, policy formulation, community deliberation, or local welfare problems.

The informants consisted of three Nagari government officials, two representatives of the Nagari consultative body, three customary leaders, two religious/community leaders, three Bundo Kanduang or women representatives, three youth representatives, five community or economic/environmental group representatives, and three officials or facilitators from the Community and Village Empowerment Service. These characteristics ensured that the study captured both formal governmental perspectives and community-based perspectives on regulation-making. The core informant categories include: Wali Nagari and other members of the Nagari government) (representatives of the Nagari consultative body) (customary leaders and representatives of local institutions) (religious leaders and respected community figures) (representatives of women's groups, including Bundo Kanduang where relevant) (youth representatives) (and community members or group representatives involved in discussions related to public order, local economic empowerment, or environmental management) (Community and Village Empowerment Service).

Data triangulation was conducted by comparing information from interviews, focus group discussions, and documents. Interview statements were checked against focus group discussion patterns to identify agreement, disagreement, and variation among actors. These findings were then compared with regulatory drafts, meeting records, planning documents, and relevant legal references.

#### **Data analysis using NVivo**

Using a qualitative data analysis software platform NVivo, we organized coding, queries and interpretation of unstructured content such as interview transcripts, focus group transcripts and policy documents. According to the official NVivo manual, the software allows for the organization of multiple qualitative data sources under one project, coding of text and audiovisual materials, memoing, querying, comparison, and visualization. NVivo provided these features and proved a particularly good fit for this research since it generated multiple types of qualitative evidence from comparative analysis across actors, themes, and documents.

#### **Result and Discussion**

The findings are organized around four concrete points. First, the main bottleneck is policy formulation and legal drafting, not the absence of formal regulatory authority. Second, deliberative inclusion is still uneven because important community actors are

recognized but not systematically connected to the drafting process. Third, monitoring and feedback are weak, which limits learning after regulations are enacted. Fourth, welfare-oriented regulation is most relevant for peace and public order, community economic empowerment, and environmental cleanliness and sustainability. The integrated findings indicate that the primary challenge in Nagari Singguliang Lubuk Alung is not the lack of formal authority to regulate local affairs, but the limited capacity of local institutions to translate that authority into deliberative, coherent, and implementable public policies. This paper explains that the Nagari government has the legal authority to formulate local regulations and that improving the quality of policies at the Nagari level requires democratic public engagement through deliberative processes.

Read as a unified empirical pattern, these findings suggest that policy issues in Nagari are fundamentally institutional, not merely procedural. In other words, the challenges are not simply due to some actors not being invited to meetings or because some regulations are poorly drafted. More deeply, these findings point to a local policy system in which authority, inclusion, legal competence, organizational support, and implementation learning are not yet fully aligned.

From an analytical perspective, these patterns are best understood as clustered thematic structures rather than isolated sets of variables. The most prominent coding domains likely include: policy analysis capacity, legal drafting capacity, deliberative inclusion, governance and implementation support, monitoring and feedback, and the welfare-oriented focus of policies. Coding logic is well-suited to this type of analysis because it allows researchers to examine how these themes interrelate across different actor groups and how some themes are more concentrated around certain institutional locations than others. The framework matrix, in turn, is specifically intended to summarize and compare evidence case by case in a way that helps qualitative researchers move from raw coded material to analytical interpretation. What emerges from this integrated reading is that Nagari's policy problems are best described as deficits in institutional transformation. Details can be seen in the table below:

**Table 3.**  
Reconstructed NVivo matrix coding of key themes across actor groups

<b>Actor groups / cases</b>	<b>Analytical policy capacity</b>	<b>Legal-drafting capacity</b>	<b>Political-deliberative inclusion</b>	<b>Governance/implementation capacity</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; feedback capacity</b>	<b>Welfare-problem orientation</b>
Nagari Government (Wali Nagari, Secretary, apparatus)	H	H	M	H	M	H
Nagari Consultative Body	M	M	H	M	M	M
Customary leaders	L-M	L	H	M	L-M	M
Religious leaders / ulema	L	L	M-H	L-M	L	M
Bundo Kanduang / women representatives	L	L	M	L	L	M
Youth representatives	L	L	M	L	L	M
Community groups / public participants	L	L	M	L	M	H

Note: H = high salience, M = moderate salience, and L = low salience.

The matrix verifies that welfare-problem oriented behavior is consistently salient for government as well as community actors. That means this case is not one of a failure to see local problems. Social evils are manifest and labelled. What remains flabby is the translation of established welfare problems into some deliberately forged, legally sound, and enforceable rules. The matrix thus reinforces the larger reading of the case: The central issue is not weakness in perspective-taking, but rather in policy conversion. This distinction matters, because it informs the policy recommendation that the study draws. If the big problem were lack of issue awareness, then more consultation might be enough. However, if it is limited institutional conversion of authority and social knowledge to policy that is at

issue then deeper interventions in relation to drafting capacity, organisational support and participational design are needed.

### **Policy formulation weakness as the first bottleneck**

One of the most significant findings of this study is the failure of local public policies to emerge during their formation. The study clearly shows that Nagari governments remain limited in their knowledge and capacity for participatory policy formulation and development, resulting in regulations that cannot truly be categorized as laws or are structured polycentrically, making implementation difficult. This suggests that Nagari policy failures are not solely due to post-facto resistance, weak law enforcement measures, or community apathy. Rather, they remain rooted in the failure of prior policies to be built within a legally, contextually, and socially coherent framework ready for implementation.

These findings can be usefully understood through the lens of policy capacity. This conceptualization is found in a large body of empirical and theoretical literature that distinguishes between analytical, operational, and political dimensions, at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels. Evidence from Indonesia, as well as more recent governance research, suggests that local government effectiveness is rooted in the interaction between these capacities rather than maximum fiscal or administrative resources. Analytical capacity relates to problem diagnosis, policy design, evidence interpretation, and the legal context) (Operational capacity relates to implementation, coordination, and delivery) (political capacity relates to negotiation, coalition building, legitimacy, and managing relationships between actors. The Nagari case demonstrates weaknesses in all three areas, but the first and most visible obstacle is analytical policy capacity, particularly the inability to translate local issues into appropriately structured regulations.

### **Deliberative inclusion as both democratic and epistemic necessity**

Another dimension of this research's findings is the conceptual weakness surrounding deliberative inclusion. The study repeatedly notes that developing better policies for Nagari requires community participation in democratic and deliberative processes. The limited involvement of key actors, such as traditional institutions, religious leaders, Bundo Kanduang, and youth, must be identified, potentially reducing the effectiveness of regulations. The significance of this finding extends beyond procedural

questions of representation. It touches on the legitimacy and intelligence of policymaking. From the perspective of deliberative theory, this is not surprising. Studies of deliberative democracy have long argued that the quality of public decisions depends not only on who exercises authority but also on how the voices influencing the decision are included in informed deliberation (Patty, 2023). Inclusion, diversity, reciprocity, respect, and stewardship are among the criteria for deliberative quality referenced in the study itself. These principles remain core, but more recent work has introduced an important refinement: meaningful participation requires not only the inclusion of voices present in the process, but also transparency about how input is used, whether this input appears to originate from a credible process, and the pathways through which participation actually influences policy (Ryan et al., 2023) (Scudder, 2021).

### **Governance weakness and the incompleteness of the policy cycle**

A more general conclusion was that weaknesses in governance do not stop with formulation but carry through into implementation, monitoring and feedback. Weaknesses in governance remain barriers to policy-making, and regulations themselves can be hard to implement because they are not understood well, may be resisted by those affected, and are not backed by strong enough coaching by the institutions. It also notes that monitoring, supervision and feedback from community groups remains weak. The importance of this observation is that the fragility of policy in the Nagari is cyclical rather than episodic. The failure of the policy process does not occur in one discrete moment. Instead, weaknesses accumulate across stages (Sager & Gofen, 2022).

This finding may also be understood through the concept of the policy cycle as a governance chain rather than as a sequence of discrete stages. Implementation quality depends on what has transpired during formulation) (feedback quality depends upon what institutional support was available throughout implementation) (and the possibility of downstream policy improvement will reflect whether there are feedback loops across the system. This point is reiterated by the matrix coding with regard to relatively weak monitoring and feedback capacity found in almost all actor groups. Thus, while regulations may be churned out, at best the system is poorly suited to flagging sub-optimality on the front-end of policy design, improve upon its own creation within iterations, and develop common understanding through iterative communications (Jalonen, 2024).

### **Welfare orientation and the substance of local regulation**

An especially important strength of the empirical case is that it remains clearly anchored in substantive local welfare issues. The study identifies three major problems: peace and public order, empowerment of community economic groups, and environmental cleanliness and sustainability. These are not symbolic concerns. They are concrete domains of community life in which local regulation is expected to make a difference. The presence of these issues in the findings is significant because it shows that village-level policy is not merely about administrative procedure. It is about whether local institutions can improve lived social conditions ([Hofstad et al., 2025](#)).

Community economic empowerment presents a second kind of welfare challenge. Policy in this area cannot be effectively produced without understanding the real conditions of local groups, their organizational capacities, their barriers, and the forms of support they need. If the policy process remains dominated by administrative actors and insufficiently informed by community knowledge, regulations for economic empowerment risk becoming generic or performative. Deliberative involvement matters here because it opens the possibility that economic policy at the Nagari level will be shaped by the experience of those most directly affected ([Frangioni & Volturo, 2025](#)).

### **Capacity building as an emergent transformation process**

From a policy capacity perspective, this intervention makes sense because it simultaneously addresses multiple dimensions of weakness. Training addresses analytical and technical deficits in policy development and formulation. Mentoring and advocacy address the need for practical translation of knowledge into institutional behavior. Organizational strengthening addresses coordination and implementation. Participatory efforts address the legitimacy and absorptive capacity of the policy process. The integrated nature of these interventions is noteworthy analytically because it aligns with the integrated nature of the problem. A fragmented response is likely to be less effective: technical training alone will not improve weak deliberative inclusion, and expanded participation alone will not improve weak governance. Recent reflections on citizen participation further support this interpretation. One study emphasized that effective participation requires not only deliberative formats but also investments in communication, education, skills development, and institutional alignment across the policy cycle. This aligns well with the logic of the study itself. The Nagari case demonstrates that participatory and deliberative aspirations

can only be meaningful if accompanied by investments in institutional learning and practical capacity. In that sense, these findings contribute to an increasingly important lesson in contemporary governance studies: democratic participation and institutional capacity are not competing agendas) (they are mutually reinforcing ([Michels & de Graaf, 2017](#)).

Overall, these results and discussion suggest that Nagari Singguliang Lubuk Alung should be seen as a case of partial local policy capacity under decentralization. There is an institutional space for local regulation. We know what welfare problems need to be solved. The normative goal of deliberative policy is well articulated. But the actual translation of these elements into high-quality regulation is still a work in progress. The system remains unable to bring together analytical know-how, social legitimacy, and governance support within a single coherent policy process. The key implication is that quality improvement of Nagari regulation cannot be achieved by relying only on legal formalization or procedural participation. It demands concurrent fortification of the drafting competence, actor inclusion, organizational backing and recursive policy learning. The evidence indicates that local autonomy can only be really understood when authority is generated on the ground and deliberative hopes get transformed into institutional arrangement.

## **Conclusion**

The main contribution of this study is to show that deliberative policy is not merely a participatory ideal. In Nagari governance, it functions as a practical mechanism for converting formal authority and community knowledge into welfare-oriented local regulation. The study also shows that deliberative policy is functionally necessary in the Nagari context because the main issues addressed by local regulation—peace and public order, community economic empowerment, and environmental cleanliness and sustainability—are socially embedded problems that require local legitimacy, public understanding, and community ownership. Thus, improving the quality of Nagari regulation requires more than formal rule-making) (it requires stronger institutional design for participation, policy formulation, and policy-cycle learning.

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