

Discursive Navigation in Institutional Decoupling: A Critical Analysis of the Dynamics of Ideational Power Communication in the Formation of Regional Apparatuses in Palopo City

Harsya Harun¹, Bambang Supriyono², Bambang Santoso Haryono³,
Endah Setyowati⁴

¹Doctoral Program of Administrative Science, Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University, MT Haryono 163 Lowokwaru Malang, Indonesia, Department of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Andi Djemma, Indonesia

^{2,3,4}Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University, MT Haryono 163 Lowokwaru Malang, Indonesia.

Abstract

This study aims to assess the extent to which institutional discursive navigation influences the occurrence of institutional decoupling in the formation of regional apparatuses in Palopo City. Using a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques, including interviews, observation, and documentation, the study analyzes data through a coding process using NVivo 12 Plus software. The findings reveal that "power over ideas" is the most dominant form of discursive power in shaping means-end and policy-practice decoupling. Actors within the Palopo City government use their power to control discourse, limit public participation, and direct the interpretation of regulations. Practically, the ability of local actors to control and communicate discourse becomes a critical factor in determining the implementation of national policies at the local level. The originality of this research lies in the finding that discursive power, particularly in the communication of "power over ideas," functions as a mechanism that enables and sustains decoupling practices within the context of decentralization.

Keywords: Institutional Decoupling, Institutional Discursive, Communication Of Ideas

Introduction

Achieving bureaucratic reform goals will always be directed toward fulfilling the principles and fundamentals that form the substance of regional government regulations. Bureaucratic reform is factually reflected in the structure of regional apparatuses intended to carry out governmental functions under the authority of regional governments. Failure to implement bureaucratic reform reflects a formal organization's inability to identify contextual aspects and align them with program or policy adaptations. This condition highlights the need for alignment between institutional capacity and the policies issued by

the government, as well as the institutionalization of effective performance management in the public sector (Khairul Muluk & Danar, 2021). This situation is also echoed by Ricks and Downer, who emphasize the importance of matching institutional capacity with developmental tasks (Ricks & Doner, 2021; Rodrik, 2004).

The regulations governing regional governance stress the importance of institutional capacity, which Savitch refers to from a relational perspective, focusing on issues of responsibility between the organization and its constituents, efficiency in performance and resource utilization, and accountability to various sources of authority (Savitch, 1998). The current regulations are designed to build connectivity between regional potential and responsibility for utilizing those resources. The use and specific exploitation of regional potential have been established in regulations, particularly concerning the execution of government affairs under regional authority.

The formation of regional apparatuses is an effort to build connectivity between institutional capacity and regional potential. The formation of regional apparatuses is regulated by Government Regulation No. 18 of 2016 on Regional Apparatuses, designed to create efficiency and rightsizing in executing governmental affairs based on regional potential. However, the achievement of efficiency and rightsizing through the implementation of this regulation has yet to be fully realized. Studies by Firdaus Nuzula Rizki (Rizki, 2019) and Gustine et al. (Gustine et al., 2018) indicate inefficiency and an increasing organizational structure of regional apparatuses, similar to the period before the enactment of the government regulation on regional apparatuses. These issues suggest that policies have been established but must be implemented more effectively.

The regulation of authority has implications for the dilemma faced by regional governments in determining the relevant regional potential for management based on administrative and political capacities. This dilemma arises when regulations explicitly mandate specific governmental affairs to be carried out by regional governments. In contrast, these governments possess other regional potentials that need to be accommodated within the regulatory framework. This situation indicates the potential to overlook institutional pressures imposed by existing regulations and, conversely, create bargaining mechanisms that can accommodate regional potential.

This study was conducted in Palopo City, a local government that has formed regional apparatuses with a larger organizational structure than other regions in South Sulawesi province. Within the framework of Government Regulation No. 18 of 2016 on Regional Apparatuses, the management of governmental affairs is based on the principles of efficiency and regional potential while also indicating a trend of uniformity in the formation of regional apparatuses across local governments.

No.	Regional Apparatuses (Before Government Regulation No. 18 of 2016)	Total	No.	Regional Apparatuses (After Government Regulation No. 18 of 2016)	Total
1	Regional Secretariat	1	1	Regional Secretariat	1
2	Secretariat of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD)	1	2	Secretariat of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD)	1
3	Inspectorate	1	3	Inspectorate	1
4	Offices (Dinas)	16	4	Offices (Dinas)	29

5	Technical Institutions (Agency/Office/Hospital)	13	5	Agencies	6
6	Districts	9	6	Districts	9
	Total	41		Total	47

Source: Organizational Section, Regional Secretariat of Palopo City 2020

Institutional pressures in the form of standardization through regulations serve as constraints for local governments, preventing them from acting outside the existing regulatory framework. However, fundamentally, regulations still contain loopholes that allow for the violation of their substance. One fundamental principle often violated is the principle of efficiency, evidenced by the inefficiency that emerges when regional apparatuses are formed at maximum capacity, accommodating almost all governmental affairs except those related to mining and forestry resources.

Early studies on decoupling, such as the work of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), demonstrate that organizations tend to respond to external influences—such as laws, public policies, and social movements—by creating internal mechanisms that shield their daily operations from external oversight and evaluation (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). These activities are carried out to separate formal policies from the organisation's technical core and everyday routines (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Thus, this phenomenon is driven by a commitment to compliance with legal requirements, industry standards, and internal rules (Roberta, 2024). External pressures, particularly legal and regulatory mandates, are crucial in shaping organizational diversity policies (Yang & Bacouël-Jentjens, 2018). Consequently, this leads to adopting policy practices that are misaligned with the regulatory framework, affecting decision-making. On the other hand, this approach also enables greater accountability, as regional apparatuses can be held responsible for implementing policies and programs (Klijn & Koppenhan, 2016).

Both Clarke and Foweraker (2001) and March and Olsen (2006) emphasize the role of rules in defining institutions, arguing that these rules are embedded in structures of meaning and resources and tend to endure over time, serving as the foundation for political behaviour (Clarke & Foweraker, 2001; March & Olsen, 2006). Within this framework, the rules that underpin institutions and are products of policy sometimes need to align with what is formally written.

Changes in governmental institutions, as seen in introducing new governance rules, are often analogized as efforts to reform government operations. However, according to Andrews (2013), such reforms only sometimes result in better governance. Often, reforms are based on standardizing approaches and achieving the same policy objectives.

The push for uniformity in policy implementation reflects the cultural-cognitive pillar of institutional formation (Scott, 2014), where there is a tendency for institutions to create isomorphism with others as a result of shared interpretations and maintaining institutional adaptation to policy changes. The drive toward uniformity within the concept of isomorphism indicates whether institutionalization has occurred within an organization (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2017; Ashworth et al., 2007). This condition is based on the assumption that similarities will arise when organizations exist in the same environment, and regulations are used as a medium to establish this uniformity.

On the other hand, compliance with regulations also generates resistance, driven by efforts to adapt to local conditions and potentials, as well as other emerging interests. Resistance to institutional change through decoupling involves organizations outwardly conforming to institutional pressures while internally maintaining existing practices (Majid, 2015).

Haack and Schoeneborn (2014) further elaborate on the types of decoupling, distinguishing between means-ends and policy-practice decoupling. Means-ends decoupling indicates that policies have been implemented correctly, but unforeseen circumstances prevent the achievement of policy goals. The second type occurs when policy practices are implemented from the outset but are not aligned with the established policy objectives. Andrews (2013) asserts that the changes referred to as government reforms are often limited to improvements in regulations, systems, and processes without yielding significant positive effects on the overall performance of the public sector.

In the context of regional apparatus formation, the phenomenon of means-ends decoupling is crucial to understand, particularly regarding how policies adopted by local governments often do not align with the expected outcomes. Means-ends decoupling refers to situations where organizations adopt and implement policies but fail to achieve the intended goals, creating a gap between what should be accomplished and what occurs in practice (Hladchenko & Pinheiro, 2018; Hladchenko et al., 2018).

One of the leading causes of means-ends decoupling in the formation of regional apparatuses is the institutional complexity faced by local governments. When local governments operate in a complex environment with various stakeholder interests and expectations, it becomes difficult to integrate the existing goals and resources (Hladchenko et al., 2018; Hladchenko & Benninghoff, 2020).

Furthermore, means-ends decoupling can lead to dissatisfaction among the public, who are expected to benefit from the policies implemented. For instance, if a local government adopts a sustainable development policy but fails to implement practices that support its goals, the public will experience negative consequences from the mismatch between policy and practice (Maddaloni & Sabini, 2022; Jabbouri, 2019). This demonstrates that, while policies may be formally adopted, ineffective implementation can result in failure to achieve the desired outcomes.

Research also shows that means-ends decoupling can occur when the focus shifts from the original policy objectives to other, more urgent or easily attainable interests. In some cases, organizations may prioritize fulfilling administrative procedures over achieving substantial results, ultimately neglecting the policy's original goals (Waldorff & Madsen, 2022; Jabbouri, 2019).

Furthermore, Hladchenko and Benninghoff highlight that senior managers often pursue personal interests, contributing to organisational cultural complexities (Hladchenko & Benninghoff, 2020). In this context, organizations frequently become entangled in practices that do not provide tangible benefits to their core functions, creating a misalignment between goals and the means to achieve them. This can lead to confusion among organizational members about shared objectives and how to accomplish them (Brunsson, 1989), which can reduce the effectiveness of public policy implementation.

In policy evaluation, using a means-ends framework can also help improve communication between agents and clients, delivering more focused messaging (Kolar & Kolar, 2021). This is particularly important in public communication, where a lack of shared understanding about communication goals can hinder effectiveness. Thus, applying the means-ends framework in public policy analysis can offer better insights into how policies can be more effectively designed and implemented and how public engagement can be enhanced in the process (Manganti, 2023). Overall, means-ends decoupling in institutional settings reflects the challenges organizations face in achieving their goals when institutional complexity is present. This highlights the need for a more integrated approach to policy formulation and implementation to ensure that desired objectives can be achieved effectively and efficiently.

On the other hand, policy-practice decoupling concerns how public policies are formulated and implemented and how the interaction between policy and practice can result in outcomes that differ from

expectations. It is important to note that public policies are often designed with specific goals, but various factors, including social, cultural, and economic contexts, can influence their implementation on the ground. Understanding policy practices helps us view policymakers as collaborative partners in innovation and improvisation, allowing them to engage in what Newman calls "creative destruction" (Freeman et al., 2011). This suggests that the policies formulated are only sometimes reflected in the practices, creating a gap between policy goals and on-the-ground realities. The policy-practice type of institutional decoupling shows the need to understand the complex interaction between formulated policies and implemented practices.

Institutional decoupling practices do not occur in isolation. Some mechanisms facilitate and sometimes justify decoupling, allowing organizations to navigate the complexity of institutional demands and their operational realities. Decoupling practices represent an internal organizational response to accommodate internal positions in the face of external pressures (Khalid & Scapens, 2005). Internally, discursive dynamics within institutions and organizations become essential in shaping and managing the institutional environment through discursive interaction (Hardy & Phillips, 1999).

Discursive dynamics can influence the construction of organizational identity and communication strategies to justify decoupling practices (Pitsakis et al., 2012). Organizations may symbolically support certain practices while implementing others, reflecting strategic responses to external pressures (Wijen, 2014). The dynamic nature of institutions, as highlighted by discursive institutionalism, underscores the role of discourse in creating and transforming institutional structures (Schmidt, 2000).

Adherents of discursive institutionalism emphasize that institutions are formed based on communicated ideas, which are often paradigmatic (Smith, 2013). Paradigmatic refers to the condition where, once ideas are institutionalized, they can operate as filters for policy, communicating the influence of ideas that support that way of thinking while simultaneously "blocking" more challenging ideas. Interpreters are crucial in communicating institutional knowledge across boundaries, counterbalancing dominant narratives, and influencing power differences through discursive means (Gu, 2022).

By analyzing data from social media platforms, patterns can be uncovered that reveal how leaders use fallacies to delegitimize established practices and opposing views (Aboh, 2023). Additionally, investigations into referential strategies and ideologies in political discourse can explain how ideologies become institutionalized in governance (Khasandi et al., 2016).

Regulatory changes that lead to the standardization of rules can obscure the essence of regional conditions and characteristics. This implies that policy implementers and stakeholders at the local level may still accommodate regional conditions. However, at the same time, they maintain an external view that the policies are functioning as written. Accommodating internal potential and conditions can develop into institutional decoupling, which can be navigated through institutional discourse.

Institutional discourse, in practice, shows a dominance of power from various parties. Carstensen and Schmidt (2015) propose three ways this power is communicated through discourse and ideas. First is power through ideas, where actors with the necessary capacity have the power to communicate, influence, and convince others about their ideas and values. Second, power over ideas is a more coercive form of ideational power where actors control and dominate the meaning of ideas by imposing them on others. Third, power in ideas focuses on the authority or power of specific ideas in shaping thinking while overpowering or sacrificing other ideas (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2015).

Power in the context of discourse and ideas can be understood through the lens of institutional and discursive theory, where power is embedded in formal structures and how ideas are shaped and

communicated within institutions. The concept of power through ideas suggests that ideas can function as tools for channelling power and influencing individual and group behaviour in social and political contexts.

Through power through ideas, institutional discourse functions as an arena where power can be expressed and negotiated. This condition can directly impact individuals' physical and mental states, creating new subjects bound to a particular ideology (Shahmirzadi, 2018). In this context, the ideas generated within institutional discourse reflect existing power and can serve as tools for resisting that power. Research by Timor-Shlevin and Benjamin shows how managerial and critical discourses in social work interact and influence the daily practices of social workers, reflecting how power operates within institutional practices (Timor-Shlevin & Benjamin, 2020).

Moreover, power can also be viewed from a "soft power" perspective, where discourse is used to build identity and position an entity within a global context. This perspective shows how media can shape discourse constructions that create distinctions between the "Self" and the "Other," which in turn influences international power dynamics (Pan et al., 2019). In this context, the ideas generated through discourse function to legitimize actions and regulate power relationships among different actors.

Furthermore, power in discourse is also closely tied to how actors within institutions use discursive approaches to influence collective decision-making. Dewulf and Elbers argue that in cross-sector partnerships, power can be understood through actors' strategies aimed at shaping collective decisions, showing that power is not solely centralized but also distributed among various actors (Dewulf & Elbers, 2018). This aligns with Kingdon's concept of "policy entrepreneurs" who invest their resources to push their preferred proposals or issues, drawing attention from critical players linking solutions to problems and merging these with political contexts (Kingdon, 2014).

It is crucial to remember that power in institutional discourse can also serve as a tool for social change. Kestler (2023) asserts that ideas possess motivational power to drive collective action, where collective self-awareness can facilitate institutional change. In this sense, ideas emerging from institutional discourse do not merely create existing power structures but also open spaces for innovation and transformation. Power flows through discourse and ideas within institutional contexts, involving complex communicative interactions among actors, ideas, and practices. Institutional discourse reflects the existing power and serves as an arena where power can be negotiated and transformed.

Ideational power can be categorized as a persuasive process focusing on the control of the content of ideas, or "Power over ideas," where actors seek to control the ideas entering policy discussions by communicating their proposed ideas (Curran et al., 2020; Dyrhaug, 2023). In this context, ideas function as tools to achieve political objectives and create broader power structures within society. Institutional discourse can shape the ideal subject within leadership contexts, where democratic and reflective ideas are internalized through technology, power, and the self (Ruschkowski et al., 2019). This indicates that power is external and internal, shaping how individuals understand themselves within a broader social context.

Institutional discourse also highlights the importance of communication frameworks in planning theory, where power is understood through the framing processes that influence how issues are perceived and discussed in planning contexts (Westin, 2021). This demonstrates that power over ideas lies not only with those who possess formal power as a form of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) but also with those who can dominantly communicate and frame issues in ways favourable to them (Acosta et al., 2020). This shows that ideational power operates at various levels, from everyday narratives to formal policies, creating

complex dynamics in decision-making. Power in discourse and ideas through "Power over ideas" shows that ideas have the strength to shape policies and social practices, manifested through persuasive processes, framing, and narratives. Power operates not only within formal structures but also in the ways individuals and groups engage with discourse.

In public policy, power often flows through discourse and ideas shaped by social institutions. The analysis of "Power in Ideas" suggests that ideas generated by various actors in the policymaking process can demonstrate how power operates and transforms in broader social contexts. One relevant approach to understanding this dynamic is through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which allows researchers to explore how language and discourse contribute to constructing and reproducing power. For example, Yoon (2024) shows how discourse analysis can help identify different voices and perspectives in public debates and how these discourses can contribute to policy changes. In this context, discourse is a communication tool and a means of constructing social and political reality.

Moreover, research by Eriyanto and Ali (2020) reveals how discourse conflicts arise among various actors in public debates, such as the government, the public, and the private sector. Their research shows that different clusters of discourse communicated by these actors can create tensions and conflicts that affect the policies adopted, highlighting how power is distributed and contested. Lynn Bust et al. (2022) highlight how mainstream media discourse can shape public perceptions of policy and how political power can manipulate discourse to maintain the status quo.

In addition, Sarah Diem et al. (2022) emphasize that education policy cannot be separated from the rhetoric and power surrounding it. They employ critical discourse analysis to explore how race and school choice discourses create shifts in power and interests. Thus, discourse analysis can reveal how specific ideas and values are communicated and internalized and influence policy implementation and outcomes (Ocasio et al., 2017). Discourse analysis in the context of public policy provides deeper insights into how power operates within ideas and discourse.

The formation of regional apparatus has created assumptions that fulfilling the substantive aspects of regulations differs from actual practice. The indication of institutional decoupling becomes apparent when the Palopo City government ignores institutional pressures in the regulations governing the establishment of regional apparatus. This pattern is indicated by an internal construction influenced by ideational and discursive capacities communicated by agents. They may concentrate their efforts on a single agent or distribute them across multiple agents, turning the institutional formation into a discourse.

This study aims to assess the extent to which communication of ideas within the institutional, discursive theory framework can navigate institutional decoupling in the formation of regional apparatus in Palopo City.

Research Method

This study employs a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach explores and understands the meanings individuals attribute to social or human problems (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Descriptive research aims to describe and analyse phenomena, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and individuals or groups (Sukmadinata, 2009). Through this descriptive research, the institutional decoupling in the formation of regional apparatus and all relevant information can be obtained according to research facts. The qualitative approach obtains descriptive data in written words and observed behaviours relevant to the study.

The data collection methods used in this research include interviews, observations, and documentation,

which are detailed as follows (Creswell & Poth, 2018): a) Literature review: conducted to gather data by searching or digging into the literature related to the research problem, focusing on institutional decoupling and institutional discursive in the formation of regional apparatus; b) Closed interviews: conducted to elicit views and opinions from key informants, including members of the Palopo City Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), several academics, and officials within the Palopo City Government who can provide credible information; and c) Observations: made to observe the activities of regional apparatus at the research location.

Data analysis was carried out by implementing a coding process using NVivo 12 Plus software to categorize data through first-cycle and second-cycle coding stages.

Research Findings and Discussion

1. Institutional Decoupling in the Formation of Regional Apparatus

a. Means-Ends Decoupling

The purpose of establishing a regional apparatus is to create an efficient, effective organizational structure tailored to local needs, as outlined in the *rightsizing* principle in Government Regulation No. 18 of 2016 on Regional Apparatus. However, the Palopo City government still needs to adhere to this objective. Instead, they establish numerous regional apparatuses, even for issues that could be merged. This is evident in creating agencies like the Department of Transmigration, the Department of Cryptography and Statistics, and the Department of Archiving, despite the local workload and potential not fully justifying them.

The motivation behind forming such a "bloated" apparatus is more politically and bureaucratically driven, such as accommodating structural positions and the potential for increased budget allocations from the central government rather than focusing on organizational efficiency and effectiveness. This decoupling is also evident in how the Palopo City government manipulates the scoring system in government affairs mapping.

They tend to inflate scores to meet the requirements for forming regional apparatus without genuinely reflecting the workload and local needs. This phenomenon has been explained as stemming from various stakeholder interests and expectations, which can lead to difficulties in aligning existing goals and means (Hladchenko et al., 2018; Hladchenko & Benninghoff, 2020).

The formation of regional apparatus in Palopo City exhibits the means-ends decoupling phenomenon, where there is a disconnect between formal goals and implementation (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Although the process follows procedural regulations, the motivation behind the formation leans more towards political and bureaucratic interests rather than efficiency and effectiveness. This aligns with Brunsson's concept of "organized hypocrisy," where organizations separate formal policies from actual practices to meet the conflicting demands of various stakeholders (Brunsson, 1989).

This means-ends decoupling illustrates that although the Palopo City government formally follows procedures and regulations for forming a regional apparatus, the primary goals of the policy still need to be fully achieved in practice. This reflects a gap between formal policy and its implementation, ultimately reducing the effectiveness and efficiency of local governance. As Meyer and Rowan proposed, ceremonial conformity describes how organizations adopt formal structures to meet external expectations without genuinely implementing them in everyday practice (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

b. Policy-Practice Decoupling

Institutional decoupling in the policy-practice type refers to the gap between established policies and ac-

tual practices within an organization. Several indications of this decoupling type can be observed in the context of regional apparatus formation in Palopo City.

First, although Government Regulation No. 18 of 2016 on Regional Apparatus emphasizes the principles of *rightsizing* and efficiency, Palopo City's practices show the opposite tendency. The city government forms many apparatuses, even for issues that could be merged, highlighting the gap between policy advocating for efficiency and practices that instead "bloat" the organizational structure.

Second, the policy requires alignment between the workload and the organizational structure. However, in practice, the Palopo City government alters the scoring system to meet the criteria for forming a regional apparatus without genuinely reflecting the actual workload and needs of the area.

Third, while the policy emphasizes the importance of considering human resource capacity in forming regional apparatus, this aspect should be addressed. Regional apparatus are formed without considering the availability of competent human resources, ultimately hampering organizational performance. For instance, the Department of Cryptography and Statistics needs more qualified personnel, as indicated by informants during the study.

Fourth, the formation of regional apparatus should be based on analysing local needs and potential. However, in Palopo City, the formation is heavily influenced by political and bureaucratic interests, such as accommodating structural positions and increasing the potential for central government budget allocations. This is evident in the formation of the Department of Transmigration, which was not based on the preparedness of settlement areas—a prerequisite for addressing this issue.

The formation of regional apparatus in Palopo City reflects significant policy-practice decoupling, as theorized by Meyer and Rowan. This decoupling is evident from the disparity between formal policies emphasizing efficiency and actual practices that tend to expand the organizational structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This disconnect is visible in four key areas: organizational size, workload assessment, human resource capacity, and needs analysis. This situation aligns with the institutional isomorphism proposed by DiMaggio and Powell, where organizations adopt formal structures to gain legitimacy rather than efficiency (D'Andreanmatteo et al., 2019).

This policy-practice decoupling demonstrates a significant gap between formal policies on regional apparatus formation and their implementation in the field. This can lead to inefficiencies in local resource management and potentially hinder the effectiveness of local governance. It also reflects the challenges in translating policy into practices that align with the original policy objectives.

2. Institutional Discourse

a) Power through Ideas

Power through ideas refers to an actor's ability to persuade others to adopt their viewpoints through arguments and cognitive persuasion. In forming regional government institutions in Palopo City, we observe how the Mayor of Palopo used this power. The Mayor convinced various stakeholders, including the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) and the bureaucracy, to accept his vision of creating a "bloated" bureaucratic structure. The primary argument was that the more government bodies were established, the more opportunities there were to receive budget allocations from the central government. While this argument was not entirely accurate, it managed to influence the perception of various parties. Furthermore, the Mayor argued that separating regional government institutions would improve focus and effectiveness in handling governmental affairs. For example, in the creation of the Department of Transmigration, this argument was communicated with a narrative that suggested the potential for regional development through the transmigration program despite limited supporting data. The Mayor also

persuaded stakeholders that creating many smaller institutions was a form of efficiency. This argument was framed as a compromise between DPRD's demand for efficiency and the Mayor's desire to create numerous government bodies.

The power of these ideas was also evident in how the Mayor presented the creation of these bodies as a strategy to harness regional potential and improve public services. Despite indications of political motivations, this argument successfully garnered support. The Mayor's ability to deploy "power through ideas" reflects his skill in building convincing narratives to support his policies, even when there was a disconnect between the argument and the reality or true objectives. This cognitive persuasion influenced decision-making processes regarding the formation of government bodies.

The Mayor of Palopo exemplified "power through ideas" by persuading stakeholders, as described by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016). His arguments about efficiency and potential budget allocation align with the concept of "framing" in agenda-setting theory (Entman, 1993). This approach highlights the critical role of "policy entrepreneurs" in shaping public policy (Kingdon, 2014). Although effective, this approach raises concerns about accountability and evidence-based decision-making (Sanderson, 2002).

b) Power over Ideas

Power over ideas refers to an actor's ability to control and limit the ideas that enter public discourse or influence decision-making processes. In Palopo City's context, the Mayor demonstrated this power in shaping the discourse around forming regional government institutions. With political authority and influence, the Mayor restricted discussions and alternative considerations that aligned more with efficiency or rightsizing principles. For instance, despite recommendations from the DPRD to consider budget efficiency, the Mayor still promoted the creation of a "bloated" organizational structure.

This control over ideas was also evident in the limited public participation during formation. Because of time constraints and the technical nature of the process, public and non-government stakeholders' involvement was restricted. This allowed the mayor to control the ideas that influenced the final decision. Additionally, the Mayor used his power to limit the influence of data and information contradicting his policy. For example, despite insufficient supporting data, the Mayor controlled the narrative about potential regional development in the creation of the Department of Transmigration.

Moreover, the Mayor directed the interpretation of regulations related to forming regional government institutions. He influenced how Regulation No. 18 of 2016 was interpreted and applied in Palopo City, emphasizing aspects that supported his policy while downplaying or ignoring contradictory elements.

The Mayor's ability to control ideas in forming regional government institutions reflects his institutional power. Through this control, he created a discursive environment favouring his policy while minimizing room for critical or alternative policy discussions. This dominance aligns with Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971), where the Mayor controls discourse, limits public participation, and steers regulatory interpretation in favour of his policy. This communication practice reinforces the Mayor's position in decision-making, minimizing opposition.

c) Power in Ideas

Power in ideas refers to the inherent strength of widely accepted ideas that have become unquestioned assumptions within an institutional context. In Palopo City's case, we can identify several powerful ideas. First, there is a deeply ingrained notion that the more regional government bodies are established, the greater the chance of receiving budget allocations from the central government. While only somewhat accurate, this idea has been widely accepted and underpins the formation of numerous government bodies. The strength of this idea is evident in how it influences decisions, even when it contradicts efficiency

principles.

Second, the idea that structural positions in the bureaucracy are a form of "reward" or "accommodation" for civil servants holds significant sway. This idea influences the formation of government bodies, where a "bloated" organizational structure is seen as a way to accommodate many structural positions.

Third, each governmental function should ideally be handled by a separate government body to increase focus and effectiveness. This idea justifies the formation of separate bodies, even when functions could be merged.

Fourth, the notion that forming regional government bodies is the exclusive domain of the government, without needing broad public participation, is another powerful idea. This is reflected in how the formation process proceeded with minimal involvement from non-government stakeholders.

These powerful ideas show how deeply rooted assumptions and understandings can influence policy-making, even when they are not entirely accurate or aligned with broader policy goals. These ideas hold power because they have become part of the "common sense" within specific institutional contexts, shaping the thinking and actions of actors involved in forming regional government bodies. This reflects Meyer and Rowan's concept that organizations adopt formal structures for legitimacy, regardless of their effectiveness (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This phenomenon also mirrors the "institutional logics" concept discussed by Thornton and Ocasio (Ocasio et al., 2017), where institutional logics shape organizational behaviour, sometimes in opposition to existing regulations.

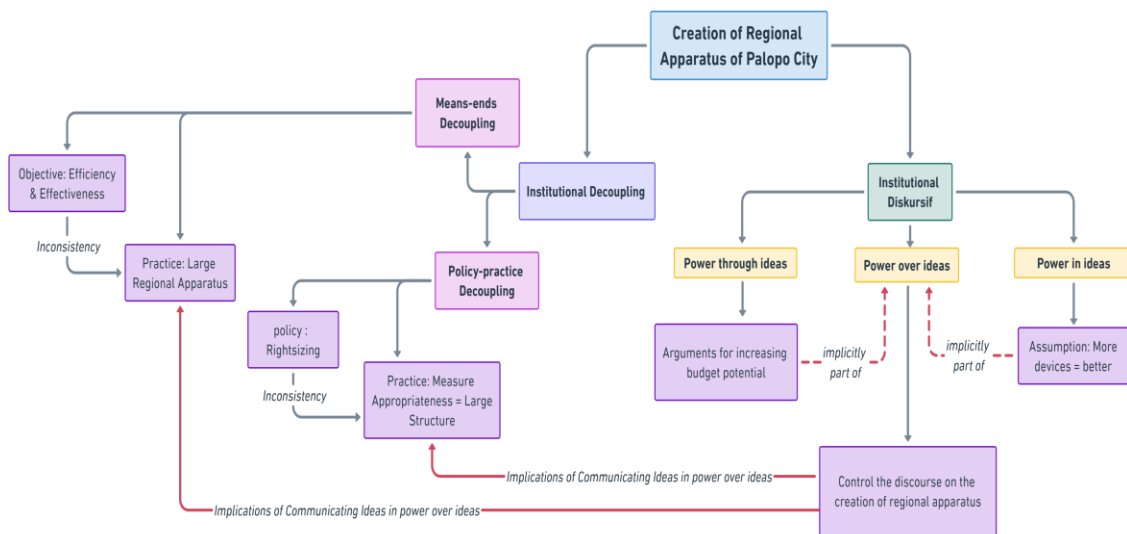


Figure 1: Patterns of Communication Dynamics in Navigating Decoupling

Source: Research Development

The relationship between institutional decoupling and institutional discourse in establishing regional apparatus in Palopo demonstrates a complex dynamic. Decoupling allows local governments to meet formal demands while maintaining practices aligned with local interests. Meanwhile, institutional discourse provides local actors with tools as channels of communication that justify and legitimize these decoupling practices.

Among the three forms of discursive power, "power over ideas" appears to be the most dominant in shaping means-end and policy-practice decoupling. The Mayor of Palopo employs his authority to control the discourse surrounding the establishment of regional apparatus, limiting public participation and directing the interpretation of regulations. The communication established is more rooted in the power held and aimed at reinforcing ideas that lead to policy decoupling.

This condition also creates an assumption that indirectly links Power through ideas and Power in ideas as implicit components of power over ideas directed toward the occurrence of institutional decoupling. This enables a decoupling between efficiency objectives (means) and the practice of establishing "large" regional apparatus (ends), as well as between rightsizing policies (policy) and the practice of establishing assessments that do not align with existing facts (practice).

A novel finding in this discussion is that discursive power, particularly "power over ideas," is an effective communication mechanism for local elite actors, enabling and sustaining decoupling practices. This suggests that in the context of decentralization, the ability of local elite actors to control discourse through ideational communication based on power can be a critical factor in determining how national policies are translated into local practices, even when such practices deviate from the policy's original objectives. Collaborative involvement from stakeholders or governance structures can counterbalance reconstruction policies by regional potential in a more positive direction. Collaboration within the framework of governance structures will open more significant opportunities to communicate diverse ideas, emphasizing Power in ideas, where each idea holds constructive value while adhering to existing regulations.

Conclusion

This study reveals the complexities involved in establishing regional apparatus in Palopo, highlighting the phenomenon of institutional decoupling in terms of means-ends and policy practice. While there is formal adherence to regulations, on-the-ground practices deviate from the objectives of efficiency and effectiveness. Institutional discourse, particularly "power over ideas," is crucial in navigating this institutional decoupling. The Mayor of Palopo utilizes his power to communicate and control the discourse and interpretation of regulations.

These findings indicate that, in the context of decentralization, the ability of local actors to control the evolving discourse and limit points of communication to a single actor in a unidirectional manner is a critical factor in translating national policies into local practices. This underscores the importance of understanding the role of discourse and ideational power in formulating and implementing policies at the local level.

References

1. Aboh, S. C. (2023). It will never be well with SARS: A discourse analytic study of the #EndSARS protests on social media. *Discourse & Society*, 35(2), 153–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265231200994>
2. Acosta, M., Wessel, M. V., Bommel, S. V., Ampaire, E. L., Jassogne, L., & Feindt, P. H. (2020). The power of narratives: Explaining inaction on gender mainstreaming in Uganda's climate change policy. *Development Policy Review*, 38(5), 555–574. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12458>
3. Andrews, M. (2013). *The limits of institutional reform in development: Changing rules for realistic solutions*. Cambridge University Press.
4. Ashworth, R., Boyne, G., & Delbridge, R. (2007). Escape from the iron cage? Organizational change and isomorphic pressures in the public sector. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 19(1), 165–187. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum038>
5. Boxenbaum, E., & Jonsson, S. (2017). Isomorphism, diffusion and decoupling: Concept evolution and theoretical challenges. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. B. Lawrence, & R. E. Meyer (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism* (2nd ed., pp. 77–97). SAGE Publications.

6. Brunsson, N. (1989). *The organization of hypocrisy*. J. W. & Sons.
7. Bust, L., Whyte, E., & Olivier, J. (2022). A mixed method media analysis of the representation of the South African National Health Insurance policy in the mainstream media from 2011 to 2019. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1681719/v1>
8. Carstensen, M. B., & Schmidt, V. A. (2015). Power through, over and in ideas: Conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23(3), 318–337.
9. Clarke, P. B., & Foweraker, J. (2001). *Encyclopedia of democratic thought* (1st ed.). Routledge.
10. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
11. Curran, D., Gillanders, R., & Mahmalat, M. (2020). Policymaking, ideational power and the role of the media. *Political Studies Review*, 20(2), 250–264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929920968348>
12. D’Andreanmatteo, A., Ianni, L., Rangone, A., Paolone, F., & Sargiacomo, M. (2019). Institutional pressures, isomorphic changes and key agents in the transfer of knowledge of Lean in healthcare. *Business Process Management Journal*, 25(1), 164–184.
13. Dewulf, A., & Elbers, W. (2018). Power in and over cross-sector partnerships: Actor strategies for shaping collective decisions. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(3), 43. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci8030043>
14. Diem, S., Good, M. W., Smotherson, B., Walters, S. W., & Bonney, V. N. A. (2022). Language and power dynamics: A critical policy analysis of racial and choice discourses in school integration policies. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 30. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.30.6995>
15. Dyrhaage, H. (2023). Danish nearshore wind energy policy: Exploring actors, ideas, discursive processes and institutions via discursive institutionalism. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 34(3), 223–235. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.2073>
16. Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
17. Eriyanto, E., & Ali, D. J. (2020). Discourse network of a public issue debate: A study on Covid-19 cases in Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 36(3), 209–227. <https://doi.org/10.17576/jkmjc-2020-3603-13>
18. Freeman, R., Griggs, S., & Boaz, A. (2011). The practice of policy making. *Evidence & Policy*, 7(2), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426411x579180>
19. Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, Eds.). International Publisher.
20. Gu, C. (2022). Interpreters as vital (re)tellers of China’s reform and opening-up meta-narrative: A digital humanities (DH) approach to institutional interpreters’ mediation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.892791>
21. Gustine, Q. B., Harsasto, P., & Firiayah. (2018). Sistem prefektoral dalam penataan organisasi perangkat daerah di Jawa Tengah (Studi kasus Kota Semarang). *Journal of Politic and Government Studies*, 7(3), 31–40.
22. Haack, P., & Schoeneborn, D. (2014). Is decoupling becoming decoupled from institutional theory? *Academy of Management Review*, 40(2), 307–310.
23. Hardy, C., & Phillips, N. (1999). No joking matter: Discursive struggle in the Canadian refugee system. *Organization Studies*, 20(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840699201001>

24. Hladchenko, M., & Benninghoff, M. (2020). Implementing the global model of the research university in a national context: Perspectives of deans and departments heads. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(10), 1493–1507. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijem-01-2020-0026>
25. Hladchenko, M., & Pinheiro, R. (2018). Implementing the triple helix model: Means-ends decoupling at the state level? *Minerva*, 57(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-018-9355-3>
26. Hladchenko, M., Westerheijden, D. F., & Boer, H. F. D. (2018). Means-ends decoupling at the state level and managerial responses to multiple organisational identities in Ukrainian research universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(4), 744–757. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1453786>
27. Jabbouri, R. (2019). Institutional means-ends decoupling work in industrial R&D project implementation. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 80, 296–311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2019.01.012>
28. Kestler, T. (2023). The motivational power of ideas in institutions and collective action. *Human Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-023-09661-x>
29. Khairul Muluk, M. R., & Danar, O. R. (2021). Policy-practice decoupling in institutionalizing performance accountability of local government: Case study of Malang City, Indonesia. *Local Administration Journal*, 14(2), 103–122. <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/colakkujournals/article/view/251004>
30. Khalid, S. N. A., & Scapens, R. W. (2005). Stability and change: An institutionalist study of management accounting change. *Accounting Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 18(1), 44–73. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513570510584656>
31. Khasandi, V., Telewa, V. K., & Ndambuki, J. (2016). Socio-linguistic referential construction of leaders in Kenya's 2008 post-consultation discourse: Coalition governance in nascent democracies. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 3(9). <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.39.2191>
32. Kingdon, J. W. (2014). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
33. Klijn, E. H., & Koppenhan, J. (2016). *Governance networks in the public sector*. Routledge.