

DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE IN NAGARI: SYNERGY BETWEEN CUSTOMARY LAW AND POLITICAL POLICY IN PASIA LAWEH, WEST SUMATRA

Tengku Rika Valentina^{1*}, Roni Ekha Putera², Tirza Haqia Purnama³, Andre Gunawan⁴,
Dhurani Balqis⁵

Department of Political Science^{1,4,5}, Department of Public Administration^{2,3}, Faculty of
Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Andalas

Email: tengkurika@soc.unand.ac.id

ABSTRACT. Political and policy crises across the globe are often characterized by declining public participation, growing political pragmatism, and weakening trust in formal institutions. These conditions create vulnerabilities for democracy, especially at the local level, where political legitimacy depends heavily on community trust. Yet, amidst such challenges, Nagari Pasia Laweh in West Sumatra presents a unique model of democratic resilience rooted in customary traditions, collective values, and socio-cultural participation that remain deeply embedded in everyday life. This study examines how the nagari functions as a node of resilience that sustains local democracy while adapting to the complex demands of the modern political system. The research applies a qualitative approach through forum group discussions (FGDs) involving the wali nagari (village head), niniak mamak (traditional leaders), bundo kanduang (matriarchs), youth, religious scholars, village officials, and community members. The analysis draws on institutional theory, particularly the three institutional pillars regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive to explore the interplay between formal rules, customary norms, and collective meanings in shaping local democratic dynamics. Findings show that democracy in Pasia Laweh is anchored in inclusive deliberation, mutual cooperation, and leadership guided by collective interests. Democracy here is not only procedural but also cultural, fostering social cohesion that withstands external pressures. Community adaptation to change is reflected in institutional innovations such as adat schools, dasa wisma schools, and the “baliak ka surau” (return to the surau) movement. These initiatives strengthen intergenerational transmission of values, reinforce moral character, and instill collective ethics among the youth, while also addressing contemporary challenges such as digital penetration, lifestyle shifts, and the threat of money politics. At the same time, regulatory dilemmas emerge. The discourse on Regional Regulation No. 7/2018, which mandates the election of the wali nagari through the Kerapatan Adat Nagari (KAN or Customary Assembly), raises debate about the balance between citizens’ political rights and traditional authority. This highlights the ongoing negotiation between modern procedural democracy and entrenched customary power. In conclusion, this study argues that the nagari is more than an administrative entity; it is a locus of democratic resilience that integrates tradition, modernity, and social innovation. Its contribution lies in offering a hybrid model of community-based participatory democracy that is not only relevant to the local context of West Sumatra but also provides insights for broader global debates on governance in the Global South.

KEYWORDS: democratic resilience; nagari; socio-cultural participation; local governance; Pasia Laweh.

