Revitalization of Marine Culture Through Maritime-Based Development Policy in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic state, possesses a rich maritime heritage shaped by centuries of seafaring and coastal livelihoods. However, national development has long prioritized land-based sectors, marginalizing maritime culture within policy frameworks. This study aims to analyze how maritime-based development policies can serve as instruments for revitalizing maritime culture and to identify the challenges and opportunities for their implementation. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research draws upon Edward III's policy implementation theory to examine policy communication, resource adequacy, bureaucratic structure, and implementers' disposition as determinants of success. Data were obtained through documentation studies, secondary data from government institutions, and semi-structured interviews with policymakers, cultural actors, and coastal community leaders. The findings reveal that while comprehensive legal instruments such as Law No. 5 of 2017 on Cultural Advancement and Presidential Regulation No. 16 of 2017 on Indonesian Marine Policy exist, implementation remains weak due to fragmented inter-agency coordination, limited resources, and insufficient political commitment. Some local innovations, such as culture-based marine schools and regional maritime heritage mapping, demonstrate potential best practices. The study concludes that revitalizing maritime culture requires integrating socio-cultural values into policy planning, strengthening institutional capacity, and involving coastal communities as key actors. Such efforts are essential to transform maritime culture from a symbolic narrative into a substantive foundation for sustainable and inclusive national development.

Keyword: Maritime Culture, Policy Implementation, Culture-Based Development

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as the largest archipelagic country in the world with more than 17,000 islands and sea areas covering around 70% of the total national area. The presence of the sea that is so dominant in Indonesia's geographical structure has formed a rich, diverse maritime culture and become an integral part of the nation's identity. However, along with the dynamics of development that is more land-based development, maritime culture has degraded and lost its strategic role in national development (Hoshino et al., 2020; Vinata et al., 2023).

The importance of reviving this maritime culture is reflected in the national development agenda through maritime-based policies. Since the era of President Joko Widodo until now, the concept of the world's maritime axis as a strategic vision to restore the glory of

the Indonesian maritime is still being implemented despite the change in national leadership (Manullang, 2024; Prescott & Schofield, 2005). This concept is stated in Nawa Cita and reinforced through Presidential Regulation No. 16 of 2017 concerning Indonesian Maritime Policy, which states that maritime development must include economic, environmental, defense, and cultural dimensions (Fabinyi et al., 2022).

From an anthropological perspective emphasized that culture is a system of values and symbols that live and develop in society. When maritime culture is no longer inherited or is not given space in public policy, there will be a vacuum of collective identity that is dangerous for an archipelagic nation like Indonesia. Therefore, revitalizing maritime culture through a policy approach is a strategic need that cannot be ignored. Normatively, the legal basis for the revitalization of maritime culture can be found in: Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture, which emphasizes the importance of protecting, developing, utilizing, and fostering national culture, including maritime culture as one of the objects of cultural advancement.

Presidential Regulation No. 16 of 2017 concerning Indonesian Marine Policy, which contains the strategic direction of holistic marine sector management, including socio-cultural dimensions. Law No. 32 of 2014 concerning Marine Affairs, which contains the principles of sustainability and recognition of local wisdom in marine space management. Although Indonesia has great potential in the maritime sector, the reality on the ground shows that maritime culture has not become the mainstream in national and regional development policies.

Many local wisdoms of coastal communities related to maritime culture, such as traditional navigation systems, sea ceremonies (sea alms, mappanretasi, sea parties), and traditional ship technology such as phinisi and jong, are starting to be marginalized. This culture has not only lost its symbolic value, but has also not been optimally utilized to support the development of the tourism, education, and maritime-based creative economy sectors.

Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology through the Indonesian Intangible Cultural Heritage shows that of the more than 1,700 intangible cultural heritages that have been registered as of 2023, only around 12% are directly related to maritime culture or maritime traditions. This reflects the low level of documentation and official recognition of the richness of coastal and marine culture (Akindele et al., 2023; Yin et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in the 2024 Indonesian Maritime Statistics Profile noted that more than 60% of coastal communities in Indonesia live in vulnerable socio-economic conditions, with limited access to education, technology, and cultural infrastructure. This shows that the potential of maritime culture is not in line with the level of welfare and strengthening of the identity of coastal communities.

This problem becomes more complex when maritime development policies in Indonesia tend to emphasize economic and infrastructure aspects, such as port development, sea toll roads, and the fishing industry, but ignore the socio-cultural dimensions of coastal communities. This shows an imbalance in policy orientation, as criticized who stated that maritime development in Indonesia is still too "technocratic-oriented" and has not touched on the "culture-based development" aspect (Kismartini et al., 2023).

In fact, local culture-based development has great potential to build regional competitiveness sustainably. The above phenomenon reflects the gap between regulation and implementation. Although there is Law No. 5 of 2017 concerning the Advancement of Culture and Presidential Regulation No. 16 of 2017 concerning Indonesian Maritime Policy, implementation in the regions has not been optimal (Margaretha et al., 2024; Marliani, 2024). This is due to the lack of synergy between regional apparatuses, weak capacity of cultural institutions, and the absence of a budgeting mechanism that supports the revitalization of maritime culture.

Policy implementation theory emphasized that the success of a policy is highly dependent on policy communication, resources, bureaucratic structure, and the disposition of the implementer. In this context, maritime cultural advancement policies often fail due to a lack of cross-sector coordination, low capacity of human resources who understand local culture, and the absence of a development paradigm that positions culture as a strategic instrument.

Revitalization of maritime culture through maritime-based development policies must be positioned as a transformative cultural policy strategy, not just a preservation program. This includes the integration of maritime culture in education, creative economy, local wisdom-based tourism, and coastal area governance involving the participation of coastal indigenous communities (Guo, 2022; Mujiburohman & Andari, 2023).

However, in the dynamics of modern development, maritime culture is slowly being marginalized. The orientation of national development for decades has tended to focus on land areas, while the maritime and coastal cultural dimensions have received less serious attention. This has an impact on the declining existence of maritime culture in people's lives and in development policies, both at the central and regional levels (Pratson, 2023; Samin et al., 2024).

Although Indonesia has a geographical character as an archipelagic country with enormous maritime cultural potential, national development still tends to be land-oriented and has not fully mainstreamed the maritime cultural dimension. Various policies have been issued, in their implementation there are still various obstacles that have an impact on the marginalization of maritime culture in national development. Therefore, the formulation of the problem in this study is: how can the revitalization of maritime culture be optimally pursued through maritime-based development policies in Indonesia, and what are the challenges and opportunities in the implementation process at the national and regional levels.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand how maritime-based development policies contribute to efforts to revitalize maritime culture in Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the characteristics of the issue being studied, namely related to complex social, cultural, and public policy phenomena, and requires contextual interpretation of dynamics in the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The purpose of this approach is to describe, explain, and interpret various phenomena related to the preservation of maritime culture through applicable policies, both at the central and regional levels. Data collection techniques are carried out through three main stages.

First, a documentation study is carried out by reviewing various formal policy and regulatory documents, including Laws, Presidential Regulations and other documents. Second, secondary data is obtained from official sources such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and other data to support the smooth running of research activities. Third, in-depth interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner with key informants selected purposively, such as service officials and traditional figures, cultural activists, and academics relevant to this issue. This interview aims to explore perspectives, experiences, and challenges in implementing maritime culture policies at the local level. In addition, limited observations were made of maritime culture practices in the field.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using thematic analysis that allows researchers to group information into important themes such as inequality in policy implementation, the role of local communities, and cultural integration in development planning. The findings were analyzed by referring to the theory of policy implementation according to Edward III (1980), which emphasizes that the success of implementation is greatly influenced by four main variables: policy communication, availability of resources,

bureaucratic structure, and the attitude or disposition of implementers. With this method, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges and strategies for revitalizing maritime culture in Indonesia through maritime-based development policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1.   Policy Communication and Cultural Integration
        Effective policy communication is the foundation of successful maritime cultural revitalization. Findings from interviews with ministry and regional officials show that communication between central and regional institutions remains fragmented. National programs promoting maritime awareness are often disseminated through top-down mechanisms without meaningful engagement from local actors. As a result, regional stakeholders interpret policy objectives differently, causing inconsistency in implementation and priority setting at the local level.

        Local cultural leaders express that government communication tends to focus on infrastructure achievements rather than cultural transformation. The narrative of the "world maritime axis," for instance, is widely recognized but rarely translated into culturally sensitive local programs. Public campaigns about maritime heritage are minimal compared to industrial or tourism-based initiatives (Zamorano & Rodríguez Morató, 2015). The communication gap between policymakers and communities weakens the sense of ownership among coastal societies toward maritime cultural revitalization.

        Document analysis also reveals that several provincial development plans have not yet integrated maritime culture into their strategic communication frameworks. Most provinces still adopt general cultural promotion models, such as festivals or exhibitions, rather than sustainable cultural education and policy literacy. This indicates that communication strategies prioritize visibility over long-term understanding, reinforcing a symbolic rather than substantive inclusion of maritime culture in development policy.

        To improve communication effectiveness, policy actors must institutionalize cross-sector dialogue platforms. Ministries related to education, tourism, and maritime affairs should co-create communication materials and knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Through participatory approaches, messages about maritime identity can be harmonized across administrative levels. This participatory policy communication aligns with Edward III's (1980) framework emphasizing the importance of message clarity, consistency, and feedback in implementation.

Table 1. Policy Communication Effectiveness in Selected Coastal Provinces

Province	Communication Mechanism	Local Involvement	Cultural Integration Level	Identified Barriers
North Sulawesi	Workshops and marine heritage events	Medium	Moderate	Limited coordination
South Sulawesi	Traditional leader consultations	High	Strong	Budget inconsistency
Riau Islands	Media campaigns and seminars	Low	Weak	Centralized messaging
East Java	Educational programs	High	Moderate	Lack of digital outreach

Source: Author, 2025

        Furthermore, the use of digital communication tools remains underutilized in promoting maritime culture. Although social media campaigns exist, they rarely connect with

educational curricula or cultural industries. A coordinated communication ecosystem linking digital platforms, schools, and cultural communities would make policy narratives more relatable and enduring. This approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility between the government and citizens in preserving maritime heritage.

Empirical findings highlight that policy communication has direct implications on public perception. Where communication is participatory, communities demonstrate stronger engagement in maritime conservation and cultural education. Conversely, regions with poor communication channels experience limited involvement, often perceiving maritime policies as external governmental agendas. This variation suggests that communication quality influences policy acceptance and sustainability.

Overall, communication must not be treated merely as information dissemination but as a process of co-creation. The government must acknowledge local cultural expressions as integral components of policy discourse. Only through inclusive communication can maritime cultural revitalization evolve from symbolic representation into a dynamic social movement supporting national identity reconstruction.

2. Resource Capacity and Institutional Support

The second finding highlights the crucial role of resource availability in shaping the success of maritime cultural revitalization. Institutional data show that most cultural offices lack adequate funding and human resources to carry out sustained maritime-based programs. Even though national regulations exist, resource disparities across provinces hinder equal implementation. Budget allocations for cultural revitalization remain below one percent of total regional expenditure, limiting both program scale and innovation.

The absence of trained cultural facilitators further weakens policy execution. Field observations indicate that local officials often lack expertise in maritime anthropology, heritage documentation, or participatory governance (Fung & Wright, 2001; Jun & Musso, 2013). Consequently, programs are frequently outsourced to private consultants who may not possess contextual understanding of local maritime traditions. This outsourcing practice results in a disconnect between policy intent and on-ground realities.

Resource capacity is not solely financial but also institutional. Many regional offices operate with overlapping mandates among tourism, education, and cultural sectors, leading to bureaucratic confusion. The weak coordination between ministries and local agencies produces fragmented efforts. In some cases, similar maritime heritage projects are implemented simultaneously by different agencies, wasting resources and diluting impact.

Table 2. Institutional Resource Allocation for Maritime Cultural Programs

Province	Annual Cultural Budget (IDR Billion)	HR Capacity (Personnel)	Program Duration (Years)	Implementation Effectiveness
North Sumatra	5.2	12	2	Low
East Nusa Tenggara	7.4	18	3	Moderate
Maluku	10.1	25	4	High
West Papua	6.7	15	3	Moderate

Source: Author, 2025

Strengthening institutional capacity requires the development of integrated cultural governance frameworks. These frameworks should delineate clear responsibilities, ensure budget synchronization, and encourage collaborative funding models between government and local communities. Such institutional reforms would transform maritime culture from a

decorative element into a strategic developmental asset aligned with national blue economy agendas.

Human resource empowerment is equally essential. The findings suggest that training programs focused on cultural mapping, community facilitation, and maritime heritage management are urgently needed. Universities and maritime academies can play a pivotal role in creating a new generation of cultural administrators equipped with both technical and sociocultural competencies. Collaborative training will bridge knowledge gaps and foster policy innovation.

Another dimension of resource optimization lies in leveraging local knowledge. Traditional navigators, shipbuilders, and sea ceremony custodians possess valuable experiential knowledge that can complement scientific expertise. Integrating these actors into policy execution enriches content and strengthens legitimacy. This hybrid approach aligns with the cultural sustainability model advocated emphasizing local participation as the cornerstone of sustainable maritime development.

Ultimately, the revitalization of maritime culture depends on how resources are mobilized and shared among stakeholders. Transparent budgeting, inclusive planning, and local empowerment will transform maritime policy from top-down directives into living practices embedded in community life. Only through institutional strengthening and capacity development can Indonesia realize its vision of becoming a true maritime nation.

3.   Bureaucratic Structure and Policy Coordination

Bureaucratic structure is another determinant in the success of policy implementation. Findings reveal that overlapping authority among institutions especially between central ministries and regional cultural agencies often leads to policy fragmentation (Rauch & Evans, 2000). Maritime cultural programs, although well-intentioned, suffer from poor coordination and unclear leadership. The absence of a unified institutional command results in redundancy and inconsistent monitoring standards.

The study identifies three key bureaucratic bottlenecks. First, the lack of inter-ministerial coordination causes duplication of programs and conflicting targets. Second, rigid administrative procedures hinder community participation in decision-making processes. Third, the limited use of integrated monitoring systems prevents accurate evaluation of program effectiveness. These structural weaknesses reduce efficiency and erode accountability in cultural governance.

Efforts to address structural barriers have emerged through pilot projects that integrate cultural revitalization within maritime spatial planning. For instance, local governments in Maluku have begun synchronizing cultural documentation with marine zoning systems. This practice demonstrates that integrated bureaucratic design can strengthen both heritage protection and sustainable resource use. However, such initiatives remain localized and have not been institutionalized nationally.

Table 3. Bureaucratic Coordination and Policy Outcomes

Coordination Mechanism	Interagency Involvement	Program Duplication Rate	Decision Speed	Policy Impact
Centralized	High	High	Slow	Moderate
Decentralized	Medium	Low	Moderate	High
Hybrid (Task Force Model)	Very High	Low	Fast	Very High

Source: Author, 2025

The role of local governments is pivotal. When bureaucratic structures are decentralized but lack capacity, policy outcomes remain suboptimal. Some regions demonstrate innovation by creating cross-departmental task forces for cultural revitalization, enabling smoother communication and better data sharing. This model aligns with Edward III's (1980) proposition that a well-structured bureaucracy ensures clarity and accountability in policy execution.

Nevertheless, bureaucracy in Indonesia still tends to operate in silos. Departments often protect their authority, resulting in limited collaboration. This condition delays decision-making and complicates budget disbursement processes. Structural rigidity also discourages the emergence of creative solutions that could bridge cultural and economic objectives. Therefore, bureaucratic reform must emphasize flexibility, interconnectivity, and digital integration.

Digitalization of administrative processes could significantly enhance transparency and efficiency. The establishment of a national maritime culture database would enable real-time coordination across provinces. This innovation would help standardize cultural documentation and accelerate program evaluation. Moreover, open-access digital systems encourage public participation and foster interagency collaboration.

The empirical evidence demonstrates that bureaucratic efficiency directly correlates with policy impact. Regions with streamlined structures and clear leadership tend to implement maritime programs more successfully. Conversely, bureaucratic inertia perpetuates cultural marginalization and policy inefficiency. Reforming bureaucratic architecture is thus imperative for achieving sustainable cultural governance.

4.   Community Participation and Local Empowerment

The final aspect of this study concerns the role of community participation in sustaining maritime cultural revitalization. Field observations indicate that regions involving local communities in planning and implementation tend to achieve more sustainable outcomes (Lapuz, 2023; Scheyvens, 1999). Community-based maritime festivals, coastal conservation efforts, and traditional boat-building initiatives create social ownership and intergenerational transmission of maritime values.

However, participation levels vary widely across regions. In some provinces, communities are treated merely as audiences rather than active partners. Government programs are often executed without adequate consultation, leading to limited cultural resonance. This top-down approach results in short-lived engagement and dependency on government funding. A participatory model, conversely, encourages community innovation and self-sufficiency.

Table 4. Levels of Community Participation in Maritime Cultural Revitalization

Region	Participation Type	Women's Role	Youth Involvement	Sustainability Level
North Sulawesi	Active collaboration	High	High	Very High
Riau Islands	Limited consultation	Moderate	Low	Low
Maluku	Customary integration	High	Medium	High
East Nusa Tenggara	Co-management	Moderate	High	High

Source: Author, 2025

Empirical interviews with local leaders reveal that traditional institutions, such as fishermen's associations and customary councils, possess strong social capital that can serve as the foundation for cultural governance. When these institutions are integrated into formal policymaking, they can mediate between local customs and administrative requirements. Such collaboration enhances legitimacy and ensures that policies align with local moral frameworks.

The empowerment of coastal women and youth also plays a transformative role. Female artisans and young digital creators have begun to recontextualize maritime culture through crafts, storytelling, and virtual tourism. These creative interventions not only preserve tradition but also generate economic opportunities. The intersection of culture and innovation redefines the meaning of maritime identity in contemporary Indonesia.

Nevertheless, participation must be supported by capacity building and access to resources. Without financial and institutional backing, community enthusiasm may diminish over time. Government facilitation in the form of micro-grants, community training, and recognition programs would reinforce participation sustainability. Furthermore, the research identifies successful collaborative models such as the "Community-Based Maritime Education Program" in North Sulawesi. This initiative integrates traditional ecological knowledge into formal schooling, bridging cultural heritage with environmental education. The program demonstrates that community participation is most effective when supported by institutional frameworks and continuous mentoring.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the revitalization of maritime culture in Indonesia requires a holistic and participatory policy approach that integrates cultural, economic, and educational dimensions. Despite a strong legal framework supporting maritime development, implementation remains constrained by fragmented communication, limited resources, and rigid bureaucracy. The imbalance between technocratic and culture-based orientations has weakened the collective maritime identity and marginalized the role of local wisdom in national development strategies.

Strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring cross-sector coordination are key to transforming maritime culture into a strategic national asset. Policy communication must evolve from symbolic dissemination toward participatory co-creation, enabling communities, cultural institutions, and educational sectors to jointly construct maritime narratives. Resource optimization through transparent budgeting, capacity building, and local empowerment will promote sustainability and accountability in cultural governance while aligning with the blue economy agenda.

Finally, the success of maritime cultural revitalization depends on community participation as the foundation of long-term resilience. Empowering coastal communities, women, and youth to preserve and innovate upon maritime heritage fosters both cultural continuity and socio-economic development. By institutionalizing inclusive governance, Indonesia can transform maritime culture from a nostalgic ideal into a living, dynamic force shaping its national identity as a true archipelagic state.

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