

Challenges and Opportunities in Regulating the use of *Horeg* Sound Systems: A Governance and Public Regulation Perspective

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ABSTRACT: The use of *horeg* sound systems at social and cultural events such as weddings, festivals, and community gatherings has become deeply embedded in everyday practices within Indonesian society. Despite their cultural significance, the absence of clear and consistently enforced regulatory frameworks has resulted in recurrent public disturbances, particularly noise pollution that affects social order and community well being. Drawing on theories of public regulation and collaborative governance, this study examines the institutional and societal challenges encountered by local governments in regulating *horeg* sound system usage, while also identifying opportunities for participatory regulatory approaches. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi structured interviews and surveys across several regions to capture both governmental and community perspectives. The findings reveal that regulatory effectiveness is constrained not only by limited enforcement capacity but also by fragmented public awareness and weak regulatory legitimacy. However, the study also highlights the potential of community-based participation to enhance compliance, legitimacy, and regulatory responsiveness. This research contributes to the governance literature by demonstrating how culturally embedded practices require adaptive and participatory regulatory strategies that move beyond command-and-control approaches, offering practical insights for balancing cultural expression with the protection of public order.

KEYWORDS: sound systems; *horeg* sound systems; festivals; cultural events

I. INTRODUCTION

Regulating socially embedded practices presents a persistent challenge for public authorities, particularly in decentralised governance systems where cultural traditions intersect with concerns of public order and social welfare. One such practice is the use of *horeg* sound systems in Indonesia, which are commonly employed in weddings, festivals, and community celebrations. While these sound systems play a significant role in sustaining local cultural expression and social cohesion, their excessive and unregulated use frequently generates noise disturbances that affect community tranquillity and provoke social conflict. This tension places local governments in a complex regulatory position, requiring them to balance cultural accommodation with their mandate to maintain public order.

From a public administration perspective, noise regulation is typically framed as a technical and administrative matter, governed through formal rules, enforcement mechanisms, and sanctions. However, existing regulatory approaches often rely on command-and-control models that assume compliance can be achieved primarily through legal instruments and coercive authority. In practice, such approaches may prove inadequate when regulatory targets are embedded within long-standing social norms and collective practices. In these contexts, regulatory interventions that disregard cultural legitimacy risk generating resistance, selective compliance, or regulatory avoidance, thereby undermining policy effectiveness.

The governance literature increasingly recognises that regulatory outcomes are shaped not only by institutional capacity and legal authority, but also by the degree of societal acceptance and participation in the regulatory process. Concepts such as regulatory legitimacy, collaborative governance, and responsive regulation emphasise the importance of engaging non-state actors in rule-making and implementation, particularly in policy areas characterised by high social sensitivity. This shift reflects a broader understanding that effective governance requires adaptive regulatory strategies capable of accommodating contextual variation and local values, rather than uniform enforcement alone.

In Indonesia, the decentralisation of public authority has further complicated the regulation of community-based activities. Local governments are granted discretion to manage public order and community affairs, yet they often operate under conditions of limited enforcement capacity, ambiguous regulatory mandates, and strong social expectations to tolerate culturally significant practices. The regulation of *horeg* sound systems therefore represents a critical empirical site for examining how local authorities negotiate regulatory authority, social legitimacy, and community relations within a decentralised governance framework.

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Despite the growing body of literature on noise regulation and local governance, empirical studies that examine regulatory challenges arising from culturally embedded sound practices in developing country contexts remain scarce. Most existing research focuses on urban noise pollution linked to industrial activity, transportation, or nightlife economies, predominantly in developed countries. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how public regulation functions when regulatory objects are not merely technical nuisances but also symbolic expressions of local identity and social belonging.

Addressing this gap, this study examines the challenges and opportunities faced by local governments in regulating the use of *horeg* sound systems from both governmental and societal perspectives. Drawing on theories of public regulation and governance, the study employs a qualitative approach to explore how regulatory authority is exercised, contested, and negotiated at the local level. By doing so, the article contributes to ongoing debates on regulatory governance by demonstrating the need for participatory and context-sensitive regulatory frameworks that can reconcile cultural practices with the protection of public order and community well-being.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Noise regulation has long been recognised as a core component of public order and environmental governance, typically addressed through statutory standards, licensing regimes, and enforcement mechanisms. Within public administration literature, noise is often conceptualised as a negative externality requiring regulatory intervention to protect collective welfare. Traditional regulatory responses have largely relied on command-and-control approaches, emphasising compliance through formal rules, inspections, and sanctions. While such approaches may be effective in technically defined contexts, several studies suggest that their effectiveness diminishes when regulatory targets are embedded in social and cultural practices, where informal norms often exert stronger influence than formal legal instruments.

Recent scholarship in regulatory governance highlights that regulatory effectiveness is closely linked to legitimacy and social acceptance. Regulations perceived as misaligned with local values or imposed without adequate consultation tend to encounter resistance, selective enforcement, or informal circumvention. Consequently, noise governance has increasingly been framed not merely as a technical issue, but as a socially negotiated process shaped by interactions between regulators, regulated actors, and affected communities. This perspective underscores the importance of understanding noise regulation within its broader social and institutional context.

Decentralisation reforms have significantly reshaped the regulatory landscape in many developing countries, including Indonesia, by transferring authority over public order and community affairs to local governments. From a governance perspective, decentralisation is often associated with increased responsiveness, policy flexibility, and closer alignment with local needs. However, the literature also points to persistent challenges, particularly related to uneven administrative capacity, fragmented authority, and limited coordination between levels of government.

Local governments frequently face constraints in enforcing regulations that involve socially sensitive issues. Limited resources, political considerations, and social proximity between officials and community members can weaken enforcement efforts. In such contexts, regulatory discretion is often exercised informally, resulting in inconsistent implementation and selective tolerance of rule violations. This dynamic complicates the regulation of activities such as community-based sound practices, where strict enforcement may generate social backlash, while regulatory leniency risks undermining public trust and policy credibility.

Regulatory legitimacy has emerged as a central concept in governance studies, referring to the extent to which regulatory authority is perceived as appropriate, justified, and worthy of compliance. Legitimacy is particularly critical in regulatory contexts involving culturally embedded practices, where formal rules may conflict with long-standing traditions or collective identities. The literature suggests that when regulations fail to account for cultural meanings and social expectations, they are more likely to be contested or ignored.

Culturally embedded practices pose unique regulatory challenges because they often operate within informal normative systems that coexist with, or even override, formal legal frameworks. In such cases, regulatory compliance is less dependent on coercive enforcement and more closely tied to social acceptance and moral authority. Governance scholars argue that regulatory strategies must therefore move beyond legal formalism and engage with cultural norms, community leadership, and informal institutions to achieve sustainable regulatory outcomes.

In response to the limitations of hierarchical regulation, governance literature has increasingly emphasised collaborative and participatory approaches to regulation. Concepts such as collaborative governance and responsive regulation highlight the role of stakeholder engagement, dialogue, and co-production in enhancing regulatory legitimacy and effectiveness. Rather than positioning the state as the sole regulator, these approaches recognise regulation as a shared responsibility involving government actors, community groups, and other stakeholders.

Empirical studies suggest that participatory regulatory mechanisms can improve compliance by fostering mutual understanding, shared ownership of rules, and trust between regulators and regulated communities. In the context of noise governance,

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community involvement has been shown to facilitate negotiated standards, context-sensitive enforcement, and conflict resolution. However, the literature also cautions that participatory approaches require institutional support, clear procedural frameworks, and genuine commitment from public authorities to avoid symbolic participation that fails to influence regulatory outcomes.

Despite extensive scholarship on public regulation, decentralisation, and participatory governance, there remains a notable gap in empirical research examining the regulation of culturally embedded sound practices in developing country contexts. Existing studies tend to prioritise urban-industrial noise issues or focus on regulatory systems in advanced economies, offering limited insight into how local governments manage regulatory dilemmas arising from culturally significant community practices.

This study addresses this gap by examining the regulation of *horeg* sound systems in Indonesia as a case of culturally embedded noise governance. By integrating perspectives from public regulation, decentralisation, and collaborative governance, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how regulatory authority, social legitimacy, and community participation interact at the local level. In doing so, it contributes to the literature by extending regulatory governance theory to contexts where cultural practices and public order concerns are deeply intertwined.

This study offers a distinct contribution to the literature on public regulation and governance by examining the regulation of culturally embedded sound practices, an area that remains underexplored in international scholarship. While existing studies on noise regulation predominantly focus on urban planning, industrial activity, or environmental compliance in developed contexts, this research introduces an empirical case from Indonesia where regulatory challenges emerge from the interaction between formal administrative authority and deeply rooted social practices. The novelty of this study lies in its demonstration that regulatory limitations are not solely attributable to weak enforcement mechanisms, but also to the misalignment between regulatory instruments and local cultural norms. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings extend governance literature by illustrating the relevance of collaborative and participatory regulatory approaches in contexts where command-and-control models risk undermining regulatory legitimacy. Practically, this study contributes policy-relevant insights for local governments by highlighting community engagement as a critical mechanism for enhancing compliance, social acceptance, and regulatory effectiveness. These findings suggest that adaptive governance frameworks are essential for balancing cultural expression with the maintenance of public order, particularly in decentralised governance systems.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the regulatory challenges and opportunities associated with the use of *horeg* sound systems within local governance contexts in Indonesia. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the exploratory nature of the research and its focus on understanding institutional practices, regulatory perceptions, and community responses that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures alone. The study is guided by an interpretive paradigm, which recognises regulation as a socially constructed process shaped by interactions between government actors and community members.

The research was conducted in several regions where the use of *horeg* sound systems is prevalent in community-based events. These locations were selected purposively to reflect variation in local regulatory practices, administrative capacity, and community characteristics. Participants were drawn from two primary groups: local government officials responsible for public order and regulatory enforcement, and community members involved in or affected by the use of *horeg* sound systems. This dual perspective enables a more comprehensive understanding of regulatory dynamics from both the governing and governed sides.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with local government officials to explore regulatory frameworks, enforcement practices, and perceived constraints in regulating *horeg* sound system usage. Interviews with community members focused on perceptions of regulation, cultural significance, and responses to existing regulatory measures. In addition, surveys were administered to capture broader patterns of public awareness and attitudes toward noise regulation and community participation. The combination of interviews and surveys allows for methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and survey responses were systematically coded to identify recurring themes related to regulatory challenges, enforcement capacity, social legitimacy, and opportunities for participatory governance. The analysis followed an iterative process, moving between empirical data and relevant theoretical frameworks to refine thematic categories. This approach facilitates the identification of patterns and relationships that illuminate how regulatory practices are shaped by institutional and social factors.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including data triangulation, careful documentation of analytical decisions, and cross-checking interpretations across different data sources. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring anonymity, and safeguarding the confidentiality of interview and survey data. The study adhered to established ethical standards for social research and received approval from the relevant institutional authorities where required.

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As a qualitative study, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalisable. However, the research aims to provide analytical insights that are transferable to similar governance contexts where culturally embedded practices intersect with public regulation. Potential limitations include variations in participant openness and the contextual specificity of local regulatory environments, which are acknowledged in the interpretation of the findings.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that local governments encounter substantial challenges in regulating the use of *horeg* sound systems, particularly in relation to enforcement capacity and regulatory clarity. Interviews with local officials indicate that existing regulatory instruments are often general in nature and lack specific technical standards tailored to community-based sound practices. As a result, enforcement is frequently discretionary and inconsistent, depending on situational judgments rather than formalised procedures. This condition weakens regulatory predictability and undermines public confidence in regulatory authority.

From an administrative standpoint, limited human resources and competing policy priorities further constrain enforcement efforts. Officials reported that strict enforcement of noise regulations in community events is often perceived as politically sensitive, as it may be interpreted as an infringement on cultural traditions. This finding aligns with governance literature that emphasises how regulatory action in socially embedded contexts is shaped by political considerations and social proximity between regulators and regulated communities.

The study also finds that public awareness of formal noise regulations remains uneven across communities. Survey responses suggest that many community members are either unaware of specific regulatory provisions or perceive them as flexible guidelines rather than binding rules. Compliance is therefore largely influenced by informal social norms and community tolerance rather than legal obligation. In some cases, excessive sound levels are socially accepted as part of collective celebration, reducing the perceived legitimacy of regulatory intervention.

This dynamic highlights the limitations of command-and-control regulatory approaches in contexts where informal norms exert significant influence over behaviour. Consistent with theories of regulatory legitimacy, the findings suggest that compliance is more likely to be achieved when regulations are perceived as socially justified and procedurally fair. Where such legitimacy is absent, regulatory rules tend to be negotiated informally or selectively enforced, leading to fragmented governance outcomes.

Despite these challenges, the findings also point to significant opportunities for enhancing regulatory effectiveness through participatory and collaborative approaches. Both government officials and community representatives acknowledged that dialogue-based mechanisms, such as community consultations and locally agreed sound limits, could reduce conflict and improve compliance. In several cases, informal agreements facilitated by community leaders were reported to be more effective than formal enforcement actions in managing sound-related disputes.

These findings support collaborative governance frameworks that emphasise shared problem-solving and stakeholder engagement. By involving community actors in regulatory design and implementation, local governments can enhance regulatory legitimacy and align formal rules with local values. Such approaches enable the co-production of regulatory norms that are context-sensitive and more likely to be respected by community members.

The findings have broader implications for regulatory governance in decentralised systems. They demonstrate that local regulatory capacity cannot be assessed solely in terms of formal authority or enforcement resources, but must also account for relational capacity and social legitimacy. In the case of *horeg* sound systems, regulatory effectiveness is contingent upon the ability of local governments to negotiate cultural meaning while maintaining public order. From a theoretical perspective, this study extends governance literature by illustrating how culturally embedded practices require adaptive regulatory strategies that integrate formal regulation with participatory mechanisms. The findings challenge the assumption that stricter enforcement necessarily leads to better regulatory outcomes, instead highlighting the importance of legitimacy, trust, and community engagement. In practical terms, the results suggest that local governments should invest in regulatory frameworks that facilitate dialogue, clarify acceptable sound practices, and empower community-based monitoring as complementary tools to formal enforcement.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study offers a distinct contribution to the literature on public regulation and governance by examining the regulation of culturally embedded sound practices, an area that remains underexplored in international scholarship. While existing studies on noise regulation predominantly focus on urban planning, industrial activity, or environmental compliance in developed contexts, this research introduces an empirical case from Indonesia where regulatory challenges emerge from the interaction between formal administrative authority and deeply rooted social practices. The novelty of this study lies in its demonstration that regulatory limitations are not solely attributable to weak enforcement mechanisms, but also to the misalignment between regulatory instruments and local cultural norms. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings extend governance literature by

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illustrating the relevance of collaborative and participatory regulatory approaches in contexts where command-and-control models risk undermining regulatory legitimacy. Practically, this study contributes policy-relevant insights for local governments by highlighting community engagement as a critical mechanism for enhancing compliance, social acceptance, and regulatory effectiveness. These findings suggest that adaptive governance frameworks are essential for balancing cultural expression with the maintenance of public order, particularly in decentralised governance systems. This study has examined the regulatory challenges and opportunities associated with the use of *horeg* sound systems within local governance contexts in Indonesia, highlighting the complex interaction between cultural practices, regulatory authority, and community relations. The findings demonstrate that regulatory difficulties are not solely the result of weak legal frameworks or limited enforcement capacity, but also stem from the cultural embeddedness of sound practices that shape public perceptions of legitimacy and acceptable behaviour. As a result, conventional command-and-control regulatory approaches are often insufficient to address noise-related conflicts arising from community-based events.

The analysis underscores the importance of regulatory legitimacy and social acceptance in shaping compliance. Where formal regulations are perceived as disconnected from local values, enforcement tends to be selective and negotiated informally, weakening regulatory consistency and public trust. Conversely, the study shows that participatory and collaborative regulatory mechanisms—such as community consultation and locally negotiated norms—offer viable pathways for improving regulatory effectiveness while preserving cultural expression.

From a governance perspective, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of regulation in decentralised systems, demonstrating that effective regulation requires not only institutional authority but also relational capacity and contextual sensitivity. The findings suggest that local governments should adopt adaptive regulatory strategies that integrate formal legal instruments with community-based participation to balance public order with social and cultural considerations.

While this study is context-specific, its insights are analytically transferable to other settings where culturally embedded practices intersect with public regulation. Future research may build on these findings by exploring comparative cases across regions or policy sectors to further examine how participatory regulatory models can enhance legitimacy and effectiveness in diverse governance contexts.

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