RECENTRALIZATION OF RESOURCES AFFECT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF RIAU ISLANDS, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Since 1999 Indonesia has experienced decentralized governance. However, local governments’ misuse of power, corruption and uncontrolled environmental degradation has pushed Indonesia’s central government to recentralize authority over natural resources from its local governments to the province level. Despite being an archipelago of 17 thousand islands, there has not been a thorough assessment of how this general policy affects remote insular areas. Hence, I question how recentralization intertwines with insular geographical characters. I use a semi-structured interview method for the collection of qualitative data, I interview local governments and community representatives from 4 municipalities (Kabupaten) of the Riau Islands Province. This research finds that the transition period of moving authority from local government to province has not been anticipated properly causing loss of potential tax revenue and minimum control and monitoring over resources. The insular character also provides more communication and coordination challenges when recentralized at province level due to its dispersed insular territory. Marine sector is especially important for the island community and government recentralization has affected their loss of island identity, perceived territoriality and involvement in local fishery and sea that connects the small islands. Findings suggest a more sensitive approach for insular local governments of smaller islands because islandness features must not be ignored when restructuring local governments. Future research will need to address scenarios for special island government regulations over resources and possibly tie governance to other specific geographic characters.