

**Small islands in a large archipelago state:
Examining small islands' peripherality and governance relations
in Riau Islands Province, Indonesia**

By

MOHAMAD RACHMADIAN NAROTAMA

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham

For the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

University of Birmingham

May 2022

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ABSTRACT

Small islands are often linked to peripherality, as they are surrounded by water, detached from the mainland, small, and often remote. For this reason, many small islands have gained special recognition by those who govern them, often providing islands special autonomy or dedicated development programmes. However, not all small islands are equally seen as distinct in their peripherality. This thesis focuses on small islands' peripherality in Indonesia; a large developing archipelago state of more than 17,000 islands, where small islands' distinctiveness and peripherality is easily taken for granted. Only recently have small islands been discussed at national level, many debates and uncertainty surround how to manage small islands, especially regarding whether it should be a concern of central government or decentralised to local governments by increasing autonomy and resources.

This thesis aims to examine how different governance relations and island geographies shape peripherality in Indonesia's small islands, using the case study of Riau Islands Province that consists of around 2,000 islands. To examine complex relations between islandness (what is considered distinct geographical and experiential characteristics of islands), governance and peripherality, this thesis develops a conceptual framework built upon an island assemblage approach and adopts an analytical lens from theories on peripherality. With this approach, the thesis has been able to analyse multiple relations that shape and change peripherality in small islands.

The research finds that even with the advantages of being strategically located along the Malacca Strait and having natural resources, the Riau Islands Province still suffers from the general challenges of small islands: high transport costs, challenges in economic growth and public service provision. But islandness alone is not the cause of peripherality, rather, it is due to how

governments undermine small islands in general policies, development planning and everyday governance practice that they become peripheralised. The findings show how changing central-local government arrangements and attracting state-led development can make a positive change in certain contexts of peripherality while creating new problems, as these changes follow generalist mainland-based mechanisms. The thesis argues the need of a new approach for small island governance; based on the thesis findings, some suggestions include providing more autonomy for small island governments especially in marine affairs, adopt an island-sensitive approach in bureaucracy and protect islands from general policies that may disadvantage small islands. This thesis shows that by understanding the relation island geographies, governance relation with peripherality in more detail, a better approach in governing islands can be achieved.

Mom and Dad,
this one is for you...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I praise Allah SWT, through his grace and blessings I have been able to survive and complete this thesis with relatively good health and sanity. I am blessed with the many special people and institutions that have supported me.

I would like to thank both of my supervisors Dr. John Round and Dr. Julian Clark who have kept pushing me to expand my understanding on the geography of islands and improve my writing. I would also like to thank other staff that have helped me in my academic development and administration affairs; Pat Naxolo, Rosie Day, Jon Oldfield, Gretchel and Lesley.

A special thanks to Mas Mushin and Mbak Endang who provided a heart-warming accommodation in Tanjungpinang and helped me develop important contacts for my fieldwork. Also, to all the new friends I met during my fieldwork; Zahid, Ferry, Harris, Muttakin and Eeng, my field work would have been much more challenging without your help.

A warm thank you for old and new colleagues in room 225 that have made the room hospitable and livable for me; Phil, Katie, Jannah, Yi Ting, Duy, Hakeem, Bobby, Hikmah, Naeemah, Husna, Maje, Ejikeme, Amy, Charles, Julia, George, Caz, Faye and Yan Hui. Thank you for other friends in the building; Suleiman, Muktar and Amin that helped support my spiritual wellbeing. I would like to thank the Indonesian student association and Indonesian society in Birmingham for making my family and I feel at home. All the family events and Indonesian hospitality have been unforgettable.

I am very grateful for the people and government of Indonesia through the Indonesian Endowment Fund (LPDP) that has provided the funding to support from my studies from master degree until the completion of this doctoral degree. I am looking forward to serve the people of Indonesia.

Last but not least, my family for supporting me; my wife and lovely children Satriya and Nagari, I am glad to have made this journey with you. My mother and father; thank you for everything, I am what I am because of you. My sister Paramita and her family, I am glad we had a chance to spend some family time here in the UK. My brother Arman and his family, thank you for providing a place to stay during my time in Jakarta. To all my other family and friends that I have not mentioned; thank you for your support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYM.....	xi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1. Background	2
1.2. An island assemblage of islandness, peripherality and governance.....	4
1.3. Research aims, objectives and contribution of the thesis.....	7
1.4. Thesis structure	10
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1. Overview	12
2.2. Understanding peripherality.....	13
2.3. Exploring island peripheralities	18
2.3.1. Islandness, peripherality, and island relations	18
2.3.2. Navigating islandness and peripherality	25
2.3.3. Peripheralisation of islands.....	28
2.4. Island assemblage.....	30
2.5. Island governance relations.....	33
2.5.1. Power and elites	34
2.5.2. Central-local governance arrangement	36
2.5.3. Informal relations.....	37
2.6. Central authority interests in islands	42
2.6.1. Territory, security and nation building	43
2.6.2. Sustainability and development agendas	50
2.7. Providing context: Postcolonialism and development theories.....	53
2.8. Background of the research setting	56
2.8.1. Overview of Indonesia.....	56
2.8.2. The Indonesian archipelago and central-peripheral island relations.....	59

2.8.3. Small islands in the world’s largest archipelagic state	67
2.9. Chapter conclusion.....	72
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	75
CHAPTER 3.	75
3.1. Overview	75
3.2. Theoretical and conceptual framework	75
3.3. Research design.....	79
3.3.1. Case Study Selection.....	80
3.3.2. Data collection: field work and interviews	86
3.4. Analysis.....	92
3.5. Ethics.....	94
3.6. Positionality and fieldwork experience	94
3.6.1. Positionality	94
3.6.2. Fieldwork Experience	100
CHAPTER 4. INFLUENCE OF RIAU ISLANDS’ GEOGRAPHY ON SMALL ISLANDS’ PERIPHERALITIES.....	105
4.1. Overview	105
4.2. Riau Islands’ strategic location: key to defy economic peripherality?	106
4.2.1. Advantages of location: integration in the Malacca Strait region.....	107
4.2.2. Smallness and remoteness: a geographical disadvantage?	115
4.2.3. Economic challenges for small islands.....	125
4.3. Geographical barriers in social development	134
4.3.1. Issues of island transport.....	135
4.3.2. Quality health and education for small islands; merely a dream?	140
4.4. Island spatiality and socio-cultural marginalisation.....	146
4.4.1. Peripheralisation and the construction of small islands’ indigeneity.....	147
4.4.2. Riau Islands’ centrality and the marginalisation of the Malays.....	153
4.5. Chapter conclusion.....	159
CHAPTER 5. AUTONOMY AS A SOLUTION FOR PERIPHERALITY?	162
5.1. Overview	162
5.2. Restoring the political and cultural centrality of the Riau Islands	164
5.2.1. Celebrating island cultural and political centrality (a bit too much)	167
5.2.2. New island politics: who decides?.....	174
5.3. Autonomy changing peripheral conditions in social development	182
5.3.1. Limitations of autonomy in social development.....	184

5.3.2.	Proliferation and the role of local governments in social development.....	188
5.4.	Autonomy: a chance to change the course of economic peripherality?.....	196
5.4.1.	Proliferation and securing economic resources	196
5.4.2.	Autonomy and a chance to develop the island economies	201
5.5.	Towards Small Islands' Autonomy?	210
5.6.	Chapter conclusion.....	213
CHAPTER 6. . EXAMINING LOCAL IMPLICATIONS OF STATE INTERESTS IN SMALL ISLANDS.....		217
6.1.	Overview	217
6.2.	The state's interests in the Riau Islands	218
6.2.1.	State-led development of economic zones.....	220
6.2.2.	Development in the border islands	226
6.2.3.	Small islands as places of isolation.....	232
6.3.	The state's policy in peripheral islands	239
6.3.1.	Border development.....	240
6.3.2.	Rural development	253
6.3.3.	Health and education provision for peripheral areas	258
6.4.	Chapter conclusion.....	262
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS		267
7.1.	Research summary and conclusions.....	267
7.2.	Significance of research	276
7.3.	Limitations of research.....	276
7.4.	Policy implications and future works.....	278
REFERENCES		281
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet		315
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form		319
Appendix C: Interview Guide.....		322

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1. Position of Riau Islands Province	8
Figure 2-1. European inner peripheries	15
Figure 2-2. Island densities along major islands.....	21
Figure 2-3. Insularity categorisation by Taglioni	22
Figure 2-4. European Island Region	23
Figure 5. Headline of online media regarding Rockall Islet dispute	44
Figure 2-6. Indonesian government structure	58
Figure 2-7. International sea passage passing through Indonesia.....	62
Figure 2-8. World shipping map passing through Indonesia.....	62
Figure 2-9. Population Density Map.....	64
Figure 2-10. Human Development Index of Indonesia 2014	64
Figure 3-1. Conceptual framework.....	78
Figure 3-2. Indonesia's archipelago provinces	82
Figure 3-3. Administrative map of the Riau Islands.....	84
Figure 4-1. Typical small fishing boats used in the Riau Islands in Natuna District	109
Figure 4-2. Two men working on their new boat in a typical fishing village in Mepar Island ..	109
Figure 4-3. A collector off-loading fish from a fishing boat in Tarempa.....	110
Figure 4-4. Pepper plantation in Lingga Island	111
Figure 4-5. Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas District.....	116
Figure 4-6. Aerial view of settlement in Sedanau Island, Natuna District	117
Figure 4-7. Huts on stilts built on the water in Sedanau Island, Natuna District.....	117
Figure 4-8. People guarding highly priced Napoleon fish in their off-shore huts	118
Figure 4-9. The main port of Sedanau Island where Napoleon fish are collected and shipped to Hong Kong.....	118
Figure 4-10. Position of Midai Island.....	119
Figure 4-11. Position of Selayar Island and Selayar-Penuba Strait	122
Figure 4-12. View from Selayar-Penuba Island Strait towards Singkep Island	122

Figure 4-13. Position of Lingga District	124
Figure 4-14. Map of Riau Islands Province’s construction cost index (IKK) 2016	127
Figure 4-15. A boat off-loading LPG cylinders in Tarempa, Kepulauan Anambas	128
Figure 4-16. Imported LPG cylinders in Tarempa, Kepulauan Anambas	129
Figure 4-17. Tanjung Beach in Ranai, Natuna District	131
Figure 4-18. Passengers travelling with motorcycles from Bunguran island to Pulau Tiga Barat, Natuna District	136
Figure 4-19. Farmers from Bunguran Island travel to Sedanau Island to sell vegetables	136
Figure 4-20. A mobile health clinic in Mantang Island, Bintan District	143
Figure 4-21. School children commute daily to school in Kelong Island, Bintan District.....	144
Figure 4-22. Johor-Riau Sultanate before and after the Anglo-Dutch treaty	150
Figure 4-23. The capital of Riau Province was moved from Tanjungpinang to Pekanbaru in 1959	151
Figure 4-24. Ethnic populations in Riau Islands, 2000 and 2010.....	154
Figure 4-25. Relative concentration of Malay Population across Riau Islands	158
Figure 5-1. Riau Islands Province separation from Riau Province.....	166
Figure 5-2. Aerial view of part of the grand mosque on Dompok Island	168
Figure 5-3. Riau Islands Province’s new government offices on Dompok Island.....	169
Figure 5-4. Putra Jaya, the government centre of Malaysia – the inspiration for Dompok Island	169
Figure 5-5. Central mosque of Natuna District.....	171
Figure 5-6. Astaka MTQ building Batam	172
Figure 5-7. Spread of political representatives	176
Figure 5-8. Spread of Bintan District’s political representatives.....	178
Figure 5-9. HDI of Riau Islands Province from 2010-2016	183
Figure 5-10. An empty newly constructed community market in Kelarik Village	191
Figure 5-11. Natuna District’s budget 2013-2016	198
Figure 5-12. Ship anchors around the FTZs within 12 miles from shore	200
Figure 5-13. Entrance of Padang Melang Beach Festival in Kepulauan Anambas	206
Figure 5-14. Several yachts seen from shore in the Padang Melang Beach Festival	206

Figure 5-15. Staff from the Department of Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture sampling the harvest of the new rice field in Lingga District 209

Figure 6-1. Free Trade Zone areas in Batam, Bintan and Karimun Islands 222

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1. List of districts in the Riau Islands Province.....	83
Table 3-2. Selected case studies.....	86
Table 3-3. List of respondents	91
Table 3-4. Coding themes	93
Table 4-1. Local government income	132
Table 4-2. Percentage of agriculture, forestry and fishery sector towards regional income	133
Table 5-1. Island representatives in provincial legislative elections	175
Table 5-2. Health and education facilities in Riau Islands Province	189
Table 5-3. Central government transfers to Riau Islands Province (RPJMD 2016-2020)	197
Table 5-4. Number of local government staff compared to population.....	202

LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYM

3T	<i>Terdepan, Terluar, Tertinggal or Frontier, Border and Less Developed Areas</i>
ACCESS	Improving accessibility of services of general interests (European mountain regions)
ADD	<i>Alokasi Dana Desa</i> or Village Funds Allocation
ALKI	<i>Alur Laut Kepulauan Indonesia</i> or Indonesian Archipelago Sea Passage
APMI	<i>Asosiasi Pemuda Maritim Indonesia</i> or Indonesian Maritime Youth Organization
ASPEKSINDO	<i>Asosiasi Pemerinatah Daerah Kepulauan dan Pesisir Indonesia</i> or Indonesian Association of Small Islands and Coastal Governments
BBK	Batam, Bintan and Karimun (Islands)
BIDA	Batam Industrial Development Authority
BNPP	<i>Badan Nasional Pengelolaan Perbatasan</i> or National Body for Border Management
BULOG	<i>Badan Urusan Logistik</i> or Logistic Affairs Body
BUMD	<i>Badan Usaha Milik Daerah</i> or Local Government-Owned Enterprise
CBD	Central Business District
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
DAU	<i>Dana Alokasi Umum</i> or General Allocation Funds
DBH	<i>Dana Bagi Hasil</i> or Revenue Sharing (from the state)
DCVD	Department of Community and Village Development
DD	<i>Dana Desa</i> or Village Funds
DPR	<i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat</i> or House of Commons
DTPK	<i>Daerah Terluar, Perbatasan dan Kepulauan</i> or Frontier, Border and Island Regions
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FIR	Flight Information Region
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
Gerbangdutas	<i>Gerakan Pembangunan Terpadu Perbatasan</i> or Integrated Border Development Movement
GGD	<i>Guru Garis Depan</i> or Front Line Teachers
GRDP	Gross Regional Domestic Product
GT	Gross Tonne
HDI	Human Development Index
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IKK	<i>Indeks Kemahalan Konstruksi</i> or Construction Cost Index
JKN	<i>Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional</i> or National Health Insurance
KEK	<i>Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus</i> or Special Economic Zone
KIARA	<i>Koalisi Rakyat untuk Keadilan Perikanan</i> or People's Coalition for Fishery Justice

KSN	<i>Kawasan Strategis Nasional</i> or National Strategic Area
LAM	<i>Lembaga Adat Melayu</i> or Malay Cultural Body
Lokpri	<i>Lokasi Prioritas</i> or Prioritised Location
LPG	Liquified Petroleum Gas
MCI	Ministry of Communication and Informatics
MIRAB	Migration, Remittance, Aid and Bureaucracy
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoT	Ministry of Transport
MTQ	<i>Musabaqoh Tilawatil Qur'an</i> or Quran Recitation Competition
Musrenbang	<i>Musyawah Rencana Pembangunan</i> or Development Plan Coordination
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OECD	Organization for Co-operation and Development
RPJMD	<i>Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah</i> or Medium Term Local Development Plan
PERINDO	Indonesian Fisheries (state-owned company)
PNPM	<i>Program Nasional Penanggulangan Kemiskinan</i> or National Programme for Poverty Alleviation
PPGT	<i>Pendidikan Profesi Guru Terintegrasi</i> or Integrated Teacher Profession Education
PROFIT	People consideration, Resource management, Overseas engagement, Finance and Transportation
PUSEMOR	Public Services in Sparsely Populated Mountain Regions
RDTR	<i>Rencana Detil Tata Ruang</i> or Detailed Zoning Plan
RIDA	Remote Island Development Act (Japan)
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SIJORI	Singapore-Johor-Riau (growth triangle)
SITE	Small Islands Tourism Economy
SKPT	<i>Sentra Kelautan dan Perikanan Terpadu</i> or Integrated Marine and Fishery Centre
SM3T	<i>Sarjana Mendidik di Daerah Terdepan, Terluar dan Tertinggal</i> or Graduates Educating Border, Frontier and Less Developed Areas
SNIJ	Sub-National Island Jurisdiction
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization
WKDS	<i>Wajib Kerja Dokter Spesialis</i> or Specialist Doctor Mandatory Assignment

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Islands are distinct geographies. They are not just bodies of land surrounded by water, they also have unique island qualities; from how they create a sense of place, to how they shape unique ecosystems and condition human relations. Many authors who research within the field of Island Studies call such qualities ‘islandness’ to describe these characteristics (Anckar, 2006; Baldacchino, 2012a; Conkling, 2007; Grydehøj, 2018; Kelman, 2018b; Stratford, 2008). In the context of regional studies, islandness is often used to describe pre-assumed attributes of islands, including detachment, seclusion, isolation, remoteness and peripherality; all of which employs a lack of connection, movement and physical relation with the rest of the world (Conkling, 2007; Hay, 2013a; Kelman, 2018b). While at a glance, the relation between islandness and peripherality seems quite straight forward, this thesis further expands the conceptualisation of islandness and peripherality relations, by acknowledging the capacity and agency of government actors and the practice of governance in mediating the relation between these two slippery and fuzzy terms, as Markusen (1999) would call them.

The interest to take upon such challenging research topic stems from the author’s interest in the small islands in his home country Indonesia. Indonesia has around 6,000 inhabited islands across the archipelago. This itself is a practical challenge for the government to oversee government affairs. This is further complicated by the country’s governance and political setting. Since 1999 the country has decentralised much of its power and resources to local governments, where leaders and members of the assembly at provinces and district level are democratically elected by the people. Research from across Indonesia in the past two decades has found that decentralisation has increased the power of *raja kecil* or ‘little kings’,

creating silo mini-empires – political islands that rely on the centre, yet try to avoid the centre’s control as they misuse resources and power for their own interests. This makes Indonesia not only an archipelago of islands, but also an archipelago of dispersed power. In a poster presentation at the beginning of this study, the author uses a figurative equation $\text{insularity}_{\text{governance}} \times \text{insularity}_{\text{physical}} = \text{Insularity}^2$ to help articulate how governance and political insularity multiplies the challenge and complexity of physical insularity for small islands. *Insularity*² has also materialised in political discourses, where local governments of small islands advocate for more funding to overcome their insularity-induced peripherality. On the other hand, funding is not the only concern for the central government; strengthening local governments might lead to further misuse of power due to their political insularity. From an academic perspective, although there has been much work in studies of decentralisation and local governance regarding this central-local government dynamics, studies often fail to acknowledge how island geography plays an important role in the outcomes.

Indonesia, an archipelago of 17,000 islands (6,000 of which are inhabited) has only just begun to consider prioritising development for its smaller islands. This is partly because it is a developing country with limited resource, and ‘peripheral areas’ are ubiquitous on the larger islands as well as smaller islands. Through a concerted lobbying by archipelago provinces, the central government formally acknowledged the need to support archipelago provinces as part of the Autonomy Act No.23/2014. However, there have been debates over how this Act will be implemented; whether local governments should be given funds directly to be used at their discretion, or whether central government should intervene to directly with their own programmes, such as Japan’s Remote Island Development Act (RIDA) (Briguglio, 1994; Desapedia, 2018; Hafil, 2014; Kakazu, 2011; Kemenhumkam RI, 2014). From experience, both have risks. Top-down interventions have often been criticised for mismanagement, unnecessary

bureaucracy, institutional corruption, and having a weak understanding of the recipients and their actual needs (Prabowo, 2014). On the other hand, there is also a danger associated with giving more power to local government; local elites control local resources, infiltrate the politics of lower-level governments and increase corruption (Ostwald, et al., 2011). The situation above becomes the background of this thesis, in which much grounded academic work is needed to understand how island geographies entangles with the political setting, different modes of governance relations and actors in producing and altering peripheral conditions for those who live in small islands.

This research uses an interpretivist research paradigm with a qualitative approach. To acquire a deep understanding of islands, this thesis is in line with the academic stance taken by the Island Studies research group, which observes and analyses islands from a grounded perspective; as Depaetere (2008) states “islands are the rule, not the exception”. The belief of island scholars is that one cannot just accept pre-assumed ideas of islands, defining islands for what they are not, or what they lack. Rather, one needs to see them for what they are and how the island inhabitants themselves view their world and experience the island (Conkling, 2007; Hau’ofa, 1994; Pungetti, 2012). The following section introduces the key readings that are used to form the conceptual framework of this thesis.

1.2. An island assemblage of islandness, peripherality and governance

This thesis builds upon intertwining bodies of literatures of islandness, peripherality and governance relations. Islands are interesting subjects of studies on peripherality, as they are considered an exemplar of a peripheral place, often challenging any effort to make them anything less (Royle, 2001). However, McCall (1994) argues that islands have too long been studied for their lack of terrestrial resources and their association with peripherality. Island

peripherality is complex; not only is the perception on island peripherality relative and subjective, but also because the influence of islandness towards peripherality depends on other factors as well. Baldacchino (2013:16) explains that “Islandness, just like mainlandness, does not, in itself cause anything”. It is the interactions between islandness and socio, economic and political relations that make islands become peripheral or central places. Grydehøj argues that islandness may also become the driver of urbanisation and new centres just as well as it might cause islands to become peripheral places, and it is difficult to isolate the effects of islandness from other factors (Grydehøj, 2015, 2018).

The discussions of peripherality have also emphasised relationality, rather than viewing peripherality as fixed given condition. The definition of peripherality summarised by Danson & De Souza (2012:11) is “inherently geographical, relational, multi-scalar in nature, as well as carrying connotations of power and/or inequality and having causal elements”. Some authors have even argued that core-periphery divides are a result of spatial domination from a centre over other areas – a form of colonisation (Grydehøj, 2015; Klimczuk & Klimczuk-Kochanska, 2019). As peripherality is not a static condition, Leick & Lang (2018) explain that peripherality is malleable; it may be reversed, redirected, shifted or altered by different physical and relational factors. Hence, this thesis proceeds to focus on the malleability of small islands’ peripherality by examining the agency of government actors, institutions and systems, as they shape various relations and influence flows of resources, capital and knowledge (Herrschel, 2014).

At the centre of the discussion on governance is the notion of power. Allen (2003) provides an exceptional explanation on how power is the result of social interactions, rather than a material ‘thing’. While unequal capacity can potentially enable influence of one actor over another, the practice of power itself is conditional. Power is experienced in certain

conditions and spaces, as it is mediated through various actors, space and conditions. Having capacity does not necessary ensure influence; for example, the capacity to govern can be disrupted by incompetent staff and distance, resulting in having no influence whatsoever on citizens in a certain remote area. The thesis also incorporates discussions of postcolonialism and development to serve as an important context. This helps understand complex governance relations that are often informal in the settings of so-called developing countries such as Indonesia, which can also shed light on issues of island governance and island relations in other developing islands around the world.

All the bodies of literature provide insight of how they are inherently intertwined; islandness, peripherality and power are products of different processes comprised of the same socio-material building blocks. But as a consequence of each academic interest focusing on specific perspectives and intellectual stance, it is understandable that a comprehensive conceptualisation among these literatures has not been made. To fuse the key bodies of literature above, this thesis takes an Assemblage approach to bring together these socio-material components into a comprehensive conceptual framework. An ‘assemblage’ can consist of various components, such as geography, infrastructure, various actors, institutions, systems, and ideas. In the focus of geography-governance nexus discussed here, actors have different ‘ruling’ capacities and interests. The arrangement of the components is viewed as non-hierarchical and their capacities do not determine the outcome. Rather, it is the specific contributions and relations in a given time and space that shape the assemblage and determine an outcome. This approach allows us to shift perspectives to zoom in on different parts of the assemblage to understand the relationality of the components at a given site, the relations between sites, how the components contribute to the assemblage ‘whole’, and how the assemblage itself is constantly influenced by the environment and external factors (Dittmer,

2014; Müller, 2015a). By adopting theory on peripherality, we can also shift scales and look into different dimensions to identify peripheralities, and trace relations producing and altering them. Having discussed the background of the thesis and laid down the key literatures used in this thesis, the following section states the research aim, objectives and contribution of this thesis.

1.3. Research aims, objectives and contribution of the thesis

This thesis aims to understand how small island geographies and different governance relations in a developing country produce and alter peripheralities, using the case study of Riau Islands Province, Indonesia. The research objectives examine the relationality between each component of the assemblage discussed above, as well as its contribution to shaping island conditions, and the implication on peripheralities in small islands. This will be achieved by analysing the assemblage from multiple perspectives or entry points; focusing on island geographies, and governance relations comprising institutional capacity, systems (government arrangements) and elite/ central interests – this guides the research objectives:

1. Identify how island geographies (islandness, location, size, resource, society) have contributed to historical development and current perceptions of peripheralities by entanglement with various social, political and economic processes.
2. Examine how changes in government capacities and government arrangements contribute to alteration in small island peripheralities.
3. Examine implications of how the centre's interests in small island geographies shape island conditions and produce/ alter peripheralities.

This research focuses on Indonesia's smaller islands, which are islands less than 2,000km² according to Indonesia's formal definition. Four districts in the Riau Islands Province have been chosen as case studies for this thesis; Bintan, Lingga, Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas. Riau Islands Province has around 2,000 small islands, varying in geographical characteristics and falling under various interests of the central government, making it a suitable case study. The selection process for the case studies is elaborated further in Chapter 3.



Figure 1-1. Position of Riau Islands Province

This thesis contributes to a wide range of academic discourses relating with island governance and island geographies, peripherality, peripheral areas in the Global South and geographies of local governance. The first contribution of this thesis lies in the novel approach to bring together three bodies of literature – islandness, peripherality and governance, that have only partially been discussed together but not in a comprehensive framework, and place them in a postcolonial context. This thesis demonstrates how we can identify intersectional nodes in which island geography and governance relations come together in producing and altering multiple contexts of peripherality observable at various scales.

Another contribution of this thesis towards the wider academic community of Island Studies is the unique study on sub-national island governance relations in a non-developed country where both formal and informal governance relations are observed. Numerous research on Commonwealth overseas island territories and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been made (Everest-Phillips, 2014; Herbert, 2019; Hussain, 2008). However, most studies on central-peripheral relations focus on the relations of island territories or island states with their former colonial patron or international donors. Other researches include political integration and secessions between islands (Mcintyre, 2012; Rodon & Guinjoan, 2018).

The type of relations showcased by this thesis is everyday governance relations (both formal and informal) between local and central governance actors, each having their own perspective on island issues. There are some relatable work on island governance in developed countries, such as in case from Australia (Stratford, 2006, 2008), a number of European islands (Baldacchino & Ferreira, 2013; Bragagnolo et al., 2016), New Zealand (Kearns & Collins, 2016; Stratford, 2016), and Canada (Mackinnon, 2014). Although lessons are taken from these cases, especially in terms of general concepts and theories they provide, an important aspect missing from these cases that make them incomparable with the case presented by this thesis, which is the high level of informality (and often corruption) that riddles many developing countries. There is also very little publication of central-local island relations in archipelago states in the Asia Pacific region; Japan has many publications on island development (L. Briguglio, 1994; Kakazu, 2011; Kuwahara, 2012; NIJS, 2009), but we rarely find publication on central-local government relations, except the struggles and protests made by the much-studied Okinawa Islands (Nishiyama, 2020; Siripala, 2018). The Philippines is also almost absent in study cases of island governance relations, except very specific topics of sustainability (Balgos & Pagdilao, 2002; Dressler et al., 2006; Katon et al., 1999) or local governance in

general (Teng-Calleja et al., 2017). Hence, this thesis can help understand island governance relations in non-develop countries that face both physical challenges, as well as challenges in government capacity and informalities.

1.4. Thesis structure

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters and is structured as following: Chapter 2 elaborates the key literatures used in this thesis. Firstly, a thorough elaboration is made relating to the concept of peripherality. Secondly, the chapter provides the key theories relating to island geographies and islandness (including archipelagones). Thirdly, the chapter provides an exhaustive explanation of concepts and theories relating to island governance relations and the concept of socio-material assemblage to bring together and comprehensively analyse various components of geography and governance relations. Subsequently, literatures on postcolonialism and development are brought in to provide context on how actors and institutions operate, followed by descriptive elaboration on the research setting, including Indonesia's geography, government structure, and its approach in island governance.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and begins by highlighting the research gaps, before elaborating the philosophical and epistemological basis of the research. Following this, the chapter explains in detail how this research has been conducted. It explains the research methodology, which is mainly based on qualitative data collection and observations, the case study selection, research design, analysis and research ethics. Finally, the chapter elaborates the field work experience, providing insight to the researcher's positionality and challenges experienced in data collection.

There are three empirical chapters, each using an analytical lens in line with the research objectives to observe the case study. Chapter 4 identifies peripheralities in the Riau

Islands. Here, the analysis primarily focuses on how islandness and other geographical factors shape peripherality. Different perceptions and experiences of peripherality are highlighted to show how islandness related-peripherality may vary between different contexts and scales. The chapter also highlights that islands' transition towards modernisation and informalities become an important factor influencing the changes in perception of peripherality.

The next two empirical chapters discuss how island governance relations influence changes in small islands' peripherality. Chapter 5 analyses changes in central-peripheral governance relations and government capacity. In the setting of Indonesia, this is focused on changes in local autonomy arrangements and the creation of new local governments that determine political capacity of islands. The chapter analyses how changes in governance regimes influences the politics, practices of local governance and local government-led initiatives in de-peripheralising small islands. The chapter also highlights how changes in government regimes, using the same mainland-based bureaucratic mechanisms, without a more island sensitive approach, misses the opportunity to gain the best benefit from local autonomy.

The last empirical chapter, Chapter 6, analyses how the external relations in islands influences the course of island development. The chapter identifies all central government interventions in the case study; this includes interventions due to interests in islands as military bases, interests over their natural resources and position, and interventions in the form of central development programmes for rural areas in general. The chapter highlights grassroot perspectives and negotiations with the central government interests.

The last chapter of this thesis, Chapter 7, summarises the key findings from the empirical chapters and ties them back to the theoretical framework. The conclusions provide a reflection on how this case study and framework contributes to the wider academic and policy discourses on island governance.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview

Indonesia's blanket policy to accelerate development in its peripheral areas has not led to any specific approaches being adopted for the country's smaller islands. In fact, the state is just beginning to acknowledge the needs of its smaller islands due to bottom-up requests from archipelago provinces. A critical aspect of the policy discussions focuses on decentralisation arrangements for small islands; local governments of small islands are asking for more decentralised funding and autonomy over resources to overcome their peripherality, while the central government has been restraining such decisions due to fear of resources being misused by local elites. Little academic work has been conducted to support such decision making, hence it is against this backdrop that this thesis analyse the relation between island geography, governance relations and peripherality. It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to compile and examine theories, concepts, cases, academic debates and other academic work relating to such topics.

This chapter comprises seven main sections; firstly, this chapter elaborates the basic understanding of peripherality, this is followed by the second section where a comprehensive review on the relation between islandness and peripherality. Thirdly, this chapter provides an overview of how an assemblage approach helps understand complex relations between human and non-human agencies in an island setting. The fourth and fifth section expands the topic of island geography and governance relations, by discussing more academic material on governance in terms of power, control, and central-peripheral arrangements. Also, ways in which small island geographies tie in to interests of the state and its implications towards various island stakeholders. The last two parts of this chapter provide a context to the case

studies used; with additional literature on postcolonialism and development theories, and a description of the research setting. Finally, conclusions are made from the selected literatures and how this thesis fills in the gaps left by previous academic work.

2.2. Understanding peripherality

Before discussing the peripherality of small islands, it is essential to begin with the broader concept and implication of peripherality. In general, peripherality is notable for what it has not, or lacks – inclusion, agency, influence and capital (Giorgi, 2014). Hence, understanding the concept of peripherality relates to an understanding of the lesser end of inequality in various aspects. The terms core, centre, centrality, periphery and peripherality can be considered, what Markusen (1999) calls, ‘fuzzy concepts’ which are difficult to test and operationalise. The application of the concept tends to be driven by different groups with subtleties and nuances in interpretation (Danson & De Souza, 2012). In the social sciences, the term centrality and peripherality have become relative measures of social, economic, cultural and political power (Grydehøj, 2015). As a construct of comparison to another condition or place, peripherality is also subjective to a person, group, or from the perspective of an outsider examining the subject.

Peripherality may refer to social exclusion; unable to access relational networks leading to deprivation (Nagla, 2014). In a political context, peripherality refers to the situation where a region or community has no possibilities to influence decisions related to its interest (Pasciaru & Tiganasu, 2017). In development discussions, peripherality often refers to conditions of lagging economic growth (Murakami & Hamaguchi, 2020). These different aspects of peripherality are actually related with each other; the economic aspect of peripherality is interrelated with geographical, political and cultural peripherality (Giorgi, 2014). In summary, peripherality is understood as inherently geographical, relational, multi-

scalar and temporal in nature, as well as carrying connotations of (asymmetric) power, inequality and having causal elements (Crone, 2012; Kühn, 2015a; Syrett, 2014).

As peripherality is relational and temporal, there also exists a term for the active form of peripherality – ‘peripheralisation’. ‘Peripheralisation’ describes the active process in which spaces or peoples become peripheral – in sociology the term is often substituted with ‘marginalisation’. Authors in the broader social and geography discipline have emphasised the relationality between peripheralisation of certain people or groups with observable spatial implications (Kühn, 2015a), Soja (2010) argues that peripheralisation is the consequential (in)justice of spatial distribution. In accordance with an understanding of peripherality as relational, Leick & Lang (2018) explain that peripherality may be reversed, rejected or redirected. The term ‘de-peripheralisation’ is often used to describe the process of reversing peripherality (Kühn, 2013) to make people or areas less peripheral as an opposite to peripheralisation, which is the process of becoming peripheral.

It is through the interpretation and application of the concept of ‘peripherality’ in policies, that it becomes simplified from the complex, relational peripherality to the understanding of peripherality as (relatively) static pre-given conditions (Kühn, 2015a). Peripheral areas are generally associated with non-core areas; detached from urban agglomeration, rural, border, or remote. Peripherality is relative, thus how it is interpreted and how it influences policies depends on a politically-agreed benchmark (Nguyen, 2019). Policies on peripheral areas are also intertwined with discourses of spatial justice and territorial cohesion, which focus on decreasing spatial inequalities (Jones et al., 2019). In the context of spatial inequality, peripheral areas are described as areas affected by structural weakness due to low accessibility, connectivity, and population; reducing their competitiveness and access to

public services (Davies & Michie, 2011; Kühn, 2015a). Policies have been dominated by these developmental indices, seeing peripheral areas as those lagging behind or under-developed.

Peripheral positions can emerge in local, regional, national and global structural relations; all of which are interlinked (ESPON, 2017, 2020). Based on spatial distribution, (Herrschel, 2014) categorises peripherality into two; ‘on the edge peripherality’ and ‘in-between peripherality’. ‘On the edge peripherality’ is located on the edge of contiguous areas and is close to the notion of rurality. On the other hand, ‘in-between peripherality’ is scattered between economic and political networks; this can be seen as areas between neighbouring centres. Some conceptual languages have been introduced to describe diverse ‘in-between’ places; from suburbs to edge-cities, in-between cities, post-suburbia, ethno-burbs, and metroburbia (Addie, 2016). Another example of in-between peripherality can be seen in the case of the European Union (EU) which uses the term ‘inner-peripheries’ to classify areas (not necessarily rural) with low socio-economic standards and low access to facilities.

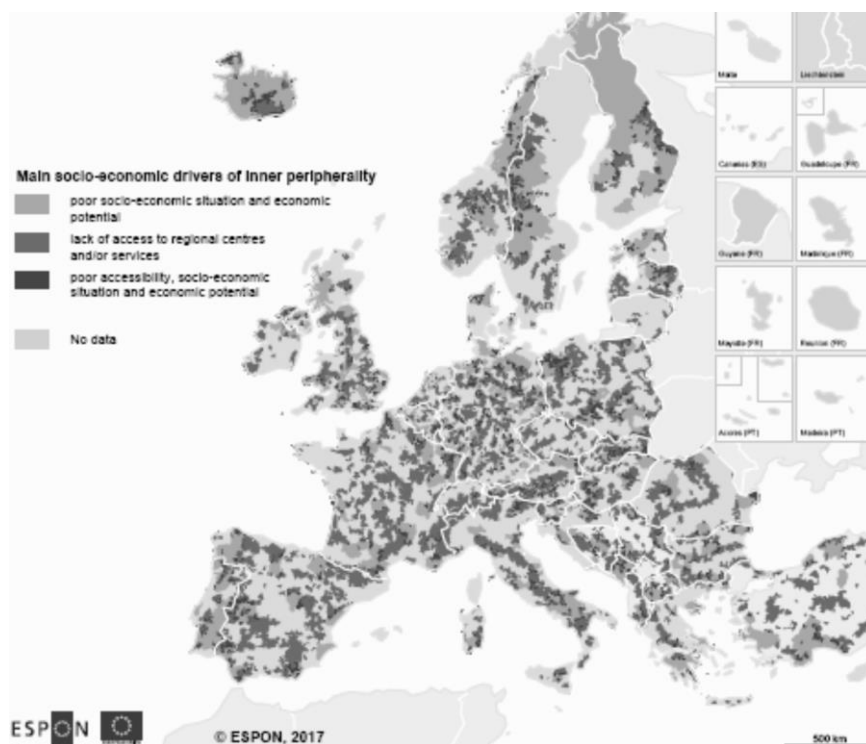


Figure 2-1. European inner peripheries (Source: ESPON, 2017)

Policies for peripheral areas are driven by the idea that without public intervention, economic activities concentrate cumulatively in the largest market; it is the absence of state that contributes to the marginalisation of people and development programmes, thus the state is obliged to intervene in peripheral areas (Davies & Michie, 2011; Nagla, 2014). This argument is strengthened by studies from international organisations such as the OECD, EU, and the UN that suggest narrowing down regional disparity within a country creates stronger and more resilient national development (OECD, 2016; UNDP, 2019).

Interventions in peripheral areas take many forms and scale; Europe provides a good example for peripheral intervention at a regional level. The EU cohesion fund is used to support services and accessibility, especially countries with large peripheral areas (Finland, Norway, Sweden) (Davies & Michie, 2011; Marot et al., 2015). Cross-border cooperation is also evident in the effort to support the Alpine Mountain regions with two main programmes; PUSEMOR (Public Services in Sparsely Populated Mountain Regions), which covers aspects such as broadband access, local social services, and networks of employers providing training for young people; and ACCESS, which helps maintain access to services in participating regions at a national level. Japan and Korea's interventions include periodically rotating high quality teachers to peripheral areas with additional incentives (OECD, 2018) and similar incentive schemes for health workers in remote and rural areas (ACN, 2018).

Along with the efforts of de-peripheralisation, there have always been criticisms that accompany them. For example, peripheral entrepreneurship policies are often replicated from the urban core; buzzwords like industrial districts, technology parks, entrepreneurship centres or clusters are built without assessing the benefits and whether the resources in the region can sustain them, while many initiatives often completely ignore local entrepreneurship (Fuduric,

2012). Programmes such as rural rejuvenation, rural renaissance and nature preservation have proven to support tourism and exclusive residents but at the same time increase land prices; such development provides jobs for the locals while peripheralising them with unaffordable land (Grabher, 2018). Peripherality is geographic, however, it affects more than merely transportation and infrastructure costs, but also aspects such as differences in skill, entrepreneurialism, policy making, capabilities, and general and human resources (Herrschel, 2014). Leick & Lang (2018) argue the need of a non-orthodox approach for peripheral areas, which focuses beyond growth for non-core regions. Policies have often supported the economic growth of peripheral places while ignoring other aspects of livelihood; in the words of (Granqvist, 2012:243) “if the periphery is to be developed permanently into areas where people can make a living it needs to be developed in a manner that favours the periphery and not just the core.” Nagla (2014) argues that governments also need to take affirmative action and ‘positive discrimination’ at a grass roots level; this may, at least temporarily, provide respite to the oppressed.

Understanding peripherality in different contexts and its malleability allows us to analyse peripheralities more comprehensively; different peripheralities may co-exist, contradict and overlay. One can do this by observing peripheralities at different scales (Syrett, 2014) and contexts (Grydehøj, 2014) by analysing the social lives, or we can also see peripheralities by analysing infrastructures in a given place (Addie, 2016). It is through an understanding of the theoretical concepts of peripherality that this thesis builds upon an approach in studying inequalities on small islands. Subsequently, the next section shows how islands become a unique sub-category of peripheral areas, and further discussions are made to examine different relations and processes that entangle with island geographies, producing notions of peripherality.

2.3. Exploring island peripherality

2.3.1. Islandness, peripherality, and island relations

We are all in some way ‘prisoners of geography’ (Marshall, 2016). Geography shapes personal decisions, geopolitics, and economic development path, some geographic conditions more than others. Scholars have defended their view that there is a differentness factor now commonly known as ‘islandness’ that differentiates islands from other places. Grydehøj (2018:2) explains that it is because of islandness that islands are worthy to have special attention:

“Around the world islands and archipelagos are shaped by diverse spatialities and relationalities that make it difficult to identify clear general characteristics of islands...one such ‘active ingredient’ of islandness, which is present across many forms of island spatiality, is the idea that islands are ‘legible geographies’: spaces of heightened conceptualisability, spaces that are exceptionally easy to imagine as places.”

While there is a general consensus that islandness makes islands unique and different from other places, such as the term peripherality, islandness is also a fuzzy terminology which may be interpreted differently depending on the context. In a broad sense, Islandness may generally refer to two things; first, Islandness often refers to the physical attributes of islands; isolation, remoteness, peripherality and littorality which influence socio, economic and political outcomes (Kelman, 2018b). Second, it may also refer to the experiential aspect that contributes to a sense of place. In terms of islandness in the physical sense, there have been numerous academic developments on the relationality between islandness and peripherality. Island peripherality is generally considered to be proportional to their remoteness and isolation. Here, peripherality refers to developmental indices such as economic growth, prices and access to services.

The relation between islandness (in the experiential sense) and peripherality can be very subjective. Take for example early thoughts by Putz (1984) cited in (Conkling, 2007) where he describes that smallness and remoteness make island societies resemble life in an aquarium;

“They are capable of self-maintenance, but like an aquarium, their functional components lack diversity, and are continually stressed. Compared to a continental community, there are fewer eco-options or strategies by which an island community can adjust to changes. . . . That an island’s human community is like an aquarium is not simply a metaphor or analogue, for social life on an island is quite literally life in a goldfish bowl. There is self-consciousness about islandness among islanders. I call it cellar hole melancholy. This is a generalised sense of loss, of what could have been, of what probably happened that shouldn’t have; of the blood, sweat, and tears that permeates every foot of island rock, soil, and beach”.

Conkling (2007) provides his understanding of how ‘islandness’ shapes island experience including the sense of being peripheral:

“Islanders from different archipelagos share a sense of islandness that transcends the particulars of local island culture. Islandness is a metaphysical sensation that derives from the heightened experience that accompanies physical isolation. Islandness is reinforced by boundaries of often frightening and occasionally impassable bodies of water that amplify a sense of a place that is closer to the natural world because you are in closer proximity to your neighbors. Islandness is a sense that is absorbed by islanders through the obstinate and tenacious hold of island communities, but visitors can also experience the sensation as an instantaneous recognition.”

This is in contrast with, for example, the observations of Hau’ofa (1994), who discusses his people in the Pacific Islands; he explains there are two levels of operation when talking about how islandness make societies feel. The higher level (those of politicians, academicians and bureaucrats) absorbs the world perception that the islands are helpless, vulnerable and small. The grass roots level however, has a different story to tell.

“[I]f we look at the myths, legends, and oral traditions, and the cosmologies of the peoples of Oceania, it becomes evident that they did not conceive of their world in such microscopic proportions. Their universe

comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. They thought big and recounted their deeds in epic proportions.”

While similarly faced with boundedness, smallness and often remoteness, different nuances of peripherality will also depend on external interactions and how the islanders think about themselves and the world around them. An islander’s attachment towards the sea, and envisioning the sea as part of the island, broadens the imagined scale of space and lowers the sense of peripherality. Hayward (2012) proposed the term ‘aquapelago’ to emphasise the role of the sea or water body as a crucial component of the island assemblage.

Peripherality is a product of comparison, therefore, to understand how islandness relates to peripherality, in the sense that they are remote and isolated, ironically, we must look into their external relations and see how islands relate and compare themselves with other places. It is easy to fall in to the general assumption of most islands being remote from other land mass, however, this is often not true, as islands actually tend to exist in clusters. Due to their geological formation, most islands around the world form archipelagos. Hence islandness needs also to be understood in relations with what some call ‘archipelagones’ (Jones & Denning, 2018; Lionnet, 2008).

Understanding archipelagones enables us to analyse island relations within their closest surroundings, as well as further mainlands. The physical separation between islands does not only separate islands from mainland, but between the islands themselves. The journey from one island to another is as challenging as from an island to a mainland; even a mere stretch of water has a significant influence in central-peripheral relations (Baldacchino, 2017; Butler, 2017; Royle, 2017). In fact, a number of academic work has been made to understand island

peripherality through its archipelago relations. Depraetere (2008), through a physical geography approach, attempted to understand island peripherality in an archipelago context by proposing an island density index. Similarly, Taglioni (2011) has conceptually organised insularity based on geographical configurations of islands and archipelagos. Such frameworks have been adopted in policies that intervene in peripheral islands such as the EU island regions cohesion policy.

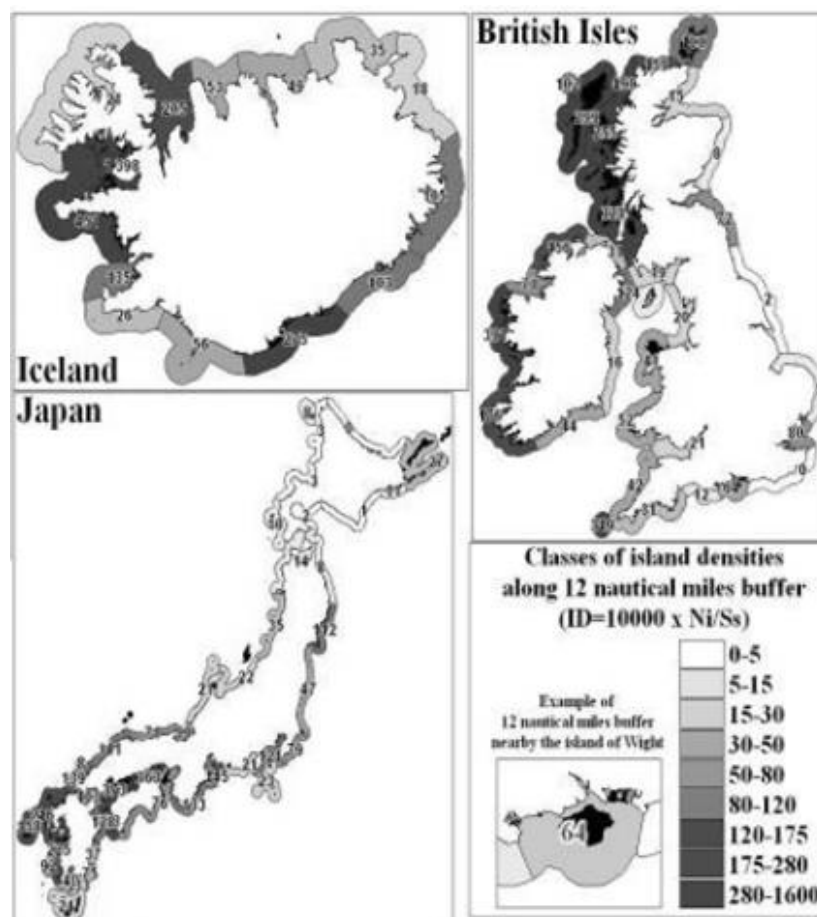


Figure 2-2. Island densities along major islands
(Source: Depraetere, 2008)

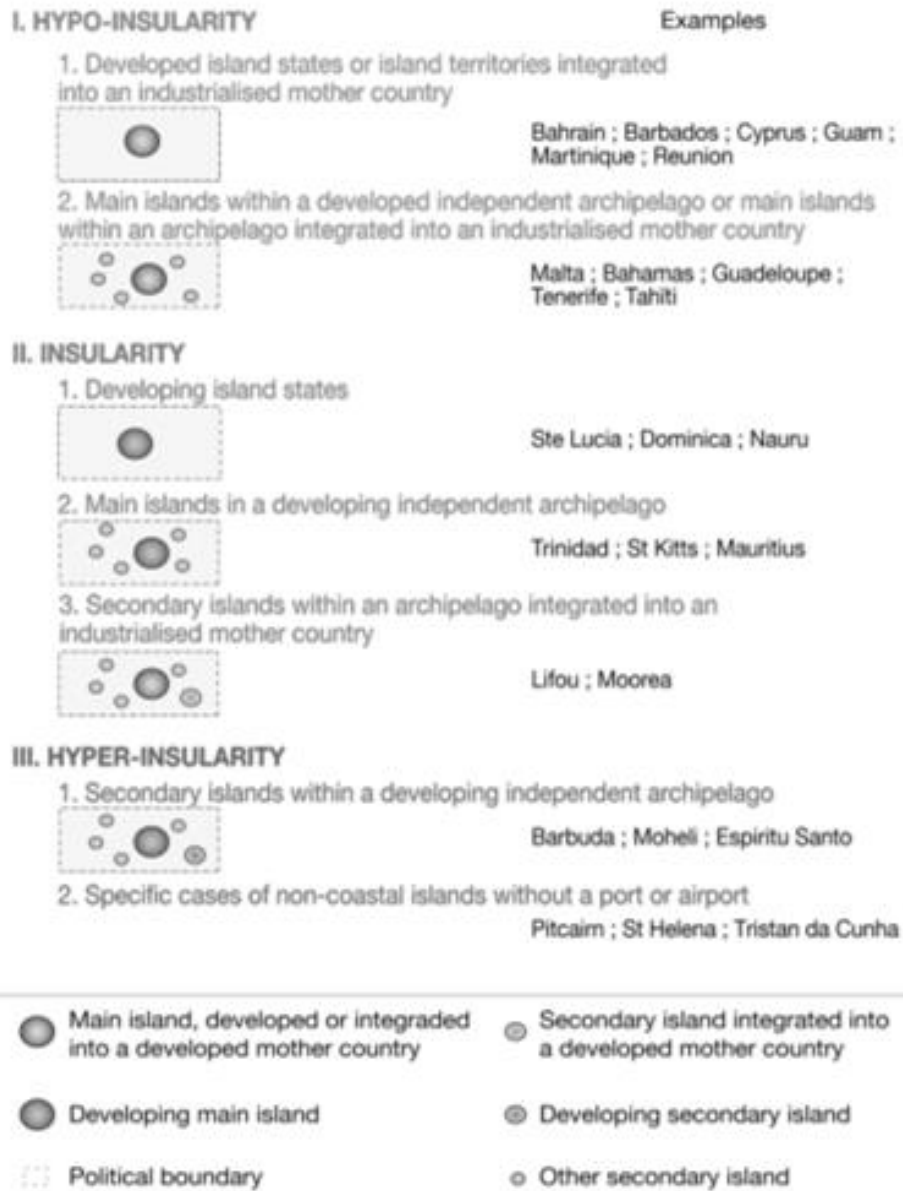


Figure 2-3. Insularity categorisation by Taglioni
 (Source: Taglioni, 2011)

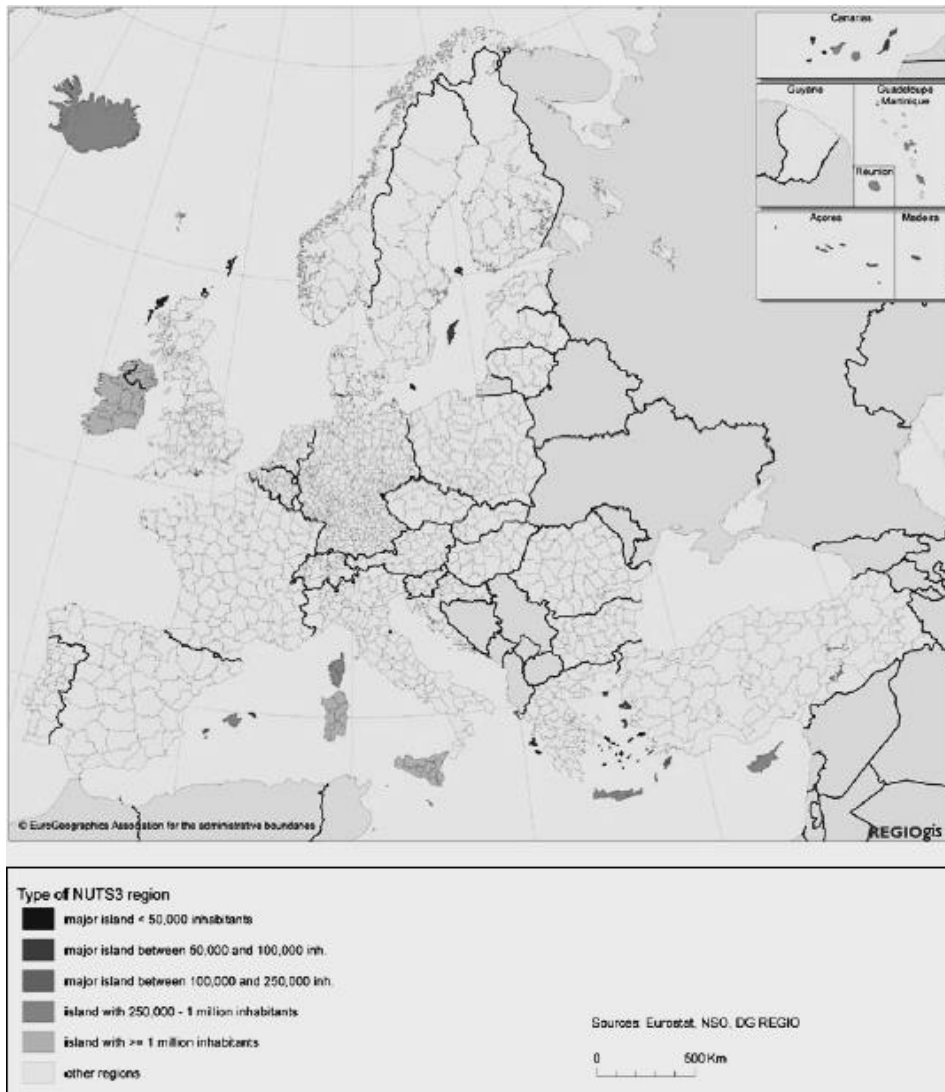


Figure 2-4. European Island Region
 (Source: Dijkstra & Poelman, 2018)

Looking into archipelago relations also provides us understanding of how island societies operate politically. While archipelagos - clusters of islands, are easily mapped as a single entity, and also imagined as socially, culturally and politically unified islands, this may or may not be the reality. The unity of an archipelago is a product of construct. For example, the physical archipelago of Japan was imagined as an archipelago nation to strengthen the image of a geographical and political entity (Suwa, 2012). However, in other cases, there is also a great temptation to secede or ignore the unity of an archipelago (Stratford, 2013; Stratford, Baldacchino, McMahon & Harwood, 2011), we can see this in many cases of post-colonial

tensions among islands. Archipelagic unifications are in flux and conflict, between those that would like to continue as an archipelago polity inheriting colonial territory, and those that would like to maintain island independence, not wanting to be marginalised by any main island. Take for example St Kitts Nevis and Anguilla, Comoros and Mayotte, even larger archipelagos such as Indonesia has had various post-colonial conflicts before relatively stabilising in the current situation. Thus, we can see how islands in an archipelago can emphasises island distinctiveness or otherwise a stronger sense of unity as an archipelago depending on how the interests of each island is played out.

Similar with the term ‘island’ being used as a metaphor to describe an independent and isolated unit, ‘archipelago’ can also be used as a metaphor to emphasise the relationality of separate entities. Thompson (2017:48) explains:

“Authors have suggested that we move from the island, the classic metaphor of a closed system, to the archipelago, understood as an open system of relationships among islands, often in relation to continents... Let us now turn to the idea of archipelago not as repeating islands but rather as configurations of connected places... These four geographical metaphors—territory, region, world, and island—suggest units that are demarcated and bounded, circumscribed and contained. In contrast to these metaphors, based on the premise of a unified geographic totality, the notion of archipelago suggests a way of focusing upon connections or networks dispersed throughout geographical spaces”.

Pugh (2013) suggests thinking with the islands *and* archipelago helps provide a larger picture of island relations, as islands are both isolated and connected. DeLoughrey (2001:23) argues that “no island is an isolated isle and that a system of archipelagraphy—that is, a historiography that considers chains of islands in fluctuating relationship to their surrounding seas, islands and continents—provides a more appropriate metaphor for reading island cultures”. Within this thesis, thinking with archipelagos helps understand complex ways in which islands connect and are disconnected with various places in “relationships that

transverse, crisscross, and entangle the supposedly unitary territories of states, areas, and islands and that make up the globalised world” (Thompson, 2017:44). Thus, archipelago, archipelagoness, and archipelago thinking are important considerations to incorporate in any relational analysis of islands and islandness.

2.3.2. Navigating islandness and peripherality

The extent to which islandness contributes to peripherality can also be observed through the impact islandness has on islanders, and the adaptation of islanders towards island conditions. Let us first look into issues related to migration – a common way to navigate island peripherality. Globalisation and the capitalist economy have infiltrated island communities through the modernisation of transport systems and communication technologies, has supported new forms of consumerism, capitalist-promoted lifestyle and increased mobility. Emigration is common, especially with younger generations moving toward economic centres on the mainlands for the chance for a more modern livelihood. Islandness creates an even more pressing urge to emigrate due to limited land and resources, yet their boundedness pose challenging circumstances to travel. An extreme example of challenging emigration can be seen where islanders migrate illegally crossing state borders often risking their own lives, such as the cases of people from Haiti trying to enter the Bahamas (BBC, 2019), and from Comoros to Mayotte on rickety boats (Aljazeera, 2016). On the other hand, there are certain conditions where emigration is acceptable and even expected. Such as in the case of Kiribati where the government equips young islanders with sea faring vocational education to serve as ship crews, nurses and hospitality workers for cruise ships (Borovnik, 2006; Kagan, 2016). Albeit possible benefits from emigration, too much emigration is still undesirable; emigration makes islands more vulnerable as smaller populations will make public services cost higher and investment

less attractive. When populations are considered too small, depopulation of an island and relocating to a place with larger population can be seen as the best available choice, such as the depopulation of the Scottish islands of St. Kilda in 1930 (Royle, 2001).

Besides economic motivations, there are also social factors that encourages emigration. This process can be understood through Baldacchino & Veenendaal's (2018) explanation on island society characteristics that have been influenced by the 'ecology of smallness'; Monopoly, Intimacy, Totality and Emigration (or collectively, the MITE syndrome). Whether they like it or not, people know each other and their relation is intimate. Intimacy leads to a strong sense of community but also clientelism, patronage, and nepotism. As there are limited candidates for influential positions, the practice of clientelism supports the monopolisation of power or influence; these conditions result in a totality of a strong and seemingly single party government. Those staying on the island, totally confirm with this island norm, while those opposing have no choice but to emigrate. This island effect can be seen in all layers of human interactions. At the grass root level, the disadvantaged 'red-foot' of the Caribbean is an example of islandness-induced social pressure. These are the poor white people, mostly Irish descendants, that were brought to the islands as labour during the colonial period. Being white then still had some sense of exclusivity, having no interest in mingling with the black society. After the end of slavery and colonialism, African descendants became the rulers, and the white labour class community now find themselves at the bottom layer of society, with only two options: emigrate or integrate (Soto-Crespo, 2017). Whatever the reason, many islanders increasingly face 'the outward urge' as Connell (2010) puts it. Conkling (2007:191) emphasises his concern over island emigration;

"If this level of decimation had reduced an island's wildlife population, an elaborate endangered-species programme would have been established to reverse the decline. But because this fate had befallen people, few seemed to care."

A non-migratory form of economic adaptation towards island geographies is the practice of scaling up, which is common to overcome peripherality; where traditional farmers or fishers gather in cooperatives to collectively buy raw materials and production equipment from the mainland. (Royle, 2010). However, at a larger scale of production, not all sectors can be relied upon to support the islands' macro economy; manufacturing certainly does not do well in small economies (Briguglio, 1998), and even agriculture is considered high risk due to irregular shipping (Bertram & Watters, 1986). These difficulties are widely acknowledged by academic and government institutions, and most have agreed that small islands need external support as a leverage for them to have a chance to participate in the global market. At a global level, UNCTAD is most concerned on their support towards Small Island Developing States (SIDS), at a regional level the UN Cohesion Policy supports small islands in the region, and at national level Japan's Remote Island Development Act (RIDA) is an exemplar of support towards small islands.

In terms of political economy, Island Studies has acknowledged a number of economic models for islands. Their basic model is known by the acronym MIRAB; Mi-migration, R-remittance, A-aid financed and B-bureaucracy (Bertram & Watters, 1986). These seemingly passive revenues have sustained island economies by relying on external networks. This reliance can also be seen in the way small island states and island regions have negotiated relations for more resources and autonomy (Baldacchino, 2006a; Baldacchino & Milne, 2006); these autonomous islands have been known as Sub-national island jurisdictions (SNIJ) (Stuart, 2015). Islandness can also become an asset to attract revenues. Other acronyms for island economic models have been proposed, such as SITE and PROFIT. SITE stands for Small

Islands Tourism Economy; many islands sell their islandness experience and natural beauty for ideal get-away destinations (McElroy, 2006). PROFIT stands for (P)eople considerations affecting citizenship, residence and employment rights; (R)esource management; (O)verseas engagement and ultra-national recognition; (Fi)nance management and (T)ransportation management. A PROFIT economy, such as tax havens, uses external resources rather than relying on them, and become economic centres (Baldacchino, 2006b). Here, we can see that islandness contributes to both the rise of island centres and their peripherality at different scales and in different contexts depending on various relations (Grydehøj, 2015). Island economies negotiate the paradox of their vulnerability coupled with self-evident affluence (Karides, 2013). Small islands exist simultaneously, and paradoxically, both at the periphery of capitalism and at its very centre (Hampton & Christensen, 2007).

2.3.3. Peripheralisation of islands

Islands are also prone to active peripheralisation; their islandness attracts continental or mainland powers to colonise them. Islands have historically been objects of colonialism; understood in a broad sense of a polity or nation taking over other areas or people. Larger islands or continental powers treat small islands as possessions (Royle, 2001). Islands are seen as vulnerable with no land connections, making them easier to conquer. Especially during the western colonial period, islands were imagined as new places to explore and claim (Aldrich & Johnson, 2018). There is also sometimes what Royle (2001) calls ‘internal colonialism’ where within island groups or an archipelago there can be quasi-colonial relationships, where a more powerful island dominates another, usually the larger island over the smaller. Royle provides some examples such as the effort of Britain to control Ireland, and Japan’s control over Okinawa and other Ryukyu islands.

Another discussion of small islands' peripheralisation falls in the wider debate of 'coloniality'. Coloniality is understood as the dark side of modernity; different sides of the same coin which focuses on the accumulation of wealth by taking advantage of other areas. Modernity comes with Eurocentric standards, ideals, lifestyle and way of thinking (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2007). Modernity/coloniality is based on terrestrial and continental thinking, which is hardly compatible with the realities of small islands, thus making islands peripheral. Coloniality is a very capitalistic process which is often subtle in changing lifestyles and even coming in via benign 'development' programmes. Grydehøj (2017) reminds us that 'empowering islands' may just be another form of coloniality, where a metropole might have more benefits from the extraction or production than the islanders themselves. This dependency toward a former colonial patron may come with another layer of peripherality by decreasing the de facto economic and political autonomy of the islands. Even when an island may seem 'developed', benefits may accumulate among a small group of indigenous islanders with a majority of economic benefits flowing to patrons and overseas investors (Kim, 2020). Affiliation with patrons, especially from colonial relations, has also been criticised for accelerating the decline of languages, land rights, and ways of life of indigenous island communities (Androus & Greymorning, 2016). (McCall (1996:77) argues the danger of non-islanders ruling islands:

“When Islands control themselves, there is innovation and the elaboration of island high culture in monuments and, probably, other works of art and literature. When, however, Islands fall to continental control, the peripheralised Islanders become conservative, mimic their masters and become exchange-oriented, with island resources in people, materials and ideas flowing to continental cores of power and influence.”

This form of peripheralisation – coloniality – has gained more traction in Island Studies over the years, as Island Studies becomes a decolonial project (Nadarajah & Grydehøj,

2016). Critiques against coloniality form the bases of many authors such as Stratford (2008), who uses islandness as a conceptual entry point to analyse island inequality; she argues islandness could be a key ontological resource among those who govern (on) islands.

The exploration of island peripherality above highlights the prominence of islandness in influencing island societies and their governments, producing different perceptions of peripherality and centrality. But throughout the discussion, we are also informed that society and government itself also has a significant role in determining island conditions. Grydehøj (2014) reminds us that in practice, it is difficult to isolate the effects of islandness from other factors, since islandness never works alone. For this, the next section further discusses some available approaches to more comprehensively understand the nexus between island geographies and governance relations in shaping island conditions.

2.4. Island assemblage

Within geography, there have recently been calls for a broader move towards socio-materiality (Müller, 2015b), acknowledging the entanglement between “all human/non-human, biological/non-biological, sentient/non-sentient organisms in a globally connected system” (Willett, 2019: 499). Several approaches have been developed and widely in the social sciences and geography, the most notable are assemblage thinking and actor network theory (ANT). These approaches support a flat ontology, where the positions of entities, components or elements differentiate in terms of degree, rather than order, avoiding hierarchical or binary arrangements (Ash, 2020). Assemblage thinking emphasises how different elements (human, non-human, systems) influence each other while contributing to the making of a larger entity.

Assemblages can be defined as a whole, where the “component parts cannot be reduced to their function within that whole, and indeed they can be parts of multiple wholes at

any given moment. The parts are nevertheless shaped by their interactions within assemblages, and indeed it is the capacities, rather than the properties, of component parts that are most relevant in understanding resultant assemblages” (Dittmer, 2014: 387). An assemblage can be made up of “institutions, practices, ways of speaking about, economies, physical and conceptual structures, thoughts, and knowledges” (Willett, 2019: 498). Assemblages are in constant process, even when they seem to be stable, and they are also constantly influenced by external factors outside the assemblage. In terms of scale, assemblage thinking posits the macro is not seen as a container of the micro, but the macro is constantly connected with the micro. Another interesting use of assemblage thinking is that it emphasises specific sites, as well as relationships between sites (Anderson & Mcfarlane, 2011; Dittmer, 2014).

There are also other approaches that look into more specific relations within an assemblage, such as ‘body politic’ that sees a nation as a body influenced by its members and emphasises the subjectivity of the body (individual or groups) that can influence the larger polity (Dittmer, 2014). Other approaches include ‘political ecology’ that is a general term to understand socio-environment relations, how social, economic and political processes influence environmental change (Anderson et al., 2012; Paulson et al., 2003), also Massey’s (1999) ‘power geometry’ that shows how spatiality and mobility are shaped by and reproduce power differentials in society.

Similar to the notion of assemblages, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) has been at the forefront of ontological approach looking into “space and agency as the result of associating humans and non-humans to form precarious wholes” (Müller, 2015: 27). It sees each component having horizontal relations, which has also been the source of criticism towards ANT, as it fails to acknowledge unequal power relationships amongst its components. Whereas

assemblage thinking posits that each component parts have intrinsic qualities outside the particular assemblage being observed.

In our effort to understand island assemblages, Warrington & Milne (2018) reminds us of the danger of easy generalisations and of a narrow focus on islands and the effect of islandness and the need to expand different variables in the relational analysis. They highlight some contradictions of focusing on islandness alone; on one hand, island connectivity is seen as an issue, but there are cases where islanders themselves have criticised island bridging as making the island lose its sense of islandness. In some cases, islandness attracts mainlands to ‘colonise’ while in others islandness strengthens autonomy and even separatism from the mainland. Islands are both referred to as being democratic and autocratic. Authors in Island Studies tend to conflate ‘islandness’ and ‘smallness’ and are often trapped in their own imagination of what islands are and islandness is. This does little justice to the many other variables such as geology, natural ecology, island inhabitants, and institutions. This becomes a guidance for analysing an island assemblage, to deconstruct the physicality of islandness into more basic components of island materiality, and the construct of islandness into more complex interplays of human interaction with these different material components.

For human aspects in an assemblage, such as governance relations, Allen (2011) explains that there is apparent ‘flatness’ in component arrangements. For example, when observing a regional or local assemblage, central government actors are considered part of the assemblage, and do not pre-determine the outcomes as a top-down force. The open-ended nature of assemblage also means that actors, institutions may entangle in more than one way in a single assemblage being observed. Allen (2011) also reminds us that in figuring out how components of an assemblage connect with each other, we may follow our senses and own understanding too easily. Therefore, the remaining of this chapter provides additional literature

on governance relations, post-colonialism and development to understand the nature in which each component of the assemblage works, and the context in which they operate in case study used in this thesis.

2.5. Island governance relations

Baldacchino & Milne (2006) argue that islanders will have a chance to become actors in the central-peripheral relations only if they have at least law/policy making and administrative capacity. Thus, 'island governments' become important to balance central government interests with the interests of the island. At a sub-national level, this function is mainly held by local governments; on many small islands, local governments are the only form of government that the islanders have access to (CLGF, 2014). This is in line with the argument of authors such as McGowan & San Millán (2019), Baldacchino (2008, 2019), Kim (2020), and Prinsen & Blaise (2017) stating that peripheral and remote areas can be helped by decentralising governance and the establishment of local government. In discussions of a regional or local assemblage, Willett (2019) also confirms that local democracy can amplify positive effects and interactions, enabling new adaptation to occur.

However, providing islands with more power or autonomy should be done with caution. The previous section explained how islandness can create unhealthy political conditions; a monopolisation of influence, clientelism and political totality (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018). Also, in the broader literature on decentralisation, Martinez-Vasquez (2011) explains that the growing second-generation literature on decentralisation assumes that political economies consist of selfish officials, as opposed to being considered benevolent governance agents. The decentralisation literature has also concluded that there are poor links between decentralisation and growth (Ahmad & Giorgio, 2009). Even when islands do have the

legal capacity, and in theory should be able to advocate the voice of the islanders, other factors still need to be taken into account. Hence, let us turn to the wider academic literature to have a deeper understanding of this matter.

2.5.1. Power and elites

When talking about central-peripheral relations, the ‘centre’ might very well be beyond the state. While the state has formal authority, it no longer monopolises power in governance (Weiss & Wilkinson, 2014). ‘Power’ is indeed at the core of discussions on governance; whether it be global governance, multi-level governance or local governance (Di Gregorio et al., 2019). Power itself is a slippery concept, where the broadest understanding is the capacity to influence others. Power can be viewed as coercion and as capital, coming in many forms (physical, economy, structural, etc.) (Moon, 2019). Power is understood as a conceptual translation point between differentiated societal resources, capacities and political interest (Low, 2005). But an alternative approach to understand power, relating closer with this research, is to understand the agencies, capacities, and the socio-material assemblages. Allen (2003) argues that power is not some ‘thing’ that moves, traverse, radiates, or grasped – power is amorphous. Power is a relational effect of social interaction that is mediated, it is inherently geographical, and experienced through rhythm and relations of particular places. He further argues that the capacity to do something is clearly different from the actual exercise of that capability; power is only exercised under certain conditions.

Important actors in discussion on power and governance are the people that are directly involved in decision making, these actors can broadly be called ‘elites’ or the ruling class. Elite theory has developed from time to time, with the main academic interest surround the ways in which elites recruit themselves, also how they justify and legitimise their rule. The basic theory

is that decision is never made by the majority, but a ruling minority, even in a democratic society. Theorists believe that every modern society is ruled by a class “that is of great intelligence, higher social status and political skill and also likely to come from a wealthy, landowning and educated background”, whose sources of power include “land holdings, kinship, lineage, employment, political party affiliation, educational attainment, religious affiliation or tenure in the community” (Khan, 2008: 511). Damele & Santos Campos (2022:2) explains the general character of Classical Elitism:

“In the end, the ruling minority always seeks to justify and legitimise its rule through ‘ideological’ formulae, without which the social structure would disintegrate. This is precisely what the theory of democracy as self-government boils down to: a myth.”

In the current democratic system, the basic theory that the majority is ruled by a minority privileged class remains the same. However, the democratic mechanism shifts the processes elite competition is being played out, hence, the development of democratic elitism theories. Today, elite power is rarely gained through coercion, rather through electoral mechanisms. Therefore, only a few of those belonging to the elite class will opt to take part in the electoral mechanism directly. While other will influence through political parties and other indirect avenues of control. While it is still true that those at the very top of the political strata are most likely from the ruling class, the majority have some chance to make different elite actors compete and force them win the hearts of the masses (Osei, 2018). It is the relation between these elite interests (which may also be benevolent), capacity to practice power, and geography that become the key ‘ingredients’ shaping island governance relations.

2.5.2. Central-local governance arrangement

The vertical understanding of governance relations can also be enriched by literature on decentralisation. Decentralisation is the general term to describe the transfer of responsibility, authority, or decision making from central or national government to sub-national level. Decentralisation can be seen as a spectrum rather than a binary opposite of centralisation, as it is impossible for all total centrality, where all aspects are handled by the top authority, and it is impossible for the authority having no control whatsoever (total anarchy) (Oates, 1972). Decentralisation does not always have to be ‘democratic’, some societies have even rejected the democratic system (Smith, 1985). Faguet & Pöschl (2015) argue “Fragmentation of authority” is a mistaken concept of decentralisation; what decentralisation really does is transform politics from top-down to bottom-up, embracing many localities and their concerns. The state moves from a simpler, more brittle command structure to one based on overlapping authority and complex complementarity, where government is more robust to failure in any of its parts (Faguet et al., 2014). The term “Decision space” has also been introduced lowering level for ‘choice’ rather than the term ‘authority and responsibility’ (Bossert, 2015). It generally accepted that islands need to have a form of local government and autonomy that can align these various forces and interests (Baldacchino, 2019b). The Scottish Islands serve as an exemplar of how local governments have made a bottom-up effort to advocate island interests. They have pushed the legislation to sign the Scottish Island Bill to protect islands interest and develop an island development plan (BBC, 2018; Scottish Government, 2014). This is in contrast with Japan’s top-down island development approach, that was launched in 1953 (Briguglio, 1994; Kakazu, 2011).

Decentralisation arrangements provide more flexibility, freedom and opportunities, but it also creates wider political and bureaucratic distance which has both advantages and

disadvantages as it strengthens local elites. And in settings where traditional societies do not have the capacity (either due to lack of knowledge, awareness, or cultural setting) to scrutinise local governments and elites, the stronger the power of local elite grows. The issue of decentralisation, federalism, and local governance in islands is overlapping peripherality; political distance and detachment from the centre and physical detachment from the mainland. The more peripheral a place is from the centre of authority, the further it is from the reach of formal government systems, the lower its 'governability' (Baldacchino, 2019; Kooiman, 2008). Studies on democracy and decentralisation on the Pacific islands have concluded that islandness of smallness of population makes democratic mechanism very vulnerable and cannot support the check and balance from the people needed in continuing betterment of democracy (Duncan, 2004). Yet despite deviating from what is considered ideal governance practice, this does not always result in total chaos in island settings; informal social structures are often in place to maintain social and political integrity. An important subsequent question is how do we strike the balance between acknowledging existing non-democratic and non-formal social and political structures in islands and the need to ensure that power and resources are used to serve the interests of islanders. We need to at least understand the nature of island non-formal networks and relations.

2.5.3. Informal relations

Island communities operate using their own network beyond the islands, and beyond formality to survive (Azzopardi, 2015; Hidalgo et al., 2015). The term 'formality' is generally understood as adhering to the rule – more specifically the government rule, while 'informality' describes acts or processes that do not abide by the rule or is not regulated. According to Pratt (2019), The term informality can also be seen as a political term to contrast, at the same time

legitimise ‘formality’, rendered having less quality and secondary in nature compared to the formal. For example, informal businesses are often linked to poverty and economic parasites (La Porta & Shleifer, 2014). Pratt clarifies that such negativity should not too easily be attributed to the term ‘informality’, and to use the term in its basic definition, as diverging from formality does not always have negative results. He even argues that ‘formality’ is in fact the exception because there are more human activities and processes that are not formally governed, therefore becoming informal. This claim is strengthened by other authors such as Chigwenya & Simbanegavi (2020) and Kleine (2018) that argue cities/ government do not incorporate informal sector enough in development, even though people in the formal sector such as the police, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and the government are also involved in the informal sector, and policies at higher levels tend to be less responsive to the needs of citizens.

Politics also extends beyond the formal political operations through elections, to less obvious forms of power in local politics, supranational politics, and the nexus between private power and public authority (Agnew, 2013). It has long been a taboo to acknowledge informality as part of governance, as it is usually seen as diverging from the norm of formal governance. However, recent scholars have become more open to the idea that governance is multi-centric, where the informal governance is as much of importance as the formal (Mohmand, 2016). While the formal governance is generally fixed and rigid, the informal structure of governance is dynamic, where both the formal and informal governance influence each other.

The importance of informality is especially prominent in small islands; as small islands have unique ‘ecosystems’ where the social and political interactions are exacerbated by smallness and islandness; this results in the Monopoly of power, Intimacy in relations, political Totality and Emigration (MITE). In Veenendaal’s (2021) article, informal and personalised

politics contributes to the stability of small states, where 34 out of 46 states observed were small islands. This is contradictory to the general understanding that such personalised politics will disrupt democratic governance and produce instability. Thus, informality in this sense can be seen positively as an existing system that stabilises small island socio-political fabric. Formal governance can even become less desirable compared to informal governance for islanders. Hampton & Jeyacheya (2015) provides a case relating to tourism in Gili Trawangan, Indonesia, where tourism was first managed under traditional customs. When the formal government became more involved, with more formal investors coming to the island, the indigenous islanders became more and more marginalised.

The line that separates between informal governance contributing to organising society in a generally acceptable manner, and where it deviates from what is acceptable is not easy to define; it depends on the implication it has on the balance between public interest and those in power. For example, traditional/ indigenous informal land rights, fishing rights, etc. is acknowledged by the modern state and certain peoples or areas given special rights to practice informal governance systems, as they are seen as environmentally sustainable systems (Cribb & Ford, 2009; Jinliang, 2012; Radikov et al., 2021; Salmon, 2013). In contrast, Grydehøj & Nurdin (2015) provides an example of how informal governance has negative impact on fishing practices in Spermonde Islands, Indonesia. Despite existing regulations banning the use of explosives and cyanide for fishing, the informal governance of Spermonde islands which consists of patron-client relations traps fishers in a cycle of debt which forces them to choose the cheaper yet more destructive fishing technology. The informal governance is strengthened by the bribes paid to local police to turn a blind eye.

The relation between informality and corruption is frequently made, corruption is said to be an important factor contributing to the size of informal economy and informality and also

seen as part of informality (Dutta et al., 2013; Ledeneva, 2018a; Ouédraogo, 2017). The definition of corruption by transparency.org is the “abuse of entrusted power for private gain”; it negatively states that “Corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis”. Baez-Camargo & Ledeneva (2017) explain that the academic challenge of identifying and measuring corruption is because while the history of corruption is centuries old, the effort to understand and theorise it is fairly contemporary. While generally viewed negatively, recently scholars have argued that corruption is much more nuanced in reality (Heywood, 2017), especially in regards to the relation between corruption and economic growth. Milanovic (2020) explains that corruption is actually endemic to political capitalism; bureaucrats understand that to play safe and do nothing is not good for growth. Local government salary depends on regional income, therefore they are incentivised to support as many investment as possible by accelerating bureaucratic administrations for investors (Ang, 2020). Despite providing different perspectives, no author supports corruption; Ang (2020) and other authors such as Pablo (2006) argue that corruption can be a useful means of bypassing inefficiencies in the short term, but in the long term it tends to create inefficiencies of its own.

From a political perspective, corruption, along with other forms of informalities can even enhance state capacity. Ouédraogo (2017) explains that graft combined with systematic surveillance, and selective enforcement of laws is used by leaders to exert control over subordinates, and pervasive graft signifies a strong shadow state behind a formal state that coincides. Systemic corruption is still systematic (not total chaos); there are norms and informal understanding of what is accepted and what is not; Ledeneva (2013) provides a perfect example from Russia by explaining that state officials are caught not for stealing but for stealing much for their rank. Informalities is also nuanced from a grass root perspective; having a relative or

connection in the education and health sector may be seen as necessary in securing a place in a school or prioritising services, and having inside information is needed for many aspects of bureaucracy. This type of nepotism or small-scale corruption is systemic and endemic that people consider this the norm. Corrupt politicians are not always perceived negatively if that person can deliver some sort of infrastructure development, or services needed by the community (Ledeneva, 2018b; Pisani, 2015).

In the discussion of island governance and central-peripheral governance relations, various aspects have been elaborated; the concept of power and the agency of geography, following this, academic work on decentralisation, local governance, and the extension of governance to informal governance. These key literatures show how island geography can contribute to a more intensive peripheral condition in terms of governability, and potentially higher operation of informality in governance. Nevertheless, the tight knit social fabric of islands may also naturally discourage corruption to exceed an ‘accepted’ level, and make sure that corruption is not individually concentrated but distributed, and leaders involved in corruption still have to deliver islanders’ needs. Relating with the wider literature on corruption and societies, Ledeneva (2013:1143) provides her view on Slavic Settlers in Russia that are living in their own metaphorical islands, which can also help provide an insight on islanders in general; She explains “The economic and social conditions that they faced— isolation, poor land, severe climate, unpredictable harvests, and a generally hostile environment—gave rise to a vigorous culture with specific traits: caution, calculation, resoluteness, stoicism, endurance, and above all, an emphasis on survival” – such similar description on the resourcefulness of islanders (Azzopardi, 2015; Burholt et al., 2013; Hay, 2006, 2013b). For these communities, their ability to adapt to changes is key for survival, including to whatever formal or informal systems they are faced with.

In summary, the social setting (including informality) is an important aspect to analyse in island settings to understand how activities, regulations and policies are actually implemented and dictate the course of island development – shifting central-peripheral relations and conditions.

2.6. Central authority interests in islands

As small islands are often marginalised in state affairs, the state's perception towards its smaller islands (their functionality and what they represent) is critical in the formation of central-local governance arrangements. Small islands usually become increasingly noticed when they overlap with affairs of territoriality, national security, nationalism, resource extraction, environment, notions of regional cohesion, or other aspects considered politically and strategically important. The following will focus on how geographical aspects (such as ideal size, strategic location, valuable resource, climate, etc.) influence the weaving of external relations, or what Warrington and Milne calls 'imperial' connection.

Islands with rare resources have historically created imperial links; spice islands such as the Moluccas have attracted western colonial powers, now natural beauty is also considered a resource that attracts investors. Islands with strategic locations have been developed into hubs such as Singapore and Batam. Nearby islands provide ideal spaces for a place of exemption; in Kish Islands in Iran there are many five star hotels and the island is seen as a liberal trade free zone in a strict Islamic country that is able to attract international investors and trade (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006). Similarly, Hong Kong and Macau are territories where socialist laws and practices are less rigid while still being part of China, others have strategic places for offshore financial centres such as the Isle of Jersey. Due to their more remote location, certain islands have been caught up in defence strategies such as Diego Garcia, Jeju, and Okinawa,

which were developed into US military bases, or made Manus, Nauru and Christmas Island that have become buffer islands to deal with Australia's illegal immigrants (Kakazu, 2018; Vine, 2012). Among the many reasons why governments pay attention to small islands, there are two main interests that have increased islands' importance in the past few decades. First, is in islands' function to mark marine borders along with the right to claim resources within Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Second, there are increasing interests in small island development as it intersects with global concerns over marine environmental issues and climate change, along with notions of sustainable island development, resilience and peripheral region development. The following elaborates more on how the interests of the 'imperial', whether it be the state or international institutions, intersects with small islands, and how it affects the lives of island inhabitants and other stakeholders.

2.6.1. Territory, security and nation building

Since the acknowledgement of outer islands as delineators of marine territory, outer islands have become increasingly important, no matter how small and uninhabitable an island is. Take for example, Rockall Islet being disputed by Ireland and Britain. An online magazine published a related article titled "The fight over a shitty rock" to display how profound such maritime agreements influence the value of border islands and islets. Brexit has made maritime borders tighter, with the potential implication of denying access to fishers from contiguous states, increasing the tension in this dispute. While state borders and borders in general have attracted a wide range of academic and political interest, border islands provide some more unique conditionings, hence border islands by itself becomes a specific point of interest. This section provides a broad review on academic literature on borders – its definition, operation,

and its effect on those living in border and beyond, and continue with a more specific elaboration of academic discussions on border islands.



Rockall, in the North Atlantic, is a small islet of large significance.
Photo by Paulo Oliveira/Alamy Stock Photo

The Fight Over a Shitty Rock

A tiny, uninhabitable islet in the North Atlantic has become an unlikely battleground in the fight for fishing rights.

Figure 5. Headline of online media regarding Rockall Islet dispute
(Source: Noone, 2019)

Much like the term ‘periphery’, the term ‘border’ in academic literature is both used to describe a material place, setting, or locus, as well as a metaphoric term. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the literal meaning of border is “an outer part or edge”, whereas periphery means “the outward bounds of something as distinguished from its internal regions or center” or “an area lying beyond the strict limits of a thing” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). The border is the boundary line, while the periphery is attached to the outside of this so-called line. While the periphery is generally understood as being detached, distant and apart from a centre, the border emphasises liminality, in-betweenness, as it marks the limit of contiguous territories or places.

Prior to globalisation, states were considered the main containers of society, having legitimate and ultimate control over territory leading into a “territorial trap” (Agnew, 1994b), where borders are considered rigid and fully confine society. However, in post-globalisation, interconnected space and time that shrinks and expands makes the definition and operation of territories and boundaries obscured, therefore juxta positioning a multiplicity of in-betweenness. Borders are inevitable, continuously constructed in the process of defining new groups of societies, tribes, polities, or states, and their making and unmaking is just a matter of time (Davies, 2011). Different forces such as globalisation, urbanisation, regionalisation, and localisation situate people “at, on, and beyond multiple borders; and discovering borders are produced and sustained in ontological, ideological, and epistemological contexts”(Konrad, 2021:713). Thus conceptually, Konrad (2021:716) summarises that “borders may intersect. Borders are mobile. Borders may be scaled. Borders connect. Borders separate. Borders may change over time. Borders vary”.

Through a deeper understanding of borders that are dynamic and permeable, rather than fixed and rigid as it is often depicted, academic interests in borders focus more on movements across borders and moving borderlands (Hassner, 2002), with human and non-human agency at the core of these discussions on border motions (Nail 2019). Border motions can be observed through flows of goods in trade, the crossing of people (formally and informally), also the exchange of knowledge, ideas and culture, and the remaking of identities (Konrad & Nicol, 2011). In this regard, borderlands serve as the space in which motion articulates itself (Massey, 2005), where the spatial extent of the borderland is dependent on the flows of human and non-human agents that create these border motions. Borderlands are places of intense interaction between these territories – described as contact zones, spaces of negotiation, and rhizomes, places of raised figurality, heightened energy, transfer, connectivity,

and attention (Konrad, 2015; Schimanski & Wolfe, 2010). Borderlands are also spaces of neglect, constraint, fear, opportunity and freedom (Van Schendel & De Maaker, 2014). By expanding the focus from borderlines to borderlands, a wider spatial range may be analysed. Consequently, the question of “where does the borderland stop?” rises. Authors such as Green (2018) offers concepts such as “tidemarks” to help understand the spatial extent of “borderliness.”

There is a large academic interest towards borders and borderlands regarding the limitless combinations of variables influencing border permeability. Firstly, geographical conditions have great influence; for example, building a fence in the dessert is much easier than creating a physical border on the sea, or through mountainous terrains. Secondly, government policies and resource determine border permeability; governments on both sides of the border may apply tight restrictions or flexible open borders, they might not have enough resource to erect physical borders. Thirdly, local authorities influence how border policies are being carried out (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2010; Van Schendel & De Maaker, 2014).

Another academic interest focuses on the experiences of those living and interacting with borderlands, how they strategise and negotiate their own interests with interests of the state (Van Schendel & De Maaker, 2014). Borders are often peripheral; as they are distant from the centre, and have been designated as buffer zones where development is discouraged for national security reasons, hence people living there also become marginalised (Hudson, 2012; Nibbering, 2020; Van Der Velde & Van Houtum, 2003). People in borderlands constantly face dichotomies, after all, borders are created in part to identify who belongs and does not belong, bordering by its very nature, is othering (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002). But sometimes borders separate traditionally indifferent societies that constantly interact with each other. And when there is asymmetric or unequal rights, resources and opportunities, othering and bordering

can become an act of marginalising – denying access to better conditions, which in turn triggers a heightened distinction between ‘us’ versus ‘them’ (Salter, 2012; Van Der Velde & Van Houtum, 2003). Researchers hope to empower marginalised and oppressed people in borderlands, advocating the need to understand borderlands in their own terms and explore lived experiences in the border (Monty & Cavazos, 2016). In some cases, with increasing forces of globalisation, borderlands do attract investment, such as in the US-Mexico borderlands where duty-free Maquiladora factories are built, or foreign investments in Myanmar’s borderlands (Kramer & Woods, 2020; Murakami & Hamaguchi, 2018; Van Der Velde & Van Houtum, 2003). It is still important scrutinise how the indigenous residents of borderlands themselves benefit from the development. From this research interest, the discussion of border ethics further scrutinises who are considered border residents, who are the stakeholders of borderlands/ border regions, and who has the right to define border space? Also how do we balance the freedom of movement against the freedom of association? (Konrad, 2021).

Borders are also linked to discourses of nationalism. The term ‘nationalism’ has been used in various ways where both positive and negative connotations can be associated with it depending on the context. In current popular discourses and media coverage, the term nationalism is often associated with conservative nationalist parties that generally considers one’s own nation to better than other nations. In this context, nationalist governments ruling tend to tighten migration policies and in some cases violate human rights (Ko & Choi, 2021; Yazici, 2019). Another term of nationalism relates with the political process of nation building (Maxwell, 2020). While the term ‘nation’ today is generally accepted to refer to the nation state or countries, there has been plenty debates on how and why societies form nations, the most dominant academic opinion today is that societies do not have a natural tendency towards making nations, rather, it nation is a construct, an idea (mostly initiated by historical actors and

elites) that materialises and institutionalises (Liebich, 2020; Maxwell, 2020) – “The idea of a nation truly is the nation” (Blaut, 1982: 4). To legitimise the nation, the idea needs to be continuously circulated, create a national identity and endorse the sense of belonging or nationalism in the citizens minds. National elites actively strategise to develop nationalism and national identity – what Richardson (2018) calls ‘nationalism as a project’. It is not rare that nation states have to awkwardly find pieces of history to create a story to create nationalism (Baldacchino, 2009). Borders are places where critical nationalism project takes place; besides maintaining physical borders, borderland residents need to have a sense of national belonging to legitimise to support the legitimisation of national territory, as it threatens territorial integrity otherwise with possible secession movements (Dzutsati, 2021). This importance of border development pulls state attention and resources to the very edge, bypassing the norm of radial development around political and economic centres.

Within the vast literature of borders and borderlands elaborated above, the focus on (smaller) islands generally takes a post-humanist approach. Emphasising agency of geographical elements influencing the lives of those living on border or outlying islands as well influencing decisions of those who have authority over the islands. The boundedness of islands, littorality – their relations and transitions with the sea, also their smallness are key geographical elements that contours the conditions of border islands. As borderlands are often used as buffer zones, border islands such as Italy’s Lampedusa and Australia’s Christmas Island become extremely appropriate to become bulwarks and detention centres for unwanted income of migrants, especially with rising number of refugees the past few decades (Mountz, 2015; UNHCR, 2018).

Border islands have a heightened potential to either secede independently from the centre or being taken over by larger polities from either side of those claiming territory (Dodds

& Royle, 2003). Unpopulated or scarcely populated border islands are more vulnerable to being grabbed by other states, thus the building of military outposts is common. Take for example China's development on Spratly Islands to claim territory in the South China Sea. Populating and developing border islands and providing service for border island residents is a softer approach in legitimisation of territory to build nationalism, as can be seen in the cases of Japan and Indonesia (Simangunsong & Hutasoit, 2000, 2018; Yamada, 2012). The Kuril Islands is an interesting case of disputed islands; situated between Japanese and Russian territory, efforts to pull the islands on either side was made through development approaches. Japan provided free visa for Kuril Islands residents to Japan, helped residents for goods and service supplies, and also established cultural exchange. This was seen as threat to nationalism and territory by Russia since many islanders were attracted to join Japan in a petition, and in turn Russia reacted to develop the island (Richardson, 2010, 2016).

In terms of grass root experiences, borderlands and islands are both places of heightened experience. As explained before, borderlands are places of intense interaction neglect, constraint, fear, opportunity and freedom, while islands are known to be places of amplified social interactions in a confined space. People in borderlands and islands are prone to be marginalised. Islandness contributes to the exacerbated effect of bordering; islands rely heavily on external relations, yet residents of border islands face multiple bordering – by the sea and by the state. The closest mainland that islands are dependent upon may not necessarily be on the same side of the border, such as the dependence of Falkland Islands towards Argentina and other Latin American states, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands towards Indonesia (Elokasari, 2019; Laskar, 2019; Popper, 2012; Richardson, 2016). Current borders, often made by colonial powers cut through existing societies, or indigenous polities, on the bases of separating mainland with smaller islands that seem to cartographically make sense, such as the

Philippines-Malaysia border separating the Sultanate of Sulu. Residents of border islands find it even more difficult to associate with kins across the sea and across borders, as nationality and identity forced upon them by elites, along with consequences of limited mobility (Blaut, 1982; Yazici, 2019). The sense of dichotomy is even more intense in bordered islands. Take for example small (less than 1,000 km²) inhabited islands such as Sebatik Island (Indonesia) and Saint Martin. Island residents are constantly reminded that they are bound together by the surrounding sea, yet a border remains within the island. Even in larger divided islands such as Timor (divided by East Timor and Indonesia) and Hispaniola (divided by Haiti and Dominican Republic), there is a great sense of division, especially when development gap extrapolates tension of pushing through and tightening borders.

All the emotions that are present in borderlands; such as depression, despair as well as hope and the urge to connect are increased exponentially in island settings (Baldacchino, 2012; Conkling, 2007; Hay, 2006). Islanders are introduced to heightened experiences of liminality and peripherality when they find themselves at the disadvantaged side of borders. As borders are created by modern nations, it is in the hands of the authorities on both side of the borders to make sure people living on border islands are not themselves bordered and marginalised.

2.6.2. Sustainability and development agendas

Another reason why small islands become noticeable by governments relates with notions of sustainability and economic development. Islands have seen growing prominence in international forums in recent years relating to environmental degradation. Pollution, global warming and the accelerated extinction of this world's flora and fauna is the hallmark of the Anthropocene (Deloughrey & Flores, 2020; Kelman, 2018a; Larjosto, 2020; Pugh, 2018), where islands have become the canary in the coal mine. Many low-lying islands have been

shrinking due to sea level rising, island communities have faced the increasing force of hurricanes and storms, sea pollution and over fishing have decreased marine resources for islanders. Islands have also become settings for ‘green’ and ‘blue’ sustainable initiatives, along with programmes relating to resilience, as islands are relatively more manageable in terms of size and isolated enough to be used as independent test cases. International development organisations have pushed this agenda as part of development loans and grants to beneficiary states.

With the growing international concern over the preservation of marine ecology, island governments have received pressure to align their development with sustainable measures. Baldacchino & Kelman (2014:2) explain that “[A]genda of sustainable development focused on climate change ... creeps into, and now dominates, much policy and practice work involving islands”. However, in most cases there is lack of funding and enforcement and policies tend towards empowering non-state organisations (Abecasis et al., 2013; Clifton et al., 2019). Those islands that do manage to align development with sustainability pragmatically use their sustainable status to gain publicity and funding (Grydehøj & Kelman, 2016). On the other hand, when governments do enforce conservation and sustainable measures, the local islanders can sometimes become peripheralised. The term ‘blue grabbing’ describes the process where there is appropriation of islanders’ economy for the sake of marine conservation; traditional fishers are threatened to not ‘over fish’ while the eco-tourism industry thrives (Hill, 2017). The money goes to non-islanders and the government, while the islanders themselves gain a portion of the benefit. Sustainable development and sustainability are sometimes placed as the main government agenda while overshadowing more urgent issues of islanders. Robertson (2018:147) shares the grass roots view on the issue of sustainability:

“Having lived on various Scottish islands for over 40 years working on numerous integrated development projects, I can state with confidence that whilst environmental concerns arising from global warming and a whole range of economic activities are fiercely being debated (usually by a vociferous minority of the population), they are but nothing compared to the outcry from the vast majority of residents when a local hospital, school, transport link or major traditional employer is threatened with closure... affordable housing, fuel poverty, fresh water shortages and access to high-speed broadband are other important issues that will be addressed long before seeking green, blue, eco or smart island status.

This is true for most islands, as the population is often dispersed across a number of islands in an archipelago, more public investment per population needs to be made in islands compared to if they were located together in one place (Karampela et al., 2014; Spilanis & Kizos, 2012). Islands want to develop in their own terms beyond discourses of climate change (Baldacchino, 2018). The true expressions and concerns of islanders quoted above reminds us why Island Studies endeavours to “study islands in their own terms” and continuously study islands not from a centralistic view, but from grounded perspectives. Even when development seems to be benevolent in growing island economy, there can be different perspectives on the benefits of such development.

To some, certain moves of empowering islands might be seen as just another form of coloniality where a metropolitan patron might have more benefits from extraction or production than the islanders themselves (Grydehøj, 2017). For example, in Hawai’i indigenous lands have been taken control over by the US in purpose of benefiting indigenous people who were claimed incapable of managing it themselves, which the procedure is similar to that of the indigenous people of North America. This was then criticised of breaking traditional land system (Androus & Greymorning, 2016). Endogenous development of remote islands can clash with development planned for them by the central government or by those on the mainland. Island gentrification projects such as Fårö, Ré, and Toronto islands have grown the economy and seen

rising property prices as more people build holiday homes and resorts (Baldacchino, 2019; King, 2009). For the younger generation, rising land price is a problem as they have less opportunity to own their own property. Hawai'i, Aruba and other cases of heavily invested islands have also made life difficult for the locals; the formal government-supported development left out any consideration regarding the fate of existing residents in the economic growth (Peterson, 2020; Stevens, 2018).

2.7. Providing context: Postcolonialism and development theories

To make better sense of the relations within the island assemblage, the islands used as a case study in this research needs to be accompanied by context. As explained in 2.4, assemblages and their components are always influenced by external factors, that shape the way how institutions and actors operate, including their different interests, motives, and capacity. In the context of what is being observed in this thesis – peripherality, the most prominent external factors shaping the island assemblage relate with the complex effect of colonialism and globalisation. This feature is shared by other places in the Southeast Asia region and other islands around the world, especially in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

The term 'Postcolonialism' has a number of related meanings, the broadest understanding of the term can be taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica, which defines postcolonialism as "the historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism". Another use of the term, (written slightly differently) post-colonialism, uses post- to signify a political stance or movement of anti- colonialism, which is established at the beginning of colonisation, not at the end. Broader discussions in the academic field also question whether 'colonialism' in postcolonialism exclusively refers to European colonisation, while there are many other forms of such colonisation by non-Europeans (Sidaway, 2000). The

term used as the context of islands in this study is the former understanding of how the European colonial presence, and the aftermath of the colonial period affects the islands.

Postcolonialism is closely tied with discussions of modernisation, development and globalisation. The first significance during the early years of postcolonialism is the change of political structure. Post-colonies need to adapt political structure of the Westphalian state to be acknowledged as a free state. Newly born nations are forced to quickly learn to form a government, military and all the other parts of a 'modern' state, and with this, a new class of national elite is born. Modernity and development are central in discussions of postcolonialism. As soon as new states are born, they are invited to hop on the development ladder, where European states and the US 'benevolently' show the way to become developed just like them. International institutions, namely the World Bank and IMF provide technical and financial support to make sure, postcolonial states progress in development. Eisenstadt (1973) explains that the process of modernisation is unique compared to other historical changes, because it is based in the assumption of a socio-political order based on universalism.

In Development Theory, states are expected to progress in a linear change from 'traditional' to 'modern' – a process widely known as modernisation, an evolutionist vision of capitalistic backed development (Nabudere, 1997). Unsurprisingly, many discussions in postcolonialism studies critiques this type of development, especially relating to universalism and the definition of 'modern' and 'traditional' (Supyandi et al., 2018), and how it undermines and delegitimises any form of traditional civilisation (Eisenstadt, 1973). Zambakari (2019) criticises that a linear model of modernisation has its own hidden agendas, as the suggestion from developed nations towards 'undeveloped' nations emphasises that to end poverty, more aid money, donor contributions, and loans are needed to get poor nations on the development ladder. Western capitalist enterprises dictate country's economic and political direction of

development, while profits go back to western nations (Msindo, 2018). Byekwaso (2016) argues that most approaches under modernisation theory also promotes Western culture and values in Third World countries, hence societies need to define their own values and goals before jumping on the ladder to have the most benefit. Jeffrey Sachs is perhaps one of the most influential economists supporting modernisation, and has been termed a 'neo-modernisation theorist'. He argues that modernisation needs huge amount of capital from developing countries for modernisation, do it comprehensively, and do it big. Unsurprisingly, with such approach, we find culture shocks, diminishing of local values and culture, and unlearning traditional sustainable lifestyle for the immediate goal of modernisation. Other critiques of modernisation include the environmental impact of global modernisation (York et al., 2003), and the disruption of family and community structures. Capitalistic view of land as asset has changed the perception of people about the value of land, freezing borders of land ownership, making traditional practice of migration impossible (Connell, 2012).

Another approach to understand development is Globalisation theory. In some ways, it is still related with modernisation theory, as it sees development as a form of modernisation. The emphasis however is on how capital, ideas, influence, and knowledge can move much faster and directly, crossing state borders, especially now with digital infrastructure (Reyes, 2001). This global flow provides more opportunities for localities to increase their economy and knowledge, blurring the traditional Global North and South divide (Haug et al., 2021). With global interconnectedness there has been convergence between countries in North and South, alongside divergence within countries (Horner, 2020). Many islands today are modernising and being exposed to the global interconnectivity as consumers and producers. Islanders and those governing islands need to ask themselves the important question on how do they want to

balance between universalisation and geographic variation and localism, between economic growth and sustainable preservation.

Unfortunately, for many states around the world, the mechanism and operation of local governance, including local democracies, was also designed by international financial organisations and donor agencies, mostly in 1980s and 1990s to promote their version of development (Herrera & Post, 2014). Since then, much has been learned from implementing such decentralisation models, especially in developing countries. While there have been positive outcomes such as political stability and the limitation of monopoly by central government elites, a number of issues are also prominent; such as low economic growth, weak institutions, misuse of power, and corruption (Faguet et al., 2014; Faguet & Pöschl, 2015; Mohmand, 2016; Ramesh, 2013). Following this, several states have re-centralised some resources and power, falling into a ‘governance trap’ where central governments unwilling to fully trust local governments, and the people keep central government accountable for services that should be the responsibility of local governments (Lockwood, 2009). This inefficiency creates a large financial burden for the government. While certain remedies have been proposed, mainly creating robust administration system and more public awareness of government monitoring (Joaquin, 2014; Shah, 2006), decentralisation mechanisms remains yet another challenge for postcolonial states in their journey towards a ‘modern society’.

2.8. Background of the research setting

2.8.1. Overview of Indonesia

This thesis uses the Riau Islands, Indonesia as the case study. Indonesia provides an interesting setting to understand the correlation between islandness, peripherality and the agency of governance relations. Indonesia is known as the largest archipelago state with a wide

range of island geographies, different conditions of peripheralities a complex society and unique governance history – “an improbable nation” as Pisani (2015) calls. This section provides a description of Indonesia to allow the reader to understand the wider context of the ‘island governance ecology’ in which this research has been conducted.

Around 65% of the state’s territory consists of water and according to most Indonesian references, Indonesia has more than 17,000 islands; where 13,487 islands have been formally report to the UN in 2010 (Ambari, 2016). The Indonesian archipelago is situated between the continents of Asia and Australia, and has an important geopolitical position as it is passed by global shipping routes, where a global network of trade relies on its political and military stability. Currently, the population of Indonesia stands at 267 million (BPS, 2020), spread across more than five thousand inhabited islands, where more than 70% of the population lives on the main islands of Java, Sumatra and Bali, in the western part of Indonesia. The archipelago has a diverse population with 633 ethnicities and 746 local languages across the archipelago (Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009; Indonesia Bureau of Statistics, 2015). In terms of development, whilst being a member of the G20, Indonesia is also classified as a developing economy and lower-middle income country (UN, 2018). At the end of 2014, as many as 75 million people still had no access to safe clean water, around 100 million had no healthy sanitation facilities (The World Bank, 2014), and 2.7 million families in villages still had no access to electricity (Indonesia Ministry of Villages Development, 2016).

The Republic of Indonesia is a unitarian state, with the president as head of state. It consists of three government levels; the central government, province government and district government. There are elected leaders and parliament members (DPR) for each of these government levels. Although having a democratic system, corruption in Indonesia is still high; it is ranked 85 out of the 180 countries on the corruption perception index (Transparency

International, 2019). Freedom House classifies Indonesia as ‘partially free’; corruption and a lack of transparency in law enforcement prevails. Free speech is also becoming threatened by new regulations on blasphemy, which are often used by politicians on opponents (Freedom House, 2020).

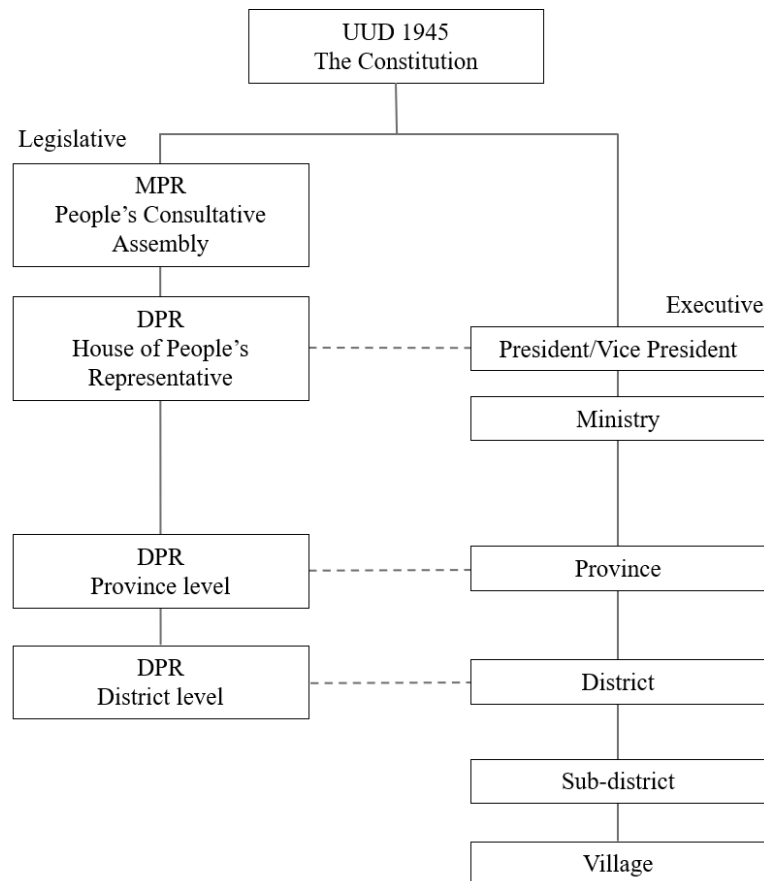


Figure 2-6. Indonesian government structure

Another factor influencing governance relations and the peripherality of small islands is ineffective governance. There have been numerous studies on how the three-tier election-based governance system has made formal governance inefficient and ineffective; where power is monopolised by local elites, government leaders and head of departments are focused more on power and elections than making real progress in government affairs (Choi, 2007; Lay, 2012;

Ramage, 2007). On top of this, the lack of local government capacity, capability and accountability has also been criticised as a development barrier (Basri & Siti Nabiha, 2014; Lewis, 2016). Having discussed the general conditions above, the following section provides a more detailed context of small island peripherality and island governance in Indonesia.

2.8.2. The Indonesian archipelago and central-peripheral island relations

Indonesia's archipelagoness has been an important foundation to build its identity as a nation. Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, said that even a child, when he looks at a map, can tell that the Indonesian islands constitutes of a single unit – an archipelago. Of course, he was talking about an archipelago in a cartographical sense, but political wise, most observers saw the islands as fragmented polities, fragile, and can easily disintegrate after its independence (Cribb & Ford, 2009). What do these islands have in common that can unite them other than having the same history of being colonised by the Dutch East Indies trade company? As a comparison, the West Indies – the Caribbean islands from the Bahamas to Puerto Rico, or further southwards to Trinidad and Tobago can also be seen as a physical archipelago, yet it consists of more than ten independent states and territories. As described earlier, the Indonesian islands consist of hundreds of ethnicities and indigenous tribes, kingdoms and sultanates, where not all of them are connected through traditional trade and cultural ties – what we expect from an archipelago in a cultural and economic sense. The islands are neither a geological archipelago, as they are formed through of volcanic and non-volcanic processes. Roberts & Stephens (2017:15) describes the archipelago formation of Indonesia as “a push and pull between the metaphoric and the material, in which the concept of archipelago serves to mediate the phenomenology of humans' cultural relation to the solid and liquid materiality of geography. Viewed from this perspective, the archipelago emerges as neither strictly natural

nor as wholly cultural but always as at the intersection of the Earth's materiality and humans' penchant for metaphoricity". Yet this archipelago is now an important part of the imagined Indonesian nation (Anderson, 2016), and various rhetoric and doctrines have been produced to spread the idea that Indonesia has always been and always will be an archipelago; consisting of different islands, ethnicities and peoples yet united physically, culturally, and most important, politically – its national slogan : *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* which means diverse but still one entity.

Indonesia also derives its inspiration of archipelago-ness from historical terms, mainly *Nusantara*, to describe the larger Indonesian archipelago including the Malay territories, Thailand and the Philippines (Budisantoso, 1997; Laksmana, 2011). Weishaguna (2006) reminds to use the term *Nusantara* carefully as an inspiration, as the term was made by Majapahit, a 14th century empire in Java, to describe the outer islands they envisioned as united under the empire's expansionist conquest. While the historical reference strengthens the idea that Indonesia has always been seen as an archipelago, it also has historic notions of imperialism with a centrality in Java. The aspiration to become a maritime nation is also derived from the understanding of *Cakra Manggilingan*, literally meaning the turning of the wheel, which conceptualises that events and periods will always repeat itself. There have been two maritime empires with territories stretching across the archipelago; Srivijaya and Majapahit, hence by repeating history, Indonesia considers itself to be the third maritime empire in the modern world (Alverdian, 2021).

Indonesia's outlook (*Wawasan Nusantara*) is also based on these archipelago values. The outlook envisions Indonesia as an archipelago, a unity of islands, sea, also a unity in economic, social and political aspects. In its outlook Indonesia views itself as a maritime nation which has a strategic location and an important role to play in the regional maritime security. This is why the archipelago nation, especially in recent decades, endeavours to strengthen

relations with the extended archipelago. Indonesia has strengthened maritime cooperation with India in securing maritime borders in the Andaman sea (Brewster, 2011). Despite the tension with neighbouring islands of Oceania regarding their support for West Papua liberation, Indonesia still supports the cultural communication between the eastern part of Indonesia with the rest of the Melanesia community and maintain bilateral relation with Papua New Guinea (Blades, 2020; Purwanto et al., 2017; Tempo, 2015). Indonesia also considers itself to have a pivotal role in Southeast Asia and supports ASEAN economic integration, with especially close cooperation in the SIJORI (Singapore-Johor-Riau) economic triangle (Ananta, 2006; Nabbs-Keller, 2020; Sparke et al., 2004; Syarip, 2020; Wilonoyudho, 2009).

As an archipelago nation, the sovereignty over the sea has been an important consideration of Indonesia since the early years of independence. The concept of a state consisting of land *and* water was first made through the Declaration of Djuanda in 1957 where Indonesia self-proclaimed its sovereignty over the seas between its islands; the term *tanah air* or land (and) water refers to Indonesia as a homeland. In 1982, the concept of an archipelago state was agreed in UNCLOS that water between the islands is part of the country's sovereignty. Border islands are not only those at the outer borders of the archipelago but also within the archipelago; this deviation from the territorial norm is due to Indonesia's location. Located in the intersection between Asia and Australia, and also between the western and eastern trade centres, more than 90,000 international ships pass through Indonesian waters each year (Kuncoro et al., 2019). To facilitate international shipping, based on international agreement, Indonesia has three international passageways or *Alur Laut Kepulauan Indonesia* (ALKI) where ships are free to pass through the islands. This becomes a source of vulnerability to enemy ships and the transport of unwanted goods and people. It has become the archipelagic state's top priority to guard not only its outer/peripheral borders, but also its inner borders.

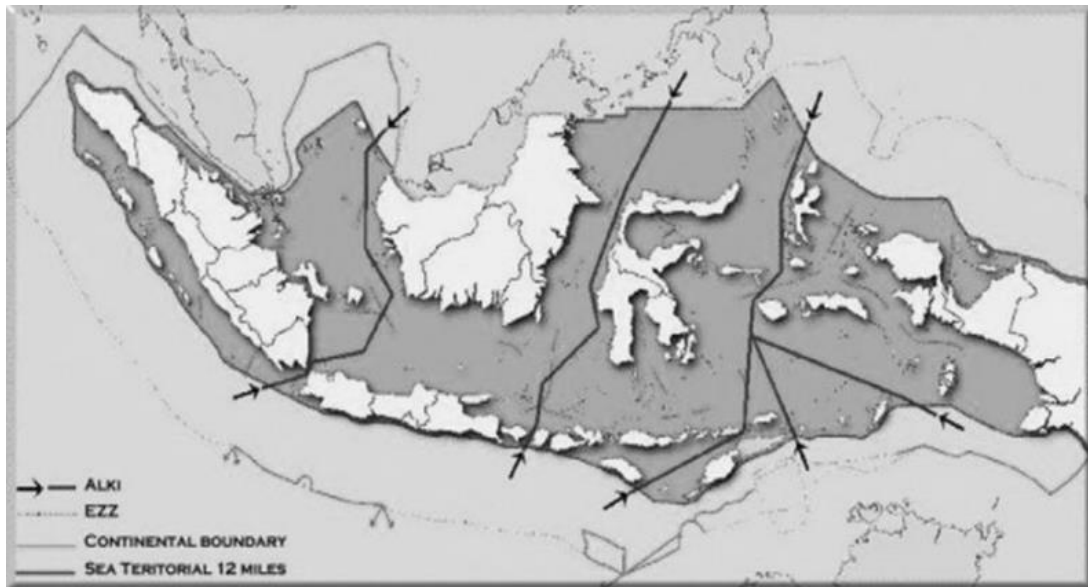


Figure 2-7. International sea passage passing through Indonesia
(Source: Handini & Risdiarto, 2019)

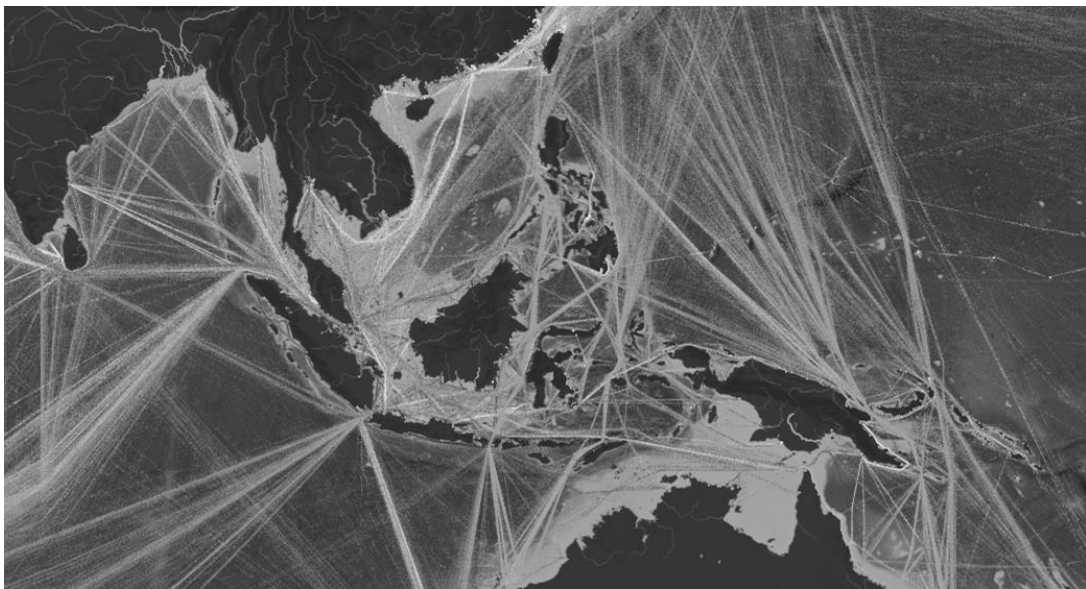


Figure 2-8. World shipping map passing through Indonesia
(Source: Shipmap.org, 2012)

Central-peripheral relations within the archipelago today have been much influenced by its colonial past and inspiration from ancient maritime empires. Indonesia has been socially, economically, and politically polarised with a strong centrality in Java Island, and has been so

since the Dutch colonial period when they used Java to control the outer islands (Touwen, 2001). The Indonesian government (mainly governed from and by Java) is also inspired by reference to ancient conceptualisation of *Mandala*, which is a Sanskrit term meaning ‘circle’ or ‘completion’ representing a microcosm of the universe. The geometric circle of Mandala was designed to draw attention to its centre, where power lies, which was defined by Javanese philosophers as the Island of Java itself (Laksmana, 2011). During the regime of the authoritarian President Suharto’s from 1967 to 1998, Java’s dominance actually grew, not only as the centre of economy, but also culture. The central government developed the outer islands based on values and development standards from Java – *Javanisation* as some call it (Bräuchler, 2010); a form of internal coloniality, strengthening the position of Java.

Modernisation and Javanisation lead to a highly dependent central-peripheral relation which was even felt at grass root level. One major shift that happened at a national scale was the promotion of rice as the main staple; in the 1980s, this was done in line with efforts to grow national agriculture and food security with rice fields based on the larger islands, especially Java and Sulawesi. This has shifted the preference of islanders from their traditional staple of cassava and sago to rely on rice, therefore rely on the very few islands that produce them (Sumedi & Djauhari, 2015). A reliance on an imported staple coupled with challenging transport, lower average income, and high distribution prices in the outer islands heightens the perception of peripherality. Consumer items such as sugar, salt, cooking oil, soap, shampoo, tinned food, etc., also vehicles and gadgets are also produced or imported mainly on Java Island before distributing to the outer islands.

However, since the fall of President Suharto’s authoritarian regime in 1999, local identities and sentiments have been rising. So has the political pressure towards a more equal spread of development. These requests have been made by areas that consider themselves

peripheral, the common terminology is *daerah tertinggal* or left-behind areas. The peripherality of small islands is thus juxtaposed with the broader context of peripherality; President Joko Widodo coined the phrase *membangun dari pinggiran* meaning “developing from the peripheries” – a popular movement to de-centralise the centre and pay attention to the peripheries that have long felt forgotten; this refers to border areas and left-behind areas. The latter classification of peripheral areas focuses more on the eastern part of Indonesia. At a national level, there is a significant development gap between the western and eastern part of Indonesia (See Figure 2-9 below). Development in the eastern part of Indonesia is seen as a way to stabilise tension of separatist movements without military intervention.

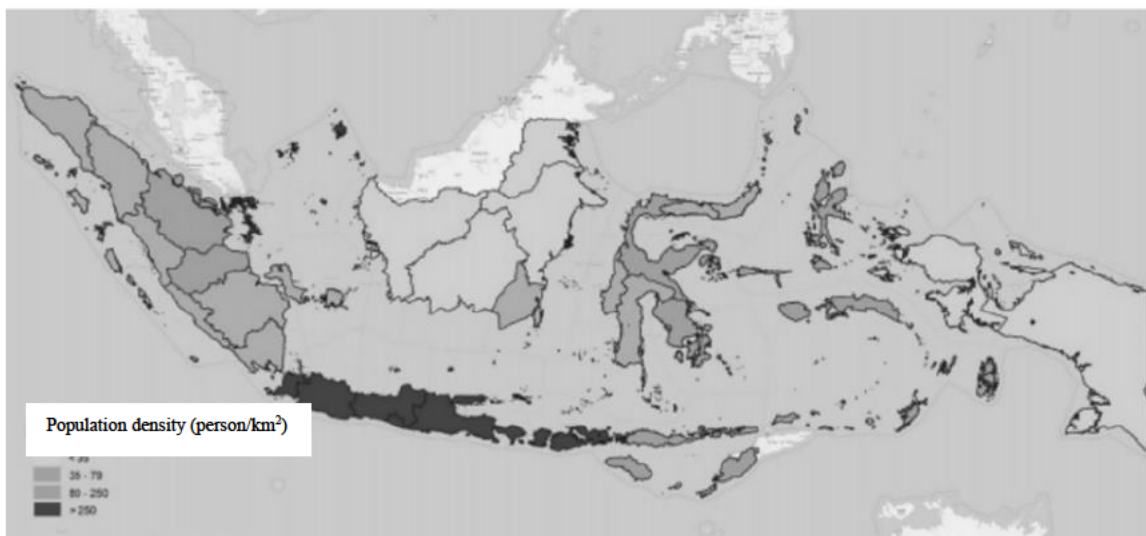


Figure 2-9. Population Density Map
(Source: Ministry of Health, 2019)



Figure 2-10. Human Development Index of Indonesia 2014
(Source: BPS, 2019)

Indonesia's shift towards decentralisation in the 1999 government reform was meant to decrease the centrality of Java by distributing resource, authority, and autonomy more evenly to local governments. This at least stimulated local economies to grow as a chain reaction of local government spending in construction of new government buildings, wages of government staff and the operation of public services. This also allowed stronger central-peripheral political relation between localities and the central government; besides political party affiliation, the democratic mechanism also provides positions for non-partisan representation from each district and province (DPD) to sit at the national assembly. This allows more dynamic shifts of central-peripheral relations outside the technocratic, top-down planning of the archipelago's development. Decentralisation also comes with responsibility; local governments are not only given autonomy and authority over resource and public services, but they are also expected to generate regional income to support themselves. Hence 'left behind areas' are not meant to be fully developed by the central government, but they are also areas expected to *catch up*. The concept is that the central government provides stimulants through national scale initiatives to allow regions outside Java to increase their economy, develop infrastructure and provide service independently.

The MP3EI 2011-2025 Masterplan is an example of government intervention to spread growth by creating economic corridors; these are integrated networks of infrastructure within a geographical area that stimulates economic growth (Berawi et al., 2017). In terms of connectivity, Indonesia has developed the 'sea highway' programme, which is subsidised shipping between the western and eastern parts of Indonesia to provide more affordable goods and services to the generally more peripheral eastern islands (Kemenhub, 2016). Another national scale project that might change the constellation of central-peripheral relations within

the archipelago is the move of the capital from Jakarta to the eastern part of Kalimantan (Borneo Island). The discourse of moving the centre of Indonesia to Kalimantan has been around since the first president, and has been revived by the current president Joko Widodo. The reasons of why the capital needs to be moved are based on issues in Jakarta, including overcrowding, traffic jam, floods, deterioration of water, and the continuous sinking of the city. This plan has also received many criticisms from academicians and the public, mostly regarding environmental and financial aspects. But, more important to this research is perhaps the discourse of how the location is chosen and what consequence it brings in changing archipelagic relations.

The new location of the capital was chosen to be at the centre of the archipelago to support the de-centralisation of Java by redistributing population, become an economic catalyst in the centre of the archipelago and have an even distant from the centre towards the entire archipelago (Farida, 2021; Salim & Negara, 2019; Sugihartati et al., 2020). This seems an oversimplified assumption and prediction of how moving the capital would affect development and central-peripheral political relations. Java's 'stickiness' – as Markusen (1996) calls it, is strong; most capital, large-scale businesses, industries, the best universities, and most of the population are already fixed to Java. Despite, many doubts on the material impact, the capital's move might have more political importance for the nation and Southeast Asia. The new location of the capital is more of what Kirby (1993: 174) calls a 'metaphorical substrate', where "space provides the very medium for measuring interconnection and difference, similarity and distance-markers that become important in evaluating the possibilities of coalition or the desirability of separatism".

While shifting the scale down to the smaller archipelagos, we can see how smallness also contributes to political distance with the centre. The affairs of smaller islands – their islandness, archipelagoness and peripherality are overshadowed by that of the larger

archipelago, making small islands too insignificant to be of concern. The approximately 6,000 inhabited smaller islands across the archipelago face similar day to day problems, as they are introduced to modern standards of living without the means and necessities to deal with the externalities – most are not isolated, but islands in transition. Lessons from various small islands across Indonesia show that waste packages either pollute the surrounding shores or are burnt, and household waste from soap, shampoo, detergents are not properly treated before disposing to the land or sea. This contributes to health problems and in some cases affecting fish stock and decreasing islands' source of livelihood (Mandala, 2016). Their reliance on processed food and sugar, increasing health issues. Public services, including the much-needed health services, have not been able to catch up and deal with the externalities of the increasing modernisation of consumerism. The physical peripherality of small islands also increases their informality, creating barriers for investment; informal land ownership, corruption and unclear bureaucracy is unattractive for investors (Wuryandari, 2014). The issues above coupled with the lack of island development policies/regulation and island-connecting-infrastructure which are ever more needed in the modern world creates a deep feeling of peripherality amongst the smaller islands (Ralahalu & Jinca, 2013; Suawa, 2018). Such issues are not unheard of by the central government, but smaller islands pose no political urgency compared to much larger political dynamic of the nation. Only few islands every now and then entangle with the concerns of the larger archipelago – mostly border islands. Thus, smaller islands find themselves at the fringe of central-peripheral relations in the world's largest archipelagic state.

2.8.3. Small islands in the world's largest archipelagic state

To understand how the issues of smaller islands fit in with the context of the larger archipelago, another aspect to look into is Indonesia's island governance and maritime outlook.

One might assume that, due to its archipelago geography, Indonesia has developed a strong maritime culture and an advanced archipelago approach in governance. Although Indonesia has formally envisioned itself as an archipelago state and maritime nation, its implication has not been applicable in all aspects. Both maritime and inland (land-based) feudal culture has strongly developed in the Indonesian archipelago (Sulistiyono & Rochwulaningsih, 2013). Not all communities can be seen as what Hayward (2012) calls ‘aquapelagic’ referring to communities that have a strong relation with the sea and view the sea as impartial of daily life. While the majority of inhabited small islands (around six thousand) generally have a strong aquapelagic nature, most of Indonesia’s population is located on much larger islands. Sixty percent of the Indonesian population lives on Java Island which has a strong inland culture, roughly thirty percent live on other large islands; Sulawesi, Sumatra, Papua and Borneo; three of which are larger than Great Britain with some of the world’s largest rainforests, leaving only around ten percent of the population spread across 6,000 smaller islands (BPS, 2020). This statistic shows that, although the majority of Indonesia’s islands may be aquapelagic, the majority of the population are not. The concentration of population on the larger islands influences national priorities, which explains how policies have not fully supported the maritime related initiatives.

Seemingly contrasting the maritime vision, the entire issue of marine and fishery affairs has not been a national priority for more than 50 years after independence. The first time marine development entered national planning was in the 1994-1999 national planning document, focusing on the inventory of marine potential. Only in 1999 did Indonesia set up the Ministry of Marine and Fishery. Prior to this, marine and fishery affairs were under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Bappenas, 2014). Only in 2000 was there any mention of small islands in national policies; the legal term ‘small islands’ introduced under the Ministry of Marine and Fishery is defined as land completely surrounded by water no larger than 10,000km² and with

a population of no more than 200,000 people. Later this was updated by Act 27/2007, where small islands are defined as land no larger than 2,000km² surrounded by water. These operational terms of small islands were related to the sustainable management of small islands based on community development. Hence, there was no need to define mainland and main islands, as regulations did not focus on human interaction.

Local governments with coastal areas and small islands have been given additional responsibility to plan and manage these areas. Coastal areas and small island zoning are to be integrated with local spatial planning. Prior to 2014, these responsibilities were given to district governments, but since 2014, along with other marine affairs, this has been recentralised to the province level. The most recent small island protection effort is based on the Ministry of Marine and Fishery regulation No.8/2019 that states any activity or business on islands less than 100km² needs permission directly from the ministry. Since the acknowledgement of small islands in 2000, issues of small islands were mainly focused on an environmental role; they became areas that need to be naturally conserved.

Small islands' role in Indonesia's environmental policies is somewhat passive, they are only designated to the preservation of coastal and marine ecosystems. Although islands have become the posterchildren of climate change and global warming, along with sustainability initiatives, these climate change-related development initiatives for small islands have not become a priority. According to the National Designated Authority (NDA) for climate change response, at a national scale, efforts to reduce carbon emission mainly focuses on reducing deforestation, forest degradation and reduce emissions in large cities (NDA, 2021). On the other hand, ownership of whole islands is strictly regulated, especially after the national media showed a website that listed some Indonesian islands to for rent and for sale. The

government then made a regulation that for islands small than 100km², the government needs to own at least 30% of the land (KKP, 2021).

The human aspect of small islands related to peripherality in a socio-economic context has yet to be addressed. Indonesia focuses on island peripherality at a macro scale; relating to efforts in de-peripheralising the eastern islands, Indonesia has developed the ‘sea highway’ programme, which is subsidised shipping between western and eastern parts of Indonesia to provide more affordable goods and services to the peripheral eastern islands. Such efforts are commendable and have been appreciated by the general public, but the efforts to tackle peripheral conditions on the smaller islands in general have not yet been made. Currently, small islands only benefit from blanket policies and programmes for rural areas in general.

As the central government has not given much attention to small islands apart for the usual environment and territorial interests of the state, bottom-up conceptualisations of small island development have emerged that acknowledges islandness and archipelagoness; such as *gugus pulau* concept, literally meaning island clusters, proposed by Maluku Province. This is conceptually a comprehensive an archipelago plan acknowledging existing inter-island networks, resources and cultural ties in order to plan development of public service, trade, and small island resilience (Alfons et al., 2012; Kastanya, 2016; Ralahalu & Jinca, 2013). Political movements have also emerged to advocate for the needs and challenges of small island inhabitants. Indonesian local governments of small islands naturally do what small islands around the world have been doing – negotiate jurisdiction. At a district level, ASPEKSINDO (Indonesia’s association of small islands and coastal governments) has been coordinating with the Ministry of Marine and Fishery to support coastal communities. At the province level, the cooperation body for island provinces has become more aggressive in requesting more funding and autonomy since 2005 (Kelen, 2017). The island provinces suggest that a maritime state

should be consistent in following the concept of an integrated territory of water and land at a local level. They argue that local governments of small islands should be given funding based on the calculation of the marine area between their islands as well as their land area for a proportional fiscal distribution. After years of lobbying the central government, the island provinces secured a general statement in the 2014 Autonomy Act that acknowledges the special needs of island provinces and states that they should be supported. As a general legislative product, this needs to be followed by more practical policies and regulations from each ministry. However, to date the formal acknowledgement of the central government has yet to materialise. By teaming up with other small island governments, islanders hope to consolidate the voice of ten percent of Indonesia's population (around 27 million!) inhabiting the smaller islands. While the national election data show no consistency of political collaboration between small island governments, the struggle to negotiate small island jurisdiction is made via local representatives body (DPD) which consist of non-partisan representatives from each district and province that focus on local interests, and assist and monitor political party representatives at the national board in passing legislation (Ogen, 2021; Tempo, 2021).

In summary, Indonesia's central-peripheral island relations today are the result of an assemblage process comprising islands' geography, past and present practices of island governance, along with political dynamics between localities and islands. Small islands, having been peripheral in both development and decision making have recently taken advantage of Indonesia's decentralisation arrangement to resourcefully navigate islandness through political and governmental avenues in negotiating jurisdiction and resources. Considering how the affairs of small islands have been dwarfed by the islandness and maritime discourses of the larger Indonesian archipelago, it seems reasonable to consider bottom-up initiatives and advocacy might have a chance to change small islands position for the better. Of course, this

needs to be followed up by further questioning how such changes implicate the daily lives and islanders experience of peripherality, and not only benefit the few elites of these small islands? – these questions will be further be explored throughout the empirical chapters of this thesis using the case study of the Riau Islands.

2.9. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has exhaustively discussed three key bodies of literature that relate with this research – peripherality, islandness, and island governance relations, as well as literature on Assemblage as an approach, the postcolonialism context, and background description of the research setting. Each of the bodies of literature provide rich academic material for this thesis. The following concludes the key lessons from each body of literature, the relations between them and gaps in the literature in which this thesis can potentially contribute to.

The chapter begins with a broad discussion on peripherality, highlighting how peripherality is a product of comparison, and is dynamic and malleable. Peripherality is shaped by many factors, including context, geography, ideas, and relations. Different peripheralities and centralities may coexist and overlap with each other at different scales and dimensions. Therefore, the relation between islandness and peripherality is actually ambiguous; at which scale, in what dimension, and through which relation and comparison?

In the studies of islands, there have been various approaches in the discussion and analysis of peripherality. Many have defended their argument that islandness has a unique contribution to peripherality by amplifying the sense of place (Conkling, 2007). Some authors have directly approached islandness-related peripherality and analysed it from various sides, including attempting to classify islands based on ‘peripherality indicators’, conceptualising socio-political traits of island societies shaped by islandness-related peripherality, and

exploring islanders' and island governments' adaptation towards island peripherality. Another growing movement in Island Studies is what Nadarajah & Grydehøj (2016) call a de-colonial project; grounded research advocating the voice of the islanders in the process of modern peripheralisation, through so called developmental programmes or in the name of sustainability. The literature presented has also discussed the peripheralisation of islands through colonialism and colonality. On the other side of Island Studies, authors such as Grydehøj (2015) have taken a stance to reject the generalisation of islands as peripheral places, with studies emphasising how islandness can equally support the creation of centrality. Indeed, as has been concluded by Baldacchino (2013:16), "islandness, just like mainlandness, does not, in itself, cause anything". Island Studies provide us with plenty of case studies to observe different ways islands influence, but how can we observe different relations within a single case study as needed in this research?

From these two bodies of literature – islandness and peripherality, using peripherality as an entry point seems to provide more promising path for analysis. By dissecting a case study in different dimensions and scale, and identifying existing peripheralities, we can observe overlapping peripheralities then try to follow the trail of relations from each peripherality to islandness. This is a promising new approach; by enabling us to identify peripherality and the relations leading to it, we have better opportunity to alter or redirect peripherality. This leads to another question: if islandness by itself does nothing, how do we acknowledge other aspects in the relation? Whether it be physical such as infrastructure, or other geographical aspects, or the agency of humans, institutions, and ideas?

For this, academic work on Assemblages is introduced – an approach to understand socio-material nexus of different elements shaping the assemblage 'whole' being observed. Literature on governance relations is added to complement the island assemblage. The

discussion of power, governance actors, different modes government, and the entanglement of islands in state interest are laid out, to understand how actors and institutions may interact with islandness and other possible factors in producing and altering peripherality. As an assemblage and its elements are continuously influenced by external factors, a postcolonial context and research setting has also been elaborated to provide a much clearer image of actors' motivation, capacity and conditioning.

The gap in the literature, is not so much to do with each body of literature, rather it is in the comprehensive conceptualisation or theoretical framework to understand how these different literatures tie together. Discourses of governance relations often lack the acknowledgement of geography that mediates capacity to influence or coerce people, whereas Island Studies tend to conflate the significance of islandness. Therefore, this chapter shows the potential contribution of the research to the wider academic discussion, by introducing a comprehensive conceptualisation of the relation between islandness and peripherality through an island assemblage. As a case study, this research brings new material to a range of academic interests. The case discussion of sub-national governance relations within a postcolonial archipelago state is a unique mix that can relate with many research areas and other islands across the world. Informalities and traditionality are important aspects that affects the island assemblage in particular ways, which are often overlooked or undermined in discussions of island relations. Having provided the key literatures for this research, along with the gaps and potential contribution this thesis may bring, the following chapter further elaborates the research methods to acquire and analyse the data to produce new knowledge that can fill in the literature gaps as explained above.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview

Having discussed the background to this thesis' key academic work and the research gaps in the previous chapters, this chapter subsequently elaborates on how the research has been conducted. This chapter is divided into three parts. First, the chapter offers an explanation of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis and the interpretivist research approach taken. Second, a detailed explanation of the research design is provided which covers the case study selection, data collection methods, data analysis, ethics, and the descriptions of changes or adjustments that were needed when conducting this research. Third, this chapter provides a reflection of the researcher's positionality and fieldwork experience, which is a crucial context in validating the depth of data collection, interpretation and analyses of the qualitative data.

3.2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

“The key theme is not in fact islands, but rather insularity, islandness, insularism and the interrelated topics of isolation, contiguity, connectivity, discontinuity, enclosure and peripherality” (Taglioni, 2011:61)

This thesis follows the tradition of Island Studies; focusing on aspects unique to islands, in this case islandness and peripherality. Peripherality is often seen as the implication of islandness, but the relation between the two is not that straightforward and actually rather complex; both notions of islandness and peripherality are slippery and fuzzy terms (Markusen, 1999). To achieve the research objective stated in Chapter 1, the theoretical framework is based on the relationality of theories from key literatures presented in the previous chapter that are analysed together with an Island Assemblage approach.

As the focus of this thesis is on islands' peripherality, developing the theoretical framework first needs a translation of 'peripherality' into more manageable terms. Peripherality itself is tied with the larger discussions of polarisation which encompasses processes of peripheralisation and centralisation. Recent academic literature has increasingly acknowledged that peripheralisation and centralisation are dynamic, multi-dimensional and multi-scalar; comprising not only economy, but also infrastructure, political and social aspects; in which the process can be influenced and reversed (Danson & De Souza, 2012; Kühn, 2015b; Lang, 2015; Lang & Görmar, 2019). scholars describe peripherality as inherently geographical (Danson & De Souza, 2012), where "institutional structures and practices (regulatory regimes, power geometries, policies) are shaped by and reproduce power relations and how they operate and shape everyday social practices and consequently regional and local development in a multiple and uneven way" (Lang & Görmar, 2019:8).

The second group of theory relates with islandness, which is understood as an active ingredient in shaping development paths (Grydehøj, 2018). However, the analysis of studies on islands, should expand the focus from islandness to other parts of island geography (islandness, resource, society) and how they interact with governance relations in shaping history and development paths of the islands (Warrington & Milne, 2018). This geographic-human interaction and interdependency is in line with the third body of literature on governance relations. Power, as the essence of governance, is *spatial*, where the interests of the elites or central authority are facilitated by their capacity and mediated through conditionings, and various human and institutional agents (Allen, 2003; Damele & Santos Campos, 2022; Moon, 2019).

Despite each body of literature explaining the interdependency with each other, the comprehensive conceptualisation of the three literatures together is yet to be made. Hence, this

thesis uses an Assemblage approach to conceptualise the socio-material relations and the coming together of island geographies, governance relations, along with other possible material and human elements, that produce and alter peripherality in small islands. As explained in the previous chapter, an assemblage approach emphasises the observation of non-hierarchical relations between different elements in shaping the ‘whole’, which are also constantly influenced by external factors or the environment (Ben Anderson et al., 2012b; Dittmer, 2014; Müller, 2015a).

From the theoretical framework, a conceptual framework of an island assemblage is constructed to analyse the relation between islandness and peripherality. The assemblage consists of several components or elements; island geography (including islandness, resource, society), elite/ central authority interests, capacity to rule, and institutional systems/ government arrangements. The external factors influencing the interplay of the assemblage that could not be ignored is the postcolonial setting and forces of globalisation. The conceptual framework can be seen in the diagram below.

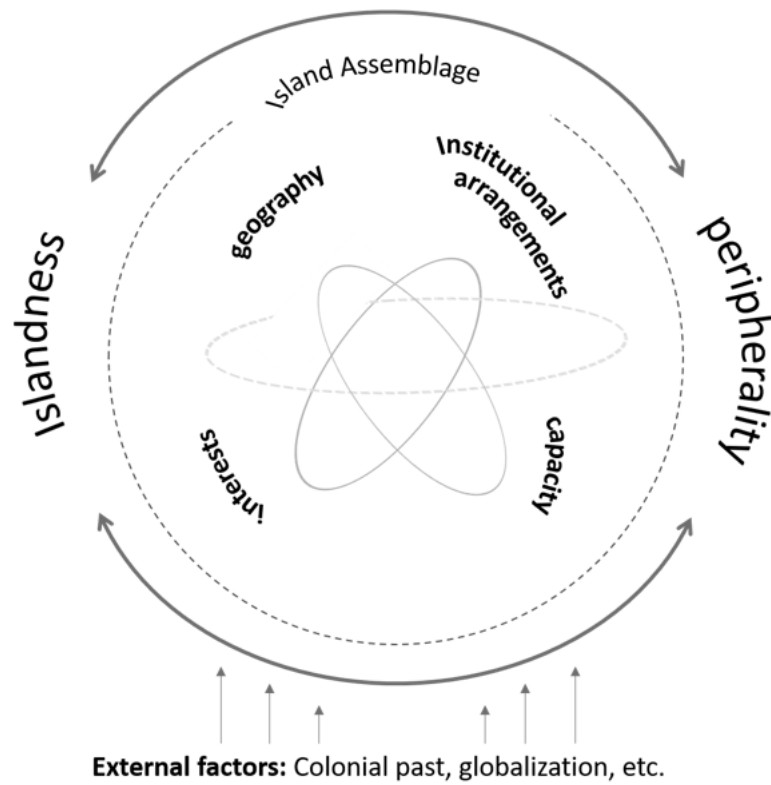


Figure 3-1. Conceptual framework

To fully capture and interpret complex relations in the framework above, the objectives of the research are based on looking at the interrelated assemblage from different perspectives and analyse from different points of entrance. It is impossible to isolate each component of the assemblage in separate discussions as they are all intertwined, rather these three objectives serve to guide and navigate discussions and analysis from different perspectives of the same assemblage being observed. This approach helps to understand how different components entangle and juxtapose in multiple scales and dimensions in producing and shifting small island peripherality and centralities.

As the conceptual framework has defined *what* relations need to be examined, the subsequent question is *how* these relations will be examined. Peripherality is often based on real conditions (geographic isolation and social exclusion) but articulated at a personal level

and becomes a social construct. To capture such experiences and understand what leads to such experiences, the type of research paradigm or approach chosen is an interpretivist one. This approach allows us to observe the case in detail and extract what is observed in lay regularities and theorise explanations and mechanisms of how it affects outcomes (Blaikie, 2010). This thesis uses a constructivist epistemology, focusing on grass root experience and interpretations from an islander's point of view; understanding from a personal level. This is in line with the mainstream stance in Island Studies that observes islands 'on their own terms', and take part in the de-colonialisation of islands by advocating islanders and island governments perspective on peripherality (McCall, 1994). This immediately pushes the question of ethics in Island Studies, on who is to be considered an islander and part of island society. As there is no rigid definition, the context of research guides the selection; here, islanders and island societies are defined as indigenous inhabitants of islands that are ethnically and culturally tied to the islands and migrants that have decided to call the islands their home. However, this does not mean those who do not fall under this category do not deserve to be heard. It is often from outsiders that we hear about uniqueness of islands (Baldacchino, 2008). The author agrees with Matheson et al. (2020) that argue sometimes islanders cannot express themselves, while non-islanders can provide insight of islanders' conditions. The following describes how the conceptual framework and the research approach outlined above is put into practice in this research.

3.3. Research design

This section provides detailed explanation on the design of this research in collecting data to fulfil the research objectives. Whilst having an outline of the research design at the beginning of the research, qualitative research, by its very nature, remains flexible before and throughout the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). There will be further

explanations throughout this chapter on how several aspects of the research have been adjusted. As the research approach adopts an interpretivist approach and a constructivist epistemology, data is collected through interviews and observations of the setting. Data collection uses flexible semi-structured interviews to fully capture the extent of peripheralities in small islands how it ties with governance relations, island geographies and other external factors that may influence peripheralities. The data collected from interviews was then transcribed and then coded with the NVivo software. Subsequently, an analysis was written thematically based on the research objectives. Following what Yin (2003) and Perry (2011) argue as an effort to build research reliability through strengthening internal validity, the following sections explain the justification of rational choices made throughout the research.

3.3.1. Case Study Selection

To fulfil the research objectives in understanding the relation between island geography, governance and peripherality, this thesis requires multiple case studies that can be used to generalise findings, yet at the same time can analyse differences in certain aspects; thus, a multiple case study methodology is used. A multiple case study design is appropriate to sample a few representative cases that can be used to understand and generalise findings, as well as highlight the uniqueness of the case studies (Eriksen, 2018).

A careful approach has been made to examine case studies that can be used to best understand small island peripherality and its relation with governance in the Indonesian setting. To begin with, the operational definition of small islands relating to this research needs to be established. In comparison to the entire archipelago, the operational terms of small islands can be referred to as islands up to 5,000km². Indonesia's largest islands (Java, Sumatra, Borneo, etc) are more than 100,000km², and main islands such as Bali, Seram and Bangka Islands are

between 5,000 – 20,000 km². By putting aside these larger islands, we can establish that any island smaller than 5,000km² can be considered small. However, an even smaller size has been set up by the government to define small islands. This relates with the concerns of coastal and marine protection, in which a small island is defined as an area of land surrounded by sea, visible at high tide and no more than 2,000 km² (Act 27/2007). Even though this is not directly related to the discussions of peripherality, the act has legal consequences for the islands. Small islands are considered protected peripheral areas with limited development options; a small island is prioritised for activities such as eco-tourism, fishery and conservation. In terms of practical governance, the actual size of the island is not so fixed in order to be considered ‘small’; the self-proclaimed ‘archipelago provinces’ define their geography as having ‘generally small’ islands and, more importantly, a larger area of sea compared to land. The latter variable points towards a dispersed island configuration with consequently high operational cost.

Considering the emphasis on governance, this thesis’ definition of small islands is aligned with that of the central government and the archipelago provinces. This decision was made in order to gather as much information as possible relating to existing policies affecting government arrangements and government interventions in the small islands. Thus, from here we can first establish that island districts consisting of a majority of small islands less than 2,000 km² with a majority area consisting of sea should be selected as case studies. In relation to the chosen constructivist epistemology, using a formal definition that interviewees (who are mostly government staff of small islands) are familiar with makes it easier for them to relate with. At the early stage of research, several small island districts across different provinces were initially proposed to capture the diversity of small islands’ peripherality and island governance relations. However, due to time and budget constraints, it was decided that the research scope

should be limited to just one province. Accordingly, to facilitate the need of the research objectives, the selected province needed to have several districts consisting of islands less than 2,000 km², have a majority area consisting of sea and could provide a variety of conditions needed to achieve the research objectives; variations of islandness-related peripherality, central-local governance arrangements and state interests in the islands. From the eight archipelago provinces in the map below, study cases were selected from only one province.

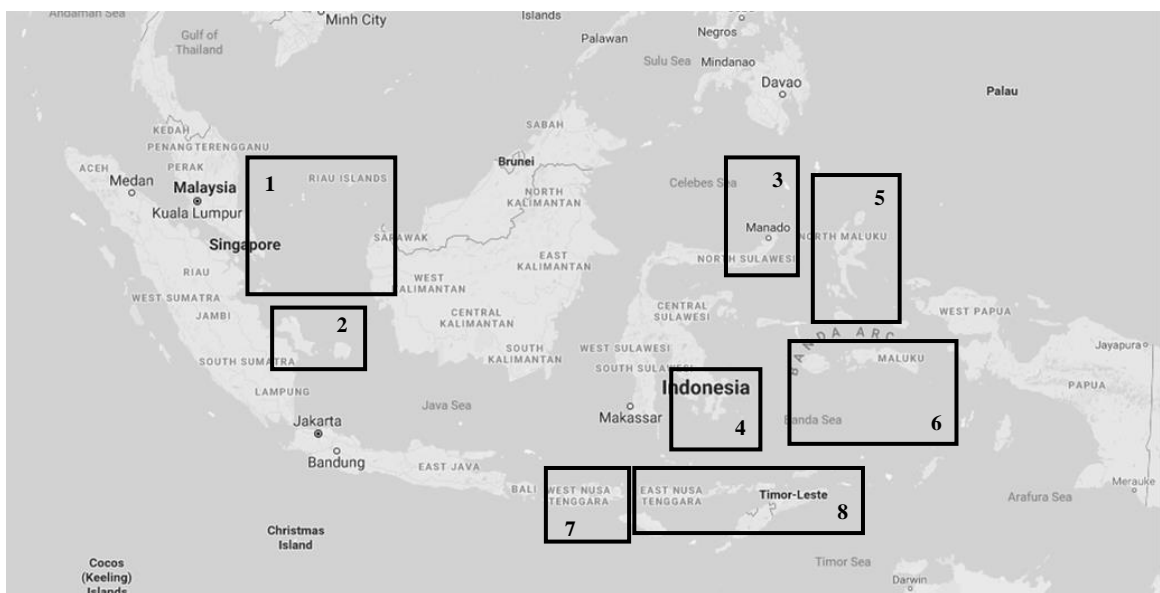


Figure 3-2. Indonesia's archipelago provinces

1.Riau Islands 2.Bangka-Belitung 3.North Sulawesi 4.South East Sulawesi 5.North Maluku 6.Maluku, 7.West Nusa Tenggara 8.East Nusa Tenggara

The Riau Islands Province was chosen for three reasons; first, it is the province with the largest number of small islands (2,408 islands), all the islands are less than 2,000km² and spread widely from the main islands of Sumatra to Borneo, where some have close proximity to Singapore and Malaysia; this provides exceptional geographical variations to understand the different forms of peripherality on Indonesian islands. Second, almost all of the districts were formed through the proliferation of local governments, and the province was only established in 2002; this provides insights to the changes in government regimes, especially central-local

governance arrangements. Third, the Riau Islands Province also provides a variety of cases of state interests and state-led development in the islands. Detailed information on the Riau Islands' districts is shown below:

Table 3-1. List of districts in the Riau Islands Province

No	Districts	Population	islands	Villages/urban administration	National interests
1	Tanjungpinang*	204,735	9	18	Province capital
2	Bintan	154,584	240	36	FTZ for tourism and industry, border area development, marine conservation
3	Batam	1,236,399	373	64	FTZ (Free trade zone) for electronic industry, border area development, metropolitan main island
4	Karimun	227,277	251	42	FTZ for shipping industry, border area development
5	Lingga	88,971	531	75	Bauxite mining (past), Malay cultural centre, no current national interest in Lingga
6	Anambas Islands	40,921	238	52	Oil and gas, border area development, marine conservation
7	Natuna	75,282	154	70	Military base, fishery, oil and gas, border development, fishery
Total		2,028,169	1,796	275	

*Tanjungpinang, the capital of Riau Islands Province is situated on Bintan Island.

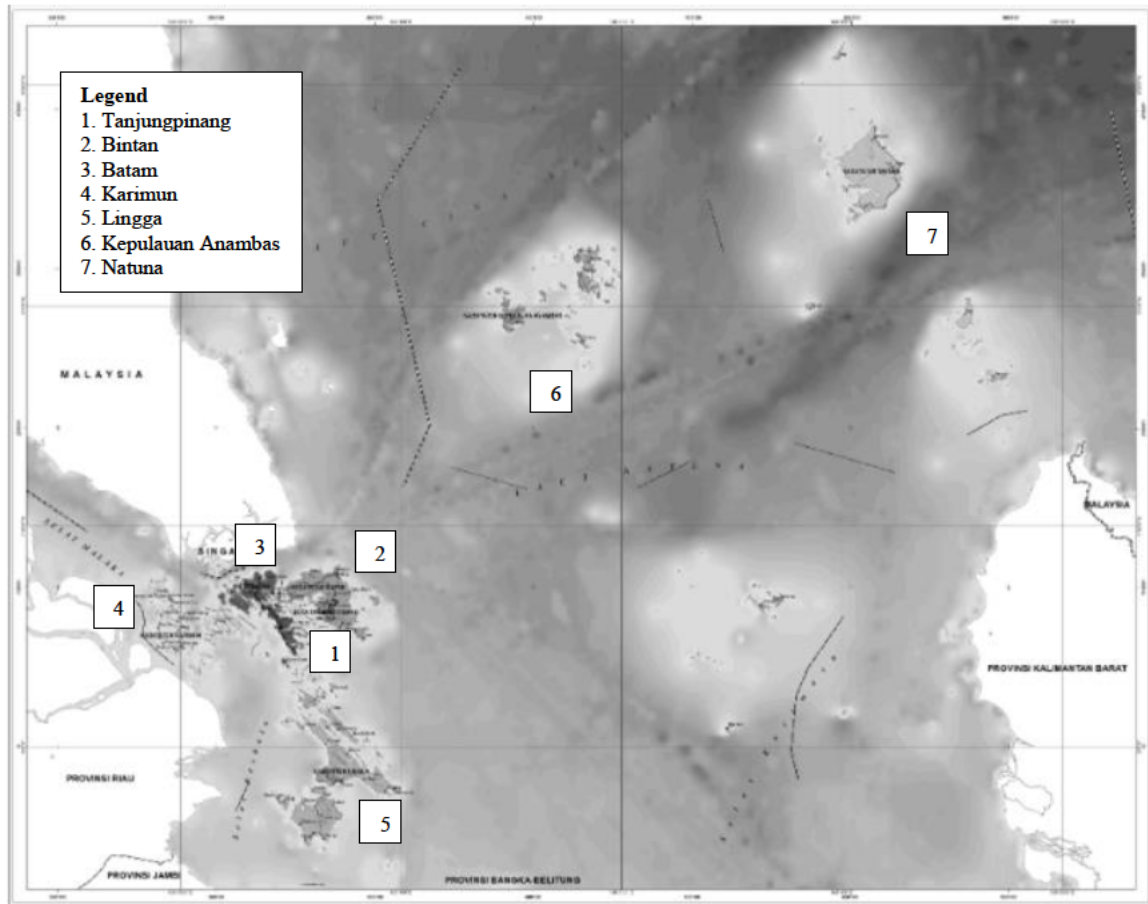


Figure 3-3. Administrative map of the Riau Islands
(Source: BPS, 2018c)

Out of seven districts in the Riau Islands Province, four were selected as case studies that can best help achieve the research objectives:

1. Bintan district; its main island is located only 8.5km away from Batam (Riau Islands' most urbanised island) and has been assigned as a free trade zone (FTZ), mainly for international tourism. The province capital Tanjungpinang is also on Bintan's main island, strengthening the island's centrality. On the other hand, Bintan district's islands are most dispersed; with the furthest sub-district more than 350km away from the main island, creating great disparity between islands. The state also has interest in the Bintan district relating to security and territoriality with five sub-districts being categorised as border areas.

2. Natuna district and Kepulauan Anambas districts; both districts used to be one larger district with the centre in Ranai island, Natuna. Anambas was separated into its own district government in 2008, which can provide more recent insights into how higher degrees of autonomy can influence small islands' peripherality. Bordering the South China Sea, both Natuna and Anambas islands have areas targeted for development and monitoring due to being border areas. The central government has strengthened its military presence in both districts, but especially in Natuna where an integrated military base has been set up. Both districts benefit from revenue shares in oil and gas extraction from their seas.
3. Lingga; whilst having the most islands, Lingga district does not have any areas targeted for border development, or any other central government development similar to the rest of the districts in Riau Islands Province. Lingga currently has the lowest government income with oil and gas resources. Lingga's glory and centrality lies in its past, as it used to be the centre of one of the last Malay empires, who's territory consisted of Riau, Riau Islands and what is now Malaysia, making the area a heritage centre in the Malayan world. There also existed large scale tin mining activities since the Dutch colony, which continued post-independence but stopped operating in 1992. Lingga provides a case of changing island geography and governance in different periods of time.

The four case studies in this research are analysed through different analytical lenses according to the research objectives. A summary of how the cases are used in this research can be seen in below.

Table 3-2. Selected case studies

Small island districts	Analytical lenses			
	Geography	Changes in government regimes	Changes in central government interest and intervention	
Bintan	Observing peripherality of small islands in different contexts (social, economic, political, cultural) and scale (daily life experiences; village, district and province governments); how variations of island geographies contribute to different peripherality	Observing changes in small islands' peripherality after changes in government regime characteristics, especially central-peripheral government arrangements	Observing changes in small islands' peripherality due to central government-led programmes for peripheral areas	Observing changes in small island peripherality due to FTZ in industry and tourism
Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas				Observing changes in small island peripherality due to military and fishery development
Lingga				Observing small island districts where central government programmes are not present

3.3.2. Data collection: field work and interviews

Data collection was designed in two phases; a short pilot study which was conducted from the end of December 2017 until mid-February 2018 and the main part of data collection which was conducted from mid-April 2018 until the end of August 2018 in four municipalities (*Kabupaten*) and at the province level government. The decision to have a pilot study was made to familiarise the researcher with the current issues being experienced in Indonesia's small islands and provide familiarity with the geographic conditions (especially relating to seasons and inter-island transport) of the Riau Islands, immersing the researcher in the setting to better plan the fieldwork. The pilot study also allowed time to apply for research permits (as Indonesia is notoriously known for its time-consuming bureaucracy). The pilot study involved interviews with Ministry staff, NGOs and academics mostly based in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital. This was followed by the first field visit to the Riau Islands to apply for a research permit, build connections and interview province-level government staff regarding current issues in small

island governance. Practical advice on travel routes and key contacts were obtained in this pilot study, which proved the importance of a two-phase fieldwork process. The pilot study also helped the researcher have a better understanding of the more significant factors relating to islands' peripherality.

At the early stage of the research, there was more emphasis in observing adaptations of communities and local governments to island conditions and peripherality. However, the pilot fieldwork provided insights into the larger picture of structural peripherality, not only influenced by island geographies but also government arrangements, state interests, neighbouring states, and informal actors, which shifted away from the narrow focus on local adaptations of islanders and their local governments towards small islands' peripherality, and move to a wider relational focus on the interactions between small island geography, governance relations and peripherality. This crystallised into the final version of the theoretical framework elaborated earlier, and also shaped the decision of selecting key interviewees and study cases for the research.

Key interviewees were identified based on their capacity to provide insights into the relations between island geography, governance and peripherality. While the issue of governance is mostly directed towards government staff, peripherality must be analysed across different aspects and scales, hence a broader variety of people were interviewed. The formal interviews targeted the people from the below categories, however to fully understand the setting, numerous informal discussions and observations were also considered to be an integral part of the research:

1. Small island province government
2. Small island district government
3. Small island cultural, community or village leaders

4. Small island local businesses and fishers

Building upon a constructivist epistemology, this research uses semi-structured interviews for the main data collection method. The purpose of this is to investigate certain themes proposed in the research without restricting the possibility of new themes being discovered during the fieldwork. There were adjustments in the research instrument after the first fieldwork exercise, as the research focus shifted from observing grass roots adaptation towards small islands' peripherality to a relational analysis of island governance in influencing peripherality. The themes used for the interview guide are elaborated below (See Appendix for detail of the interview guide).

a. Island geography's influence in shaping peripherality

Interviewees have different perspectives and experiences about islands' peripherality based on their subjective understandings of an island's character, insularity, remoteness, and sense of isolation (Ardener, 2012; Liarakou et al., 2014). Their understanding is influenced by the background and experiences, as well as what they represent (certain government department, business, etc). Thus, interviewees were first asked about where they originally came from and how long they had spent on a small island. If they did not originally come from that small island, the interview guided them to reflect on the difference between living on a mainland or other islands. Following this, for government staff, they were asked, based on their professional perspective (health, education, planning, etc), to explain the factors they think contributed to small islands becoming peripheral. For non-government interviewees (businesses, community or cultural leaders, fishers, etc), they were asked about their perception on how their quality of life, livelihood, business and culture were affected by their small island environment,

and whether small islands' geography has made them feel they lack of certain things or conditions.

b. Changes in government regimes

Changes in central-peripheral arrangements, government capacity and leadership. In Indonesia changes in government regimes are most noticeable through changes in the local autonomy regulations, the proliferation of local governments and changes of leadership through local elections. Local government staff were asked whether changes in the government regimes helped small islands and how those changes contribute to efforts to alter or reverse peripheral conditions. Non-government interviewees were asked whether there had been any changes in daily life, environment, or business following changes in government regimes.

c. State interests and interventions in small islands

State's intervention may shape and alter small islands' peripherality; either through programmes benevolently designed for islands/peripheral areas, or through programs that support state interests in an island (conservation, mining, security, etc). Central government interventions *for* islands are often made in line with national interests *in* certain islands. Local government representatives were asked about various central government interventions in the small islands and how the small islands benefited from such programmes. As these are top-down programmes, local government staff were also asked to explain whether there was any conflict with local interests. Non-government interviewees were asked to explain any changes in island life (economy, business,

social, cultural, etc.) following central government interventions or programmes and to consider whether such changes are beneficial for islanders.

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents from government departments, businesses and community/cultural leaders that can most explain different perceptions of peripherality and how they are influenced by island geography and governance relations. Whilst a list of targeted interviewees and an interview guide prepared prior to the fieldwork, it was not meant to be a fixed target. The data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously; when data saturation was reached, certain topics were no longer asked, and if a new topic was considered useful and related to the thesis, additional interviews could be conducted. Across the first and second fieldwork process 96 interviews were recorded. In addition, there were 18 interviews that were not recorded due to requests from interviewees (but still allowed to be written down)²; the list of interviewees is shown in .

² Despite being guaranteed anonymity, some fear of sensitive issues being discussed, and others are uncomfortable being recorded, especially those having traditional upbringing such as community or cultural representatives.

Table 3-3. List of respondents

Respondents	Government staff	Business/ Community	Experts
Experts	Directorate General for Local Development-Ministry of Internal Affairs, Department of Marine, Fishery and Small Islands		Academicians, NGO: KIARA, APMI
Riau Islands Province	Fishery Department, Planning Department, Public Works, Transport, Secretary of Development, Industry and Trade	LAM (Malay Culture Association), Local government owned ferry enterprise	Riau Islands' FTZ expert
Natuna District	Fishery, Planning, Public Works, Education, Health, Transport, Tourism, Industry and Trade, Border development, Oil and gas, Environment, Communication, village development bureau Land management, sub-district offices, village offices	Local maritime activist, Cultural leader, Tourism developer, Youth activist, Education and tourism entrepreneur, Political activist, and local communities	
Kepulauan Anambas District	Planning, Tourism, Transport, Fishery, Village development, Health, Border development, land management	Head of hotel and tourism association, fish trader, political activist, Local communities	
Bintan District	Planning, public works, Transport, Education, Health, Fishery, Industry, Tourism, Village development, Development secretary, Communication, sub-district offices, village offices, Local parliament office	Entrepreneur, Resort managers, local tourism developers, Fish trader, Community tourism activist, local communities	
Lingga District	Planning, Public works, Transport, Agriculture, Education, Local parliament, Tourism, Village development, Fishery, Industry, Trade, Communication, Village office, Sub-district office, Finance office	Fishers, Farmers, cultural leaders, tourism entrepreneurs, Political activist	

To observe grass root level experiences, the researcher relied on field observations and informal conversations – a common technique for qualitative research. Photographs and notes were taken when the researcher believed them to be relevant to represent the experiences of different aspects of peripherality or the changes of peripherality on small islands. Pictures and

notes were taken in a flexible manner as to maintain attachment to the current situation, conversation and personal experience. Such observation allowed for a capture of the emotional and experiential sense of being and living on the small islands, along with the local cultural and political context of the situation. This research also uses a variety of documents as secondary data relating to small island governance. Prior to the fieldwork, the researcher collected regulations, policies, news articles and reports. At the time of fieldwork, secondary data collected included local regulations, municipal budgets, development plans and village fund allocations. These secondary data have been used to triangulate and confirm what has been explained by interviewees, and to better understand the implications of government programs and government arrangements.

3.4. Analysis

The transcribed interviews were analysed by coding the texts into different themes derived from the research objectives. Secondary data was then used to sharpen the analyses and emphasise the findings, along with the observation notes and fieldwork memos. This research used the NVivo program to assist with the coding process. Thematic grouping of the data collection went through several changes and adjustments to best represent the data in accordance with the research objectives. shows the final version of the themes that emerged from the data.

Table 3-4. Coding themes

Research Objectives	Themes	Sub themes
Identify peripheralities influenced by small islands' geography	Economic peripherality	Geographical advantages of the Riau Islands for informal economies, geographic disadvantages for economic development
	Peripherality in social development	Island transportation issues, challenges for health and education services
	Political and cultural peripherality	Political peripheralisation of small islands and cultural peripheralisation of Malays, growth of new Malay Islands identity
Examine how changes in government regimes (central-local government arrangements, government capacity) alters small island peripheralities	Changes in cultural and political peripherality	Growth of local pride and local elites, changing internal politics
	Changes in social development	Limitations of autonomy, local governments' role in social development
	Changes in economic peripherality	Securing local resource, economic challenges and dependency on the central government
	Disappointment towards limitation of autonomy in de-peripheralising small islands	Growth of archipelago government identity, and requests for special island autonomy
Examine how state's interests and policies influences and alters islands' peripheralities.	The state's interest <i>in</i> the small islands	The development of FTZs, National Strategic Areas (KSN), Military bases and
	The state's intervention <i>for</i> small islands	Development programmes for border areas, rural and marginal areas.

A qualitative analysis uses all parts of interviews and observations; direct answers to a question, expression of disappointment or pride, daily activities of participants and observed community, or anything else that can relate with the subject being researched should be noted and recorded (Stake, 2010). The geographic nature of this research also resonates with Taylor's et al.'s (2015) argument that the people and setting need to be analysed holistically, not as separate variables. Each interviewee is influenced by their local setting; whether the island, the administrative units, or cultural landscape they live and work in. Analysing the setting and the

people together helps to identify the perception of peripherality along with the background of how the perception came to be.

3.5. Ethics

As part of the formal research process, this research was granted approval by the University of Birmingham's Ethical Committee and Risk Assessment Reviewers. Before starting interviews, appointments were made with the related organisations or interviewees by explaining the research topic and providing an information sheet that had been approved by the ethical research committee. The information contained a summary of the research consisting of the research background, aim and objectives, and the type of questions that would be asked, along with their rights as an interviewee and confidentiality. Except for academics and experts, all the names of local interviewees have been classified. After having made an appointment at an agreed location and time (generally in the office at office time for government staff, experts or businesses, or at home for more casual interviews with community leaders) the researcher briefly repeated the research objectives and asked them to sign a letter of consent before the interview began. Permission was also asked to record the interviews as part of the data collection process. In practice, approaching different people in different settings varies depending on the setting of the interview and the character and nature of the interviewee.

3.6. Positionality and fieldwork experience

3.6.1. Positionality

Qualitative research is a subjective approach where the researcher is immersed in the setting and topic of research (Taylor et al., 2015), thus it is important to explain the positionality of the researcher and the research process in order to understand how the data was acquired and

analysed. Gary & Holmes (2020:1) explains positionality affecting “The individual’s world view or ‘where the researcher is coming from’ concerns ontological assumption (an individual’s belief about nature of social reality and what is knowable about the worlds), epistemological assumptions (an individual’s beliefs about the nature of knowledge), and assumptions about human nature and assumptions”. An individual’s background shapes his/her values and beliefs as well as how an individual is accepted by the interviewees, which in turn affects the quality of the information given to the researcher and how it is interpreted. Background attributes may include “political allegiance, religious faith, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical location, ethnicity, race, social class, and status, (dis) abilities and so on” (Gary & Holmes, 2020:2). Vaneer (2015) suggests to breakdown as much background attributes as possible and elaborate how this may influence the researcher’s position as being considered an insider or an outsider. This is not to limit the research to only one classification, because as Gary & Holmes (2020) explains, the researcher’s position may simultaneously be an insider or an outsider depending on different interviewee’s background and the topic of discussion. Hence, the following provides detailed description of the researcher’s background.

Firstly, the researcher’s academic background and motivation is explained here, as it influences the outlook and subjectivity in what the researcher is looking for in the field. During the researcher’s bachelor degree in architecture, the researcher was involvement in post-earthquake reconstruction programs. During this time, interactions with NGOs, local governments and communities became the starting point towards the growing interests in the governance and social aspect of the built environment. The researcher later graduated from an interdisciplinary graduate course and received his M.Sc. in Management of Infrastructure and Community Development. The researcher worked in the Centre for Transportation and Logistics Studies, and conducted studies relating to infrastructure, with a special interest in rural

areas. The sponsor of the Ph.D. course was the Indonesian government, which at the time had priority research in maritime affairs, as the president administration at the time was reintroducing rhetoric of Indonesia's destiny for maritime greatness. The researcher then aligned his interest in rural areas to conduct research in small islands. As a mainlander with an interest in learning about uniqueness of small island settings, the researcher became disappointed in learning how local governments themselves did not have an urge to govern in an 'island way' and develop their own understanding of island governance and island development. This has shaped some of the researcher's opinion, as highlighted in Chapter 5.

Regarding personal background; the researcher is a native Indonesian citizen from Java Island, Indonesia's most populated main island. In terms of race, Javanese and Malays of the Riau Islands are indifferent. However, in terms of culture, historians have frequently highlighted the contrast between the two dominant ethnicities in the Indonesian archipelago, where Javanese culture is said to be an inland culture, whilst Malays represent a maritime culture (Sulistiyono & Rochwulaningsih, 2013). During the Dutch colonial period, Java Island was developed as the colony's main island, which sustained till post-colonial times. This has led to the domination of the archipelago by Javanese people and Javanese culture for around 50 years after independence. Unfortunately, this has caused some anti-Java sentiment we see today. Respondents may have various conceptions regarding the researcher's ethnicity.

Coming from Yogyakarta City has surprisingly been beneficial for the researcher to engage closer with interviewees. Yogyakarta has been known as the city of education; it has one of the earliest universities to be established after Indonesia's independence, thus many senior government staffs have studied there, even government staffs in in Natuna, the most peripheral islands. A number of Natuna people have even married a Yogyakarta citizen and brought them back to their own island, making the connection between Natuna and Yogyakarta

stronger. Yogyakarta is also known for its modest culture, in contrast to Jakarta (the capital) that has a generally more urban and somehow snobby culture. Thus, all these factors help neutralise the negative sentiments that might be placed towards someone coming from Java.

Although in general the researcher was welcomed and respected, there was one particular respondent that has shown very subtle negativity; somehow seeing the researcher as being an ignorant Java mainlander. When the researcher gave compliment about the development of the Riau Islands' capital an expressing astonishment of how grand the government buildings were, the response was "did you think we were backwards and still ride horses?". Of course, this was a joke, but the way the interviewee said this convinced the researcher of a deeper meaning. This interviewee had been actively supporting the establishment of Riau Islands Province during his youth, with a pride of the Riau Islands being the motherland of the Malay culture and a centre on their own terms. Having been involved in that struggle to reject inferiority from the Riau mainland, this person also rejects the domination of Java.

Regarding education, the researcher's position as an overseas Ph.D. student perhaps contributes the most in gaining trust and respect, which is especially important to interview senior level government staff. At times, there have even been too much expectations towards the researcher; the researcher has been asked to share knowledge and expected to have better understanding on how to develop their small islands. The positionality of the researcher as being an insider or an outsider sway continuously depending on how the interviewees can relate with the researcher. This does not imply that being an outsider always has a negative consequence; sometimes the interviewee is more comfortable sharing sensitive information with the researcher as an outsider. As an example; an interviewee said that he was relieved to be able to discuss about issues of corruption in the small islands involving the military, as the

information will be anonymous and can help academic and policy discussions. In contrary, he considered fellow islanders are seldomly able to keep a secret for so long, it can lead to trouble if information is somehow received by a political opposition.

Delving deeper in the deconstruction of positionality, other attributes also need to be addressed. The researcher is a married man in his 30s and a practicing Muslim. These attributes become additional layers that influence the positionality of the researcher. As Malay is an Islam-influenced culture; the researcher's gender and religion has helped the researcher immerse himself within the island communities. The following example shows how the situation might change if the attributes were the opposite; a family in Pulau Tiga Barat Island shared their experience in becoming a host family for an NGO volunteer that was posted there the year before. As the volunteer was a non-Muslim, she did not participate in many religious events and activities that were actually also social events, and missed out the opportunity to mingle with the community. Thus, being a Muslim gave the researcher the opportunity to chat after prayer in the mosque, meet people during activities in the fasting month, and other informal talks that could relate with the communities and interviewees.

Being 30 years old has a fair advantage of at least not seeming 'too young to be taken seriously'. However, gender plays a much more important role in the researcher's positionality to be accepted and trusted. Out of 96 interviews with government staffs, only 5 were women. Such contrast may be an indicator how the patriarch custom of the Malays transcends into governance. There is no proof if a female researcher would be less accepted by interviewees if all other attributes remained the same (ethnicity, origin, and education), but it would limit the opportunity of interviews during the research in small islands. Not only relating to security reasons when travelling alone, but being a female also limits the interaction with interviewees that are a majority male. In the traditional Malay Culture, unmarried male and female cannot

be in the same room with closed doors or in a private place; this limits the ability to acquire sensitive information.

The patriarchy culture that is reflected in the majority of men having lead roles in the local government is a complex issue, thus outsiders must be careful not to easily judge. The Malay custom does not dictate that women are not allowed to work (the 2017 province statistic show women make up 46% of local government staff), but in the family, men are more accountable for the needs of his family. The custom also does not dictate men to not help around the house, but because men have obligation to fulfill the needs of the family and usually work more outside the house, there is a division of responsibility where the women are responsible for the children and the house. This can be seen in traditional gender roles in fishing communities in the Riau Islands, similar to traditional fishing communities elsewhere around the world (GSDRC, 2007; Islands & Plan, 2013; Joseph-Brown & Tuiloma-Sua, 2012; Kusakabe, 2017; Siles et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2002).

In government institutions, the social attitude towards the female role also transcends in the workplace. It is true that many do not hold leading positions, but they also have informal benefits and understanding from the male workers if they need to go home early to pick up their children, or cannot work overtime as they need to attend their family, also women will be least likely to be sent on assignments to remote islands. The researcher has met several single women or older women with older children, who chooses to focus on their career and have good position in the government. Despite the division of gender responsibility, the Malays in general are far from being the strictest people. Men do not force dominance over their wives; in contrary, it is not rare to hear gossips of senior government staff being steered by their ambitious wives. A humorous Indonesian term for these conditions is *suami takut istri* literally translated to 'husbands scared of their wives'.

As the positionality of a researcher depends much on how one perceives the mix of different attributes (Gary & Holmes, 2020), the researcher navigates positionality by foregrounding attributes that can make interviewees most comfortable in sharing insights or information, shifting between becoming an insider and outsider. The navigation of positionality also facilitates different ways of looking into the situations and contexts to suit the research enquiry. Being an insider provides deeper understanding of how and why people perceive their surroundings and make decisions; while as an outsider, the researcher can relate and compare the context and communities that the researcher is immersed in with other case studies and the wider literature to find similarities and distinctions.

3.6.2. Fieldwork Experience

While the attributes of positionality affect the narratives in this thesis, prior experience in small islands, the fieldwork process and experience are also important factors that contribute how thesis is shaped. Despite the researcher having numerous experiences conducting research in rural infrastructure and community development, the only small islands the researcher has been to prior to this project were Ternate and Tidore Islands in the eastern part of Indonesia in 2015. The lack of experience working in small islands shaped a certain pre-conceived assumption on small islands, despite having read a wide range of literatures on small islands. Perhaps the unconscious prejudice towards small islands as peripheral places is also contributed by the literature; the majority of literatures have discussed small peripheral islands with few exceptions of some urban islands, but islands somewhere in between transitioning between traditional and modern, peripheral and central rarely become highlighted. The researcher expected to find abundant contrasts comparing the Riau Islands to other rural/peripheral places, but in reality, the surprise was actually the mundaneness and the similarity between the Riau

Islands and other rural places the researcher has visited such as coastal towns in Java or river side communities in Borneo's largest rivers. The Riau Islands also did not have the same sense of islandness compared to Ternate and Tidore islands that the researcher has previously visited.

During the first fieldwork in Tanjungpinang City (on Bintan Island) – the capital of Riau Islands Province, the researcher was surprised about the conditions of the island. Although knowing from prior desk study that Tanjungpinang was close to Singapore and Malaysia and just 30 km away from the urban island of Batam, the researcher did not realise the extent of Bintan Island's centrality and the strong sense of economic optimism until experiencing the island first hand. The islanders of Bintan felt a strong centrality due to their strategic position in the Malacca Strait region. Surprisingly, this centrality was even felt in the surrounding smaller islands. This initial experience offered a productive start to reflect on what it means to be an islander and identify the different understandings and perspectives of the relation between small islands and peripherality, as elaborated in Chapter 4.

Experiencing Riau Islands' islandness first hand formed an important part of the research, allowing the researcher to identify a rich extent of small island peripherality through observation and informal talks with local people. For example, the researcher found that more remote islands are just referred to as 'islands' and those living there are called *orang pulau* or island people; those living in one of the district's main islands do not consider themselves as 'islanders'. This shows the hierarchy and perception of relative centrality and peripherality at different scales. In terms of travel, safety concerns of traveling between islands may not be considered as a variable contributing to the sense of peripherality by the islanders, but for visitors such as doctors, teachers and others (such as the researcher) travel safety and inter-island travel can be a daunting experience contributing to a heightened sense of peripherality, which consequently becomes a disincentive to travel. The researcher always carried a life jacket

when travelling on small boats, bringing some assurance. Coming to the end of the fieldwork, the winds and tide started to rise, even when travelling on a big ferry from Lingga to Tanjungpinang, it was like being tossed up what seemed to be at least 20 meters, and when coming down the high waves observed from the windows appeared as if they could easily swallow the entire ship. However, the more horrifying eye-opener was when a local friend traveling with the researcher explained that this was a new ship; a few years ago, much smaller ships were used and it was much more dangerous to travel. The researcher could clearly imagine other islands in the Riau Islands, where modern transport is unavailable. Traveling between islands was wonderful when the waves were calm and the sky blue, the scene was breath-taking, but the situation could suddenly change to a life-threatening experience when the weather changed. These personal travel experiences influenced how the research has emphasised different perspectives of peripherality, both from a mainlander's and islander's perspective, and how this has implications in other aspects of island life.

Generally speaking, there were no constraints in gaining trust and assimilating with the local community and leaders and government officials. However, in terms of having a formal interview, there were some factors that affected efficient data collection. Some non-government respondents found it uncomfortable to sign the confidentiality letter before the interview, as they had little experience in being interviewed for research purposes. The norm for an interaction was to begin with an informal personal conversation, slowly develop a conversation about my research and then ask permission for an interview. On some occasions, even after the person had happily agreed to participate, when asked to sign the consent letter they became tense and uneasy and answered the questions in a very formal manner. This resonates with experiences from Crossley & Vulliamy (1996) in conducting qualitative research in developing countries, explaining that the formal ethical process of the western academic

tradition may not always be accepted well in developing countries. They take the interview consent as an example; for many people in developing countries a signed document is a very serious matter and considered to have potentially large consequences because people are used to having an informal tie based on trust. Even after explaining their confidentiality rights, some respondents took extra measures and asked me to turn my recorder off when they explained some sensitive issues such as corruption and politics. In these cases, notes were taken while conducting the interviews.

It was challenging to meet capable people in each local government department to answer questions on behalf of their office or obtaining the right documents. This was partially due to local government organisational arrangements; to gain a higher position and salary raise, a government official may fill in a higher position in another department. Therefore, speaking to high position staff such as head of department, vice of department or the secretary, does not necessarily mean speaking to someone who best understands the main issues relating to their department. On some occasions, the interviewee admitted that they had just moved to the new department and still had little knowledge of past programmes. In addition, the technical constraints in conducting this research are related to the spread and isolation of some islands, making travel arrangements harder to predict. It took more time and effort to interview all the targeted interviewees, especially when government offices are spread over different islands, as in the Lingga District.

Some data sets that would have helped sharpen the analyses could not be retrieved. The main problem is that electronic data has not yet been integrated. Data relating to 'islandness cost' such as government expenses on inter-island travel and extra costs for service provision could only partially be retrieved, as some costs were aggregated with other items, and sometimes overlapped between departments. Data on government projects per island could not

be retrieved, as many programmes are documented per administrative area. Data on central government projects were also unavailable; often infrastructure development programmes by ministries such as roads and ports are not shared with local governments. Hence the research relies mainly on understanding, perceptions and statements of interviewees, with partial ability to triangulate this with quantitative data. Having elaborated on the research methods, the next chapters provide rich empirical data from the Riau Islands Province, and deep analysis on each aspect of the research objectives as discussed above.

CHAPTER 4. INFLUENCE OF RIAU ISLANDS' GEOGRAPHY ON SMALL ISLANDS' PERIPHERALITIES

4.1. Overview

There have been debates over whether archipelago provinces should be given more priority over other provinces in Indonesia due to their peripherality. Indonesia is itself an archipelago, and as a developing country many areas are still considered peripheral based on formal standards. How then, do small islands differ from other areas in Indonesia in terms of peripherality? Research in the Indonesian setting has only lightly touched upon this issue. The Riau Islands is a good example to showcase the complexity and ambiguity of the statement that island provinces are peripheral. At a province scale observation, Riau Islands is far from being considered as under-developed; the region had the third largest GRDP (Gross Regional Domestic Product) per capita of all 34 Indonesian provinces in 2018 (BPS, 2018a) and was ranked 4th in the Human Development Index in the same year (BPS, 2019). None of their districts are categorised as underdeveloped and only 14.5% of villages are categorised as underdeveloped (BPS, 2018c). On the other hand, they also have 394 inhabited small islands with the third highest construction cost index among other Indonesian provinces (BPS, 2018b)⁴.

As has been established in previous chapters, this thesis acknowledges various factors influencing the peripherality of small islands; namely geography and governance relations. This first empirical chapter specifically focuses on how island geography contributes to peripherality in the Riau Islands setting. Regarding islands in a general sense, Baldacchino (2004:278) explains that islandness (qualities attributed to islands) is “an intervening variable that does not

⁴ Construction Expensiveness Index (IKK) is used as a basis to show the price differences of construction costs between regions. This also provides an insight into price differences of items in general.

determine, but contours and conditions physical and social events in distinct and distinctly relevant ways.” Islandness is indeed a valuable trait to differentiate islands with other places, however to acquire a deeper understanding of this subject, the analytical lens cannot only look into islandness in relation to pre-assumptions of islands as isolated, remote and peripheral *places*. Grydehøj and Casagrande (2020:57) warn that focusing on the pre-assumed traits of islands threatens to limit “the scope of potential policy options and ultimately restricting our ability to understand what makes island places (more broadly understood) special when compared with mainland places.” Grydehøj (2015:431) also reminds us that, “just as urban geographers must overcome the urge to abstract cities into pure space, island geographers must resist ‘the lure of island’ as pure place outside of space” and look closer at every aspect of an islands’ spatiality; how different aspects of an island geography can shape the social, economic and political conditions of islands.

Building upon the understanding above, this chapter identifies and analyses various aspects of Riau Islands’ geography that contours and shapes social, economic and political relations leading to peripherality. As peripherality itself carries connotation of inequality in multiple contexts and scales (Syrett, 2014), this chapter dissects the relations between island geographies and peripheralities by dividing discussions into three thematic analyses; economy, social development, and cultural/ political inequalities.

4.2. Riau Islands’ strategic location: key to defy economic peripherality?

The Riau Islands consist of around four hundred dispersed inhabited small islands; many would agree that such geographic conditions are synonymous to economic peripherality. However, some islands are located in very strategic positions along the Malacca Strait and in close proximity to Singapore, an economic centre in the region, while others are spread out and

border the South China Sea. Could the strategic position of the Riau Islands help defy small islands' predicted destiny of economic peripherality? The findings show that there is no simple answer. The Riau Islands has both central and peripheral qualities at the same time, only seen from different perspectives. Various geographic aspects come in to play in conditioning the economy of these islands. This section begins with perspectives of how the Riau Islands' geography contributes to centrality, followed by a discussion on a different economic perspective highlighting how the islands' geography contributes to peripherality.

4.2.1. Advantages of location: integration in the Malacca Strait region

When examining the Riau Islands, one would immediately be familiarised with the free trade zones (FTZ) developed in Batam, Bintan and Karimun Islands, which have contributed to rapid urbanisation. These islands will be discussed extensively in chapter 6, with a discussion of the influence of the central government's interest and intervention in the Riau Islands; this section discusses the more general conditions of the archipelago. When traveling across the Riau Islands, one can sense the high optimism of a thriving fishing community. The Riau Islands' proximity with richer countries surrounded by bountiful marine resources is considered a blessing. Buyers from Malaysia and Singapore across the strait buy fish at a higher price than buyers from the main Indonesian islands. The Riau Islands' Province consists of more than 90% sea, and its fishing grounds have a high potential of fishery resources of more than 1 million tons/year or around 12% of the Indonesia's overall fishery potential resources. The production rate of this area is 40%, which means that there are still much more potential fish that can be sustainably caught than the current production (Suman et al., 2016).

Islanders in the Riau Islands are generally seasonal; they avoid going to sea during the windy months, which the locals call *Musim Utara* or the North (wind) season, which usually

lasts from October-January. Nevertheless, their traditional livelihood has sustained them for generations. However, conditions are not the same throughout the Riau Islands; some islands provide better physical conditions than others that allow fishing throughout the year. One example is Mepar Island, Lingga District. A fisherman in Mepar Island describes:

“I usually go out (fishing) at sunrise and come back around noon. I take the fish to the *towkay* (fish collector, usually Chinese descendants) and get money. *Alhamdulillah* (praise to God), I usually get around Rp.7,000,000 a month (around £400). I own my own boat so I don’t have to pay boat rent, so I can save more... The sea around this island is protected, so the wave is not too high in the North Wind season. Actually, there are more fish during the North Winds, but if it does get too windy fishermen usually just choose another side of the island.” (L19, 13/7/2018)

The fisherman’s monthly income is higher than the formal minimum wage in the Riau Islands, which is Rp.3 million or around £170 /month. The *towkay* (a local term for Chinese business owners or boss) collects fish from the fishermen and transports it to major ports in Tanjungpinang, Batam, or directly to buyers in Singapore and Malaysia. Similar experiences were shared by other fishermen throughout the Riau Islands during the fieldwork; the ease to catch fish and receive instant money is generally similar throughout the Riau Islands. The fishery business is so attractive that even local government officials sometimes have side businesses in fishery.



Figure 4-1. Typical small fishing boats used in the Riau Islands in Natuna District
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)



Figure 4-2. Two men working on their new boat in a typical fishing village in Mepar Island
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)



Figure 4-3. A collector off-loading fish from a fishing boat in Tarempa
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

There is also other produce that is exported from the islands, such as crabs, lobsters, copra, clove and pepper. Clove and pepper are especially important for the islanders, especially fishermen, as they are valuable products that can help cover living costs during the North wind season when the winds make the sea too dangerous for small boats. Cloves and pepper can be dried and stored to wait for the best-selling price. The collectors of cloves are often the same people who collect fish, using international trade networks across the strait to find the best place to sell.



Figure 4-4. Pepper plantation in Lingga Island
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

Besides shaping conditions that facilitate the trade and export of island products, Riau Islands' location has helped islanders seek job opportunities in Singapore and Malaysia. Even though most do labour work, it still offers a higher income when compared to Indonesian wages. Job opportunities range from work in construction, shipping and factories, to domestic housemaids and the service sector such as hotels and restaurants. Many interviewees, especially on Bintan island, had at least one person in their extended family that has worked or is working in Singapore and Malaysia. Riau Islands' location also allows them to import goods from Malaysia – their closest mainland. These direct links between the Riau Islands, Singapore and Malaysia makes what Herschell (2014) calls a “virtual region” in which administrative borders are not so important. For those residing in the main cities of Riau Islands, being closest to Singapore and Peninsula Malaysia is part of their pride; they have good income and can buy good quality items at a cheap price from across the strait. While many transactions and the movement of goods and people across the strait is conducted formally, informality is also important for the maintenance of this virtual region, especially for the most remote islands. An official from the Riau Islands Province trade department explained:

“Almost everything in the Riau Islands is imported from elsewhere. the Riau Islands has sufficient supply of daily needs due to informal trade with Malaysia, since it will be very expensive if not impossible to supply all the islands if only relying on Indonesian supply, especially for the most remote islands (from Indonesian mainland), they are much closer to Malaysia. Small trade is done informally; even the Malay officers know this and let it happen because they are the closest mainland for the islanders. No formal trade agreement has been made to give the islanders a formal justification. This is openly known in the Riau Islands but cannot be disclosed publicly because it is a sensitive issue of border and territory. You know Indonesia has a political duty to ensure to the people that it is guarding its borders well.” (P09, 17/7/2018)

The action of turning a blind eye towards informal cross-border trade is evidence of how the local government on both sides of the border understand the importance of the virtual region for the islanders. Similar conditions are also evident in the context of the export of labour; a fisherman in Kepulauan Anambas District who has various experiences in working as a labourer in Malaysia explains that not all labourers work legally:

“The good way is to apply for work permit – this is usually helped by the boss in Malaysia, but there are deductions from our payment in the formal system; for tax and some other fees. Sometimes we go on tourist visa and get work there, usually only for short periods so we don’t over stay. I have tried both ways for construction work. It is not too hard for us, because we have the same ethnicity and speak the same language as the Malays in Malaysia, people won’t be too suspicious”. (AI5, 27/7/2018)

Islanders often work in Singapore and Malaysia illegally, and sometimes even movement across the strait is done illegally; the small islands’ spatiality provides countless opportunities for movement from around the islands and for navigation of any chosen route. Officers on the Indonesian side are often involved in facilitating or at least covering up illegal crossings. When driving around Bintan Island with a local informant, the informant pointed towards the place people usually get on a boat to Malaysia. He said:

“Do you see that navy post there (pointing at a navy military post in Bintan’s beach), illegal workers from Bintan often cross from there to Singapore and Malaysia to work without permit. They usually go at night time. The military is definitely covering up.” (BI1, 25/6/2018)

Aside from the materialistic motivation in corruption and bribery, local government officials understand that this virtual region that overlaps state borders today was once a very *real* region – economically, socially and politically – which was divided by two colonial powers through the Anglo-Dutch treaty in 1824. Areas north of Singapore were colonised under the British, those south of Singapore under the Dutch, dividing the Malay society into two territories; local governments and authorities still appreciate these traditional networks over rigid state borders.

Unfortunately, the islands’ spatiality that allows the islanders to easily integrate in a virtual region along the Malacca Strait also attracts those from outside the islands to enter and take advantage; sometimes threatening the livelihoods of the indigenous islanders. The largest problem faced by islanders is the invasion of Riau Islands’ seas by foreign fishing ships. Fishing boats from mostly Vietnam and Thailand have been trespassing and illegally fishing in the Riau Islands’ seas. Where the navy is absent, these foreign fishing boats fish very close and even in between the islands; Riau Islands’ much smaller fishing boats have no chance competing with larger ships, let alone trying to scare them off. A community leader in Pulau Tiga Barat, Natuna District describes:

“Before the navy made serious efforts in guarding our seas, there were so many foreign ships⁵. At night the sea looks like a night fair, so many lights at sea, it was like a floating town, all of them were foreign ships. They come here because we still have good fish stock. I guess there is already overfishing in Vietnam and Thailand. Sometimes they really cross the line; they are brave enough to travel between our islands – very close! But what can we do? Our fishermen choose to stand aside.” (N24, 20/5/2018)

The geography of dispersed islands has also become an ideal passageway for drug trafficking, smuggling and piracy. In 2018, a boat transporting around two tons of cocaine was

⁵ Since 2014, under President Jokowi, Indonesia has strengthened its navy in the Riau Islands to guard its sovereign territory. More detailed description is elaborated in Chapter 6.

caught by Indonesian police in the Riau Islands. The drugs were transported in fishing ships from Taiwan. Experts say this is only a tip of the iceberg of drug trafficking using the Riau Islands route, as there are unlimited routes a ship can take, with hundreds of empty islands that can be used as places for transit and exchange whilst avoiding authorities (Santoso, 2018, 2019). The islands' vast number of small islands and passageways are also used by pirates. A report says that pirate activities are often masterminded by people across the strait in Singapore who recruit people from the Riau Islands as henchmen. Most men involved in piracy are from other places in Indonesia that come to Batam seeking work. Those who do not succeed can end up in illegal activities including becoming pirates, but the masterminds are said to be from Singapore (Frécon, 2018). Pirates can operate from the hundreds of informal harbours that exist around the islands, locally known as *pelabuhan tikus* or rat harbours, avoiding the police. In their action, they lure local fishermen with the promise of high income for their service as transporters and local guides.

The lack of law enforcement opens opportunities for illegal activities at sea that threatens islanders' fishing areas and ways of life. On the other hand, ironically, law enforcers are also part of the problem in the Riau Islands. Being far from monitoring and having an urge to take a piece of the money circulating in the Riau Islands, the sea police often take illegal retribution from passenger ships and fishing ships at sea. Two Indonesian journalists travelling around Indonesia documented their journey; they described their experiences in traveling on boat from Dumai to Batam Island. Their boat was stopped four times; first by young marines, the other times by police at sea and at the port, all asking for 'retribution'. They summarise by saying:

“Truly, the realities we have seen along that journey have been so painful. Maybe this is what has made Indonesia's trade is not doing well. While large ships are queuing in the seas of Malaysia and Singapore, our authorities are playing dirty, civilian vegetable boats. Small boats become an easy target for

these uniformed “pirates”. They are pirates that have been given authority by the state. For whatever reason, truly, these incidents have no justification and cannot be forgiven. Hence, we have agreed to write this incident.” (Yunus, 2011:86)

Conforming this, a maritime activist in Natuna explains:

“In more developed countries, there are mainly two institutions at sea; coast guards and navy. Coast guards protect life at sea and enforce the law while the navy mainly protects the borders. In Indonesia everyone has a stake in the sea, each having their own authority and patrol boats; navy, police, rescue, Ministry of Marine and Fisheries, customs, Ministry of Transport and sometimes even local governments. Authorities overlap each other, why? Besides institutional ego, there is also a lot of money at sea, especially in the Riau Islands.” (N25, 3/5/2018)

These findings are disturbing; they show how the Riau Islands’ geography can be seen as offering unique opportunities in both positive and negative ways, yet nevertheless confirm the Riau Islands’ centrality, as places with economic centrality can often become the breeding ground for good and bad activities alike. While we understand the general centrality of the Riau Islands, a closer observation of various islands in the region may provide a deeper understanding of what actually contributes to the centrality/peripherality of a small island.

4.2.2. Smallness and remoteness: a geographical disadvantage?

Islands provide different spatial advantages compared to terrestrial or mainland geographies. Grydehøj et al. (2015) highlights the three advantages that islands have; territoriality, transport and defence. Island geographies are particularly easy to conceptualise in terms of territorial boundaries, as they have clear natural borders, they provide direct access to the sea from all sides, and are considered ideal locations for defence bases and build secure centres of government; all of which can influence an islands’ development path and economic condition. Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts are examples of how islands so

unconnected and distant from Jakarta and other Indonesian main ports can become central economic places as they are connected in international networks.

Although seemingly peripheral, located remotely in the northern border, their direct access to the South China Sea has its advantages; ships from Hong Kong come directly to the islands, mainly to Sedanau Island in Natuna District and Tarempa in Kepulauan Anambas District to collect live fish; the most prized fish in these islands is the Napoleon fish which are bred in captivity and are bought at around £60/kg, in China the market price is around £250/kg. Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas' spatiality of small dispersed islands provides an ideal place to breed these fish and offers easy access for foreign ships to harbour. The islanders of Sedanau are so reliant on this economy that 70% of the people prefer to live on top of the water, close to their fish. A youth activist in Natuna expresses his perspective on Natuna's position:

“We are actually at the centre of a good trade route; between two Malaysian mainlands (Malay Peninsula and Borneo) also between Indonesia and China. Even though people say we are at the periphery, we are actually in a very central position.” (N25, 1/5/2018)

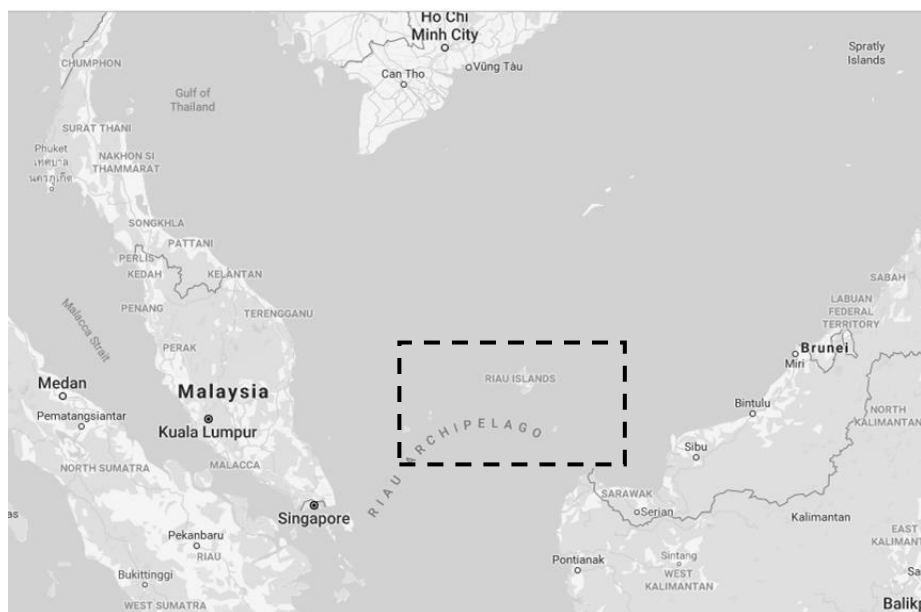


Figure 4-5. Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas District



Figure 4-6. Aerial view of settlement in Sedanau Island, Natuna District
(Source: Malik, 2016)⁶



Figure 4-7. Huts on stilts built on the water in Sedanau Island, Natuna District
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

⁶People's houses and huts are built on stilts above the sea to be close to their Napoleon fish aquaculture



Figure 4-8. People guarding highly priced Napoleon fish in their off-shore huts
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)



Figure 4-9. The main port of Sedanau Island where Napoleon fish are collected and shipped to
Hong Kong
(Source: Malik, 2016)

Another example of central islands in Indonesia's periphery is Midai Island in Natuna District; it is only around 30km², remotely located 130km from Ranai (Natuna District's main town) and 250km from West Borneo, but has been an important exporter of copra since the 19th Century (Arman, 2017). Historian Aswandi Syahri (2016) (cited in Suryadi, 2016) revisited a magazine from 1926 called *Pandji Poestaka*. it reports on Midai Island:

“Continuous arrivals of merchant ships owned by KPM (Dutch shipping company) and the Chinese come to Midai to buy copra. Tens of ox carts are used every day transporting copra from fields and the mountains to the beach. There are thousands of baskets of copra carried to the ships every month. It (the copra) seems to be number one (in quality).”



Figure 4-10. Position of Midai Island

One of the first forms of cooperatives in Indonesia was formed on Midai Island called Ahmadi Co. focusing on developing the community-based copra industry, which is evident in how important the copra production of Midai was. Midai’s resource and islandness allowed large ships from as far as China to harbour around the small island and navigate to easily to the main shipping routes. A visitor from Midai Island came to the house of my local guide in Natuna and described her island:

“It is a small island, but it is a busy island. Before Ranai (Natuna District’s capital) became crowded like it is today, Midai was much more populous and vibrant. Tarempa (now the capital of Kepulauan Anambas District)

and Midai Island used to be the most known places in Pulau Tujuh (the island cluster of Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas).” (N26, 6/5/2018)

A local magazine, Batam Pos (Yermia, 2014), portrayed Midai Island as a prosperous island; not only producing copra, but also cloves and rubber. Copra is harvested every three months, while cloves are harvested once a year. The island’s clove harvest is worth around £4 million. The head of sub-district stated that “there are no poor people in Midai, in the clove harvest season, children would pick the leftover of the cloves and could gather 1-2kg each day which they sell to the local collectors, so it’s not surprising that children will have millions of Rupiah pocket money (a few hundred pounds) during the clove harvest.” The article continues by describing people as having more money than they can spend on the island. A local described that “when a motorbike comes from Kalimantan on a boat, people would compete to get it. One person would hang on to the front bar, another would grab the seat and another hold on to the rear wheel.” From the cases of Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts, we can see how being peripherally positioned from the mainland does not necessarily mean being entirely economically peripheral.

Selayar Island in Lingga District is another interesting example, despite being only 55km² and sandwiched between two much larger islands – Lingga and Singkep. This island used to be a trade hub in the region. Although small, it provides ideal conditions as a transit and trade hub in the Lingga Islands. A local newspaper, Kepri Antara News (2020), covering the history of Penuba village on Selayar Island describes the village as an *Onder Afdeling*, a Dutch administrative unit. The island had Dutch customs and administration offices, and even recruited local islanders to work in the office. In the newspaper the head of Penuba village described “Penuba is like a gateway, it has very strategic geographical position because ships could harbour safely as the water in this strait is deep.” Its main harbour is located in a small

strait between Selayar Island and the smaller Penuba island. This function was evident at the time of research; just after a ferry had left Jagoh Port on Singkep Island, a storm began so the ferry took refuge in the Penuba strait until the storm had passed. Other reasons why Selayar Island has become a central island include having fertile soil and fresh water, allowing the area to be used as permanent place to reside and plant valuable produce, including opium and spices (Nurjali, 2020). The first Indonesian flag to be raised in the Lingga islands was raised in Penuba, which confirms the historic importance of the island as a centre. However, this centrality has changed over time; a local government official said:

“The elders say that people in Dabo and Singkep (islands) used to buy fish, clothes and other needs here, but it became less busy when the tin mining industry began to grow in Singkep. Penuba village used to be a busy place of trade they say. Many people on this small island have good education and are working in other places like Lingga, Sumatra and even Singapore. Maybe because in the past, people were already used to interacting with other places so they have open minds.” (L13,7/8/2018)

Today, Penuba village’s role has been reduced to acting as the administrative centre of Selayar sub-district; and its past importance in the region as a trade centre has been taken over by the new government centre on Lingga Island to the north, and the much more urbanised mining town on Singkep Island to the south. Nevertheless, just like the case of Sedanau and Midai islands, smallness, remoteness and other geographic attributes that may be considered as non-ideal based on a mainland perspective may offer their own advantages to become economic centres; such as island resources, accessibility by ship, or providing protection from weather.



Figure 4-11. Position of Selayar Island and Selayar-Penuba Strait



Figure 4-12. View from Selayar-Penuba Island Strait towards Singkep Island
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

In contrast with the cases above, Lingga District seems to be the least remote set of islands, as it is the closest distance towards a major city on the main island of Sumatra. Yet Lingga District today is, in the words of Lingga' government officials, the black sheep of the

Riau Islands Province. In regards to access, Lingga District is not as close to Singapore and Malaysia as the Batam, Bintan and Karminun Free Trade Zones (FTZ). It also lacks the direct access to international shipping networks that Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas have. In regards to economic resources, Lingga does not have any large-scale industries or urban population when compared to the FTZs, nor do they have oil and gas resources like Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas.

Singkep Island in Lingga District was once a major tin mining site developed by the Dutch and later inherited by Indonesia, which was operated by PT.Timah, a state owned company, until it stopped operating in the 1990s. A local government official from Singkep Island described the end of the 'glorious days' as a confusing time when people did not know what else to do once the major mining company ceased operation; some operated small-scale mining, scraping what remained from the tin mines, while many others returned to the sea. That being said, Lingga is in dire need of developing strategic networks to kickstart the economy. In regards to location Lingga District is separated far enough from the mainland of Sumatra that economic flows become restricted, but the area is not peripheral enough to have accessibility advantages for trade across state borders.

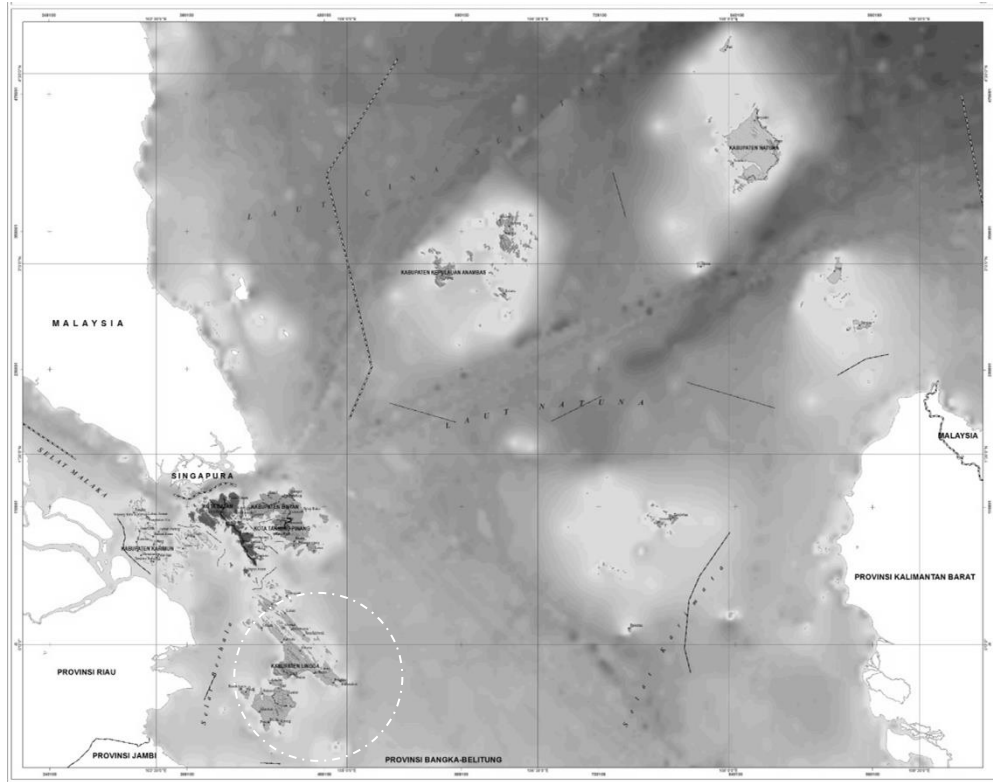


Figure 4-13. Position of Lingga District

While having proximity to a mainland is an obvious advantage, the cases provided above show that distance is not the only geographic variable shaping an island's economy. A closer look at different islands shows the variety of geographical aspects that can influence an island's economy. In the case of the Riau Islands, smallness and remoteness does not imply a certainty of economic peripherality for islands; other geographical aspects have been identified as determining factors including; island resources (marine, plantation and mineral resources), access to international waters, protection from the weather and the contour of the sea bed that allows larger ships to harbour. Thus, besides the general advantage of the Riau Islands having access to international trade, each island has its own set of geographical characteristics that shape its economy.

By understanding the multiplicity of geographical factors supporting islands having qualities of central places, is it still relevant to generalise small islands' peripherality? Is

islandness still a significant variable in contributing to peripherality? Or can all the geographical advantages above completely defy peripherality associated to small islands? The following section provides a different perspective on the relations between island geography and islands' economic development, focusing more on how the islands' geography contributes to economic challenges. The following section also provides insights from the Riau Islands as to how islands can be central and peripheral at the same time.

4.2.3. Economic challenges for small islands

The perception on Riau Islands' economic centrality/peripherality differs in the context of observation. While the discussions above provided insights as to the geographical advantages of the Riau Islands, it has not yet discussed the geographical disadvantages. While having access to trade and abundant natural resources, the Riau Islands suffers geographical challenges when trying to diversify and develop its economy. Challenges vary between islands, but are related with general issues that have been commonly addressed in island and development studies, such as emigration or depopulation, a lack of connectivity to markets, and vulnerability to climate change. The purpose of this section is to highlight the economic challenges resulting from the interaction of island geographies with other issues in the Riau Islands. For the Riau Islands, economic challenges are related to a combination of factors; mainly issues of island transport, restriction of border movement, and restrictive government systems.

The Riau Islands consists of around 400 dispersed inhabited islands that rely on sea transport, which comes with inherent problems; there is a higher cost and a higher safety risk than land transport, and it is less time reliable as it is dependent on the weather. On top of this, there is restriction of movement between the islands and their closest mainland, Malaysia and

Singapore, forcing islands to import goods from further distances, increasing the already expensive cost of transport. While the export of island products (fish, cloves and pepper) and import of goods has been conducted for generations, there are restrictions in place. Firstly, outside the free trade zones the type of imports is limited; high import taxes are applied to imports of fuel, materials for production and construction, making imports that are not consumer goods unfeasible. Secondly, there is a quantity limitation for free trade at ports in Serawak, Malaysia. This is a problem because the furthest islands from Riau Islands' main islands, such as Serasan Sub-district, are much closer to Malaysia Borneo and have always been dependant on this traditional trade route. As there are limitations of trade quantities, these islands have trouble in developing their economy. Acquiring more goods than the quantity limit or non-consumer goods are subject to high export/import taxes. On the other hand, relying on distribution from the Indonesian mainland results in a high price of goods. Both options are financial challenges when considering economic development. An official from Natuna District's Bureau of Development said that border trade is a complex issue related to wider considerations:

“The problem of cross border trade is not only an internal (national) issue, but it also needs the other side to cooperate. In the past, we have negotiated a limit of 6,000 Malaysian Ringgit (£1,000) worth of goods that could be traded at their port. We are trying to increase this, because a 30-ton ship can take more than that. It seems the central government has not focused on this aspect of cross border movement yet. Maybe because there are so many drugs smuggled by boat passing through the Riau Islands' seas that the central government is more focused on not letting ships in rather than opening borders.” (N07, 7/5/2018)

With the restriction of free movement, items such as construction materials, fuel, and raw materials have an unreasonably high production cost. Figure 4-14 shows the Construction Expensiveness Index (IKK) compared to the national average. In this map Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts, which are located on Indonesia's periphery, have the highest

IKK; the map clearly shows that prices become higher the further the islands are from the Indonesian mainlands. This also reflects price differences in other items distributed from the Indonesian mainlands, such as industry materials, equipment, fertilisers, vehicles, machines, and even labour. It is a contrasting reality from the earlier discussions on trade; islands located in the periphery have better access to trade, while on the other hand islands in the periphery also experience higher costs in construction, fuel and production materials. While people receive a good income from their fish and plantations that they can sell across the strait, the cost of living is also inflated. This demonstrates the possibility of islands having qualities of both centrality and peripherality at the same time.

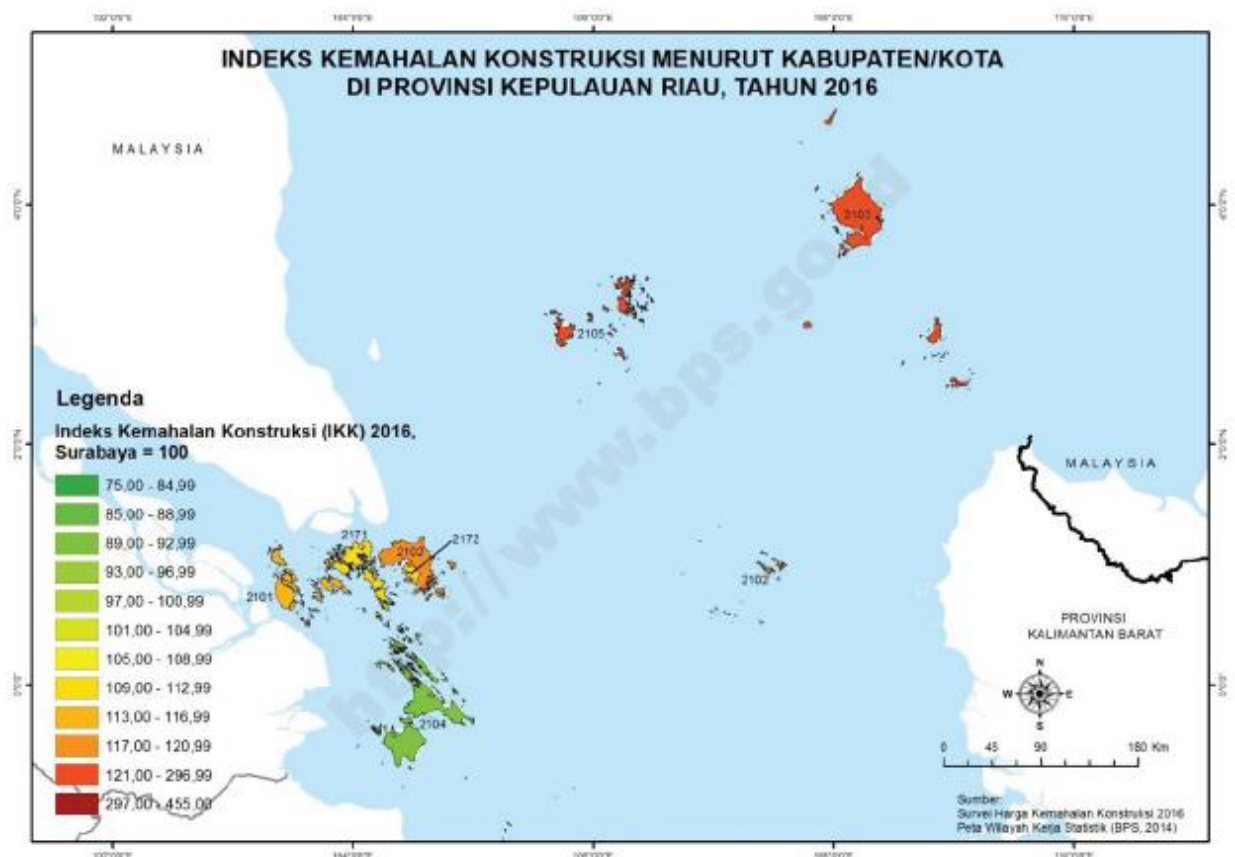


Figure 4-14. Map of Riau Islands Province's construction cost index (IKK) 2016 (Source: BPS, 2018b)

At a grassroots level, fuel and LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) for cooking contributes to the highest daily expense for those living on the remote islands. In 2018, the average price of 12kg LPG was Rp.220,000 compared to Rp.140,000 in Jakarta, whilst fuel cost Rp.14,000-30,000/litre depending on its availability, compared to Rp.6,500 in Jakarta. A province government official said:

“When the people in Java (island) are protesting because of a slight increase in fuel price, the people of Riau Islands don’t even care of the price as long as it’s available. We’re already used to prices being higher than anywhere else. What we *are* worried about is the availability of fuel and LPG, because for islands, distribution also depends on weather.” (P07, 26/4/2018)



Figure 4-15. A boat off-loading LPG cylinders in Tarempa, Kepulauan Anambas (Source: Author’s documentation, 2018)



Figure 4-16. Imported LPG cylinders in Tarempa, Kepulauan Anambas
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

Findings in Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts show that the government system can make the situation worse, increasing prices even more through the rigid implementation of bureaucracy in the supply chain. An official from the department of oil and gas in Natuna District said:

“There is a problem of distribution of fuel to the surrounding islands, which relates to the distribution sequence in the supply chain, take for example Midai Island. It (the fuel) is off-loaded at Selat Lampa port and has to be taken to the depot in Ranai by land, to go through administration process. It is then transported back again to the port and sent to Midai Island. If it was taken straight from Selat Lampa, the cost would be much lower. We have asked for the process to be shortened, but Pertamina (the national petroleum company) has not agreed yet.” (N11, 9/5/2018)

Similarly, as Kepulauan Anambas District does not have its own depot, it receives its distribution of fuel from the main depot in Natuna District, even though Kepulauan Anambas is passed by ships from Java Island on their way to Natuna District. The high price of production caused by the various factors discussed above makes many business models unfeasible for the islands. Even efforts to become resilient in food security have proven fruitless. Islands are

trapped in a cycle of reliance towards imports despite the high prices, because even to develop agriculture in efforts to be self-sustaining, many things need to be imported. An official from Natuna District's Department of Industry and Trade explained:

“Rice is easy to get, the people here are spoilt and are now reliant on rice. We have tried to plant rice here, but we can't force BULOG's (Logistic Affairs Body) purchase price. BULOG's purchase standard from farmers is Rp.7,000 (per kg), whilst the farmers here sell at around Rp.14,000. BULOG certainly won't buy it. The price is expensive because of the seeds, fertilisers, pesticide and labour costs are all high.” (N08, 7/5/2018)

Similar problems were stated by an official from Lingga District's agriculture department:

“We are only focusing on pushing farmers to fulfil our own (Lingga District) need of beef. Currently we still import beef from Jambi (mainland Sumatra). It is impossible at the moment to target exporting beef to other districts. For example, in Tanjungpinang, beef can be sold at Rp.30,000/kg and the seller still has profit from that. If Lingga's product was sold there, even at Rp.35,000/kg, it would be without profit. The cost of food and other needs for cattle to reach Lingga is still very high.” (L04, 3/7/2018)

Transport and import obstacles that challenge islands to develop their own resilient food security also challenge efforts to develop a non-resource-based economy. Tourism, for example, is an industry that many small islands have chosen to concentrate on; utopian tropical secluded beaches are an attraction for many holidaymakers. However, even when blessed with natural beauty, high transportation costs are still a challenge when trying to attract visitors. Among the two thousand islands of the Riau Islands, only a handful have been developed into tourism destinations. Bintan, an island close to Singapore, has been developed into a large resort area called Lagoi. It is just fifty minutes from Singapore's Tanah Merah port by ferry. On the other hand, islands in Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas District find it difficult to attract visitors. Figure 4-17 shows Tanjung Beach, which was developed for tourism in Ranai, the capital of

Natuna District, with only a few local visitors. An official from the province's planning department said:

“The local governments have made efforts to attract tourists from Malaysia (to Natuna), but the one-way plane ticket from Batam or Tanjungpinang is around Rp.1,200,000. They might as well go to Phuket (Thailand) for that price. The local governments really need to think extra hard of what they can sell to attract visitors.” (P05, 23/4/2018)



Figure 4-17. Tanjung Beach in Ranai, Natuna District
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

A hotel manager in Tarempa, Kepulauan Anambas District provides a more detailed insight on how an island's spatial configuration also determines the feasibility of tourism development. He describes the challenges of developing tourism in Kepulauan Anambas:

“I had a guest from Bali, she was in the tourism industry and was looking for other places outside Bali to explore. I took her around many islands around here and she was really satisfied with the underwater scenery and beaches. But eventually she said that it will be challenge to attract tourists here. There are no good beaches on the main island, and the good ones are far apart from each other, and the cost of boat rent is very expensive. On the other hand, in Bali the main island is already a main tourist destination, and the surrounding touristic islands are much closer together, so tourists can enjoy a range of

destinations. It (tourism) may still be possible, but for a very specific high-end market” (A01, 23/7/2018)

Facing the economic challenges mentioned above, most islands in the Riau Islands fall into what Bertram (1986; 1999; 2006) calls a MIRAB economic model, with a reliance on Migration, Remittance, Aid and Bureaucracy. Besides the Free Trade Zones, island governments’ only hope is to rely on revenue sharing from natural resources and central government transfers. Tanjungpinang, Batam, Bintan and Karimun have higher local income as they generate income from their urban areas, including taxes from hotels, restaurants, properties, etc. The table also shows that the Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts receive significantly higher natural resource revenue sharing because they have off-shore oil and gas mining in their area. Lingga District has no urban population or natural resources hence its income is significantly lower than other districts. Local government income is important to finance public services and infrastructure, which influences many aspects of island life.

Table 4-1. Local government income
(BPS, 2017)

District	Population	Local government income (Rp.millions)	Non –tax/ natural resources revenue sharing (Rp.millions)	Overall local government income, including central gov. transfers (Rp.millions)
Tanjungpinang	204,735	126,037	91,717	948,653
Bintan	154,584	206,292	128,286	1,048,555
Batam	1,236,399	881,275	94,400	4,220,602
Karimun	227,277	397, 443	98,425	1,888,153
Natuna	75,282	53,414	387,347	1,218,904
Kepulauan Anambas	40,921	17,218	193,535	693,319
Lingga	88,971	18,250	96,841	748,500

However, even if the islands cannot develop a non-resource-based economy, there is still a paradox of a vibrant fishery and plantation economy with a local government with very little income. There are a number of reasons for this; firstly, since the 2014 Local Autonomy Act, there has been a recentralisation of affairs relating to resource management from district level to province level, hence district governments can no longer receive tax revenues from fishery. Secondly, the value of fishery is not as valuable as mineral and carbon resources. And thirdly, Indonesia's fishery sector is notorious for being under-reported and under-regulated; hence fishery has a very small contribution towards the regional economy. Table 2 shows the contribution of the agriculture, forestry and fishery towards Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) and the size of each district's GRDP in regards to the province's overall GRDP. The table shows that where fishery, agriculture and forestry are a large part of GRDP, such as Lingga, the actual GRDP is small. On the other hand, larger districts with higher GRDP rely less on rural activities and more on an urban economy or natural resources.

Table 4-2. Percentage of agriculture, forestry and fishery sector towards regional income (BPS, 2017)

District	Contribution of fishery, agriculture and forestry towards GRDP (%)	Percentage of contribution towards Riau Islands Province's overall GRDP (%)
Tanjungpinang	0.84	8.08
Bintan	6.43	7.98
Batam	0.99	60.85
Karimun	16.45	4.93
Natuna	10.26	8.75
Kepulauan Anambas	4.69	7.89
Lingga	23.64	1.53

The discussions above have shown the relational complexity between an island's geography and an island's economy. By dissecting the case through various scales, different geographical influences on islands' centrality/peripherality can be observed. An island's

location, resource, and protective environment have contributed to shaping centrality, while small islands' dispersed spatiality challenges economic development in general. The findings are evidence that island geography is not an isolated variable, but is intertwined with trade, political and governance relations in the process of shaping central/peripheral experiences and perceptions.

Having analysed Riau Islands' economy from various perspectives, we return to the initial question; can the Riau Islands' geographical advantages defy economic peripherality? The answer is that geographical advantages can help, but do not completely defy islandness-related economic peripherality. Whilst different economic centralities/peripheralities coexist, from the perspective of the local governments their reliance on central government and shares from oil and gas creates vulnerable sources of income, over which they have no control. Since 2014, oil and gas shares for the Riau Islands Province and the producing districts (mainly Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas) dropped by more than 40% due to the low price of oil on the world markets. Besides creating volatility beyond the control of local governments, not all islands and island governments have these advantages; they face islandness-related economic challenges without the additional funding that they need. Following the efforts to observe Riau Islands' geographic influence on peripherality in different contexts and scales, the second part of this chapter focuses on social development. In contrast with the diversity of central peripheral experiences and perceptions in economic discussions, the following section shows a more unified perception of how island geography significantly shapes peripherality in small islands.

4.3. Geographical barriers in social development

Social development generally refers to efforts to increase wellbeing by enabling the basic conditions for one to live to their full potential; it covers a wide variety of aspects

including; the right to proper nutrition, right to work, mobility, access to knowledge, access to healthcare, housing, and equal gender rights, to name a few (ECLAC, 2018; Kumar and Rani, 2019). In the context of this chapter, more focus is given to issues of island geography affecting mobility, health and education.

4.3.1. Issues of island transport

Island spatiality is a challenge for connecting infrastructures; electricity, telecommunications, clean water, and transportation are all affected. Even when it is possible to link these infrastructures between islands, there are increased financial, construction or technological consequences. Among these different infrastructures, island transport is one of the most significant challenges that contributes to a sense of disconnection and peripherality in social development; island transport affects all aspects of social development. The issue in the Riau Islands is not only that there is not enough affordable transportation, but transportation safety is often inadequate. Most travelling routes in the Riau Islands use wooden ships known locally as *pompong*. These *pompongs* are traditionally built without any safety standards and rarely offer life jackets for passengers. The safety of sea travel varies between different islands and different seasons; some islands are located very close to each other making travel between islands as natural as getting on a bus or driving a car. We can see some examples in Bintan and Natuna Districts where some surrounding islands can be reached in 15-20 minutes from the main island; people can commute with their motorcycles on board, easily hopping from island to island, especially on a nice day where there are few waves.



Figure 4-18. Passengers travelling with motorcycles from Bunguran island to Pulau Tiga Barat, Natuna District
(Source: author's documentation, 2018)



Figure 4-19. Farmers from Bunguran Island travel to Sedanau Island to sell vegetables
(Source: author's documentation, 2018)

This situation can turn quickly when the weather changes; in 2016 a boat traveling from Tanjungpinang to Penyengat Island, which normally takes only 15 minutes, capsized when a strong wind blew the boat on its side. Ten out of 14 passengers drowned in the incident, as most cannot swim and no proper safety equipment were provided (BBC, 2016a). Others have

described to the researcher similar frightening experiences when traveling to nearby islands on a windy day. Furthermore, an official from Natuna District's transportation department explains that, on some small islands, travelling on non-passenger boats is the only possible way to travel, usually because the island population and travel demand is so little that it becomes unfeasible even for informal passenger boats. When an accident happens, it poses a dilemma to local governments, as they are unable to provide travel solutions but on the other hand, they must fulfil the law. Natuna District's Transportation Department official explains:

“Actually, the people who own the boats don't really want to take passengers. It's like the incident in Seluan Island. It was the clove harvest season, if not mistaken it was during the west winds (a local season known by the locals). The boat just wanted to transport cloves and coconuts. But then the locals wanted to get on, and the incident happened. The boat sank, the passengers drowned, and the owner of the boat was imprisoned. We have constantly told them (boat owners not to take passengers), but what else (can we do)? At that time, the passengers don't have any choice, renting is too expensive. If the boat owner does not allow them, people will think badly of him. For more populous islands like Sedanau Island there are commercial boats, but for smaller islands there are no routine boats. All we can do is to monitor them as best as we can, give them information about the weather, wave height and advise them not to go if it is too windy.” (N10, 8/05/2018)

Safety issues are even a concern with larger passenger ships; one reason is that the supporting infrastructure is sometimes unavailable on small islands. Natuna District's head of the education department, who has had experiences with being appointed on the remote islands, explains how even boarding a ship is a life risking experience:

“For many small islands, large ships cannot come too close to the shore, thus there are smaller boats to take passengers from the island, to where the larger boat harbours. Getting on the larger ship is not easy, because both boats are moving and sometimes people fall in the sea” (N05, 4/5/2018)

More detail is described by a journalist in the journey to Midai Island in a Batam Pos article (Yermia, 2014:19)

“When *Batam Pos* went to Midai Island, KM Bukit Raya (name of passenger ship) stopped in Midai’s sea at 1am. At sea, a fisherman’s boat 10 meters long and 2.5 meters wide was already waiting with passengers that are going to Pontianak or Jakarta. When the ship stopped, the crew let down a ladder on Deck-5. The wind was not strong, but the waves that night was strong enough to rock the small boat. It had to be steered precisely to direct the boat next to the ladder... The process of jumping from the end of the stairs to the boat deck is not easy. With the waves moving the boat vertically 1 meter, the passenger has to know the right time to jump. It is the moment when the boat deck moves closest to the ladder. “Jumping has to be precise, if not, you can break a leg” says Suherman, the head of Midai Sub-district. That night all the passengers moving from the ship to the boat were adults. There were no children or babies. Some people said that if there are babies, the process is more dramatic. Other stories that *Batam Pos* heard are quite frightening; some have even drowned in that process.”

Transportation around the Riau Islands is certainly challenging; it is expensive and often unsafe. It has become even more of a concern with the increasing need of inter-island mobility. For local governments, the increasing demand of mobility relates with the increasing targets of public service standards. Inter-island transport not only increases the costs of public service delivery but also discourages people to come and work on the islands. A field assistant for a rural development programme in Natuna said:

“Many of my friends have decided to quit from their work as field assistants in rural development programmes. They can’t stand the constant sea travel on boats, especially in bad weather. The boats are unsafe and many of my friends are afraid.” (NIS, 9/5/2018)

Natuna District’s development secretary said that development on the small islands seems to be stagnant, as it is conducted piecemeal and spread across many inhabited islands with limited funding. On top of the practical issues in transportation, the high cost of development is coupled with rigid government systems that do not accommodate the special needs of small islands. Small islands are systematically peripheralised in development; despite evidently needing more support for public service, small islands are the least prioritised in government planning. An official in Riau Islands Province’s Planning Department explained:

“Development proposals are compiled from village level and then discussed in Musrenbang (*Musyarawah Rencana Pembangunan* or Development Plan Meetings) from village level, to sub-district, district and province level, where at each level development proposals are prioritised and filtered. Variables used to prioritise proposals include the number of populations benefiting from the project, efficiency, ease of implementation, and in accordance with national and local political priorities. For everything beside political priorities, the smallest islands have no chance of being prioritised. That is why if you look at meeting notes from year to year, there are some projects that have been proposed every year and never make it to the final selection.” (P03, 26/1/2018)

As this hierarchical filtering of development is based on administrative areas, it is no surprise that small island administrations (village, sub-district or district) have often been neglected in terms of development, in favour of other administrative areas that have a higher ‘score’ in the development planning stage. This also explains why there is a wide development gap between the Riau Islands and the Riau mainland, when Riau Islands was still a district level government under the Riau Province which consisted of mainland and islands.

The high cost of development also affects island development in the implementation stage; government construction tenders are limited by a pricelist based on a construction price survey in each district. The problem for small islands is that there is often a wide gap between the construction price on the main island and the price on the surrounding islands, but even when working on a project on the smaller islands, the tender price still refers to that of the district centre, hence the quality of government projects are greatly reduced. An official within Natuna District’s Public Works Department explains how this condition can even damage the environment:

“The challenge (in infrastructure construction) is the material, if the value of the construction package is high, I am sure the material can be delivered. If the package is beneath Rp.1 billion (around £60,000) for let’s say in Pulau Laut (the most remote island in Natuna District, it becomes very difficult. Eventually they (contractors) use local materials, the consequence is on the quality (of construction) and environmental degradation. Sand from the sea is not feasible for construction, if they use sand from the middle of the island, the

fresh water will be affected. Sometimes even corals are used, and this contributes to abrasion. The worst abrasion is in Midai Island; it is also partly because of that (use of local material for construction). The abrasion is 1-3 meters/ year. Imagine, Midai Island is exposed to all seasons; there is a 7 km stretch of coastline that has serious abrasion. Whoever the contractor is, they are bound to look for the cheapest material, so it depends on the budget and the system. There should be better construction calculation for islands, because islands cannot adjust with the current standard calculations.” (N04, 4/5/2018)

With a dispersed small islands spatiality, the challenging inter-island transport influences every aspect of service delivery. Island transport has increased the cost of delivery and discouraged people to come and work in the islands. Further, the high cost of development on small islands is not balanced by interventions from a supporting government: instead, the rigid government bureaucracy works against the small islands by systematically de-prioritising them. In discussions of social development, it is common that, at least at the early stage, there will always be regional inequality; a centre will grow at the expense of the periphery (Kumar & Rani, 2019). It is obvious from the findings that, by default, small islands often become the periphery of larger islands or a mainland in modern development planning, not because of their spatiality per se, but rather in relation to how mainlanders and governments conceptualise small islands as peripheral places. The following section explains in more detail how the Riau Islands’ spatiality affects the most important foundations of social development – health and education.

4.3.2. Quality health and education for small islands; merely a dream?

Indonesia has placed great emphasis on the development in health and education by securing national funding, with 10% for health and 20% for education. The central government’s aim is to achieve the national minimum service standards equally across the Indonesian archipelago, including on the small islands, but with the challenges related with

island spatiality, is this aim merely a dream? And can Riau Islands' strategic location supporting its economy also support the delivery of health and education?

There is still an advantage of being in the Malacca Strait region; the Riau Islands' proximity with Malaysia has been beneficial for the affluent population seeking private medication. Many people that the researcher interacted with informally said that people prefer to seek private medication in Malaysia rather than in Jakarta. Johor has even responded to this market by developing health or medical tourism where Indonesians can visit hospitals and local tourist attractions at the same time (Tanjungpinang Pos, 2018). A description from a local informant on Bintan Island represents the experiences of such people.

“Last week, I just came back from taking my uncle to Johor, Malaysia. I've been there a few times. It's more convenient than Jakarta; it is closer, the transportation and accommodation is cheaper, and the cost of doctor and medication is not more expensive than Jakarta. We (Malays) are also very comfortable because we speak the same language and we don't get any discrimination there.” (BI1, 25/6/2018)

Facilitating non-emergency medical visits of the affluent class is perhaps the only positive contribution of the Riau Islands geography in terms of basic services. Findings from the fieldwork provide strong evidence as to how Riau Islands' geography contributes to the islands' peripherality, which mostly relates with difficulties around the lack of island accessibility. Peripherality is, of course, a subjective matter, and people have been living on the small islands for generations. However, one cannot help to reject the island communities' acceptability when facing the lack of health and education services. This point of view is evident in much of the interviewees' response. An official within Lingga District's Planning Department said:

“There is a saying that the sea connects the islands, but from what we see from day to day is that the sea acts more as a separator. If someone living on a small island, let's say a pregnant woman or someone sick and they need medical service, late at night, in a stormy weather, how do they get to the clinic?

There are no regular routes, if there are, they won't go at night. But if they are still on the same land, it is still possible by bike, motorcycle or on foot, right?" (L01, 2/7/2018)

For those in charge to ensure sufficient services, their experience of how difficult it is to deliver public service creates a deep sense of helplessness and disappointment. The former secretary of Lingga District health department recalled his experience:

"I witnessed twice with my own eyes – twice! a patient dying in front of me on the ferry on our way to a hospital in Tanjungpinang. If we cannot treat them in our hospital because we do not have enough equipment or specialist doctors, we have to take them to better, larger hospitals in Tanjungpinang. We cannot just go; we have to wait for the ship's schedule. The journey is long and may be very rough if the waves are high. In those conditions, I feel we are really helpless in these islands." (LI1, 9/7/2018)

The experience above is shared with many other stories from various interviews. A common expression following such tragic stories from local government staffs is "Are we not part of Indonesia?" the empathy towards the islanders is followed by the feeling of being left behind and forgotten by the central government. The need for more support has not only gone unnoticed, but is instead unmet by rigid government systems that sometimes make service provision more complicated. The loss of life due to inadequate infrastructure and an inability to access health facilities creates the experience of peripherality at its climax; it has become the main rhetoric in island governments' plea towards the central government to acknowledge small islands' issues.

The findings show that the way in which Riau Islands' geography challenges access to public services is complex; the following discussion addresses different aspects of service delivery in the Riau Islands. Firstly, public services require supporting infrastructure such as transportation, fuel, electricity and telecommunications, which itself is challenged by island geographies. Electricity generators are often used to support offices, schools and health clinics.

The supply of fuel for the generators depends on delivery by sea. Sea transport risks are higher than land transport which can delay delivery, especially with traditional boats. For example, at the time of research in 2018, a boat carrying fuel to the small islands exploded; fuel delivery was delayed for almost a month (Maulana, 2018). Even when fuel can be delivered, the cost of fuel is high, thus the local government does not always have a sufficient budget to pay for fuel. Figure 4-20 shows a mobile clinic boat rarely in use due to budget shortages. Mobile clinics themselves face the same risks as any other boats; in 2018 a health service boat sunk in Kepulauan Anambas District after hitting a large log at sea (Liputan6, 2018). Similarly, for education, pupils and teachers rely on boats to get to schools, hence risking not being able to reach school in bad weather.



Figure 4-20. A mobile health clinic in Mantang Island, Bintan District
(Source: authors' documentation, 2018)



Figure 4-21. School children commute daily to school in Kelong Island, Bintan District
(Source: authors' documentation, 2018)

Secondly, supplies of equipment, medication, books, etc. rely on delivery from the Indonesian mainlands, mainly Jakarta and Batam; islands further from these places will consequently be more negatively affected. As in the case of construction, tenders for supplies sent to small islands become problematic; the time and cost of the tender is based on rigid government administration, and does not consider the conditions in the Riau Islands, hence resorting to informal paths to adjust the system. An official within the Natuna District Health Department describes an example with medicine procurement;

“Some time ago we had a shortage of medicine; we made procurement, but the suppliers objected because the transportation cost was too high. We have to use *e-catalog* now, so the price is locked⁷. The *e-catalog* price should have included transportation, but perhaps they did not calculate the transportation for small islands correctly. On the other hand, because the *e-catalog* price already includes transport, local governments should not be allowed to make transportation expenses. Of course, this is the fault of the supplier, and we have reported it; but at the mean time we still needed the medicine, so we had to ‘play with the budget’ a bit to get those medicine here.” (N06, 7/5/2018)

⁷ Since 2014 the Ministry of Health has centralised procurement; the supplier must list the price of an item (drug or equipment) with an agreement that the price will be the same for distribution to all Indonesian districts.

Again, this shows how small island geographies do not only become real life challenges in distribution, but also create conflicts with government systems, leading to additional problems for islands. These conditions are a challenge for public service providers, which leads to the third aspect being discussed; the challenge to recruit people to work on the small islands. Some of the reasons have been discussed earlier; the risk of sea travel, a lack of infrastructure and a lack of facilities to support their work. Another important reason is simply that living on small islands is unattractive for many people from the mainland. An official within the Lingga District's health department said:

“Even in the districts' main hospitals, there are still shortages of specialist doctors and other health professions. Professions such as doctors and pharmacists are rare. Sometimes, we open (recruitment) for 6 positions but only 2 apply, whereas if Batam opens 10 positions, hundreds will apply.” (L14, 9/7/2018)

Local government data is consistent with the statement above; Lingga District has only 0.35 doctors/1,000 people whereas Batam, the much more urbanised island, has 0.66 doctors/1,000 people. At the same time, the data shows the reality of Indonesia; even in the most urbanised district, the number of doctors is below the WHO standard of 1:1000 people. The case is slightly different for education; education departments have stated that the pupil/teacher ratio is already ideal according to national standards, but the spread is uneven. Most teachers are on the main island and very few are willing to teach on the more remote islands. The education department of Natuna District explains that the incentives for teachers to teach on the remote islands are not interesting enough and to some degree, teaching on remote islands is counter-productive for a teacher's career, which is an additional disincentive. An official said:

“Our islands are dispersed; some are 6-10 hours by *pompong* (motorised traditional wooden boat). Internet is not available, so when a teacher wants to deal with school administration, or administration for their periodic

salary increase, it means they must travel to Ranai (the district capital city on the main island). For high school teachers, they must go to Tanjungpinang. For that they may need to leave their students for a week, especially if the weather is bad... periodic increase of salary is only around Rp.100,000/ year but they must spend a high cost, maybe up to Rp.5 million for transport and accommodation if they don't have any relatives there. Imagine the loss of lessons for the students and the loss of money and time for the teacher.” (N05, 4/5/2018)

The issues of health and education service on the small islands is multi-faceted, with each aspect being influenced by the islands' spatiality in different ways. Issues of distribution, recruiting health and education professionals, rigid government bureaucracy and uncompromising island conditions, have all been identified as challenges in public service on small islands. Riau Islands' strategic location in the Malacca Strait region that has supported island economies has proven to have little to no positive contribution in the support of public service delivery. Unlike trade, public services rely fully on the Indonesian state and the central government to build infrastructure, send materials and human resources. Hence the challenge is not only due to the Riau Islands spatiality of hundreds of dispersed islands, but also their long distance from Indonesia's mainland. A shared sense of peripherality in social development and a joint effort to request more support from the central government has fostered a small island identity which is tied to political motives. In the next section, further elaboration is made regarding the merger of an island identity triggered by social development peripherality with a certain marginalised cultural identity.

4.4. Island spatiality and socio-cultural marginalisation

The terms peripherality and marginality inherently carry a connotation of inequality. While earlier discussions in this chapter have focused more on spatial inequality, the socio-cultural marginality discussed here focuses more on inequality among different groups of people. Riau Islands' spatiality has influenced how the colonial and post-colonial governments

conceptualise, organise and (de)prioritise the Riau Islands. Small islands have clear surrounding delineations, are small enough to be belittled and are highly easy to conceptualise, to distinguish and in the process become “the other” when compared to the mainland (Grydehøj et al., 2018). Consequently, people of the islands have become circumscribed to their islands, disconnecting them from the complex relations beyond the islands and leading them to become marginalised. The following uses a *longue durée* historical perspective highlighting how the Malays of the Riau Islands have become gradually marginalised due to various governments’ conceptualisations and ‘othering’ of small islands in different times in history. This section concludes with an elaboration of the current conditions of the Riau Islands’ Malays.

4.4.1. Peripheralisation and the construction of small islands’ indigeneity

The Riau Islands’ geography has contributed to the indigenous Malays experiencing various central-peripheral positions. To understand how the Malays have become marginalised, a *longue durée* historic view needs to be taken. Although intertwined, the discussion of Riau Islands’ Malays is not to be mistaken with the condition of the Riau Islands itself as a place. The Malay people of the Riau Islands are not a distinct ethnicity, they are part of a larger Malay society spread across Sumatra Island, the Riau Islands, Borneo, Singapore, and the Malay peninsula. Internal conflicts and resistance towards European colonial powers has been the reason of the constant movement of Malay government centres across the Malay world.

The centrality of the Riau Islands can be traced back to the 17th century with the rise of the Malay World, especially in regions along the Malacca Strait. The Johor-Riau-Lingga-Sultanate, also known as the Johor-Riau Sultanate which was based in the Riau Islands, has long benefited from their ideal location, as the islands were a safe place for defence; the main islands were surrounded by smaller fortified islands. They also had economic advantages as

they were prime locations for the passing of trade ships from China to India and Europe, allowing access to world trade and building them up as trade hubs. Development of the Riau Islands advanced with the rising popularity of an important commodity in the late 17th century; pepper and gambier – a plant endemic to the Malay region that was used to tan hide in the leather industry (Hui Kian, 2013; Lyons & Ford, 2013.; Trocki, 2002). Due to the suitability for the plantation and its easy access for ships, especially around the Malacca Strait, Chinese merchants saw the opportunity and imported Chinese coolies to work on the plantations, significantly increasing the population of the Chinese ethnic population in the Malacca region. The Chinese were well accepted by the Malays and, as time passed, many Chinese coolies became traders themselves, not only in gambier but also in other kinds of goods. Since then, the Chinese have facilitated the import and distribution of goods into the Riau Islands and facilitated exports of fish and plantation. The Riau Islands' geography attracted Chinese migrants, and in turn helped the Malays become well served in the Riau Islands.

The popularity of the Riau Islands attracted another important people; the Bugis – sea faring people from Sulawesi Island. The Bugis that began as merchants became allies of the Johor-Riau Sultanate in protecting the government in power; their mastery of the seas helped the Malays protect the islands. The “*Sumpah setia Melayu Bugis*” or Malay-Bugis Loyalty Oath, is still remembered by both Malay and Bugis today. A maritime expert and local activist in Natuna island explained:

“The prosperity of the Riau Islands is due to the cooperation of three ethnicities; the Malays that own the lands, the Bugis that master the sea with strong maritime culture, and the Chinese that facilitate trade. The Bugis and Chinese have always been accepted and given a good status in the traditional Malay Sultanate.” (N09, 8/5/2018)

Riau Islands' plantation, location and the coming together of different ethnicities allowed the Riau Islands to prosper. Unfortunately, it also attracted the attention of various

European colonial powers who began the gradual marginalisation of the Malays in the Riau Islands. In 1824, the Johor-Riau Sultanate's territory was divided by two imperial powers, the Dutch and the British. The Anglo-Dutch treaty divided the territory along the Malacca Strait; areas north of Singapore, including the Malay Peninsula, were placed under British rule, those south of the strait under the Dutch colony. In practice, the British focused on controlling the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, hence the surrounding small islands were somehow ignored and came under the Dutch colonial administration, even those north of Singapore – nowadays Kepulauan Anambas and Natuna. Figure 4-22 shows the original Riau Sultanate before and after the divide; the map on the left shows Riau's natural spread of political influence, while the map on the right is the result of the Anglo-Dutch treaty. Small islands and straits are geographic features that can easily be conceptualised in territorial practices; it is easy to imagine straits as border lines and small islands as either complementary parts attached to a mainland or detached altogether depending on the distance and context. Following this, the sultanate was also divided; the Riau Lingga Sultanate centred in the Riau Islands ruled the Dutch side of the divided Malay world. This divide severed the sultanate's political power, and proved to be the source of further peripheralisation in post-colonial times.

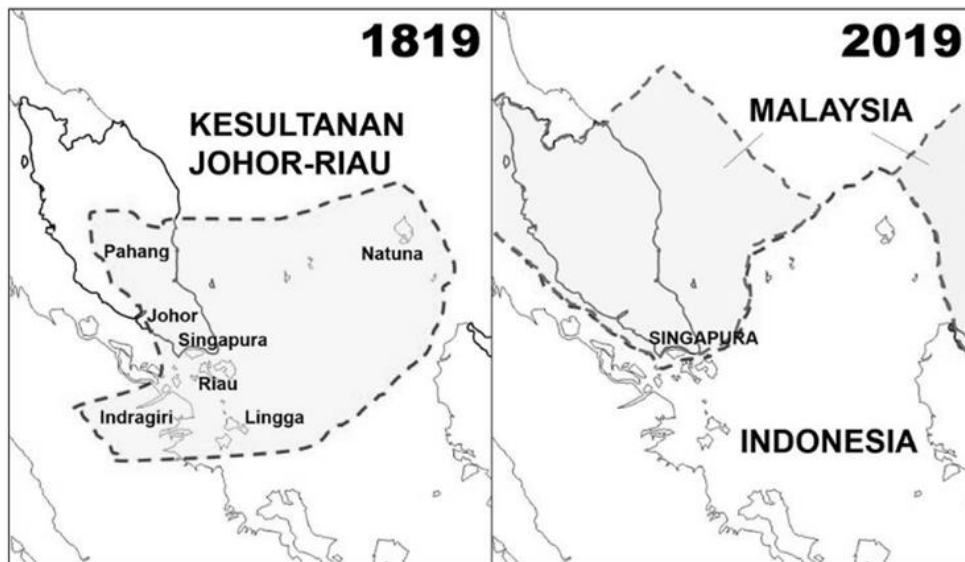


Figure 4-22. Johor-Riau Sultanate before and after the Anglo-Dutch treaty (Source: Wong, 2019)

Under the Indonesian state, the former Riau Lingga Sultanate became a province administration which was divided into several districts on the mainland and one island district covering all the small islands. Technocratic planning saw the small islands having similar geographical characteristics that can be grouped separately from the mainland. In 1959, the capital of the province was moved by the state from Tanjungpinang in the Riau islands to Pekanbaru on the Sumatran mainland. Following this, development excelled much faster on the mainland than on the islands. Anger grew in the islands; what was once the centre of the Riau Lingga Sultanate, now became a peripheral area, not only positioned at Indonesia’s border but also the hinterland of the Riau mainland. An official in the Lingga District’s Department of Culture said:

“We were the original centre of Riau, but when the capital was moved from Tanjungpinang to Pekanbaru, we felt really left behind. They (Riau mainland) did not care much about us. The development gap grew wider between mainland and the islands. So, we decided to make our own province and separate ourselves altogether from the mainland.” (L08, 4/7/2018)

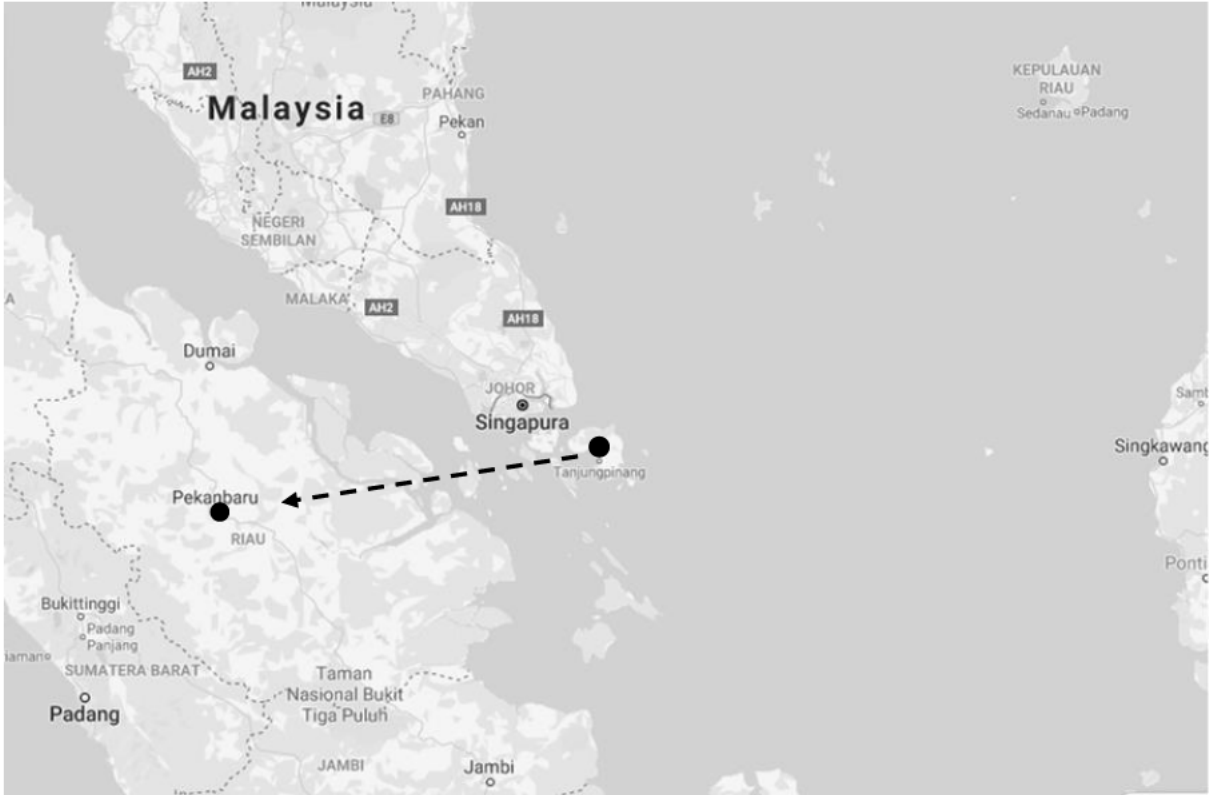


Figure 4-23. The capital of Riau Province was moved from Tanjungpinang to Pekanbaru in 1959

In the past there was no geographic division of the Malay world, there was no mainland, island, and peninsula Malay – such terms did not exist. It is through the historical divisions of the colonial powers and the Indonesian state that the Malay became divided. The elites in the Riau Islands have seen their islands gradually degraded from their position as the political centre of the Malacca Strait region to being circumscribed to small islands. This peripheralisation has influenced the crystallisation of a new form of indigeneity exclusive to the Riau Islands. The Riau Islands indigenous, maritime Malay became the new political identity that strive towards regaining the centrality of the islands. In 2002, the efforts of Riau Islands' elites were successful; the Riau Islands were upgraded from a district administration to become a province administration – the highest self-autonomy level in Indonesia's government structure. The elites have also been promoting the Riau Islands as the centre and

origin of Malay culture, which is even shown in the Riau Islands Province' motto "*Bunda Tanah Melayu*" (Motherland of Malay). In 2017, the first international Malay gathering was held on the island of Lingga to remember cultural history and create unity across the Malay world. An official in Lingga's cultural department said:

"When the capital was moved from Tanjungpinang to Pekanbaru, the Riau Islands' position as a cultural centre also seemed forgotten. But not long ago there was an international Tamadun Melayu (Malay Gathering), people from Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Sumatra mainland came. Lingga was established as the motherland of Malay, where the Malay language and customs known today were formed... We are happy that we can be known as the cultural centre of the Malay world again." (L08, 4/7/2018)

This fusion between Malayness and Islandness was forged through the process of re-imagining an identity for the new province of Riau Islands. It was a reaction of gradual peripheralisation narrowed by different governments and the classification of being a small island territory. In response, islanders searched for historical and cultural inspirations and justifications to de-peripheralise or recentralise the islands. Having a distinct ethnicity or culture was an important variable that helped new administrations to be formed during Indonesia's decentralisation turn in 1998⁸. The rhetoric of Riau Islands' Malayness seemed to ignore the fact that it was due to inter-ethnic symbiosis that created the Riau Islands centrality in the past, but it was the appropriate need at the time. With Malayness becoming the jargon of the Riau Islands in efforts to bring back the political and economic centrality of the Riau Islands, the conditions of the Malay ethnicity itself has surprisingly not been discussed openly. The following section provides an insight into how, despite efforts to create centrality in the Riau

⁸ In 1998 President Suharto's authoritarian and centralistic regime ended, and in its place a new form of decentralised governance approach was taken; this transition was called *Era Reformasi* or the Reform Era. With the decentralisation turn, localities were allowed to form new autonomous local governments to "share the pie" of Indonesia's development. This was to keep the Indonesian archipelago politically united after the fall of the former authoritarian regime.

Islands, Riau Islands' Malays, the supposedly indigenous ethnicity that the new province has been fighting for, are becoming marginalised in the process of centralisation.

4.4.2. Riau Islands' centrality and the marginalisation of the Malays

Due to their strategic location, the Riau Islands has seen an influx of migrants at various times in history. In earlier discussions it was mentioned a wave of Chinese and Bugis migrants came to the islands and formed the social fabric that still exists today. With the development of the Free Trade Zones (FTZ) in the 1970s, a new wave of migrants came to the Riau Islands from across Indonesia, becoming skilled labours in the FTZ industries, followed by entrepreneurs in other sectors contributing to the flow of urbanisation.

Even though the Riau Islands have been historically plural, the indigenous Malays have always been in control. However, recently it has been predicted that Malays could become a minority in the Riau Islands by 2030 (Ananta, 2016). The 2010 census noted a rising percentage of Javanese ethnicity and a declining Malay ethnicity with the most increase in migrants coming in the urban islands, mainly Batam which holds more than 60% of the Riau Islands population. Long (2013) has commented that the Malayness of the Riau Islands is becoming more and more blurred as the socio-demographic composition becomes more diverse.

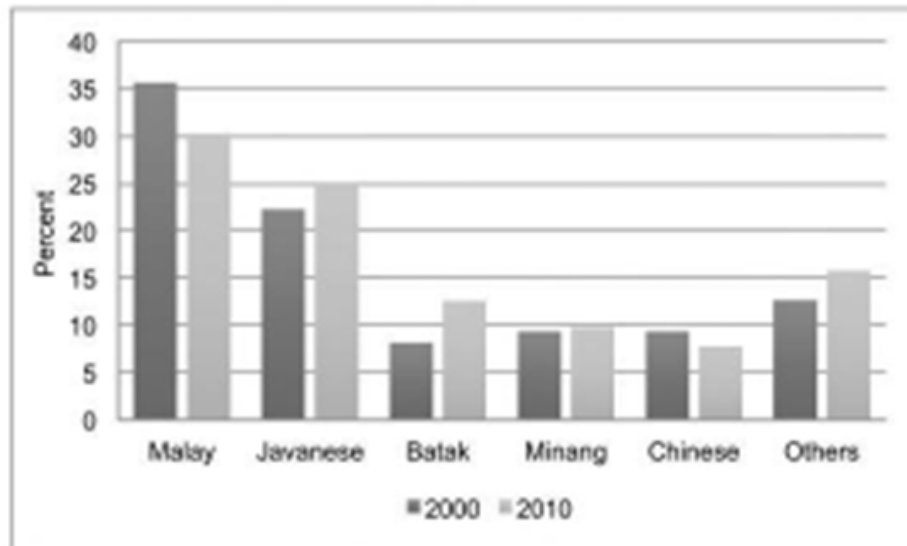


Figure 4-24. Ethnic populations in Riau Islands, 2000 and 2010
(Source: Carruthers, 2018)

What makes the Malays marginalised is not the change of demographics per se, but also that the migrants are seen to have a higher work ethos by employers and are more equipped with the skill set for the modernising Riau Islands. A laid-back culture is perhaps common in many rural areas compared to urban areas, but in the Riau Islands this can be linked to the ease of traditional livelihoods due to a long history of island geography intertwining with various trade and governance networks.

As explained earlier in this chapter, the Malays' livelihood is based on small-scale fishing and plantation, with a dependency on the *towkays* (Chinese business owners) to sell their fish, cloves and peppers. Most *towkays* are descendants of those that came during the height of the gambier plantations in the 17th century. The relation between the Malay fishermen with today's Chinese traders and fish collectors is very close. A province senior advisor explains that the relation between the Malay fishermen and the *towkay* is not just between seller and buyer. If the fishermen need money when their family is sick or for a big event like a marriage, the *Towkay* usually lends them money without interest. The *towkay* act as non-governmental agents that provide financial security. Thus, with these traditional relationships,

fishermen have almost nothing to worry about. In relation to this, a fish collector in Kepulauan Anambas District explains the negative side of fishermen's laid-back way of life:

“These good conditions have spoiled the Riau Islands’ fishermen, making them only think short term; what they have today they can spend it all and hope to get some more money the next day. This is different from the people I have recruited from East Java. They spend very little here; I teach them to save money. Now they can buy themselves land back home. The local fishermen do not have any motivation to work harder and fish with larger ships. The government has made attempts to support these fishermen; larger ships have been given to fishermen groups so they can fish together further away from the islands to catch more fish. However, the fishermen do not want to use too much capital and they don’t want to be away from home too long, this has been their way of life and they do not seem to want to change. That’s why I collect fish from the locals, but I also have my own ship with workers from Java.” (A02, 23/7/2018)

With the growing centrality of the Riau Islands, the Malays’ laid-back customs have made them vulnerable to marginalisation. Coming from a similar point of view, an elder in Bintan District admitted that the younger generation lacked work ethos. He said:

“There are many young men from Java coming here to work as labours in the fishery industry, some go on the ships, and others work in the processing place. I talk to the youngsters here; Look at those people from Java, coming here only with their penis (without any skills), but they can be successful because they work hard. You can row a boat (you’re used to the seas), you know the area so you have advantage, why can’t you be successful too?” (BI6, 25/1/2018)

Of course, not all Malays are like this, but even those that have succeeded to compete in the modernising Riau Islands are affected by the negative stigma towards the local Malays. A local government staff official of Bintan District, who is himself Malay, said:

“It is only very recently that Malays here are proud of their heritage because there is LAM (Malay Cultural Body) now. In everyday life, we are sometimes embarrassed when asked what ethnicity we are because we know that other people think of Malays as lazy compared to those from Java and other places.” (B04, 24/5/2018)

The marginalisation of the Malays also relates with a more structural matter, the access to quality education and experience. This has been touched upon earlier in the discussion of peripherality in health and education, where islands’ spatiality becomes a barrier to service

provision. The lack of teachers, internet access, and missing classes due to bad weather are among the factors influencing the low quality of education on the small islands. It is not always the case that islanders do now want to engage in modern jobs and opportunities, but they lack the capacity to compete. In fact, most fishermen interviewed would like their children to have a good education. Even though fishery has sustained their livelihood for generations, economic expectations have risen due to modernisation and the fact that fishery is hard and sometimes dangerous work. The domination of migrants over locals can be seen in both the private and public sectors. From manufacturing to tourism, most managers and staff are migrants from outside the islands. On Bintan island, where resorts have been developed to accommodate the overflow of Singapore's tourism, most of the workforce is brought in from outside the island. An employee of BRC, Lagoi resorts' property management company, said:

“Most high positioned staff are from Singapore, and many of the hotel staff are from the Philippines and Sumatra mainland, because they speak English better. A new tourism vocational campus has opened to train local people to get in the industry. Hopefully in the future, more local people can compete with foreign workers.” (B06, 27/5/2018)

The sense of being dominated by outsiders is not only felt in the central islands (Batam, Bintan and Karimun). In Lingga, the least developed district, numerous locals argued that formal jobs are being taken by outsiders. One interviewee argues:

“There should be more assigned roles for the local people in the local government. There are too many people from outside the islands taking jobs here. From Pekanbaru, Padang, and Medan. The government tells our children to get good education, but after they get it, they don't have a job here. Maybe there can be people from outside the island if they are qualified, but there needs to be more positions kept only for the locals, otherwise we cannot compete.” (L12, 7/7/2018)

The younger generation can be especially vulnerable in this situation; their parents and the government push them towards reaching higher education and leaving the traditional life at

sea, yet their skills and competitiveness cannot yet compete with migrants in modern job markets. Lacking the capacity to keep up with the influx of migrants and capital, the local Malays are urged to sell their lands to make way for development and in return receive what seems to them as a large sum of money. The most ironic case found in this research is the selling of coastal land for resorts on Bintan Island. A local informant in Bintan Island explained how lands are being bought by foreigners:

“Most people don’t even know the price of land (along the beach). When their neighbour sells, they sell. Most land is bought by foreign people to make resorts. After they build it, there are high walls closing the view to the beach. The resort managers say it’s to protect the locals and the tourists, because the tourists usually do not wear appropriate dressing according to the local customs. But whatever the reasons, it seems very exclusive now.” (BI1, 25/6/2018)

This closing up of beach areas for resorts means fishermen can no longer use the area and need to move to further beaches to remain in their livelihoods. In turn, the gradual loss of access to the sea forces locals to change their livelihood away from the sea and towards a land-based livelihood in a changing environment in which they cannot compete. Malays mostly become labourers or lower-class employees. Despite Malayness being central in Riau Islands’ revival rhetoric, it seems only to be cultural jargon for political use. Malays are the most marginalised people in the Riau Islands. Figure 4-25 shows that Malays are dominant on the most peripheral islands; these people have the highest challenges when accessing public services and have the highest cost of living. On the other hand, the most central islands (Batam, Bintan and Karimun) have the highest number of migrants; here the Malays are marginalised in urban jobs due to a lack of competitiveness yet at the same time (as in the case of Bintan) are gradually disconnected from their life at sea.

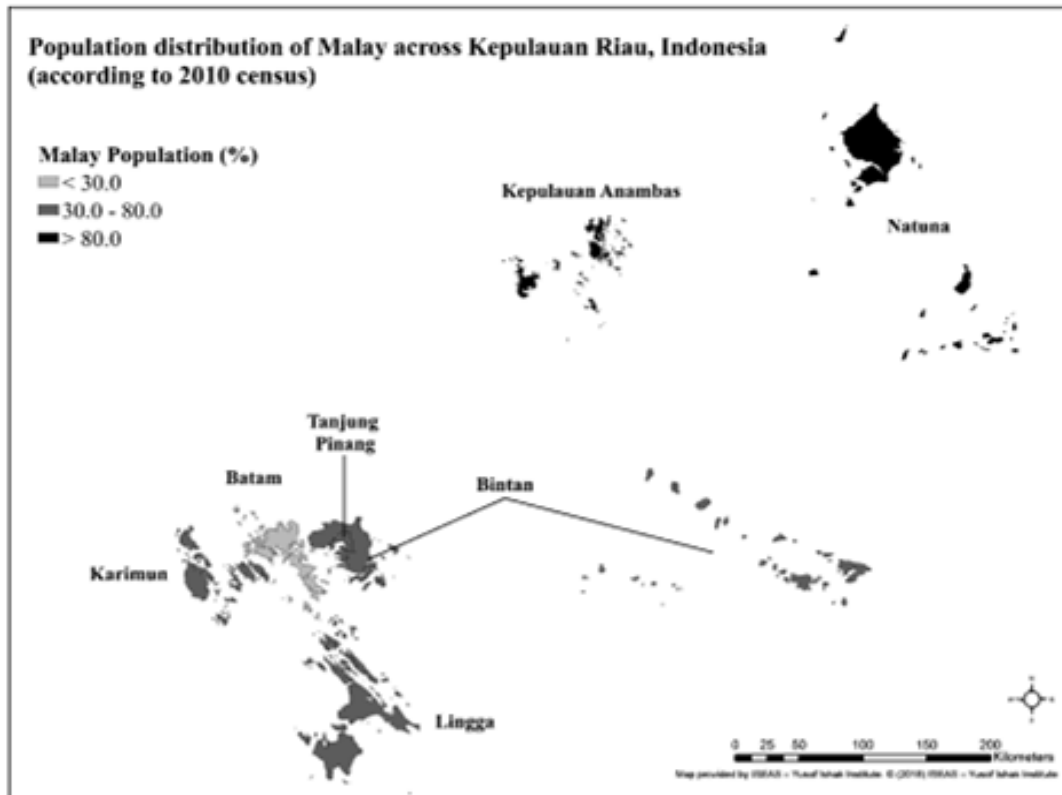


Figure 4-25. Relative concentration of Malay Population across Riau Islands (Source: Carruthers, 2018)

Looking closer at the Riau Islands' society, this discussion on socio-cultural development has highlighted the unevenness of development affecting the indigenous Malays. It is often the case that islanders fall victim to coloniality of globalisation and development (Lee et al., 2017; Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2007). The analysis above has taken the discussion further by using a historical approach and highlighting specific relations between the Riau Islands' geography and its influence on the marginalisation of small islands and the indigenous islanders. The findings show that islands' spatiality has a significant influence on marginalisation by challenging education and the transfer of skills and experience on disperse small islands. However, the more profound cause is how colonial and post-colonial governments have perceived islandness and conceptualised the islands circumscribing the traditional government to small island territory, and devoting the small islands as merely

hinterlands of the mainland and larger islands. As with the context of economy and social development, island geography has directly and indirectly influenced the marginalisation of Riau Islands' Malays.

4.5. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has focused on analysing how geographical aspects can influence island development paths and their central/peripheral qualities. In line with previous arguments that Islandness is not a determining factor, but contours and shapes conditions (Baldacchino, 2004), this chapter has elaborated how islandness has coincided with other geographical aspects (location, resource, society) and various economic, political and governance relations in conditioning central and peripheral experiences and perceptions. This chapter has demonstrated that in the discussion of small islands' peripherality, dissecting the observation at multiple contexts and scales provides a deeper, thorough and comprehensive understanding of the various perspectives on central/peripheral positions. Previous works have often taken extreme opposite sides, with some focusing on island-related peripherality, others on the islanders' view of their own world. Thus, the approach used in this chapter offers a new way of analysing islandness and peripherality; enabling a view of the different perspectives in a single case, understanding different sides of islandness (as a place and space) and different contexts of peripherality.

Regarding the economy, at a grassroots level islanders have strong connections to the sea – what (Hayward, 2012b) calls an “aquapelagic” society. The islands' spatiality and access to international trade has contributed to a heightened sense of economic centrality. In contrast, the islands' governments are far from being aquapelagic; the traditional fishery sector provides very little income for local governance. Meanwhile, for island governments, islands' spatiality

is considered a disadvantage for their efforts to diversify the economy; furthermore, outside the FTZs there are restrictions of border movements for production materials, making proximity to international shipping and Singapore pointless. Instead, island governments are supported by the islands' geography in other ways; oil and gas reserves in the seas around Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas District have provided revenue shares, while Batam, Bintan and Karimun Islands' proximity to Singapore has attracted the central government to develop FTZs. Hence, in the Riau Islands, we see prosperous fishing communities with most local governments having good income sources but being completely unrelated to the economic activities at the grassroots level.

In terms of social development, although the relations between islandness and peripherality seem straightforward, a closer analysis of the Riau Islands finds that the relations between the two are complex. Besides becoming a physical challenge for development, islandness often conflicts with the bureaucracy of development, as projects for small islands have low cost-benefit value and have often unpredictable project timelines due to weather. Without bureaucratic adjustments for small islands, solutions are often informal, reducing the quality of infrastructure and relying on local materials, causing abrasion and degrading island environments. This in turn makes islands need even more government support.

Finally, this chapter provides insights as to how Riau Islands' geography has contributed towards certain social and political peripheralities of the Malays. The belittlement of small islands by colonial and post-colonial governments has changed the islands' position from being a centre of the Malay world to the periphery and hinterland of the Riau mainland, Singapore and Malaysia. This has forced Riau Islands' elites to reproduce a Riau Islands' Malay identity to take back centrality. However, amid regaining political and economic centrality, the Malays have been gradually marginalised by immigrants in the modernising Riau Islands as

they lose land, leave their traditional livelihoods, yet fail to compete in new employments. The marginalisation of the Malays is a reminder of the potential of coloniality that comes with external intervention to de-peripheralise islands or create centrality in the islands (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2007; Nadarajah & Grydehøj, 2016).

Throughout the chapter, the findings show how the effects of islandness and island geography towards island development is often indirect. Islands' spatiality and other geographical attributes are perceived and conceptualised by those in power, who then decide to prioritise, de-prioritise, politically and administratively divide, control, or ignore small islands. As the notion of centrality and peripherality is a construct of comparison, islanders see themselves being "left behind" by others, be this the mainland or immigrants, hence they develop a sense of peripherality. The older generation's perception suggests that islanders themselves have lived on the islands for generations without having much conception of central-peripheral positions. As the Riau Islands is in transition between tradition and modernity, it is possible to observe and conclude that it is through the introduction of globalisation, capitalism, the development agenda, and governance autonomy that social, political and economic inequality of the small islands and islanders have become increasingly highlighted. Island governments turn towards the central government that has induced this peripheral condition in the first place, by belittling small islands yet imposing high standards for public service for local governments to fulfil. Following the debates on whether island governments should be given greater autonomy and resources, or whether the central government should have intervene more, the following chapters analyse other elements of the island assemblage.

CHAPTER 5. AUTONOMY AS A SOLUTION FOR PERIPHERALITY?

5.1. Overview

This thesis is written against a backdrop of debates surrounding how Indonesia should prioritise and govern its small islands to address their peripheral conditions, mainly regarding a lag in their development. The political debates are polarised between two extremes, focusing on whether small islands should be given special priorities with local governments given more autonomy, or whether intervention should be taken directly by central government. The conceptual framework of this thesis encompasses the relationships between island geography, governance relations and peripherality. The previous chapter elaborated on how the geography of Riau Islands conditioned the islands in various ways across different contexts and scales, but does so through its interactions between various economic, governance and political networks. The chapter demonstrated how the term peripherality is itself complex; there are a wide range of peripheralities and centralities that can be observed in the case studies discussed in this thesis. The previous chapter also provided a warning on how the peripherality of small islands is often shaped by those in power. As part of an effort to further understand the influences of governance on small islands' peripherality, this chapter focuses on the role of island government autonomy, including changes in central-local government arrangements and the role of government capacity in changing peripherality.

Autonomy is a term used very widely across academic disciplines. In general, it can be defined as “self-governance and power-sharing with the state. In the geographical imagination, it constitutes territorial control and governance over a bounded space demarcated by borders” (Naylor, 2017:25). Interestingly, there is a wide range of studies covering island autonomy. Hepburn (2012) has argued that islands have developed innovative forms of

autonomy arrangements; islands avoid being totally independent, but opt to have a combination of dependency and self-rule. She argues:

“This (islands’ choice of autonomy) has led to the creation of a plethora of terms to characterise the sub-state governance arrangement of islands, such as ‘autonomous province’ (Åland Islands, Finland), ‘associate state’ (Anguilla, UK), ‘overseas territory’ (British Virgin Islands), ‘special region’ (Sardinia, Italy), ‘commonwealth territory’ (Cocos Islands, Australia), ‘overseas department’ (Réunion, France), ‘federal province’ (Newfoundland, Canada) and ‘autonomous region’ (Azores Islands, Portugal)... [T]here is a need to explore why islands have so overwhelmingly sought to enhance their power, influence and capacity by developing distinct forms of asymmetrical autonomy rather than sovereign statehood”(Hepburn, 2012:118).

Islanders are aware of their disadvantages; being disconnected, small, and sometimes remote. Hence, islands are also aware that they cannot survive alone in a modern global economy. Baldacchino explains “islands, smaller islands in particular, must exhibit a generous degree of openness and integration with the outside world in order to survive” (Baldacchino, 2006:47). The so-called ‘MIRAB’⁹ economy is seen as a standard development strategy for peripheries around the world (Baldacchino, 2006b). Like islands elsewhere, Indonesia’s small islands have also been actively advocating their island needs in their demands for more autonomy and funding.

In the context of Indonesia, the term ‘local autonomy’ is also tied to the decentralisation turn in 1999, following a 30-year authoritarian regime. Experts predicted the ‘balkanisation’ of Indonesia – a process of political disintegration that could lead to a failed state (Kimura, 2013). To address this concern, the state moved from a highly *centralised* to a highly *decentralised* government structure. The state’s budget, authority over resources and political power was significantly decentralised to local governments. The state also encouraged new local governments to be formed and given autonomy to avoid clashes within existing local

⁹ Migration, Remittance, Aid, Bureaucracy; known in island studies to be the norm of small islands economy

government administrations – the Indonesian term of this proliferation is *pemekaran daerah* (regional blossoming). With the splitting up of territories, many regions moved up the scale of administrative territory – from sub-district to becoming a district and then up to a province. This rescaling and re-territorialisation has contributed to more spatially distributed political power, funding and development. However, it has also been well documented that Indonesia's decentralisation turn has created opportunities for the strengthening of local elites and local corruption (Aspinall, 2014; Basri & Siti Nabiha, 2014; Blane D Lewis & Kuan, 2010; McVey, 2003; Ostwald et al., 2016; Ramage, 2007). Thus, it is reasonable that some may be sceptical about providing more autonomy and resources for the local governments of small islands; after all, monitoring and auditing governments on small islands may be more challenging. Act 23/2014 is a result of the central government's mistrust towards local governments, which has transferred a number of district governments' authorities to be centralised at provincial level.

This chapter analyses how changing central-local government arrangements and the strengthening of local government capacity influences changes in small islands' peripherality. In a similar manner to the previous chapter, and to capture a comprehensive picture of changes in island peripherality, this chapter is comprised of three sections. The first section discusses the implications of district and provincial autonomy towards changes in political and cultural features, the second section discusses the implications related to social development, while the third section discusses the economic implications.

5.2. Restoring the political and cultural centrality of the Riau Islands

There are various reasons that contribute to the proliferation of local government in Indonesia; rescaling administrative territory for optimal federalism, political incentives for local elites and fiscal incentives for localities (Pierskalla, 2018). Many have dubbed the phenomena

as a post-Suharto “democracy euphoria” with every locality wanting its own power and resources; from 1999 to 2019 the number of district governments grew from 310 to 524, while provinces grew from 27 to 34 (Damanik, 2020). For the Riau Islands, the demand for its own provincial government stemmed from a shared feeling of being forgotten by the Riau mainland in terms of development and cultural heritage. The previous chapter explained how island spatiality has influenced the circumscription of small islands’ administrative territory, which led to the gradual peripheralisation of the Riau Islands. In turn, these boundaries also helped shape the new Riau Islands Province by providing a clear mainland-island geographical and administrative divide.

The role of the Riau Islands’ elites in Tanjungpinang was important to convince other island districts to form new provinces, mainstreaming a unified purpose and reproducing a new identity which was specifically tied to the islands – an important process to fuel the struggle to gain autonomy. The elites captured historical moments from a time when Lingga and Bintan Islands were the centre of the last Malay Sultanate to rule over the Riau Islands, the Riau mainland and the Malay Peninsula. The political campaign aimed to regain political centrality for the islands. A new identity was forged and mainstreamed to show the differences between mainland Malays and island Malays. This helped convince the central government to allow the formation of a new province in spirit to reduce social tension during the post-Suharto transition (Amri & Rianto, 2018). The mainland-island divide was further emphasised by opposing separatist movements that were emerging on the Riau mainland; the Riau Islands stated their loyalty to Indonesia in favour of more autonomy (Ardi, 2002). From a practical perspective, the Riau Islands also had a strong reason to have a provincial government centre on the islands, which was to enhance government coordination.

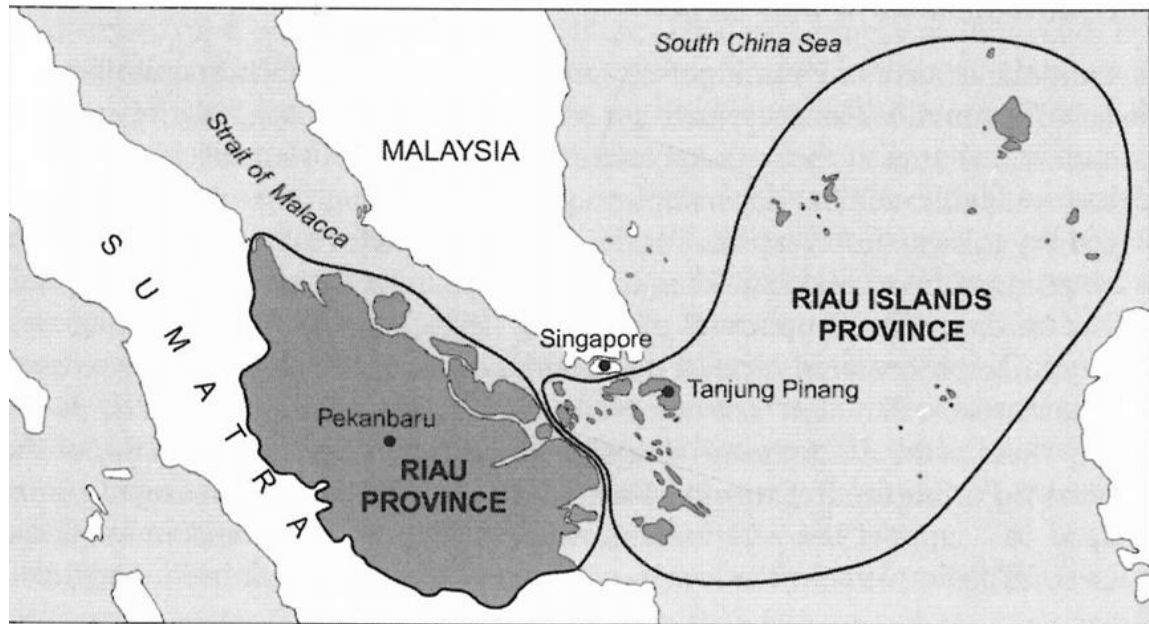


Figure 5-1. Riau Islands Province separation from Riau Province
(Source: Kimura, 2013)

While the Riau Islands' proposal seems straightforward and seems to make perfect sense, internally the reality was much more complex. It was only on the surface that the Riau Islands seemed to have perfect cultural, political, ideological and administrative unity. The Natuna district, for example, did not share the same sentiment of Malay unity, as they had their own distinct language, are much closer to trade with Borneo rather than Bintan, and have oil and gas resources. Hence, the Natuna district had no reason to join the new province. Similarly, the Batam district is mainly an urbanised island with a plural population and a strong independent economy; neither Batam or Natuna had strong incentives to join the new province. However, with the rest of the island districts opting to form the new province, it was geographically impossible for these two districts to remain under the rule of Riau Province while the surrounding islands were ruled by the new province. This is evidence of how the islands' geography had significant influence on the formation of the new province, as well as on the peripheralisation of the islands in the first place. While being administratively united in

an archipelago province, the following discussion will elaborate upon the various cultural and political implications of the Riau Islands gaining local autonomy.

5.2.1. Celebrating island cultural and political centrality (a bit too much)

After the establishment of the Riau Islands Province in 2002, the first thing that the island elites celebrated was the return of political and cultural centrality. The indigenous Riau Island Malays were prioritised to fill legislative and executive government positions that were previously dominated by people from Java Island, and regained their cultural importance that was taken away when the capital of Riau Province was moved to the mainland. Those actively involved in supporting the new province and districts were recruited as government staff, including some of the people interviewed in this research¹⁰. After the province was established, it became clear that the cultural aspects of the Riau Islands' narrative did not seem to matter. Even though islandness was the central narrative to demonstrate how the Riau Islands were different when compared to Riau mainland, after becoming a province, islandness seemed to fall by the wayside. The narrative of a distinct island Malay culture that was used as a supporting fact to gain provincial autonomy did not exist in practice; rather the *Lembaga Adat Melayu* (LAM) or Malay Cultural Body in Tanjungpinang emphasised that the Riau Islands was the place where Malay culture was refined, thus the province's motto "*Bunda Tanah Melayu*" or "Motherland of Malay". This fact proves that the islands' cultural distinctiveness suggested by elites was different to the perception of the islanders themselves.

With the variety of complex interests and intentions involved in the establishment of new governments, it is no surprise that efforts to de-peripheralise the islands also have mixed

¹⁰ Nepotism is still highly practised in Indonesia in the Reform Era, despite the anti-KKN (*Korupsi, Kolusi, Nepotisme* or Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism) movement that led to the fall of the dictator President Suharto.

results. Decentralisation has allowed for the strengthening of local elites, often dubbed by Indonesian authors as *raja kecil* or small kings (Basri & Siti Nabiha, 2014; Hidayat, 2017; Wilonoyudho, 2009), as local governments have replicated the feudal culture that was experienced during President Suharto's reign. New governments of the Riau Islands Province and its districts are no exception, and themselves were victim of common Indonesian decentralisation 'hiccups' where early funding was spent on government and political leaders' 'facilities', prestigious offices and monumental projects. Infrastructure in the province's capital Tanjungpinang has seen significant development, especially on Dompok Island, which is connected with a 1.5 km bridge to Bintan Island; a grand project by Indonesian standards. The island was developed for provincial government offices and involved the creation of several other facilities such as an international stadium, exclusive apartments, a central business district, a golf course, hotels and a grand mosque. Inspiration came from the government city of Putra Jaya, Malaysia. For the Riau Islands, the monumental development of its capital is an important statement of restoring political centrality of the Riau Islands.



Figure 5-2. Aerial view of part of the grand mosque on Dompok Island
(Source: Humaskepri, 2019)



Figure 5-3. Riau Islands Province's new government offices on Dompak Island
(Source: Hafzan, 2014)



Figure 5-4. Putra Jaya, the government centre of Malaysia – the inspiration for Dompak Island
(Source: Tripadvisor, 2020)

A senior province government staff member, who was involved in the development of Dompak Island, explained that Dompak Island was chosen not only because it was a relatively empty island but also because using an island as the capital gives character to the capital of an archipelago. The island was developed at such a scale because other functions were planned to generate income for the province. However, at the time of this research, the island was still very empty, with only several government offices sparsely located. This was due to a sharp decline of the province's governmental budget transferred by the central government since 2014. The central business district (CBD) has also not been developed due to low interest from investors. Although critics have highlighted that the development of Dompak Island was a waste of public funds, had too many political interests, and was accused of corruption throughout its development (Moser, 2014; Moser & Wilbur, 2018), the government staff members interviewed in this research generally defended the development, arguing it had an important purpose as a symbol of pride and may generate income for the province in the "long-run" (although, the investment return timeline keeps stretching).

As Malay culture is closely related with Islamic religion and culture, grand mosques were also built by new local governments to create a sense of pride amongst the people. The grand mosque of the Riau Islands Province was built on Dompak Island, together with the main province's government offices. Most new districts also have had their own central mosques built by the government. For most peripheral areas, these buildings are the biggest development projects the local communities have ever seen.



Figure 5-5. Central mosque of Natuna District
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

Adjacent to government buildings, cultural development was also prioritised by the new province to symbolise the restoration of the Malay culture to the islands. Cultural projects included a museum on Lingga Island and the redevelopment of Penyengat Island (important heritage sites of the Malay Sultanate), naming streets from Malay historical figures, in Malay writing with Arabic alphabets¹¹ and the preservation of indigenous Malay architecture. In 2014, the Malay Cultural Body (LAM) for Riau Islands Province was formed to promote Malay culture. The Riau Islands celebrated its highest cultural achievement with the first Malay international gathering “*Tamadun budaya Melayu antar bangsa*” or International Malay Cultural Gathering in Lingga Island in 2017, with people coming from Sumatra Island, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

As the Islamic religion is understood to be an inseparable part of Malayness, local governments also funded annual events called *Musabaqoh Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) – a

¹¹ This was considered culturally important, since in the centralistic Suharto Regime, the name of roads and the architectural character of government buildings were forcefully imported from Java Island.

competition of reciting the Quran. There are MTQs at district and provincial level, and each year each sub-district and district takes turn to host the event. Hosting an MTQ is like hosting an Olympics event – a new building called Astaka MTQ is built to host the events, and in return participants and local government staff workers from elsewhere will come and contribute to the local economy by staying in local hotels and dining in local restaurants. Ironically, another similarity with the Olympics is that after the event, the MTQ buildings are mostly left unused and local governments struggle to find funding to upgrade them into museums or other functional spaces.



Figure 5-6. Astaka MTQ building Batam
(Source: Batam News, 2019)

These new buildings are part of the political message to show that Riau Islands has regained political and cultural centrality. Outside the main urban areas of Batam and Tanjungpinang, these lavish government buildings and monuments are the most outstanding constructions in the islands. However, while the buildings deliver a political message, new government offices are especially troublesome in practice. Similar to the developments on

Dompak Island by the province government, district governments tend to be found on large plots of land located far from the main towns. Natuna District's government offices are built on top of a hill, Bintan District's on disputed land in the middle of a protected forest, Kepulauan Anambas District's on a remote part of the island, while Lingga District chose to build its government offices not on the most populated island but near the location of the past Lingga Sultanate on a different island. The argument of local governments is that these remote locations have cheaper land prices, hence they are able to build grander buildings; also, the new government-built area will attract economic development with a more spatially distributed development. The logic of the latter reason is debatable and has been proven to fail, however, a larger archipelago-related problem needs to be highlighted.

Local government offices have a function to serve the people within their jurisdiction, including those from the surrounding islands. With government offices located in remote places, government staff and citizens from other islands need to hire private transport to travel, which increases the cost of bureaucracy. Public transport is not yet available on most of the Riau Islands. At various occasions, public professionals such as teachers and nurses have complained to the researcher about having to travel to the government offices. Even the government staff themselves often complain about traveling to the office each day, as most still prefer to stay in the main town. This seems in line with the experiences of other islands where investment in infrastructure and buildings are made for the sake of development; while benefiting certain aspects it may have negative impacts on existing sustainable systems within the islands and archipelago (Grydehøj, 2014; Grydehøj & Hayward, 2014). Rather than being there to serve the people, these extravagant government buildings send a message that the people are there to serve the 'little kings' of the new government. The autonomy given to local governments has not changed the mindset of a centralistic government to a more locally-

oriented serving government, rather only moved a centralistic government down to the local level; this is clearly expressed and materialised through the governments' constructions. The following section provides more insights as to the immaterial political implications of the autonomy given to island governments in the Riau Islands.

5.2.2. New island politics: who decides?

In the establishment of Riau Islands Province, one of the reasons of separation from the Riau mainland was that the islands were marginalised in terms of decision making. Having been granted a provincial government, the people of Riau Islands Province expected to finally have control over their own development, with true representation for the people of the islands who have previously been marginalised. But who truly represents the people of the Riau Islands in making decisions? By observing the case study at different scales, the findings highlight the spatial unevenness of political influence within the islands; some respondents found the reality after autonomy disappointing.

The provincial parliament provided a platform for political contestation between representatives of district governments to steer provincial priorities towards the interests of each district. With representative arrangements based on the number of voters, political power is highly centralised in Batam and other urban areas. Batam has more than half the population of the Riau Islands, and together with the Free Trade Zones of Bintan and Karimun Islands make up 75% of the population. Most of the population are immigrants living in urban areas on the main islands that do not relate to the Malay cultural sentiments, nor have an archipelago vision to spread development to other islands. Because of the main islands' large population, they have the majority of representatives at the province's assembly and consequently have more say over what to do with the provincial budget, regulations and development priorities. They

can also divert development funds to their own districts. The Riau Islands Province’s Secretary of Development explained:

“Due to being from urban areas, politicians from the urban islands, especially Batam (District), are much more critical and dominate discussions and debates in the province assembly compared to politicians from smaller districts such as Natuna, Kepulauan Anambas and Lingga. Politicians from the smaller districts have fewer seats and are usually less educated so they don’t speak too much in forums. And of course, members from Batam will bring their own programmes forward as they are bringing their voters’ aspirations.” (P11, 2/82018)

Table 5-1. Island representatives in provincial legislative elections
(Source: *Keputusan KPU RI No. 273/PL.01.3-Kpt/06/KPU/IV/2018*, 2018)

Election Zone	Province elected representative
DP1: Tanjungpinang	5
DP2: Bintan and Lingga	6
DP 3: Karimun	6
DP 4: Batam A	10
DP 5: Batam B	10
DP 6: Batam C	5
DP 7: Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas	3

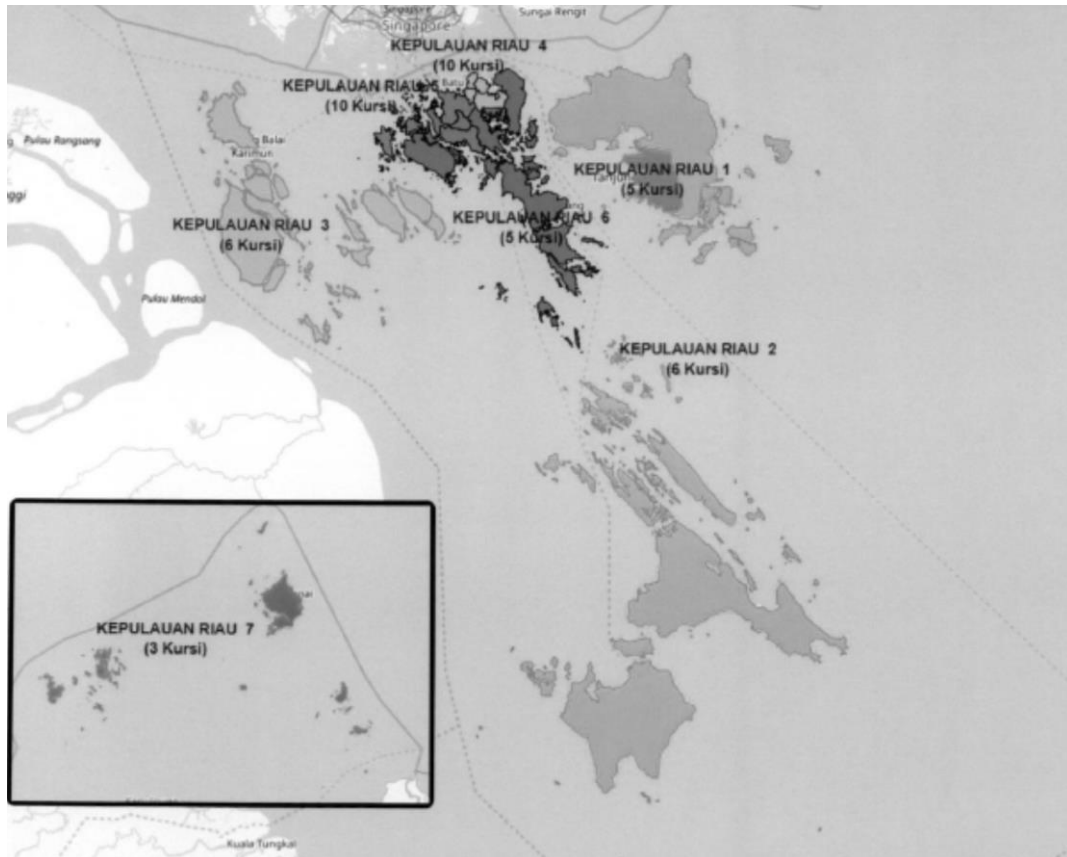


Figure 5-7. Spread of political representatives¹²
 (Source: *Keputusan KPU RI No. 273/PL.01.3-Kpt/06/KPU/IV/2018*, 2018)

This unequal political power balance between the central islands and the remote islands has implementations for development. Currently, there are major projects being developed on the central islands: the *Gurindam Dua Belas* reclamation and road construction along the coastal area of Tanjungpinang; a bridge between Batam and Bintan; and bridges on several islands in Karimun to prepare connections with Malaysia; and further development on Dompok Island, namely an international stadium built partially or fully with provincial budgets. In contrast, Lingga District’s Secretary of Development explained that:

“Despite Lingga having the least budget due to small population and no natural resources and having the most inhabited islands, the province government does not pay any extra attention to us. The province even took years to fix roads in Lingga, that is by regulation under the responsibility of the province. The head of district Alias Wello was so upset with the province

¹² The word *Kursi* in the map literally means seats; in this case the number of political representatives.

that he only sent the district secretary to the province development coordination (Musrenbang), that is usually attended by a representative from all departments of all districts.” (L10, 5/7/2018)

This sarcastic move was to show that Lingga believes it to be useless to attend development coordination when there is hardly any input for them. Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts, with only three representatives and a small population, receive no real benefit from the province government, but they can rely on their oil and gas revenue shares. Lingga District on the other hand, has no natural resources and finds itself as the forgotten islands of the province. The proliferation of local government has not changed the way the democratic mechanism works here; rather, it has down-scaled the political arena. This same system also applies to the district level where the less populated islands have fewer representatives: although they are sparser, each community might need its own needs catered to.

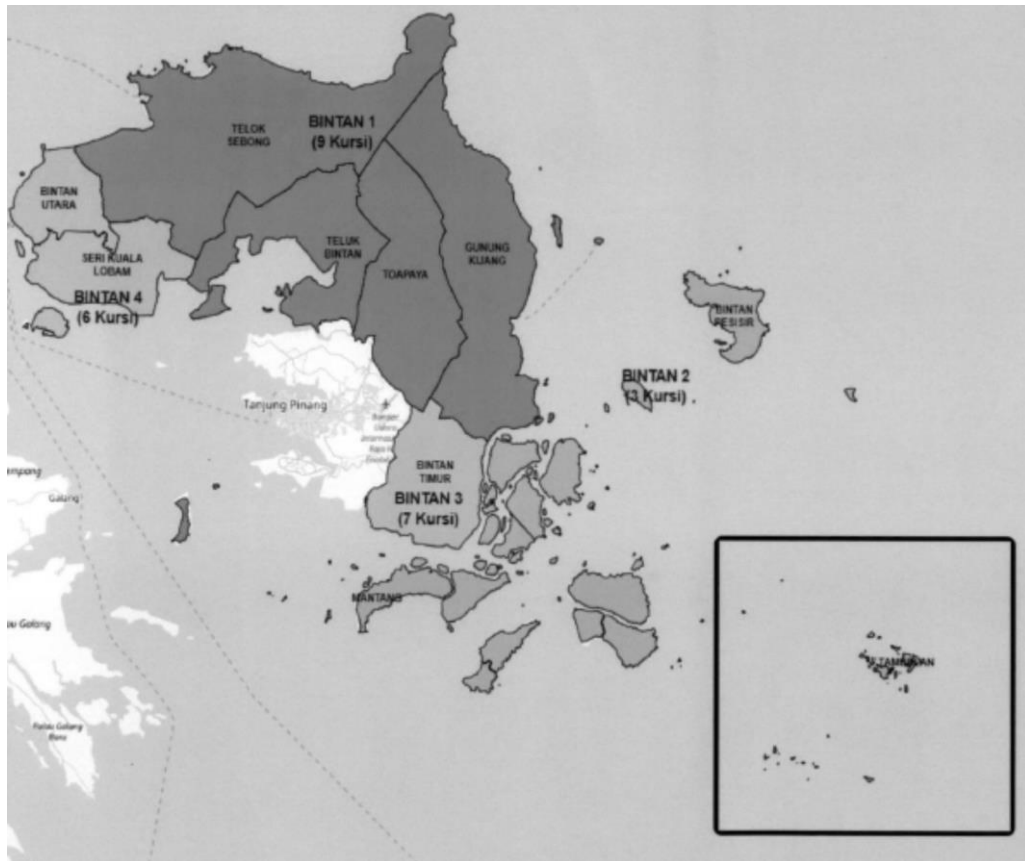


Figure 5-8. Spread of Bintan District's political representatives
(Source: *Keputusan KPU RI No. 273/PL.01.3-Kpt/06/KPU/IV/2018*, 2018)

The previous chapter explained how in technocratic development planning, small islands are systematically marginalised as they represent low cost-benefit variables. Development on small islands have higher costs yet fewer beneficiaries. The only variable that can help them is political prioritisation. However, if political prioritisation is determined by the number of political representatives, then without any intervention ensuring the representation of small islands and providing for the promotion of their needs, small islands will most possibly remain in the periphery. It is out of disparity that marginalised islands turn to the practice of redrawing territorial boundaries. Local governments can hope a higher administrative status will lead to the building of more public facilities. However, this is not a perfect solution; the political consequences of proliferation are often overlooked and the disappointing reality slowly unfolds. The possibility of creating new local government has created an insular mentality

which causes further fragmentation. Localities try to secure resources and government funding; this seems an ideal solution for peripheral areas, but it also provides the same opportunity for economically stronger areas to secure their wealth and refuse to share it with surrounding areas.

The establishment of the Riau Islands Province was intended to secure the wealth of Natuna and Batam Districts within the Riau Islands, rather than seeing it transferred to the Riau mainland, so it can be used to help spread development to other islands. But recently, discussions of autonomy are brought even further by Natuna and Batam Districts to secure their economic revenue within their own areas. Natuna District is proposing to become a new province to secure oil revenues rather than sharing them with Riau Islands Province. At the time of this research, this was a very hot topic among local government staff workers and elites. To achieve this, the proposal for Natuna Province was shaped around the narrative of the importance of coordination and the development of Natuna Islands as a valuable border territory in the South China Sea, guarding important national resources. Chapter 6 explains how the border territory status is actually despised by the Natuna people, but despite this, it becomes a strong narrative for the request of provincial autonomy. Similarly, Batam, Riau Islands' only metropolitan island, also has an intention to become a province to secure its resources and focus development in Batam. The proposal and justification for the new province also contradicts what has actually been experienced by Batam. Batam was a central government-led development and managed by Batam Industrial Development Authority (BIDA). In the decentralisation turn since 1999, Batam was not excluded, hence a local government structure was placed aside BIDA; this caused bureaucratic problems as there are two institutions managing Batam, and arguably has become a reason for the decline of foreign investment on the island. While becoming a province may lead to securing more resources, the political and bureaucratic complexity increases. With lessons from elsewhere in Indonesia, there is

reasonable speculation of the increase of corruption, which will harm investment even more. Both cases demonstrate how in practice, the notion of an island-mainland divide, developing the periphery or representing the voice of islanders, are merely justifications to down-scale political competition and to secure resources. Those with more resources have not been willing to share with the surrounding areas.

A similar pattern of how this political system is utilised can also be observed at a grassroots scale. The democratic system has mainly induced an insular mentality, the chance to gain more transfers from the central government while securing resources. A community leader in Pulau Tiga Barat, Natuna District explained that:

“Islanders usually choose a representative from their own island, so they have a better chance of receiving government projects. If not, the closest island is also an option, because for example, if a telecommunications tower or a school is built on a nearby island, we may still have benefits.” (NI3, 20/5/2018)

Consequently, the down-scaling of democratic systems has affected the social lives of islanders. The introduction of democratic mechanisms at the grassroots level has disrupted social life on island communities. People sit in coffee shops for hours discussing politics. A government staff member from Sedanau Island, Natuna district, said:

“I think democracy ruins our social unity, even election for the village chief makes division. There has recently been discussion that our island wants to become a sub-district administration (from village), so that more public facilities are made. But I strongly disagree, because then people will compete to fill in positions, and as new village units will be made, there will be competition too. Everyday people will only talk about politics, neighbours supporting different people will not talk to each other. I don’t think it’s good.” (NI2, 13/5/2018)

Besides the political islanding played by local governments, a disappointing practice of everyday politics can also be observed. The findings show political practices similar to what have been warned by the previous literature, mainly clientelism. The research can find further bad practices in other areas; for example, it allows for an easier practice of money politics or

vote buying, and consequently lowers the standard of politician capacity. It is easier for ‘*raja kecil*’ or ‘little kings’ to spot friends and opponents and, interestingly, use insular geography as a platform to exert power. The island spatiality provides agency to express power; local government staff workers who are considered disloyal can be transferred to isolated islands, those that have good relationships with the ruling mayor and legislative board members may be granted a position on the main islands and enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle. Hence, in the minds of local government staff, being sent to an isolated island is always somehow correlated with how the leader values their political views. This is similar to the use of islands in Japan in the past, where disobedience was punished with exile to a remote island (Suwa, 2012). A senior staff member in Bintan’s tourism department said:

“Every time we have an election, senior staffs like me are always nervous when we receive a telephone call. If the new head of district did not like us, we could get stripped off our structural position to go back to usual staff. There is a huge drop in wages and also there’s the shame of working aside those who were once our subordinates. For lower-level staff, there is always a possibility to be sent to a remote area... It’s impossible for government staff not to be caught up in politics. If we are passive, those who have better relations with the political leader will progress more, but it is also dangerous when we take the wrong side.” (B19, 28/7/2018)

Regarding elections, island districts have small populations dispersed over many islands; in the Riau Islands (excluding Batam) the population size ranges from around 40,000 – 225,000 spread over more than 1,000 islands. A political activist from Natuna District explained that on small dispersed islands the cost of vote buying is cheaper and is less monitored. Natuna’s District’s cultural leader expressed his views:

“I know all the local parliament members, they’re all idiots. I know a person whose every day activity used to be collecting crabs at night. I don’t know where he got the money (to run) for elections, but now he is a (parliament) member. How do you expect people like this to lead Natuna?... Political leaders aren’t even confident of themselves. If they have to go on a

business trip, the moment they arrive in Batam¹³, they take off and hide all political attributes. They're worried that someone will try to have a discussion on important issues and they can't reply." (NI6, 10/5/2018)

The findings above show the extent of unintended consequences of gaining more autonomy through proliferation. While the initial purpose of proliferation highlighted the marginalisation of the islands and aimed to strive for the islanders' political rights, the reality after autonomy was gained seems far from this purpose, as elites quickly took advantage. Local government funds were spent on lavish government buildings and government facilities, not considering the archipelago spatiality. This is yet another example of islands being governed by a handful of elites ignoring the importance of islandness (Stratford, 2016).

Gaining local autonomy has secured political representatives from the island districts and provinces, but the evidence above shows that the practice of autonomy has not truly fulfilled its purpose to deliver more political justice for the people of the archipelago. Proliferation has merely down-scaled the political contestation for more power between local governments and between islands. There also seems to be little control over bad political practices and effects on island social life. While in theory, providing more political autonomy seems to be an ideal solution for small islands, the findings prove that this is not a simple answer; it comes with externalities and unintended consequences. This chapter progresses by analysing how autonomy has changed the conditions of social development and the economy.

5.3. Autonomy changing peripheral conditions in social development

The bad practices of politics on the islands have a large impact on executive functions. The province's secretary of development explained that it takes up to one year after an election

¹³ Batam is the main transport hub in the Riau Islands

for the situation to stabilise. After elections, there are always those who claim misconduct during the election process, which sometimes includes protests from supporters. There are also politicians who get disqualified by the election committee. As political leaders are so occupied in debates over power and positions, they are inefficient when carrying out their main duties to make policies, pass local bills, agree to budget plans, etc.

However, despite the unideal political conditions, according to previous publications, the establishment of a new province has actually accelerated the reduction of poverty in the Riau Islands (Ilmma & Wai-Poi, 2014). In a recent publication, Amri and Rianto have argued that the development of Riau Islands Province has been even better than its ‘parent province’¹⁴ the Riau Mainland (Amri & Rianto, 2018) in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI), based on welfare, education and health. Figure 5-9 shows how the Human Development Index (HDI) in all districts has improved and is constantly increasing.

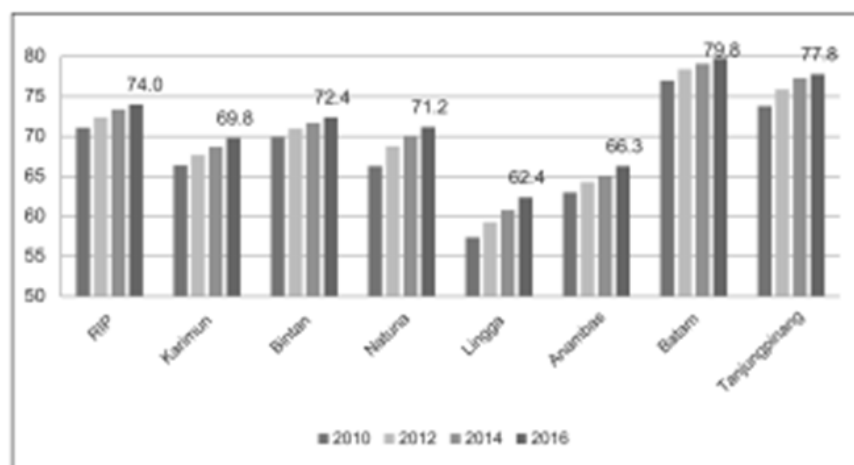


Figure 5-9. HDI of Riau Islands Province from 2010-2016
(Source: Amri & Rianto, 2018)

¹⁴ ‘Parent province’ is a term for the original province before being partially split into another province.

Reflecting on the statistics, the Riau Islands Province has largely made positive progress in increasing services. However, this does not say much about the full effects of autonomy. The increase in the HDI is mostly due to the change of central-local arrangements with the establishment of new districts and provinces; the central government transfers more funding, new facilities are being made and new staff are being recruited. The following section examines more closely at the practices of autonomy and self-governance and their impact on social development.

5.3.1. Limitations of autonomy in social development

Despite the positive growth of the Riau Islands, there are several issues relating to administration and bureaucracy that become barriers for the efficient use of autonomy. When a district or provincial government is established, localities are given a ‘franchise’ package including a list of government departments, legislative system, and an operational guide. In practice, the notion of autonomy itself does not refer to the complete freedom to determine a region’s own developmental choices; rather it is closely tied to the central government’s interests, agendas and regulations. A common Indonesian phrase that local governments use to describe this situation is that the central government has “released the head, but holds on to the tail” which expresses that freedom for local autonomy is still limited. For small islands, the autonomy given to local governments has not been sufficient to take control over development in ways that are considerate to islandness, or to be able to fully utilise resources in efforts to de-peripheralise small islands. Hence besides the islands’ spatiality and poor political practices negatively affecting social development, public administration has also become an barrier.

The first major constraint of autonomy is on budgeting; in terms of government structure, there are 53 departments at the provincial level and around 30 departments at the district level.

Local governments spend around 35% of their budgets on local government staff. While increasing employment can arguably contribute to economic growth, and is seen as an accepted part of the so-called MIRAB political economy of small islands (Bertram & Watters, 1986; Bertram, 2006; Kakazu, 2018), when such arrangements are compulsory it becomes more of a burden. A large bureaucratic organisation is often viewed as inefficient in discussions of small island states, and there is a general view among experts that small populations should ideally have government departments that are small and flexible (Chittoo, 2011; Ismail, 2019; UNODC, 2016). There are also budget constraints; although local governments have autonomy to decide priorities of development, they have a limited proportion of their budget to spend based on local decisions. A senior officer interviewed in the Bintan District explained:

“Local government funding is instantly divided for education (20%), health (10%) and village funds (10%) which are a requirement from central government, local expenditures include annual increase in staff wage (2.5%), local government staff (35%). Less than 30% of the budget is to be spread to 36 local government departments such as transport, fishery, tourism, rescue & emergency, public works, agriculture, etc. Health and education funds secured include human resource wages. Hence major development projects and investments, especially in infrastructure, will be almost impossible to make without external support.” (B16, 25/6/2018)

The public administration for small islands is surprisingly discussed very little in the academic literature; there are several literatures on public administration for small states and small island states, but these focus on ‘smallness’ without any consideration of ‘islandness’ (Chittoo, 2011). Likewise, there is also little discussion of public administration for local governments of small islands. Hence, the findings here provide valuable insights into the subject, especially for Indonesia.

Budget challenges also come in the form of national programmes that burden local governments. Many state-led developments, especially regarding construction, require local governments to contribute to the projects either by acquiring the land needed or contributing

financially to at least 10% of the project's overall budget. This may or may not be in line with the priorities of local governments themselves. If it is in line with local priorities and aspirations, central government-led development can be of great benefit. However, if the programme or project is not particularly aligned with local government priorities, the contribution becomes an extra burden and reduces the amount of the budget that can be used by local governments. Since 2014, there has been a major shift to strengthen the centrality of the state in terms of control. With the President Regulation No.12/2017 on Mentoring and Monitoring Local Governance, the central government has emphasised enforcing sanctions on local governments that do not cooperate or underperform in supporting national strategic programmes. The large organisational structure of local governments and limited development funds results in the distribution of local government funds in small amounts across all the departments. Local government officials in non-prioritised departments often say the budget is just enough to pay for staff with very few programmes.

Another constraint for small islands in using their autonomy to support social development relates with bureaucratic rigidity. The previous chapter provided some examples of how island spatiality often conflicts with government systems. Such issues have constantly been communicated with various central-government staff by each local government department, but there has not yet been any satisfying result. The informalisation of bureaucracy to fulfil administrative checklists justifies the practices of nepotism and, in turn, threatens the quality of the work. This is especially evident in the construction process; in general, the preparation of governmental construction tenders begins at the beginning of the year, construction starts in the second semester, with the cut-off for government project administration in December. Meanwhile, the Riau Islands experiences the worst weather during the second semester, especially from around September when the wind speed increases and the

waves are high. An official at Bintan District's Department of Public Works explained how contractors are selected:

“The administration process is not ideal, but it's what we have to work with, we are used to this. The tender process has all been set. We tell our ‘partners’ to bring the material to the island a few months before the tender, when the weather is good, then after the tender, they can work straight away. So, there is no reason for delay because of the weather.” (B04, 24/5/2018)

Despite experiencing these conditions for years, there has never been focused coordination between central and local governments regarding the subject of adjusting bureaucracy for small islands. The main advocacy for small island governments has mainly been focused on requesting more autonomy and funding to support development. This has increasingly become a central topic of local government forums since the changes introduced by the Local Government Act 23/2014. The new policy is despised by district governments across Indonesia as it shifts the authority over natural resources from a district level to the provincial level. This move was made due to the high degree of corruption and misuse of power over resources (mining, forestry, fishery) at the district level. With this, other functions were also moved from up from district to the provincial level (including certain functions in education, health, and energy), for the sake of better central government control and coordination. An interviewee from the Ministry of Internal Affairs argued “It is easier for the central government to control 34 provinces than to monitor more than 500 districts.” Local governments believe that their autonomy has been stripped away; the Head of Mantang Sub-district, in Bintan District, argued:

“The state has lost its spirit of local autonomy. If they (the central government) are worried about corruption, that's reasonable, but there are other ways to deal with the problem instead of taking back control.” (B02, 25/1/2018)

It is not just the loss of autonomy and potential revenue from resources that infuriates local governments, but also their distrust that central government will provide better solutions for the islands' development. The Kepulauan Anambas District's Secretary of Planning Department argued:

“Decentralisation should increase the local government responsibilities, not take it away. We used to be able to build our own electricity and telecommunication poles, now we can't. The central government should always calculate the benefits of development in small islands. With that mindset, until two days before the end of the world, there will be no development here. On the other hand, we are pressured because our local revenue contributes to less than 5% of our annual budget, ideally it should be at least 20%. When we request more funding, they (central government staff) ask why did we request for our own government, if we were not ready to financially support it.” (A05, 24/7/2018)

These findings are evidence of how little attention has been paid to small islands by the central government. From bureaucracy to changes in local government arrangements, small island governments have been left to adapt. Hence, even though local governments have been given autonomy, there are still limitations in how this autonomy can be used to reverse or shift the peripherality of the small islands. Given the limitations of autonomy, the following sections further investigate how proliferation and autonomy has contributed to changes in the small islands' peripherality in terms of social development.

5.3.2. Proliferation and the role of local governments in social development

As could have been expected, the administrative proliferation of local governments has increased the number of health facilities and schools, as the national standard of public infrastructure is tied to administrative territories. A public hospital was built for the new province in the capital Tanjungpinang in 2012, as well as in each new district. According to national regulations, it is the central government's priority to ensure every sub-district has at least one community health clinic (*Regulation No.75/2014: Community Health Centre, 2014*)

and at least one high school (*Regulation No.27/2007: Standards for Education Facilities*, 2007). As new districts and provincial governments received more funding and autonomy, local governments also developed other infrastructures, namely roads, ports, jetties and floating pontoons for small islands. Many government staff officials expressed their satisfaction regarding the development of the Riau Islands after the establishment of new districts and the province. A senior staff member at the Riau Islands Province Planning Department explained:

“As a university student, I was involved in the efforts to make Riau Islands a new province, I joined political movements. We (Riau Islands) were really marginalised and there was a wide development gap between mainland and island. But now, as you can see, we have good infrastructure and facilities. You can ask anyone who has been here long enough, and they will say it is much, much better now.” (P04, 23/4/2018)

Table 5-2. Health and education facilities in Riau Islands Province
(Source: Riau Islands Province statistics, 2016)

Districts	No. of sub-districts	Population 2017	No. of inhabited islands	No. of clinics	Public hospital	Public Junior high school	Public High school
Tanjungpinang	4	264,273	4	7	3	24	24
Batam	12	1,283,196	43	19	3	124	97
Bintan	10	151,248	39	15	2	29	18
Karimun	12	240,170	57	11	1	48	25
Natuna	15	79,058	27	14	2	21	19
Kepulauan Anambas	10	44,186	26	7	2	33	8
Lingga	7	101,159	84	8	2	36	16

With the exception of the Kepulauan Anambas District (the youngest district) almost all facilities exceed the minimum requirement of facilities per administrative level. The departments of health and education explained that there still needs to be more facilities considering the spread of the island population, but this is still a positive development. While the proliferation process has contributed towards the increase of public facilities, local governments and their newly found autonomy also had important roles to facilitate this progress. Local governments make proposals, compete with each other and lobby important

people in the capital to attract central government funds and public investment in a certain district.

The head of the Lingga District at the time of research, Alias Welo, was a very popular leader. Alias used his political networks in Jakarta to help prioritise the link between Lingga District to Jambi Province, and between Lingga Island to Singkep Islands (two main islands of the Lingga District) to increase mobility and trade. Besides enabling the movement of goods and residents of the Lingga District, the ships have contributed to an increase in tourists coming from Jambi Province. An official from the Lingga District's Department of Trade explained that there are other projects that involve active lobbying, namely the airport development on Singkep Island and the development of main ports. In terms of health facilities, Bintan District's Health Department Secretary explained that, even when development in certain areas is prioritised by the central government, there needs to be a bottom-up proposal from local government. However, sometimes local governments make proposals for projects inappropriate for local needs, merely for the sake of the project, taking advantage of the opportunity of the list of projects offered by central government for development. Examples include the construction of a new health facility on Tambelan Island, a remote island of Bintan District located near the state borders. Development in border areas is prioritised by the central government, however Bintan District's Health Department Secretary explained:

“I don't actually agree with that new facility, but the head of department and the head of district wanted to show that they can facilitate development. The one we had was already good enough and located close to the main settlement. The new health clinic looks really good but is located far from the main settlement. Another downside is that now we have to build the road going to the facility and also the electricity line, which we have to build with our own budget, because the central government funding only covers the building. What we needed more were medical equipment and human resources.” (B15, 4/6/2018)

Local elites often think that any development is better than nothing, as they scramble for any opportunity to attract central government funding. The result of such attitudes can be seen in the many new (and empty) markets found across the Riau Islands. Local governments tried their luck to tap into funding from the Ministry of Trade’s programme for supporting the grassroots economy; this included the construction of community markets. A government staff worker from Kelarik Village in Natuna District explained:

“I don’t know why the (district) government built that (market). There are two main reasons it’s not in use now. First, as you can see, the market is not near the village settlement; it’s quite a distance to walk and there are no asphalt roads yet. They just built that there because the land was quite cheap. And the second reason is because our people are not used to trade in markets, people here either sell in front of their own house or go around the villages. Maybe markets can work in Java Island (Indonesia’s main island), but not here.” (N14, 11/5/2018)



Figure 5-10. An empty newly constructed community market in Kelarik Village
(Source: Author’s documentation, 2018)

Since been given autonomy, local governments have also used their budgets to provide facilities and subsidies to support the social developments most needed by small islands. This

would not have been available before governments were given such autonomy and funds. The Kepulauan Anambas District subsidised commercial airlines and ferries to connect the district with the provincial capital. The Bintan District provides free inter-island transportation for school children and teachers. They also provide free accommodation near health facilities on the main islands for patients and their families from other islands. The Riau Islands Province government, through its province-owned company (BUMD), has invested in a port and shipping business. The district bought a 158-seat passenger ship in 2017 to serve the route between Tanjungpinang and the Lingga District. It is highly appreciated by the people of Lingga, as before, there were only small passenger ships (15-40 passengers) serving the Tanjungpinang-Lingga route. An informant from Lingga District, who travels frequently to Tanjungpinang for work, explained:

“There were only smaller ships, it was very scary during the East Winds season. The waves were high; it’s as if the ship was about to be swallowed. There was an incident when I was travelling from Lingga to Tanjungpinang, the ship ran out of fuel in the middle of the sea. We could see a black cloud in front heading towards us. If we were caught in the storm without being able to manoeuvre, we would sink for sure. Praise God, the captain was able to call for help and another ship came with fuel. I’m glad that the route is now served by a bigger ship.” (LI9, 14/7/2018)

From the discussions above, it is clear that the proliferation of local government structures and the autonomy given to localities have mostly contributed to positive changes in social development, despite some hiccups relating to poor planning. Unfortunately, the shortcomings of the political side of autonomy also have some negative influences on efforts to deliver public services. As discussed in the previous sub-chapter, elites use the islands’ spatiality to ensure loyalty of their bureaucracies by transferring local government officials to remote islands if they are considered disloyal or in opposition to their own aims. This has negatively affected the process of posting local government staff members in remote areas for

justified reasons, especially for the health and education services. When an official is posted to the outer islands, they ask what they have done wrong and may believe it is because the district leader does not like them. If the official or their spouses have special relations with the current leading parties or district leaders, they may use their political networks to avoid being posted to the outer islands. A senior staff member in the Bintan health department explained:

“When local leaders did not have much power as they do now, the process of locating people was straight forward; if there was a position that needed to be filled somewhere, we just get someone randomly to fill in the position. But now everything is political; if the staff has a good connection, they ask legislative board members or the district leader to get them out of their duties in outer islands. There are many staff that have their own connections that may pressure our department, it makes the process much more complicated now.”
(B15, 4/6/2018)

One worker from the Lingga District’s Department of Education explained how politicised education programmes could be. The interviewee admitted that maybe only around 50% of the proposed budget is genuinely in line with departmental needs, while the rest is used for political interests to support certain electorate areas or to benefit the businesses of certain elites in procurement. Sure enough, due to this practice, several people have been investigated and arrested for corruption: the head of Natuna District’s Education Department in 2013; the head of Kepulauan Anambas District’s Health Department in 2016; and several staff from Lingga District’s Health Department in 2017, to name a few. The long list of corruption cases in executive and legislative institutions is evidence of how autonomy can also create opportunities for some elites to take advantage of social development programmes.

Beyond the discussion of how autonomy can influence social development, there are features that autonomy cannot, or has not yet, changed. One of the most important aspects that is so-far untouched is the general condition of inter-island transport. Local governments have helped provide main connections between districts, but in general island transport is still served

by informal networks of expensive wooden boats that come with a high travel risk (see Chapter 4). Despite being a key aspect that affects the entire process of social development, there has been little intervention by local governments. None of the districts involved in this research have even conducted any studies on island transport. An official from Bintan District's Transportation department explained:

“There has not been any sea transport study or planning yet. Usually, the head of district just comes up with an idea to subsidise a boat or build a wharf somewhere. Transport department connects with lots of other affairs; health, education, tourism, and trade. Despite our central role, transportation issue is still not a priority. This year we only received Rp.7 Billion (£400,000) including wages! If you compare us with other departments such as housing department, we have less than 1% of their budget. So, you can tell how ‘important’ we are, can’t you?” (B05, 25/5/2018)

Another reason is related to the central government's lack of consideration towards small islands; templates of regulation, prioritised targets, and operating systems within the departments of transportation are the same between the mainland and small islands. An official from Bintan District's Department of Transportation explained that the main targets based on ministry policies focus on land transport, which exhausts the local governments' human and financial resources. Sometimes assigned tasks do not make sense for small islands; an example provided was the compulsory establishment of a vehicle pollution testing facility, followed by the testing of all vehicles (cars and motorcycles) in the district. This is highly problematic for small islands, as vehicles from surrounding islands will need to be transported to the mainland to be tested. Without discrediting the importance of land transportation, such compulsory targets undermine more pressing issues of inter-island transport. The best efforts that local governments have made in this matter have been socialising safety procedures, providing weather forecasts, and occasionally handing out life jackets. Challenges in managing inter-island transport for district governments are exacerbated by Local Autonomy Act 23/2014,

which removed district governmental authority over the sea (previously the districts had authority over the sea 0-4 miles from shore). An official within the Natuna District's Department of Fishery explained:

“Since the new autonomy arrangement, the moment we step our foot in the sea, we are out of our jurisdiction! The sea between our islands, no matter how close they are, is now out of our hands! Everything related to the sea such as conservation and monitoring of corals and sea grass are officially province affairs now. But in reality, when anything happens at sea, if someone sees illegal activities such as fish bombing, they report to *us*. We don't have the formal authority to do anything, nor the funds to monitor and protect. On the other hand, we can't reject people's reports and tell them to go to the province government. So, we report to the province, and do what we can informally. The province said they will make an office or send some personnel here, but there is nothing. Another thing is, if the central government has a programme related to the sea or implemented in the sea, they have to go to the province first and then coordinate with us. Too much bureaucracy. Before, the central government came straight here and coordinated with us.” (N01, 3/5/2018)

In summary, the process of government proliferation and the decentralisation of autonomy gained by island governments has created opportunities for the enhancement of social development to change the peripheral conditions of small islands. However, the process is negatively affected by political interests; elites have exhausted much of their resources on political projects, decreasing resources made available for social development. The political misconduct of elites also contributes to inefficient service delivery. Despite the autonomy provided, local governments are constrained by funding, various regulations and the need to comply with national priorities, to the extent that more pressing island issues are left unattended. After more than 15 years of autonomy and improvising the implementation of service delivery on small islands, it seems that local governments have not produced or even proposed a standardised small island version of social development or bureaucratic flexibility in the spirit of embracing their islandness. Similarly, in regards to the economic aspects described in the

following section, local autonomy has not been able to fully utilise economic potential due to political and bureaucratic constraints.

5.4. Autonomy: a chance to change the course of economic peripherality?

By establishing new local governments, the islands succeeded in down-sizing their territories and securing resources within the smaller area. Natuna and Kepulauan Districts secured oil and gas revenues for the district-level government, while the Riau Islands Province secured revenue shares (from natural resources and urban areas) within the islands, rather than allowing them to be transferred to the mainland. The implications of securing these economic resources are more complex than they may seem, as shall be discussed in the following section – securing these resources does not guarantee the communities in the smallest and most remote islands an increased income and higher levels of wellbeing.

5.4.1. Proliferation and securing economic resources

The efforts made in securing economic resources for islands have not been as smooth as was imagined by the Riau Islands' elites during the push for autonomy. There have been various unexpected external and internal challenges in securing and maintaining a constant flow of funding for local governments. The Riau Islands Province and its districts have benefitted mainly from central government funding and revenue sharing from Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas' oil and gas reserves. Before proliferation, as a district-level government, the Riau Islands only received a 6% share of oil revenue and 12% of gas revenue for the entire Riau Islands¹⁵, while 3 to 6% is transferred to the provincial government on the Riau mainland. When Natuna District was established in 1999, 6% of oil revenues and 12% of gas revenues became

¹⁵ District 6.2% of oil and 12.2% of gas revenue, province receives 3% of oil and 6% of gas revenues (Act 33/2004)

secured for the new district. Following 2002, when the Riau Islands became a province, 3% of oil revenues and 6% of gas revenues were secured for the Riau Islands. Provincial taxes, including vehicle taxes, mainly from Batam Island, were also secured for the Riau Islands. However, local governments learned a hard lesson about the volatility of revenue from mining when world prices plummeted in 2014. Table 5-3 shows how tax and non-tax transfers from the central government began a sharp decline in 2014. This trend is also seen in the decline of the Natuna District's budget (see Figure 5-11). The sudden decline in oil and gas revenues was not anticipated by any level of local governments, and many programmes had to be cancelled or postponed.

Table 5-3. Central government transfers to Riau Islands Province (RPJMD 2016-2020)
(in Rp. Million)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Central government transfers	1,246.9	1,594,446.9	1,753,710.5	1,644,959.8	1,246,121.8	1,464,904.6
Tax/Non tax sharing	829,255.4	1,110,423.5	1,060,969.8	925,272.5	507,640.9	521,709
General Allocation Fund	395,745.5	460,857.8	656,067.6	698,009.3	695,943.7	866,810.7
Special Allocation Fund	21,903.2	23,165.6	36,672.9	41,678	42,537.2	76,384.9

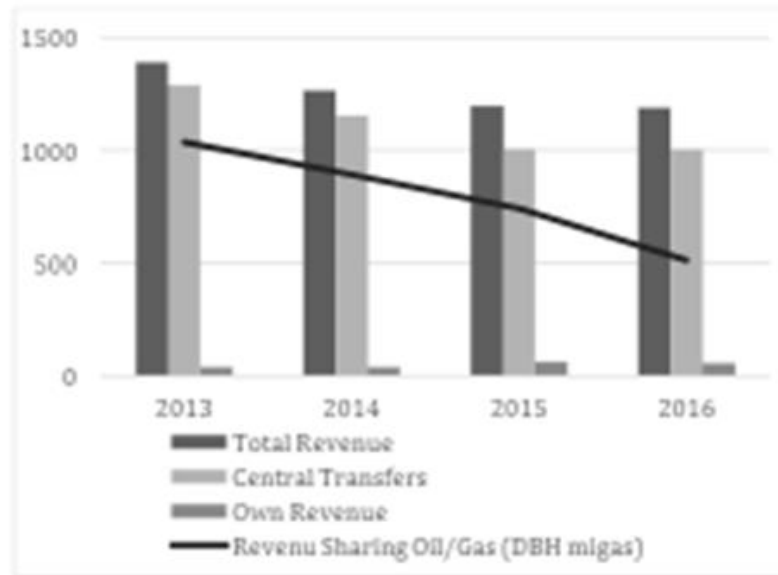


Figure 5-11. Natuna District's budget 2013-2016 (in million IDR) (Source: Simandjuntak, 2017)

Access to other economic resources were associated with more internal challenges. Various government arrangements and issues with informality became barriers for island governments to fully utilise their geographic advantages for economic growth. While being Indonesia's largest archipelago province, revenue from marine and fishery contributes less than 5% of the province's overall income. After the change of local government arrangements with the implementation of Act 23/2014, district governments no longer have any authority over marine and fishery, while the province has rights over the management and resource of the sea from 0 to 12 miles around each island. However, most fish are actually caught in deep waters more than 12 miles from the shore, where the retribution is collected by the central government. The national accumulation of fishery retribution taken by the central government is distributed equally to all provinces. Hence, even though by administration the Riau Islands consists of more than 90% sea, their actual jurisdiction of the sea is miniscule compared to their administrative sea area – and so is the benefit the district receives from the sea. Despite the large numbers of

fish caught in the Riau Islands' seas, the province receives the same share of revenue as any other province.

While the provincial government believes this arrangement to be unfair, it also has its own issues. Even within their 12-mile jurisdiction, the province has been unable to collect retribution from the fishery industry to its full potential. At the time of research, four years after the recentralisation of marine affairs from district to province, the regulation to take retribution from fish collectors and fishing ships was still being drafted. Riau Islands' busy shipping routes have also been of little benefit to the province. According to the Riau Islands Province's Department of Marine and Fishery, until now ship anchor taxes have been collected by the Ministry of Transport. When the Riau Islands was governed under Riau Province (centred on the mainland), the province had no particular interest in marine taxes, hence the dues were taken over by the Ministry of Transport. This continues today, even after the establishment of Riau Islands Province. An official within the Riau Islands Province's Department of Marine and Fishery explained:

“The *Syahbandar* (port masters) do not want to recognise the marine authority of local government even though the Act 23/2014 clearly states we have authority. We don't get one single Rupiah from ship taxes. This should be discussed amongst ministries, but here we are in the middle without real solutions from either ministry.” (P02, 19/7/2018)

At the time of writing, the province's Department of Marine and Fisheries is still constantly meeting and negotiating with the ministry to give the province their marine rights based on the 2014 Autonomy Act. Besides issues with the ministry, the Batam Industrial Development Authority (BIDA)¹⁶ also overlaps with the province's marine jurisdiction around Batam Island. Thus, Riau Islands' strategic position as a busy shipping node has not become a

¹⁶ BIDA was set up in 1971 by the central government and is still directly controlled by the state to manage the Batam Free Trade Zone (FTZ). Everything in the Batam FTZ is owned by the BIDA. When Batam's population were also granted autonomous government, some of the authorities overlapped with the BIDA.

source of income for the Riau Islands Province. Figure 5-12 shows where ships are anchored within 12 miles which, according to Act 23/2014, should be within the jurisdiction of the Riau Islands Province, but in reality are paying tax to either the BIDA or the Ministry of Transport.

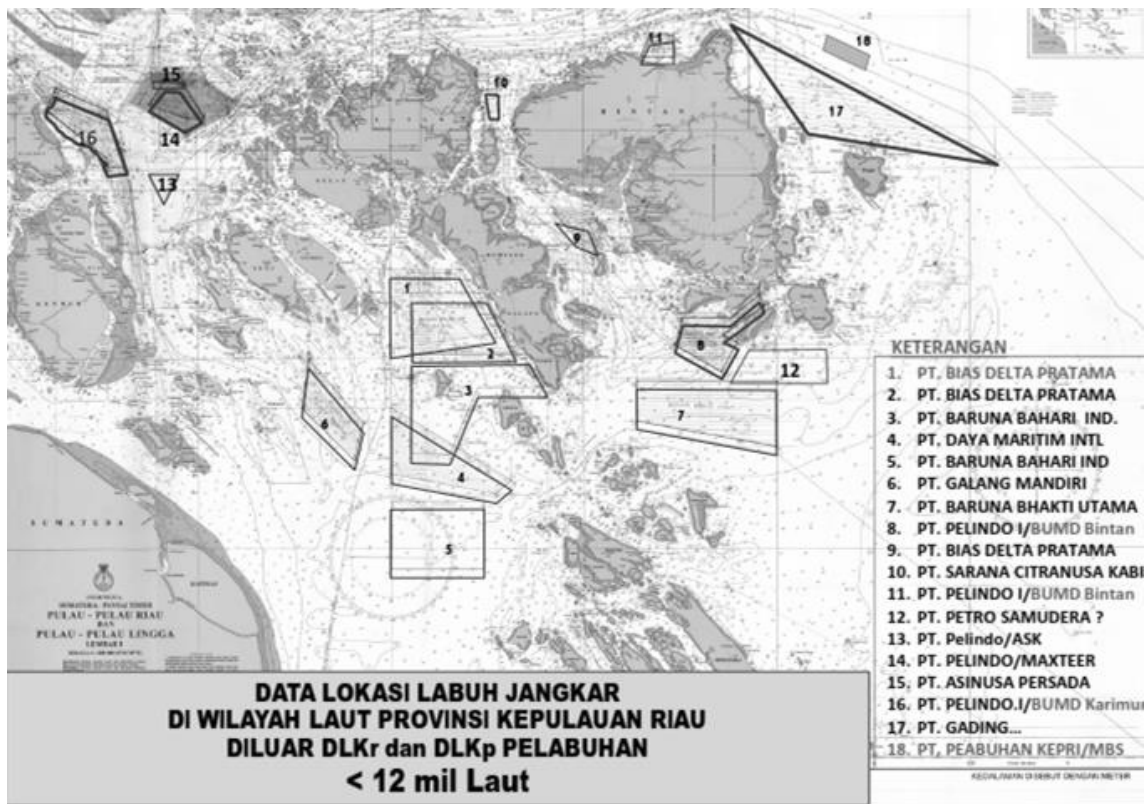


Figure 5-12. Ship anchors around the FTZs within 12 miles from shore
(Source: Presentation from Riau Islands Province Department of Fishery, 2018)

Looking closer into resource management, it is also evident that local governments themselves have internal issues. Even by down-scaling administration and bringing governance closer to the people, district and provincial governments have failed to deal with the informality of resource extraction and the loss of potential income. In fishery, various government and non-government informants pointed out how the fish trade is often conducted at sea to avoid taxes, sometimes through the bribing of sea patrol officers. Similar illegal activities can be seen in mining; Bintan and Singkep islands have largely been exploited by colonial companies and later

by state-owned companies. Bintan Island was mined for bauxite by PT Antam until 2009, and Singkep Island for lead by PT Timah until 1992. Since then, small scale and often illegal mining operations have continued to be carried out. Illegal bauxite mining activities are still being carried out sporadically, especially in the Bintan and Lingga districts on numerous small islands. A local newspaper even dubbed Bintan as the haven of illegal mining (Antaraneews.com, 2013; Bisnis.com, 2019; Tribun News, 2018). Ironically, Tanjungpinang, the capital of Riau Islands Province, is located on Bintan Island, and even on Dompok Island (the newly developed government city) illegal mining is still conducted, right under the nose of the provincial government (Hazliansyah, 2013). An informant in the Lingga District explained that lands previously owned by large companies were not properly handed over to the local governments and were only administered by village offices. Village officers then rented out these lands for small-scale mining. This of course involves many actors making the activities highly visible and well known and everyone involved understands that it is just a matter of profit distribution. This shows how poorly autonomy has been utilised by local governments to secure resources for the development of the islands. While proliferation has provided opportunities for island governments to increase their regional income, the various issues outlined above have become obstructions for the Riau Islands to reach its full economic potential.

5.4.2. Autonomy and a chance to develop the island economies

Decentralisation and local autonomy do not necessarily lead to financial independence (Faguet, 2015). This is even more true in the context of small islands' autonomy, where it has been widely discussed that islands have a strong dependency that accompanies their autonomy (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006; Bertram, 2006; Grydehøj, 2011; Karlsson, 2009). Most of the discussions here focus on how local governments have actively and passively used their

administrative status and autonomy to attract central government resources and to develop their island economies. Included in the findings are externalities or the unforeseen consequences of economic development.

The presence of new local governments has made an important contribution to the local economy, especially for the districts of small populations. The highest economic effects are felt on the main island where most government offices are located and where their staff resides. As shown in

Table 5-4 below the local government is responsible for 5 to 10% of the district's employment. The data does not include state institutions that also open new offices in the district and provincial administrations as new governments are established. These institutions include the police, military, judicial system and other institutions under various ministries. This in turn creates other supporting businesses and employment, such as those working with industries covering office supplies, vehicle and electronics supply and maintenance, and the personal needs of the newly recruited staff if they migrated from elsewhere. The head of the Kepulauan Anambas District Hotel Association stated that around 90% of hotel guests in the Kepulauan Anambas District are related to government affairs; either those coming for monitoring, audit, or even consultants working on government matters.

Table 5-4. Number of local government staff compared to population
(Source: compiled from 2017 district and province statistics)

Province/ District	Number of local government staff	Non-permanent government staff	Population	Percentage involved directly in local government
Riau Islands Province*	2,714	760	204,735	4%
Tanjungpinang	3 744	1,000		
Bintan	3,710	1,123	147,212	3.2%
Batam	5,654	6,300	1,236,399	1%
Karimun	3,667	3,000	227,277	2.9%

Lingga	2,925	2,200	88,971	5.7%
Natuna	3,080	1,810	75,282	6.5%
Kepulauan Anambas	1,672	2,198	40,921	9.5%

*The province government office and Tanjungpinang district office are both in Tanjungpinang

This reliance on a government-based economy in the early years after proliferation was also felt at the grassroots level. In the case of the Lingga District, after the major tin mines were closed in 1992, the economy went into depression and many workers went back to traditional fishing and plantation industries, until the creation of the new district government in 2003 helped revive the local economy. With the creation of the Kepulauan Anambas District, there was a sudden economic boost; the islanders argue that you could sell anything with your eyes closed and earn a good income. A fish trader in Tarempa (the capital of Kepulauan Anambas District) described:

“After Kepulauan Anambas gained its district autonomy, local government staff had high income and the economy was good. I usually collect lobsters from my fishermen and send them to Tanjungpinang or Hong Kong, but this was not possible at the time (after district autonomy) because it was all bought by local people, especially government staff. And they did not even bother to bargain, they took it at the highest price.” (A02, 23/7/2018)

The salaries of staff within the district and provincial government depend on income sourced from central government general transfers (DAU), revenue sharing from resource extraction, local income (tax, retribution, etc.), and from administering projects and tenders. At the dawn of the new governance arrangement with new districts and the new province, many government projects were launched and revenues from oil and gas grew and were shared more equitably. Hence, government staff received a generous salary and in turn boosted the local economy through higher levels of consumption. Moonlighting is also common practice; people working for the government often have side businesses outside their daily jobs. In the Bintan District, a senior staff worker in the fishery department has his own fishery business on the Tambelan Islands and has a tourism business on Bintan Island. In the Kepulauan Anambas

District, the head of the Tourism Department owns his own resort. In the Natuna District, senior government officials have been known to buy and develop property in strategic areas. The economic growth due to these activities are indirect results of government proliferation.

This economic centrality attracted those from outside the islands, including returning islanders who came back to work in their homeland. A cultural leader and elder in Natuna described this with an Indonesian proverb: “*ada gula ada semut*” literally translated as when there is sugar, there are ants. Unfortunately, not all those who arrived were welcomed; the previous chapter explained how local Malays are being dominated by immigrants. However, the elder’s deepest regret was he did not predict that just after Natuna was announced as a new district government, in the following few days ships of alcohol and prostitutes from Pontianak, West Borneo came to take part in the informal economy. This was a very big issue for Malays, as Malay culture and the Islamic religion are tied, and both have negative views of alcohol and prostitution.

After more than 15 years of the establishment of Riau Islands Province, the central government revisits and scrutinises the efficiency of local governments. Many new local government authorities formed after 1999 are considered to be underperforming by the central government (Noor, 2017). The 1999 decentralisation-turn was purely a political move; at the time the technical side of governance was less of a priority (Kimura, 2013). But now that the state is politically stabilised, local governments are being urged to improve their performance. With limited budgets, local governments use their autonomy and networks to lobby and send proposals to the ministries and private companies (mostly banks and oil companies) for aid to support fishery, tourism and agriculture. At the time of this study’s fieldwork in 2018, Bintan, Batam and Karimun Districts have taken advantage of the opportunity to propose special

economic zones, while others have made various efforts to attract central government support to increase local government revenues.

During the fieldwork, the Kepulauan Anambas District held a tourism promotion event in Padang Melang Beach on Siantan Island. The local government took advantage of the sudden popularity of Kepulauan Anambas' underwater landscape made viral by independent diving websites. The event was supported by the central government and the oil and gas company that operated in Kepulauan Anambas. Yachts traveling from Singapore were invited to harbour and enjoy the event. However, at the time of this research the district government still had no plans ready to monetise and gain revenue from such events. The initial purpose was to introduce the Kepulauan Anambas and let local islanders and investors make use of the opportunity, but the event still brought some fresh money to the island. With an event this big, almost all local government officials were ordered to travel to Siantan Island and participate in the event. All guest houses and hotels were immediately at capacity, motorcycles were rented out, and local restaurants became busy. Although admitting that the tourism facilities in Kepulauan Anambas were not yet sufficient to support, the head of Kepulauan Anambas District's Tourism Department said the event was a good start to focus on tourism.



Figure 5-13. Entrance of Padang Melang Beach Festival in Kepulauan Anambas
(Source: Authors' documentation, 2018)

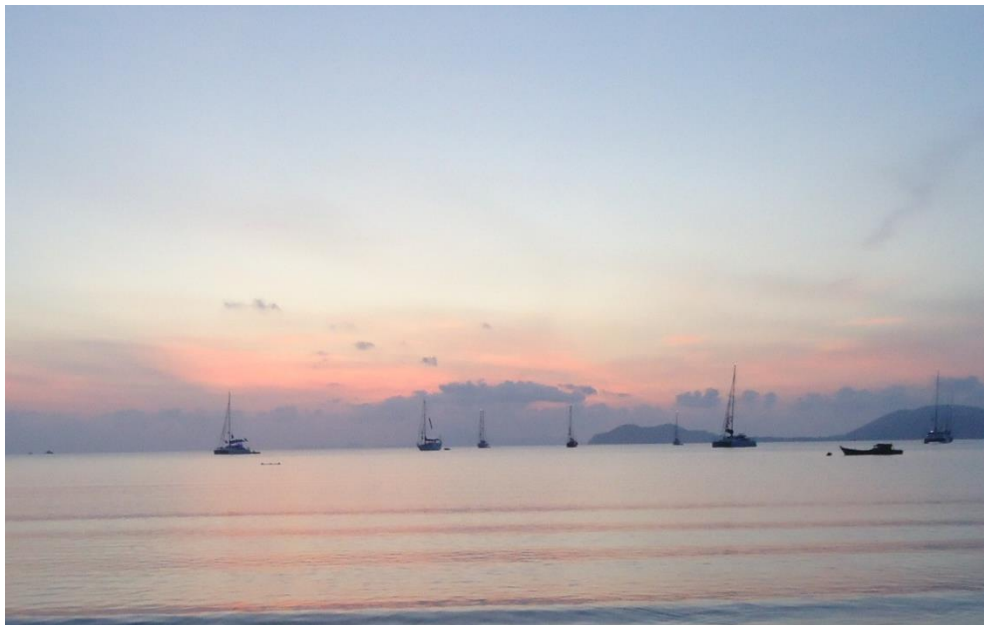


Figure 5-14. Several yachts seen from shore in the Padang Melang Beach Festival
(Source: Authors' documentation, 2018)

Similar to the efforts outlined above, Bintan District has also been supporting its tourism sector. The difference is that Bintan is more fortunate due to the fact that the exclusive resorts that have already been built in Lagoi Resort are in the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) area, developed by the central government. Tourism contributes to 60% of Bintan District's local income, which comes from hotel and restaurant retribution. In 2018, Bintan's resorts attracted 400,000 international tourists, yet Bintan District's Department of Tourism explained that the Ministry of Tourism has increased the target of international tourism in Bintan to 500,000. In terms of the economy, such targets will certainly increase the revenue for Bintan District. However, this target has not considered the capacity of local governments to manage and handle tourism growth. Even at this stage there are unresolved issues; outside the Lagoi resort areas, resort areas have expanded to Trikora, Bintan's eastern beaches, without sufficient planning. According to the Department of Tourism, they have not yet thought about water, waste, transport or the islands' capacity to handle tourism. An informant working in Bintan District's Planning Department explained that beaches have been sold to investors and have been exclusively gated. Many resorts along Trikora Beach do not fulfil local government planning regulations, but have been built and are still operating nonetheless. He said:

“Our local regulations prohibit building permanent walls along the beach and building any permanent buildings 100 meters from the beach. But the reality is so many resorts do. Our politicians and head of departments usually have a “share” in the business. There is sometimes even dispute between departments; at one time the Department of Environment objected to the Department of Planning about a resort that had just been given permission. It went on for quite a long time, but the Department of Planning got its way. Here (in Bintan), you have to be a real idealist if you want to do things right as a local government staff. Most find it too much effort, so many things are swept under the carpet. Politicians and the head of district can easily move around staff in different departments, once they are moved, they will be too occupied with their new position.” (B11, 25/6/2018)

Amongst all the districts in the Riau Islands, the Lingga District has been the most active in its efforts to attract central government funding and development programmes. This is no surprise, as the district has no natural resources to rely on, nor does it have any industrial or urban areas that can be used as an economic centre. Unlike other districts in the Riau Islands Province that receive prioritised development due to their border status, the Lingga District does not fall into this category. This makes the Lingga District the most marginalised in terms of central government support. The Lingga District is no longer in the category of least developed region, and hence no longer benefits from additional support from central government. Many local government officials despise the Lingga District's "achievements", as island communities are used to using discourses of underdevelopment as a means to access external funds (Grydehøj & Hayward, 2014). An interviewee from the Secretariat of Development argued:

“The previous Bupati (Head of District) was proud to announce that Lingga district has been lifted from the “least developed areas” category. He should not have been so eager for such awards and prestige, because we used to be given grants and priority in development, now we are hardly given anything by the central government. On the other hand, we do not have much economic potential here, so we are trapped in the middle.” (L10, 5/7/2018)

In contrast, the current Head of District Alias Wello is very popular. He has been praised for his efforts to attract central government funding and support, including programmes from the Ministry of Agriculture relating to food security for border areas. Although not located in a border area, Wello convinced the ministry that Lingga Island was perfect for the programme. The island has good water supply and sufficient land for agriculture, especially rice. It is also close enough to Batam, Bintan and Karimun to distribute agricultural products to the most populated border islands. The funding included expenses for building irrigation, roads and agricultural-related machines, manure, pesticide, etc. He also managed to promote Bakung

Island to be used as an ideal place for imported cattle quarantine for testing before being distributed across Indonesia. Alias Wello has also taken advantage of Lingga District's coconut products by securing funding from the Ministry of Industry to develop the coconut industry. Although the Lingga District itself is not one of the main coconut producers, he managed to attract investors and the central government to build a coconut processing industrial centre on Singkep Island. However, at the time of the research, all these state-led developments in the Lingga District are either just beginning or have just completed the construction phase. It is not yet known how these developments will affect the economy.



Figure 5-15. Staff from the Department of Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture sampling the harvest of the new rice field in Lingga District
(Source: Authors' documentation, 2018)

While the financial effects of proliferation can be quantified based on central government transfers, the influence of autonomy itself is less obvious. The qualitative data suggests that there are at least economic benefits for the local economy, from construction to the operation of state-led or local government-led economic development. The research also

identifies institutional challenges and negative social and environmental externalities in pushing economic development on small islands. Relating to the wider island economy discussion, Indonesia has yet to define what an island economy should look like for local governments like the Riau Islands. Islands' geographical challenges have been widely accepted as a basis for governments to provide more support and sometimes more autonomy; such as the EU island regions and Japan's RIDA (Remote Island Development Act). Yet, in the Indonesian case, small island governments have been given the same targets as other areas, with the same proportion of resources.

Facing these conditions, the messy efforts of local governments to increase their economies can be seen as expected outcomes, both in the wider context of decentralisation in developing countries and in the context of island survival strategies accomplished through both formal and informal paths. There is much room for improvement for the island governments themselves, but many authors have argued that creating so-called development targets for small islands without considering islandness may be harmful for islanders and island environments (Grydehøj, 2017; Hayward, 2018; Nadarajah & Grydehøj, 2016; Royle, 2001; Stratford, 2008). Despite the various challenges of island autonomy in the Riau Islands, the findings of this study show that there are a wide range of positive contributions associated with proliferation and local autonomy towards changing the peripherality of small islands. For local governments, this is sufficient to become enough justification for the request of a special kind of autonomy, especially for small islands.

5.5. Towards Small Islands' Autonomy?

The island-related issues discussed in this chapter are not new, and have long been a concern of island governments. However, the progress made in discussions and negotiations on

autonomy arrangements for small islands has been slow. Indonesia's small islands are similar to other islands around the world; they are known to be creative and crafty in negotiating autonomy (Baldacchino, 2010). The Riau Islands, together with other archipelago provinces, formed a cooperation body of archipelago provinces, just three years after the Riau Islands' establishment, on August 10th 2005 in Ambon. The first meeting discussed well-known issues of insular development and a commitment to advocate the needs of the islands to central government; this was later to be known as the Ambon Declaration. Although having had numerous objections by central government politicians towards the term 'archipelago provinces' and the proposed maritime territory arrangement, archipelago provinces have slowly gained recognition. With consistent efforts in lobbying the central government, the Archipelago Province Association succeeded to gain formal acknowledgement from the state in Act 23/2014. Ironically this is the same act that took away the maritime rights of district governments, undermining islandness at a small scale. In 2018, another archipelago province conference was held, with an agreement to keep pushing the central government to follow up Act 23/2014 and make more detailed practical policies that can create immediate effects for island governments.

The acknowledgement of island provinces in the new autonomy act has legitimised archipelago provinces as a special category of governance based on their island characteristics. It has strengthened their idea of having a special type of autonomy in which islandness and aquapelagic thinking (the importance of islands' relation with the sea (Hayward, 2012a)) should shape their jurisdiction. Even though the Ministry of Finance has reformulated the calculation for general allocation funds (DAU) for island governments, increasing their DAU with an average of 5.2% for island provinces and 9.15% for island districts (Ministry of Finance, 2018), this is still not considered to be enough. The central government has not acknowledged local

governments' fundamental ideas of fully incorporating the sea, and autonomy over the sea is considered to be an integral feature of an archipelago government. Having responsibility for just 12 miles of sea around each island does not sit well with archipelago provinces. Especially the Riau Islands, where even their 12-mile jurisdiction around each island has been taken over by other government institutions. This is arguably what led the archipelago provinces to request the province's maritime jurisdiction delineated 12 miles from the *outer* islands instead of around each island. This was inspired by the archipelago state territory, where archipelago states' territory was marked by their outer islands, thus down-sizing this to archipelago local governments seemed fair. This will not only support development of the small isolated islands by offering more shares of the maritime resources, but also the island identity of the people and government of island areas.

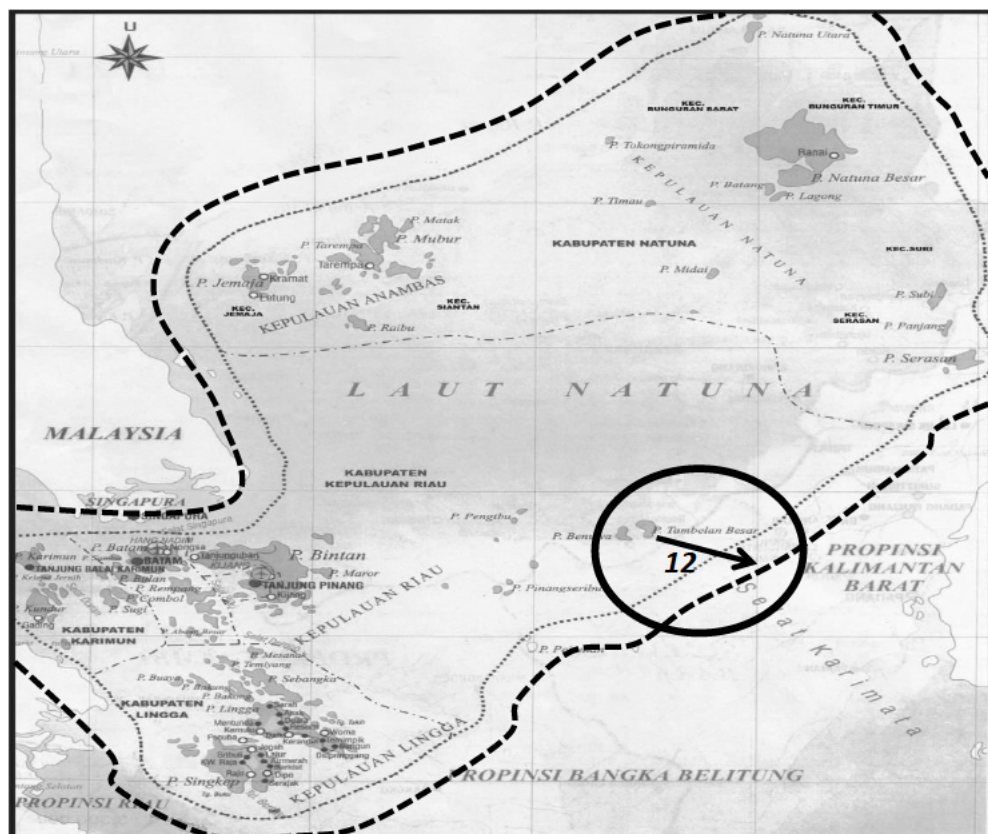


Figure 16. Marine territory request from Riau Islands
(Source: Presentation of Archipelago Province Association, 2018)

Although there are countless accounts of local elites misusing power and resources when regional movements for more autonomy and resources for islands are discussed, it is not always based on self-interest per se. It is often also due to spatial inequality and the systematic marginalisation of small islands. Small islands find themselves having targets and expectations imposed on them in terms of service delivery and economic growth, without considering their geographical context with their island-specific challenges. On the other hand, islands are not assisted by the central government, whilst they are given the exact same funding shares based on variables such as population and land area, without any consideration given to the financial implications of islands being surrounded by large areas of seas. Not recognising the materiality of the sea as a means to connect islanders, deliver public services and as a source of archipelago pride, is an undermining of spatial justice. It is based on an overwhelming experience of systematic marginalisation of island governments that they find receiving equal autonomy is just not good enough.

5.6. Chapter conclusion

This thesis is written against the backdrop of Indonesia's discussions on the prioritisation of smaller islands over other peripheral areas, and whether providing more autonomy or more central government intervention would be best for the small islands. As part of the larger analytical framework encompassing the relations between islandness, governance and peripherality, this chapter has focused on how changes in central-local government arrangements and local government capacity can influence small islands' peripherality, using the case study of Riau Islands Province. In general, the findings show how the autonomy gained through the establishment of local governments positively contributed towards statistical

variables of development. However, by cutting across different contexts and scales, the findings show the complex implications of autonomy.

This chapter began by discussing the political and cultural implications of government proliferation and local autonomy. While local autonomy is celebrated across many local governments, it seems to be celebrated more by the Riau Islands Province because it fulfils their political quest to *bring back* centrality to the islands that was taken away when Indonesia moved the capital of Riau to the mainland. This has been the justification of excessive spending on lavish political ‘monuments’ of government offices and cultural buildings. The Riau Islands Province developed a new Malay archipelago identity and used the motto ‘Motherland of Malay’ for the new province to highlight its distinctiveness with the Riau Mainland, as well as to promote the unity of the islands. However, after being granted autonomy, rather than focusing on island issues, leaders and politicians focused their efforts on accumulating more power and resources. Rather than building upon their political ideals of an archipelago assemblage, local politics have created political ‘islands’ of islands, with each trying to secure more resources and power. The findings also show that the democratic system has shaped the polarisation of political power in Batam, the most plural and urbanised population, whose interests do not resonate with narratives of islandness nor Malayness. Internally, decentralised autonomy has strengthened ‘little kings’ – local elites that infiltrate and dominate legislative and executive government bodies. Down-scaling politics has also created micro-political contestations and disrupted social life on islands.

With the political conditions outlined above, local governments have tried hard to deliver social development to enhance the islanders’ quality of living. Proliferation – the establishment of new local governments – has had a direct effect on the increase of public facilities due to the re-arrangement of administrative boundaries. In theory, autonomy provides

increased manoeuvrability for local governments to further develop public services on different islands, but in practice local governments face administrative challenges that limit their autonomy. Local government organisational and budgetary structures can follow rigid top-down templates, as is the case with many bureaucratic systems. These mainland-based systems disrupt island governments' efforts to deliver public services, and are evidence of how little the central government has acknowledged islandness as an important factor in island governance. While the central government has continuously increased the standards of public services, it has not provided the extra resources needed for island governments, hence local governments are urged to creatively gain the resources they need.

The implication of government proliferation and autonomy for the economy has been well celebrated by the islands and is fairly successful. The islands have secured several tax revenues at district and provincial levels, although some need further coordination with other institutions. In line with the previous literature on island economies and Indonesian local governments (Blunt et al., 2012; Faguet, 2014; Martinez-Vasquez, 2011; Prinsen & Blaise, 2017) local governments in the Riau Islands are highly reliant on central government funding. The direct economic effect of government proliferation was an increase of the regional economy due to local spending of the new governments. Due to the geographic constraints on economic development, local governments tend to find ways to attract government funding by tapping into programmes of various ministries. Unfortunately, because local governments so desperately try to attract central government funding, they sometimes take any opportunity they can without thinking through what the plans might entail, and often find themselves unable to deal with social and environmental externalities of economic development.

The establishment of new local governments and the gaining of autonomy has shifted various aspects of island peripherality. At a regional level, the findings show mainly positive

results; the islands have gained political autonomy, they have more resources, more public facilities and score statistically higher on the Human Development Index (HDI) than before. Despite these achievements, the ‘essence’ of island governance seems missing. Rigid bureaucracy and mainland-based systems imposed on small islands do not acknowledge the importance of islandness as a defining variable, which undermines the autonomy of island governance. Island governments themselves seem to overlook the importance of islandness-fine tuning in everyday governance, and choose to focus on using islandness as a narrative to obtain more resources. Resources are important factors in efforts to de-peripheralise islands, but as has been demonstrated in the discussions above, using resources for development without careful considerations of islandness and islanders could become a problem. After all, those governing the islands (who may not even be from the islands) may not always have benevolent intentions to govern or have the capacity to govern (Nadarajah & Grydehøj, 2016). With the political implications of autonomy, it is reasonable to cast some doubt on how island governance would unfold if local governments were given more resources and autonomy. On the other hand, can central government intervention in efforts to de-peripheralise islands be more appropriate? This will be continued to be discussed in the next empirical chapter.

CHAPTER 6. . EXAMINING LOCAL IMPLICATIONS OF STATE INTERESTS IN SMALL ISLANDS

6.1. Overview

While proposing the importance of islandness as an ‘active ingredient’ in shaping island conditions (Grydehøj, 2018), the previous chapters have analysed how the centrality and peripherality of islands are dependent on geographical factors (size, resources, distance from a metropole) and governance relations. The previous chapters have also demonstrated that, by acknowledging the complexity of peripherality following the suggestion of Syrett (2014), and in dissecting the case study across different contexts and scales, one can observe multiple overlapping central and peripheral positions. Chapter 4 focused on how islandness, along with Riau Islands’ geographical characteristics, can interact with social, economic and political networks to influence the emergence of new centralities and peripheralities. Chapter 5 examined how changes in central-local government arrangements have supported the development of new centralities as well as new forms of peripheralities in the Riau Islands. Subsequently, this last empirical chapter discusses another part of governance, which is the intervention of what Warrington & Milne (2018) calls ‘imperial connections’ – relation with external and more powerful political actors that have influence over island development. In this context, the most influential so-called imperial power is the central government, hence this chapter focuses on the local implications of the central government’s interests and interventions in small islands, and the Riau Islands’ response to this intervention.

Relating back to the backdrop of this thesis, part of the ongoing debate on the management of small islands is in efforts to de-peripheralise small islands, should island governments be given more autonomy, or should there be more intervention from central

government. The previous chapter provided evidence that autonomy contributes to the positive development of islands and introduces new social and economic peripheralities. Subsequently, this chapter examines the implications of central government interventions that have been conducted in small islands to shed light on the positive and negative implications that may unfold in efforts to de-peripheralise small islands. As islandness has not been the main basis of state-led development and targeted programmes on small islands, it is important to learn from previous central government interventions on small islands in general to understand the potential benefits and obstacles associated with state interventions, and to examine how these interventions can work *for* the islands. Again, as has been conducted in chapter 5, throughout this chapter different contexts and scales will be analysed to understand changes in peripheralities. Previous and current state interventions in the Riau Islands relate to the islands' peripheral position, either in terms of state borders (peripheral regions) or as peripheral areas in terms of rurality and detachment from the mainland. Regarding their purpose, state interventions can be grouped into strategic development (for state's interest), or to benevolently increase the well-being of those in the periphery. Based on this main classification, this chapter is comprised of two main parts; the first part discusses development *in* the peripheries, the second examines development *for* the peripheries.

6.2. The state's interests in the Riau Islands

The development of peripheral islands or small islands in general is ideally limited by the general policy on small islands. Act 27/2007 on coastal areas and small islands regulates the functions of small islands (islands less than 2,000km²) as spaces for the conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems and indigenous fishery. Activities that are allowed are those relating to eco-tourism, agriculture, environmental research, and other non-environment-

altering activities, whereas mining and industries are generally prohibited. In general, small islands have already been designated their peripheral role by the state for environmental preservation, *unless* by the approval of the central government. As shall be discussed below, the central government has various interests in small islands, especially in the Riau Islands, which sometimes discard the islands' function to preserve island ecosystems and indigeneity, and even leads to the creation of new socio-economic peripheralities.

This section discusses how the central government uses its peripheral islands; the definition of 'peripheral' in this context includes areas at the edge or border of the country and also those that are 'outside the centre'. Indonesia has always considered its border areas as important lines of defence; the 'Mandala' defence concept sees the political centre of the state to be ideally geographically positioned in the centre, surrounded by protective barriers. The closer an external force is to the centre, the greater the threat (Laksmiana, 2011). Hence, guarding the borders has always been the state's top priority to secure the centre. This also means that anything that may disrupt the centre needs to be located as far away as possible, i.e., in or near the peripheries. However, in terms of economic development, the state's main aim has been to create more economic centres across the archipelago, especially in the peripheries, to decrease the reliance on Java, Indonesia's central island. This has been the main focus of Indonesia following the decentralisation-turn in 1999, with the state moving from a centralistic government to a decentralised government, not only decentralising political autonomy and resources but also state investments, to showcase the state's presence across the archipelago. Since President Jokowi came to office, these efforts have been more publicised, and the term '*pinggiran*' (literally meaning periphery) is present in many programmes and policies, with the overarching motto of the government "*membangun Indonesia dari pinggiran*" translated as "developing Indonesia from the periphery". This also relates to the importance of border areas;

President Jokowi emphasised the need to appreciate the importance of border areas by not only developing military bases, but also trying to develop the economy as much as possible. A new narrative was publicised; that border areas are Indonesia's 'front gate' and are a representation of the country.

The Riau Islands' strategic position in the peripheries overlaps with their geographic uniqueness as islands. Islands in general are considered places detached from the mainland which provide ideal geographical conditions for various activities; as trade hubs, naval stepping stones, military posts, off-shoring activities, places of isolation, and environment protection, among others (Mountz, 2015). Hence, many islands in the Riau Islands provide an ideal function as both peripheral border areas and as peripheral places. This section discusses three strategic functions of the Riau Islands that have been identified for the state; economic islands, military posts, and places of isolation.

6.2.1. State-led development of economic zones

The Riau Islands' economically strategic position in the border area has attracted state interests and interventions. The Riau Islands' position and layout scattered along the Malay Peninsula creates a narrow passage for international shipping routes, paving the islands' development path to become potential hubs for trade and cultural exchange. These ideal conditions have attracted governing powers to take advantage of the shipping routes, with the development of trade hubs since colonial times. In the post-colonial period, the SIJORI (Singapore, Johor, Riau) growth triangle initiative was created to increase growth in the Malacca Strait region. The regional initiative was seen as a golden opportunity for the state to

create a new economic centre in the periphery to even out development¹⁷, which led to state-led development of the Riau Islands in the 1970s. Technocratic planning favoured development on the larger islands; hence the main development was focused in Batam, one of the largest, least populated and closest islands to Singapore. Together with Bintan and Karimun Islands, Batam Island was made a Free Trade Zone (FTZ). Before the 1980s, Batam Island was mostly inhabited with only a few fishing communities (Pereira, 2017). The most populated island in the region in the 1970s, which also served as the centre of administration, was Belakang Padang Island, a much smaller yet more populated transit island. This was then dwarfed by Batam's growing population and the administration centre was moved to Batam. This state-led development triggered the growth of an urban area. From 6,000 people in its early development in the 1970s, Batam has now become a metropolitan city with a population of more than one million people. State-led development significantly changed central-peripheral relations and hierarchies in the Riau Islands. Smaller islands and towns once considered to be central, such as Tanjungpinang, Belakang, and cultural centres such as Lingga and Penyengat Islands, have now become the peripheries to an entirely new form of centrality.

¹⁷ *Pemerataan Pembangunan* literally translated to 'evening out development' is a term very often used by the Indonesian government, that contests the current conditions where there are wide economic and social development gap between Java Island and the rest of the islands in the Indonesian archipelago.

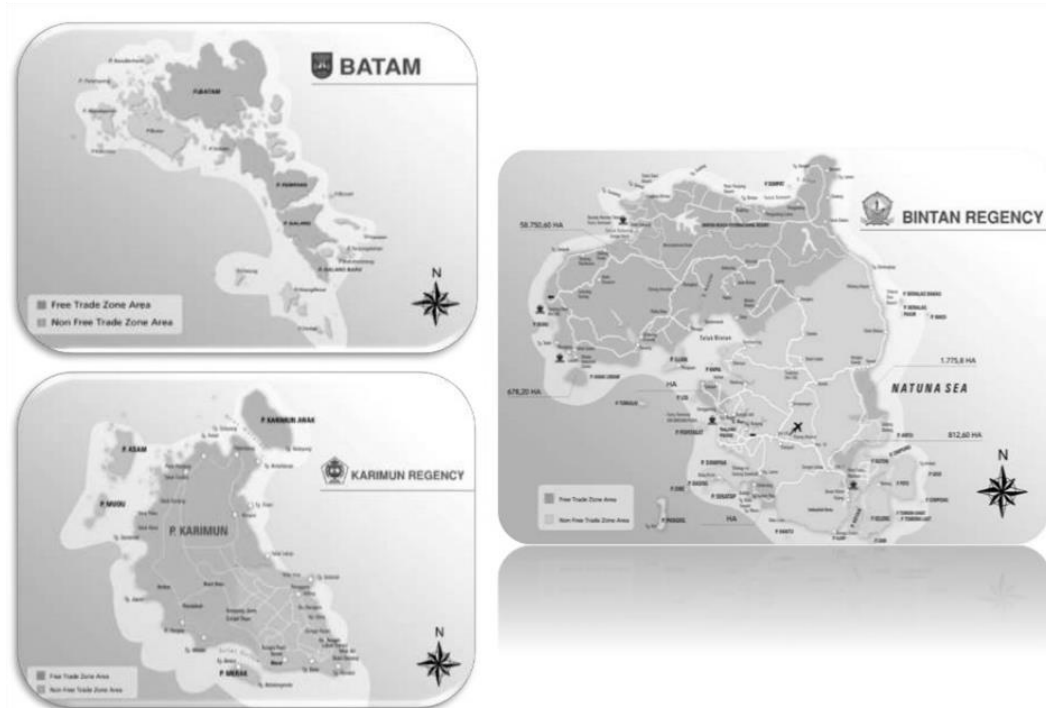


Figure 6-1. Free Trade Zone areas in Batam, Bintan and Karimun Islands
(Source: Naharuddin, 2014)

The Riau Islands' FTZs were Indonesia's first experiment in creating economic zones, which the central government considered to be a good example of how regional interventions can trigger economic growth and create urbanised centres outside Java. This was in line with the state's aim to spread economic development throughout the Indonesian archipelago and decrease the dominance of Java Island as an economic centre. The FTZs attracted international investors and skilled migrants, and were generally considered to create a good economic model. The economic experimentation in the Riau Islands inspired the central government to develop a more general form of bonded areas called *Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus* (KEK), or Special Economic Zones (SEZ), to be created as new economic centres across the archipelago.

As explained in the previous chapters, the establishment of the FTZs created economic centres which has provided economic opportunities, but at the same time culturally and socially marginalising the indigenous Malays. In terms of governance, the FTZs have also marginalised local governments. The FTZs have long been a governance quirk in Indonesia after the

decentralisation turn in 1999, especially Batam. Since its establishment, Batam was managed under an independent management organisation called BIDA (Batam Industrial District Authority). When governance was decentralised, local government in Batam was also created; since then, BIDA and the local government regularly clash with each other. This confusion has been even more exacerbated by contradicting central government policies. The Riau Islands has been established as a National Strategic Area (KSN) based on PP No.13/2017. The purpose of this was to allow the central government to safeguard the area under national control to accelerate development. The implication is the central having more control over spatial planning and certain administration. However, paradoxically, in 2018 President Jokowi announced there should be only one institution that should manage the Batam FTZ; to end governance confusion, the local government was given the main authority over BIDA (CNN Indonesia, 2018). With both new government decisions ratified, there has been no clear plan on how such decisions will be applied, including on how the transition should be managed.

From the perspective of local government, the central government is seen in a negative light; they seem to support local governments in public to gain political support, but their policies marginalise local governments from decisions made in the region. Since decentralisation, local governments have a highly territorial perspective; even though there are central government programmes in their territory, they have the right to know and participate. The most protested aspect of the arrangement regards the maritime territory. The province's Marine and Fishery department explained:

“Even without being established as KSN, the central government can still do whatever they want while the authority stays in the local government by coordinating with local governments. For example, if an island was made into a resort, the authority, license and monitoring will be by the local governments. For KSN, these affairs are taken over by the central government. In terms of planning, national spatial planning (for land) only serves as guidance for local planning but for the sea planning, the central government also gives license for maritime activities. It is the matter of maritime authority that we object to. For

land, if the central government took over, at least there is development of roads, airports, and electricity in the KSN which in long term benefits our people, for maritime affairs, there is no development benefit, but they take away our authority and income from the sea.

Even now, the Ministry of Transport (MoT) does not want to let go of maritime retribution, even though we (province) also have a right for up to 12 miles from the shore. Under the KSN regulation, the MoT will have a stronger argument, and the local government will not get anything from the sea. The financial arrangement is still unclear, we have reasons to doubt if this will benefit local governments or local people. We have examples such as Las Island – an outer island being used for an oil bunker. The local government gave an approval and based on PP 62/2010 there should be a distribution of revenue to the local government. But in reality, is there such a thing? No there isn't. Regulation tools and mechanisms for local governments to charge or collect tax from the central government aren't available yet. Another example is Nipah Island, which has been rented to international investors; they pay retribution to the central government and there is no revenue sharing for local governments. The Autonomy Act No.23/2014 has been dissected by each ministry, some still hanging on to their rights. So, it is reasonable that we are now suspicious and weary of how KSN will be implemented in maritime affairs.” (P01, 19/7/2018)

In times where local autonomy has thrived, state-led development becomes a sensitive issue. For the Riau Islands, their marine jurisdiction is especially important; the limited land they have makes the islands turn towards the sea for a source of income. The sea is also an integral part of the province's self-governance; developing a maritime economy is part of the province's mission statement. With authority over the sea being taken by the central government, for the Riau Islands Province their pride as an archipelago is reduced to having jurisdiction over scattered islands. The state's interests in developing economic centres in the peripheries is mainly to show state presence and to increase the economy nationally. While seemingly successful in creating economic opportunities in the periphery, state-led economic development is seen as a new form of coloniality, which conflicts with the general spirit of local autonomy that has thrived since 1999. A senior official from the province's government is suspicious of the central government's motives:

“Even now, there are small islands being leased to resorts and other activities without the province even knowing, because permits come directly

from the central government, even within our 12-mile marine jurisdiction. Even for activities above 12 miles, we should at least know what happens in our own territory, because there are bound to be implications relating to the surrounding islands, let alone those within our jurisdiction. Ever since the establishment of the province, it seems like businesses have been bypassing the local government and somehow being able to connect to those in the capital. There *must* be something going on, right? This happens mostly in the most economically strategic seas around Batam. So maybe, those in the capital that support this KSN have a political and business interest there, because it does not really make sense in practice. Why do they (central government) have to make the KSN which takes local government authority, while there has not been any trouble for economic development *with* the local government involved? They can increase infrastructure development if they want, without putting aside local governments, because if anything (bad) happens, we will also be the first to be involved.” (P11, 2/8/2018)

A long-term issue affecting the coastal environment is the mining of sand from the Riau Islands’ sea bed, with it being exported to Singapore for reclamation. These practices are now illegal, but they have been authorised at certain times in the past. Even so, many mining activities have been conducted illegally (Batamnews, 2016). Investigations often conclude with no enforcement. A complex cover up involving central government, the navy and local governments has allegedly to have long been at play (Liputan6, 2007), but at least there were accountable local representatives who could look into the problem. The previous chapters elaborated other externalities resulting from state-led economic development, mainly the marginalisation of the local people by immigrants, the political polarisation on Batam Island, the illegal smuggling of goods and drugs, and piracy operating from Batam Island. The legal consequences of KSN have not yet been fully implemented, but if local governments end up with absolutely no authority over the seas around Batam, Bintan and Karimun Islands, then it is reasonable to speculate that, without local monitoring, and with those accountable for managing these externalities located far away in the capital, more unintended externalities may emerge. The case above has demonstrated how central government-led economic development can create an urban centre which generates revenue from economic growth, but in the process

can cause peripheralisation in different contexts and at different scales. More importantly for local governments that hold local autonomy as an archipelago province over land *and* sea as an important value, the case shows that failure of acknowledging and appreciating “the ontological power of islandness” (Stratford, 2008:161) threatens to weaken the archipelago as a system and constrains it from developing to its full potential as an autonomous archipelago with its own decentralised powers and authority. Beyond the FTZs, many more islands have come under the interest of the central government in terms of national defence, especially in the border islands of Natuna District.

6.2.2. Development in the border islands

Another state-led development in the Riau Islands is related with the geostrategic positions of islands in border areas. The Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts have especially been concerns of the state, as they are oddly positioned between two Malaysian territories (the Malay Peninsula and the Northern part of Borneo Island). They also strategically face the South China Sea, hence guarding them has been a priority. The very fact of their odd position and the state’s interest in them today shows a shift in the importance of the border islands. In the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty, the agreement only stated that areas north of Singapore should be under British control, while areas to the south under Dutch control. According to this, Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas should have been part of the British colony, but in reality the British did not mind the islands being occupied by the Dutch, leading them to become Indonesian territory. It was only after 1982 UNCLOS that the border islands became valuable; they demarcated maritime jurisdictions and secured all the resources within their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a 200-mile border drawn from the outer islands. For Indonesia, these two remote island clusters became very important due to resources in the

surrounding sea; fish, oil and gas. Since the Riau Sultanate became part of Indonesia in 1956, the government has populated the islands by sending migrants from Java to develop agriculture through a transmigration programme in the 1980s and built infrastructure (roads, ports and electricity) to strengthen Indonesia's claim over Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas as its outer islands. In the 1999 decentralisation turn, the Natuna district was among the first in the Riau Islands to be given local autonomy to support coordination and development in the outer islands.

Natuna has increasingly come into the spotlight more frequently due to several reasons. First, was to secure Natuna's fishing area from foreign fishing ships. Between 2007 and 2015, more than 600 ships were detained by Indonesia (E. Laksmana, 2019). Second, China published its claims over the South China Sea that overlaps Indonesia's EEZ around the Natuna Islands. Third, Singapore has managed the Flight Information Region (FIR) since 1946, which was agreed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO); in efforts to strengthen Indonesia's borders, gaining sovereignty over Natuna's air space is critical. And fourth, since the 2000s Indonesia has been planning to develop joint-force military bases in several parts of Indonesia to strengthen the state's presence; Natuna was seen to be one of the best places to develop Indonesia's first 'Pearl Harbour'. These reasons have been publicised by the state as justification to invest heavily in the development of a military base on Ranai Island, Natuna District, since 2014. Beyond these reasons, Laksmana (2019) argued that there was also the TNI (Indonesia's National Army) organisation motivation. After the fall of President Suharto, the army has been pushed into the background and civil democracy has become much more prominent. Investment in the military and opening new commando centres were suppressed. With thousands of army recruits and no new positions to fill, personnel found it difficult to receive a promotion. Generals and the senior leadership still have years ahead of them before

retirement, whilst no new leadership positions have opened. With the opening of new squadrons and integrated commando bases throughout the Indonesian archipelago, new high-ranking positions need to be filled.

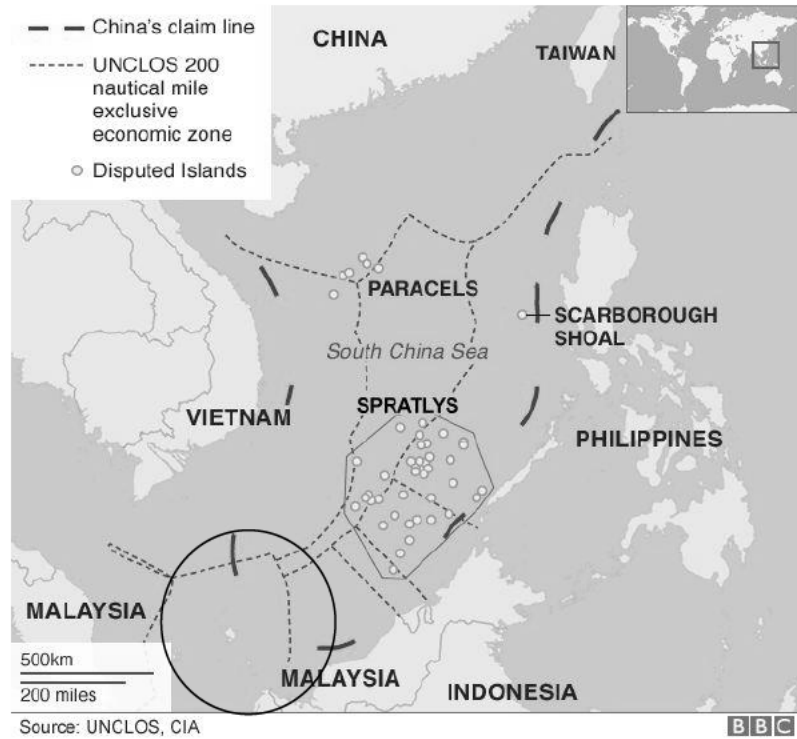


Figure 6-2. China's nine dash line juxtaposed Natuna's EEZ, shown circled (Source: BBC, 2016)



Figure 6-3. Flight routes above Natuna where airlines pay navigation services to Singapore (Source: Screen capture from flightradar24.com, 2018)

China's claims over the South China Sea have been made repeatedly over the years, including in the 1990s, which encouraged then President Suharto to deploy the military to Natuna. As this was a military development *on* the island rather than *for* the island, the military presence felt more like military occupation by foreigners for the resident local population. President Suharto was a military general himself and a dictator; the military forces were untouchable by law under his government. A local Natuna elder explained the conditions at the time:

“The military caused a lot of problems. They often ate at small shops and said they will pay later but they never did. It is also not a rare occasion where local girls became pregnant and were left. You know, the army men here bring ‘pistols without their cases’.” (NI6, 10/5/2018)

These experiences and grassroots expressions are evidence of the uncomfortable relations between the central government and those in the periphery. Although the state argued that these moves were designed to protect Indonesia's sovereignty, there were no real threat felt by the established islanders. The military did not bring any sense of protection for the local people, instead becoming more of internal colonialists themselves. As the situation calmed down, Indonesia's military refocused its efforts on resolving internal threats such as secession movements. The military base in Natuna remained, but like other military bases in border areas it became a place to ‘banish’ or exile misbehaving army personnel. With the constant presence of bad personnel, it is not surprising that the negative sentiment of the locals towards the army and the central government grew. The military presence could not (or did not) protect Natuna's sea from illegal fishing by foreign vessels; the head of a sub-district in Natuna argued:

“The military has something to do with it of course; there was once a foreign fishing boat stranded on one of our islands, the local military chief reported this to higher levels but was told to release them. Now, how can you explain that if there isn't anything fishy going on? People have reported but nothing was done, we eventually gave up.” (N12, 9/5/2018)

The military in Natuna had long failed (or neglected) to protect the islanders' main source of income while appearing to protect national territory. Hence mistrust in the military was understandable for the local population. After receiving local autonomy, the local government became intermediaries between the people and the military. A sub-district leader in Natuna said he keeps in good contact with military leaders to maintain local order and peace. Despite efforts to change the negative image of the military after the fall of Suharto, the traumatised community still regards them negatively. Since 2014, the government has been constantly sending more troops to Natuna as they build an integrated military base. Yet, even though the base was not yet at its full scale at the time of this research, the islanders feel the tension. Islands, as Conkling (2007) and Baldacchino & Veenendaal (2018) explain, amplify the effects of interactions, hence making Ranai Island, Natuna District, a hot bed of conflict. A respondent in the Natuna District described speeding military trucks on civilian roads that have caused numerous accidents; military officials only began to drive more carefully after a military vehicle sped passed a high-ranking military official and made him crash. Interestingly, the islands' spatiality that restricts activities within the island and amplifies the social tensions within Ranai Island becomes a blessing for the surrounding islands. Beyond Ranai island – the main island where the military base is located – the presence of the military is not experienced in daily life. Even on the near-islands, just a 15-minute boat ride away, one can feel a very different situation without the tensions of the main island. Tensions are also felt at the regional level; a local government staff worker explained that it is hard to generate local income with the military base in Natuna. Tourism, industry, hotels and other investments do not usually work hand-in-hand with a prominent military presence. This conflates the economic challenges that Natuna already faces due to its island geography; hence for now Natuna District relies on central government transfers and their shares of oil and gas revenues.

In 2015, the government stepped up its activities with a firm stance in defending its borders. Patrolling marine borders became more frequent, and illegal foreign fishing boats were detained; the crew deported and boats literally blown up and sunk. These activities were hugely publicised in the national media to showcase the seriousness of the central government in securing its borders, strengthening their justification for further development of the military base in the Natuna District. However, the research finds expressions of marginalisation and rejection from the community; a cultural leader in Ranai Island, Natuna District expressed the following concerns:

“Based on past experience, we had to be bow politely when passing in front of the military, when the government builds a new military base here, we may have to crawl when passing their buildings.” (NI6, 10/5/2018)

Some informants expressed more specific partial objections to the military development. A youth activist argued:

“We understand that there are more navy forces here, they are doing a good job guarding our sea. But why should they also add ground infantry? If any foreign military forces were to reach this island, then we would have already lost the war. They should not send too many unnecessary forces.” (N25, 1/5/2018)

The experience of Ranai Island in the Natuna District is similar to other military islands, such as Okinawa, Marshall Islands and the Palau, that tend to marginalise and even forcefully remove the indigenous people from the island to pave way for military development (Nishiyama, 2020; Siripala, 2018; Smith-Norris, 2016; Wakako, 1991). Even with the increase of infrastructural development that comes with the development of military bases, and the military’s role in securing the sea from foreign fishing ships, those living on the island experience great pressure and marginalisation. Because of their small population, their voices are often unheard or ignored, and everyday negative experiences are rarely broadcast in the national media, which instead focuses on the larger national rhetoric associated with the state’s

strong military capability and development in the peripheries. This also demonstrates the little acknowledgement of the state towards the implications of state-led development on small islands. The state views these islands as ideal places for exile and isolation of unwanted activities and people, belittling the existence of islanders and undermining their rights over their islands even further.

6.2.3. Small islands as places of isolation

Throughout history, islands have been known as places of isolation and exile by governing powers (Mountz, 2015; Royle, 2001); this fate has also become the reality for several islands in the Riau Islands Province at various times in post-independence Indonesia. As an archipelago between Asia and Australia, Indonesia has long been a bulwark of migrants illegally trying to get to Australia and New Zealand by boat (Jones, 2015). In 1975, Indonesia observed the first wave of people seeking refuge in the Riau Islands. After the fall of Vietnam to the communists, thousands of Vietnamese people fled the country to the surrounding regions of Southeast Asia. From 1975 to 1995, between 122,000 and 145,000 people settled in the Riau Islands. Although they were processed by the UNHCR to be accepted in western countries, the surrounding countries held the most refugees. Those who travelled by boat were known as the ‘boat people’; they arrived in Tarempa and many other places in the Riau Islands, including the Natuna Islands (Missbach, 2015). An elderly islander on Pulau Tiga Barat Island, Natuna District, described the past experience:

“There were so many Vietnamese people coming to our islands, the local people thought that we were being invaded and the islands would be given to the Vietnamese. People who had money bought property in Ranai Island (Natuna’s main island) and Tanjungpinang (Riau Islands capital), in case they had to move.” (NI8, 20/5/2018)

Indonesia then made Galang Island a temporary settlement for around 16,500 Vietnamese refugees until 1995. Indonesia chose the relatively empty island so the refugees would not mix too much with locals, as not to minimise the risk of creating social problems. At the time, Galang was inhabited by only 200 people who did not mind the refugee camp as it provided them with extra money from services and trade (Missbach, 2015). Today, Galang Island has become an island of memories, and the camp is now a historical tourist attraction. Hundreds of Vietnamese people and descendants that are now living abroad visit the camp to remember their suffering and struggles. Those who used to live in the Galang camp have even made their own Facebook group¹⁸ to keep in touch with others and share memories.

Since 1996 Indonesia has again become a stepping stone for transit migrants, only this time many arrive from the Middle East and South Asia. Indonesia has not yet signed the refugee convention of 1951 or the 1967 protocol on refugees, but for humanitarian reasons Indonesia agreed to provide a temporary processing space before people caught in Southeast Asia could be transferred to a destination country (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, US, Canada, etc.) or sent back home depending on UNHCR screening. However, what was thought to be only a maximum of one year was extended to five years, and there is still no certainty. The destination countries have closed their own doors to migrants, yet the refugees cannot go back to their home countries. These people are stuck in limbo on the Indonesian archipelago. Indonesia has also held firm with their stance to only become a temporary place and not receive any refugees. In this legal limbo, the ‘illegal’ migrants in Indonesia receive just enough provisions to meet their basic needs, but they cannot work or receive formal services from the government.

As Galang refugee camps have been closed, 14,000 migrants have been moved around detention centres across the country, with 1,000 ending up on the Riau Islands. Unfortunately

¹⁸ Visit <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Galang-Refugee-Camp-416320421811539/posts/>

for local governments, they have been assigned by the central government to assist in the handling of refugees. According to President Regulation No.126/2016, local governments' duties on this matter are to provide shelter for the refugees, coordinate with the police regarding security, and deal with refugee burials. Without the necessary facilities being provided by the central government, the local government ends up dealing with the presence of refugees themselves. The detention centre in Tanjungpinang (on Bintan Island) was built only to anticipate illegal migrants crossing the Malacca Strait with a capacity for only 200 people, but is now being used also to detain 400 refugees and asylum seekers. Another 400 are housed in a hotel on the other side of Bintan Island. Unlike the conditions on Galang Island, which was relatively empty in the 1970s, the presence of the refugees on Bintan Island drew much attention and resistance from locals. According to a local informant, Bintan's communities are used to seeing foreign people on their island as tourists, but refugees are a different sight. He explained as we drove past the Bhadra Resort Hotel:

“These people are not tourists but refugees. Most people don't even know why there are so many in this island. Refugees are free to go out of the detention centres and hotels, they are head counted every morning and evening. They play football with the local people and sometimes they help the community and local mosques. But honestly people are also suspicious of them as they cause problems sometimes.”
(BI1, 25/6/2018)

The local media has represented local concerns covering issues that have made the community unsettled; protests made by the refugees, love affairs between the refugees with the wives of local people, prostitution, riding motorcycles without licenses, and other aspects of misconduct.



Figure 6-4. Asylum seekers protesting to UNHCR and Indonesia for basic human rights (Source: Pro Bintang, 2018)



Figure 6-5. Asylum seekers being punished for riding motorcycles carelessly (Source: Tribun Bintang, 2019)

Without proper organisation and communication, the presence of asylum seekers has also disrupted social life in other detention centres across Indonesia; hence politicians want to restrict the interactions refugees have with local residents as much as possible by placing them on islands (Firmansyah, 2019). This is not an uncommon move; in 2019 Bangladesh also started to move Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char, a small island 30km from the mainland

(Aljazeera, 2019). Small islands, especially those in the periphery, become easy targets for non-citizens to be placed in one place. However, to date, there has been no sign that the Indonesian government has committed to spend on facilities for the refugees, as the country persists with its passive stance in asylum affairs.

Riau Islands' problem with asylum seekers demonstrates how small peripheral islands are caught up in national and international affairs; their peripherality is often seen as an obvious solution to locate activities away from the mainland to avoid conflicts with locals. Moving asylum seekers away from Jakarta to the peripheral islands relieves the potential threat and disruption from the centre. In the context of this thesis, it is clear to see how island peripherality can actually be caused by those supposedly committed to develop small islands and the periphery. This is demonstrated by the further peripheralisation of islands, especially the Natuna Islands as the most peripheral islands. Whenever Jakarta intends to exile and isolate people and activities, their thoughts go straight to the Natuna Islands. For example, there have been discussions by politicians on making a high security prison in the Natuna Islands to isolate prisoners. Fortunately for the Natuna people this idea was protested by several legislative representatives, who argued it would create a negative image for Natuna. One politician argued "It would hurt the people and government of Natuna" (Indrawan, 2017). At the time of writing, with the ongoing Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Natuna was chosen to isolate Indonesian citizens brought back home for observation before sending them back to their home towns. The main reason given was that the Natuna District is a remote place with full health facilities run by the army. There were protests from the Natuna people, but the plan was executed anyway (BBC, 2020). As the pandemic grew, Galang Island also became a potential site to isolate patients, with the government planning to use an abandoned hospital in the ex-Vietnamese camp

to isolate and treat infected patients. Consequently, the Galang Camp that had become a tourist destination was closed to accommodate quarantine facilities (Kompas, 2020; Sahputra, 2020).



Figure 6-6. Protests against COVID19 quarantine in Natuna District (Source: BBC, 2020)



Figure 6-7. The construction of an emergency isolation hospital in Galang Camp (Source: Sahputra, 2020)

The case above is evidence of how islands' geographic peripherality can attract government interests outside of those viewing the islands as having excellent strategic potential. Designating islands for exile and isolation becomes problematic for inhabited islands; islanders have expressed their disappointment of being marginalised by the centre that has enforced those in the periphery to deal with issues that the centre wants elsewhere. Relating to the wider discussion, because of their small dispersed population, small land area and detachment from the mainland, Indonesia has actively designated peripheral status on smaller islands by making them protected areas for environmental conservation to preserve coastal and marine ecosystems, and also traditional or indigenous fishery and island communities in general. However, when the central government sees fit for certain islands to be developed for national interests, the findings of this research show how the notion of protecting island life is discarded. The growth of economic centres on the peripheral islands and the marginalisation of island communities and island governments for the sake of the central government shows how the central government as the "imperial" actor that has power over the islands is active in both the centralisation and peripheralisation of small islands, and undermines the sensitivity of the importance of islandness for island governments. Stratford (2008) argues that islandness is both affective and ontological, and a failure of those governing the islands to use islandness as an ontological resource to direct them in decision-making processes may result in internal conflicts. As will be discussed in the next sub-chapter, without using islandness as an ontological resource, even when state-led development for the peripheral areas is implemented on small islands, there is bound to be inappropriate implications and conflicts with local communities and local governments.

6.3. The state's policy in peripheral islands

Indonesia's main concern over small islands relates with the protection of coastal areas and small islands based on Act 27/2007 and The Ministry of Marine and Fishery Regulation No.8/2019. However, based on interviews with local governments, the implication of the regulation has been one of the least concerns of local governments. Even though the regulation seems to restrict island development and cause conflicting regulations for small island governments, there is a wide gap between regulations and their implementation, and has not restricted island governments in any way at the moment. While the central government's policy for small islands has little significance in terms of influencing peripherality, other policies *do* have influence on small islands, especially policies relating to peripheral areas which consequently target peripheral islands. The following discusses the local implications of state's policies in peripheral islands.

The making of Indonesia as a political 'archipelago' began with the creation of the administrative 'archipelago' by the Dutch from what was once a geographical archipelago inhabited by individual peoples, tribes and kingdoms. A core-periphery hierarchy among the islands was conceptualised by the Dutch, where Java and Bali Islands were called the central islands or the inner islands and the rest were called the outer islands. The Dutch expanded their colonisation programme in 1905 by resettling people from the 'inner island' to the outer islands as plantation labours. This programme was then continued by the Indonesian government after independence, known as the 'transmigration' program with the aim of spreading the population across the archipelago, promoting political unity of the archipelago state and introducing the Indonesian state to the peripheral islands (O'Connor, 2004). Further efforts were made to materialise the presence of the state across the archipelago; since the 1970s a programme called *Instruksi Presiden* (Inpres) or 'Presidential Decree' gave grants for provinces and districts to

develop infrastructure and services, such as schools and clinics. And in the 1980s, Inpres for undeveloped villages was initiated by giving grants to villages to develop community and agricultural-related infrastructure (Akita & Szeto, 2000).

Today, development of the peripheral areas is prioritised in three definitions of peripheral areas known as 3T (*Terluar, Terdepan, Tertinggal*). *Terluar* literally meaning the outermost areas, are Indonesia's borders around the archipelago marking the state's territory. *Terdepan* means the frontline areas; the Indonesian archipelago has multiple international shipping routes cutting across the archipelago (ALKI). Areas along these international routes are considered frontline areas that are prone to international threats. *Tertinggal* literally means 'left behind'; these are the least-developed areas based on a number of development variables. Unlike the small islands in the EU peripheral regions development scheme for island regions, or in Japan's Remote Island Development Act (RIDA), Indonesia's small islands do not fall under a specific island category. Hence areas such as the Riau Islands intersect with various categories of the 3T peripheral areas. The following section discusses how state-led development in peripheral areas (both in terms of borders and less-developed areas) has been implemented on small islands and influences changes to island peripherality.

6.3.1. Border development

As part of the efforts to strengthen the state's presence in the border areas, alongside military deployment on the border islands, Indonesia has launched a number of programmes to support the social and economic development of the border islands. Border islands are often both peripheral in location and peripheral in social economic development due to their distance from economic centres. In 2014, the government developed a programme called '*Tol Laut*' translated as 'The Sea Toll' focusing on connecting Indonesia's peripheral islands with the

more developed islands. The main purpose was to reduce the price disparities between the central island of Java and Indonesia’s peripheral islands; especially the eastern part of Indonesia and the border islands. In the Riau Islands, the Sea Toll serves routes from Jakarta to the Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts.

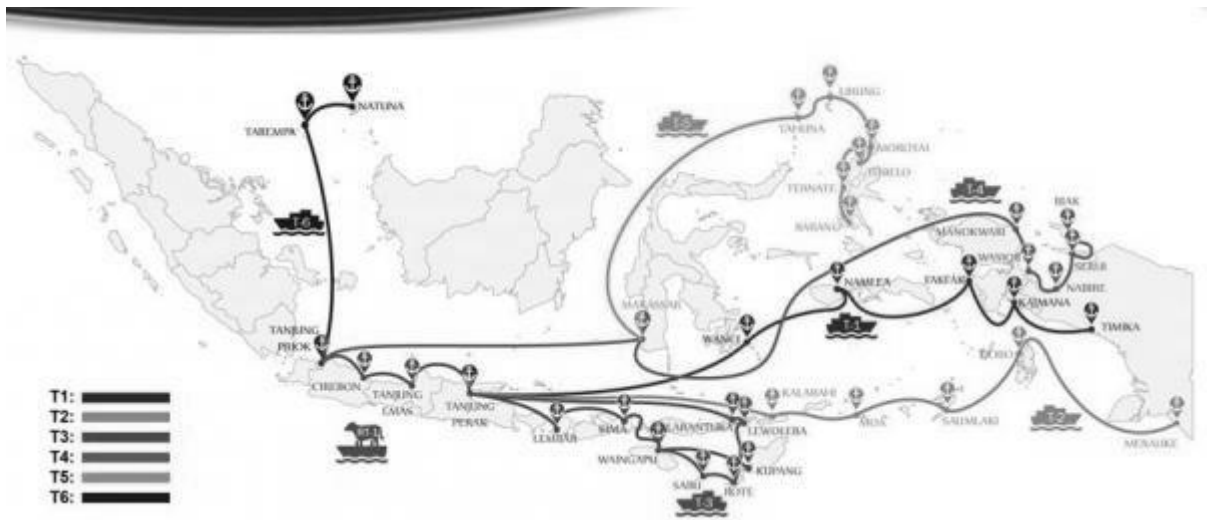


Figure 6-8. The Sea Toll route
(Source: Kemenhub, 2016)

The Sea Toll ships do not come to the Natuna District as frequently as other smaller boats, but they are more reliable in the rough weather in the windy seasons. At the time of this research in 2018, the Sea Toll had not fully achieved its purpose. An official within the Natuna District’s Department of Industry and Trade explained:

“The Sea Toll helps in terms of maintaining stock of goods, but it does not help in reducing price yet. The overall cost of transport, including land transport, is still too high; (the distance) from Lampa Strait (the main port) to Ranai is 80km, the cost of one-way travel is Rp.800,000-1,000,000 (around £60) per pickup truck. We have requested a smaller ship so it can dock at a closer port; the current ship’s capacity is 3,000 GT which is too big for the closer port. As an example, rice should be sold with a maximum price of Rp.13,000 but we can’t give that price here due to transport costs. Laut Island has the highest cost as it is the most remote island in the north. Businesses cannot rely totally on the Sea Toll, but they also rely on smaller cargo ships from Tanjungpinang, Jakarta and Pontianak, whichever can come first.” N08, 7/5/2018)

The official explained that the current Sea Toll was still at an early stage and was only part of the solution; besides the need of more frequent shipping and a solution to transport goods from the port to the city, a logistic warehouse that could secure more imports is also needed. The efforts to provide better connections to the peripheries also include the development of communications infrastructure. ‘Palapa Ring’, a project to connect the whole Indonesian archipelago with fibre optic cables which began in 2007 but has been delayed for various reasons, has been started up again under President Jokowi’s administration. The name Palapa was derived from the Palapa Oath scripture of the Majapahit Empire, an ancient kingdom based on Java Island. The scripture contained an oath by the leader of Majapahit that he would not rest before the Indonesian archipelago was united (known as Nusantara at the time¹⁹), hence the name Palapa is associated with a strong message of unity. As with the Sea Toll programme, the purpose of Palapa Ring is to increase connectivity with of the peripheral regions. Similar to the Sea Toll, the Palapa Ring is only the first step for better connectivity, as it will need additional infrastructure to spread communication networks from the main island to the surrounding islands. The provincial government admitted that the telecommunications network is still not stable yet; when the Minister of Communication and Informatics (MCI) came to check the connection in Kepulauan Anambas, the local government and the ministry staff official secretly lowered the signal of the surrounding islands to ensure that the Kepulauan Anambas had optimal signal strength at the time of the Minister’s visit, as to not lose face.

¹⁹ The islands envisioned as Nusantara consisted of Java, Bali, Sumatra, Borneo and Sulawesi, the closest resemblance of what can be defined as the Indonesian state today.

PALAPA RING PROJECT - Jan 14, 2019

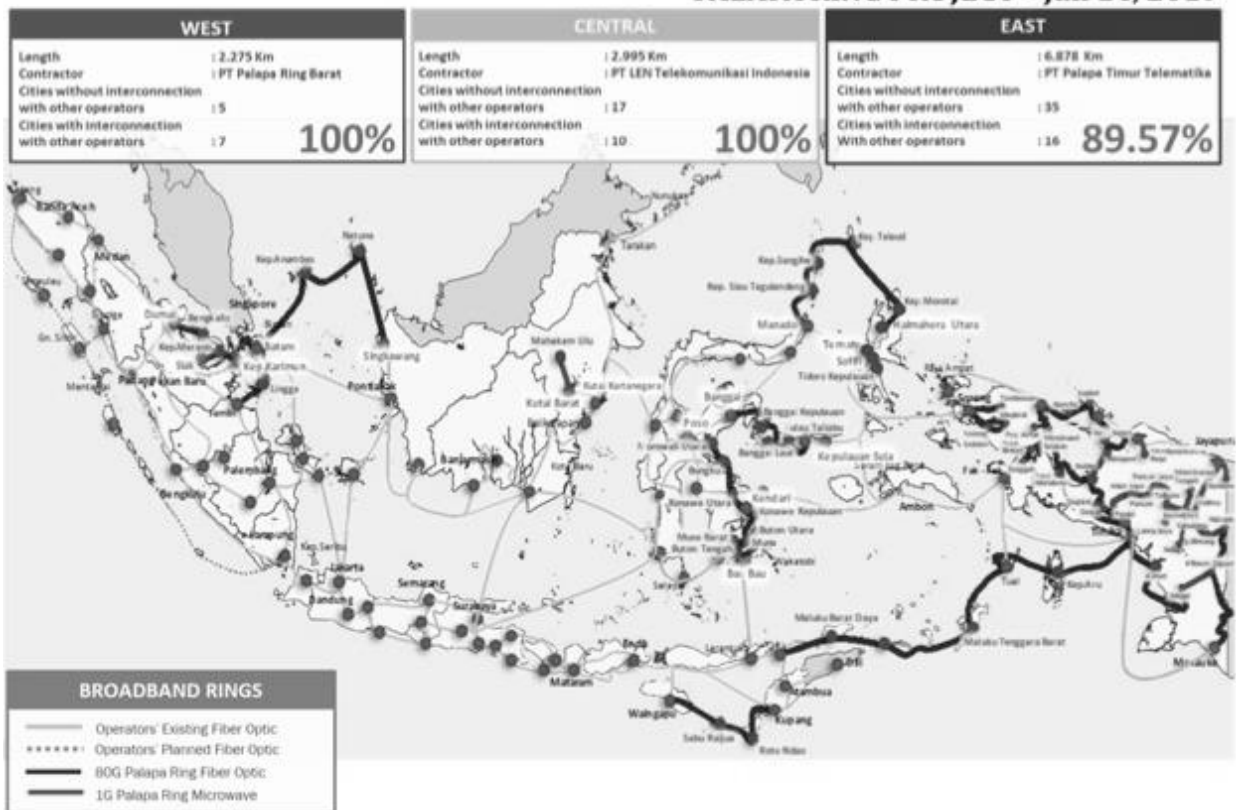


Figure 6-9. Palapa Ring fibre optic networks
(Source: Kominfo, 2017)

Indonesia's infrastructure development for peripheral islands is still overshadowed by the general practices of the state to safeguard border areas from neighbouring countries, in ways that restrict opportunities to further develop the islands. In terms of decreasing the price of goods, according to the local governments the solution lies in strengthening networks with the closest mainland Malaysia. However, the central government has not seriously worked on this due to general concerns of guarding the borders, especially from smuggling (see Chapter 4). Regarding telecommunications, the central government opted out of a chance to access Malaysian networks to enhance the peripheral islands' connections.

While the Indonesian government has only recently laid fibre optic cables for the outer islands, Malaysia has already used the islands as hubs to connect the peninsula with the

Sarawak, Borneo side of Malaysia since 2004. The Malaysian telecommunications company Sacofa Bhd. set up landing stations in both the Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts to power connections. While receiving permission from the MCI, in 2017 the landing stations were monitored by the army who decided to shut the operations of the landing stations, arguing that they were a potential threat to security. The landing stations may be used to intercept military ships and submarines in the area, which have been increasingly important as discussed earlier. The closure of the company was also supported by the local community, as the compound was closed to the public, heavily guarded and seemed suspicious with foreigners inside. Later in 2019, an Indonesian company negotiated to take over the operations of the landing station as a solution for better security monitoring, while taking the opportunity to monetise the hub position of the islands. There might even be a possibility to use connectivity from the existing Malaysian cables. However, this has still not yet been approved, due to the military's claim of external threats.

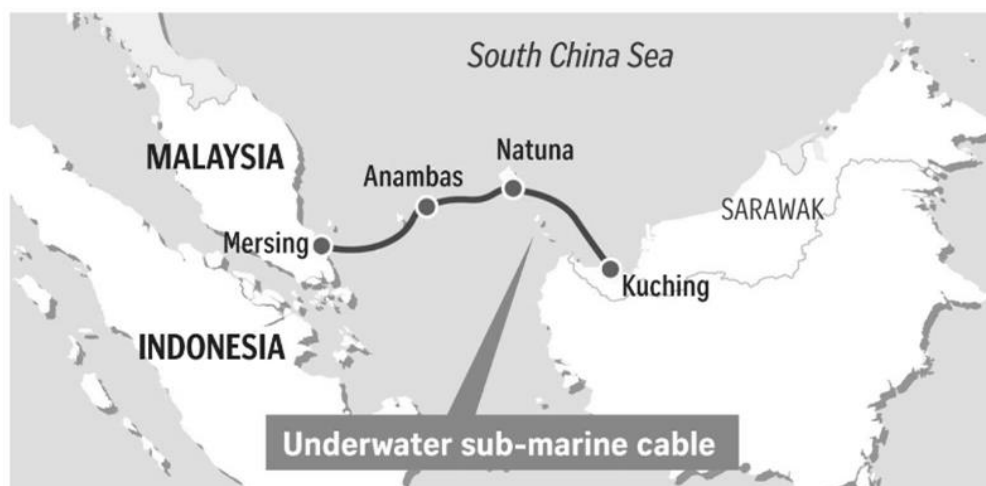


Figure 6-10. Sacofa's submarine fibre optic cable connecting both sides of Malaysia (Source: The Straits Times, 2017)

The central government has decided to project its image to the public as a strong government able to guard its borders, ironically at the expense of development of the border areas. Rather than using existing movements that can create a 'relational archipelago'

(Stratford, Baldacchino, McMahon, Farbotko, et al., 2011), the government has forced the production of new artificial connections within the state borders, marginalising the peripheral islands. In practice, the government has only partially solved issues of connectivity and turns a blind eye to the ‘illegal’ island networks where the peripheral islands trade informally across state borders, while some islands use mobile network operators based in Singapore and Malaysia.

Although not as remote as Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas, many other islands are categorised as border areas, and consequently become targeted areas for border development programs. The central government has been developing social infrastructure as a part of state-building efforts on the outer islands. In 2014 President Jokowi’s administration pushed non-military development in the outer territory to strengthen the presence of the state on the borders. The president stated “We want Indonesian citizens in the border areas and frontier islands in isolated areas feel the presence of the state, to feel the fruit of development, and feel proud to be a citizen of The Republic of Indonesia” (Kompas, 2017) . The programme was targeted at sub-district-level administrations. Amongst 187 border development locations, 41 were in the Riau Islands, spread across all districts except Lingga (BNPP, 2018). This uneven development of border areas widened the development gap, especially between the Lingga District and the others. Lingga already suffers as the district with the least local revenue; when the Lingga District is excluded from the border development programme, it has less chance of being developed and increasingly feels marginalised from central government support.

From those that were in the list of border development programmes, the reality of the programme turns out not to be as fascinating as publicised. Investigating the implications of an area listed as a border island has been challenging. Border areas have the highest priority amongst other areas in terms of the prioritisation variable, which has been set in the national

planning system, but there is no special budget specifically for border areas. An official within the province's planning department explained:

“There is no special slot (for border areas) in the Development Planning Coordination (Musrenbang) system. The proposed development programmes are brought by BNPP (National Body of Border Areas Management) to the ministries. There is no guarantee that the proposals will be approved because the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Transport and others all have their own targeted plans. Now then, how does Lokpri (prioritised locations of border areas) fit in? This is the weakness of the system. In most cases, ministries only attach proposals for border development with their own suitable programmes that they already have in their action plans. Even without being asked for by border areas, each ministry will have implemented the projects anyway, but it might be the case that they prioritise the distribution in border areas first. But if the BNPP has a proposal that does not intersect with the ministries own programmes then it will not be implemented. Ideally, we hope that the central government has an exclusive budget slot especially for border areas, but at the time being it is still unclear. If there is a central government-led development in border areas, we (local governments) do not know whether it was because they were prioritised as border areas or is it a programme that has already been planned for that area in the first place.” (P11, 2/8/2018)

Despite the amount of infrastructure being developed in the border areas, local government officials have expressed concern over the fact that they have not yet felt any significant change compared to the initial optimism shared by central government. An official within the Kepulauan Anambas District's Planning Department stated:

“The Maritime Coordinating Minister has been here several times, next year the Gerbangdutas (Integrated Border Development) programme will be implemented in Kepulauan Anambas. In the meantime, ‘developing from the borders’ is just a slogan and false hope, there has been no concrete evidence the past couple of years. For example, our Bupati (head of district) has requested for a fuel depot but it has not been built – it has already been surveyed, yet even the feasibility study has not been made. There's also a fish breeding facility that we proposed, we have prepared the site but the project is still far from being implemented... There have been no effects of us being borders yet. Well, I can't say there are no programmes at all, because there is the Palapa Ring (fibre optic development) and the Sea Highway (logistic shipping for peripheral areas). But there are seven sub-districts here, all border areas, but there has been no significant change” (A05, 24/7/2018)

An official within Natuna District's Development Bureau expressed similar thoughts:

“Natuna is currently quite popular (among other districts). When there is an (national) event, everyone will start looking for Natuna's Bupati (head of district) because the president has been here three times. The president planned five pillars to accelerate Natuna's development; tourism, environment, oil and gas, security and marine and fishery. There has already been oil and gas exploration. The (central) government has also built SKPT (integrated fishing facility) and of course, there are new military development projects here. However, there has been no sign of development in tourism or environment yet... If we rely on investment; does anybody want to invest in a heavy militarised area? In general, commercial investment and defence do not go hand-in-hand.” (N07, 7/5/2018)

The administrative aspects of the border development programme have also been criticised by local governments. Similar to Batam, Bintan and Karimun (BBK) FTZs, the Natuna District became a National Strategic Area (KSN) due to its prominent defence function. Central control is managed through the BNPP (National Body of Border Areas Management), a coordinating body led by the Coordinating Ministry of Politics, Law and Security. Based on President Regulation No.12/2010, its function is to make policies regarding border development, plan budgets, coordinate implementation and monitor state borders and border areas. In 2012, local governments were tasked with setting up border coordinating bodies to coordinate with the BNPP at the national level. However, the way BNPP works with local bodies has been criticised by local governments, who claim it overlaps with many affairs of local governments' own departments. An official within the Natuna District's Planning Department explained:

“The BNPP overlaps with the planning department. They also make sub-district spatial planning (RDTR) and development action plans. We have 2 versions of spatial planning at sub-district level (RDTR) now and there are slight differences in zonings as both documents have not yet been synchronised, we use both versions depending on the purpose. They also make development priorities and propose projects to the ministries. If they have their own funding from the central government then that is very welcomed by the local government, but they only propose projects to the ministries and also want to use the local budget, so their function does not make sense really. The local Planning Department already does that and projects are implemented directly

through the Public Works Department. Their job is to coordinate development in border areas but their presence is not valuable. BNPPs in other districts of Riau Islands have been removed, only in Natuna does it still remain due to the prominent status of Natuna as a border area, but in reality, they really don't have anything important to do.” (N03, 4/5/2018)

Due to how insignificant the changes have been felt, local governments are not convinced as to how small islands can benefit from their ‘border area’ status. Another aspect that local governments understand is that these border development programmes are short-term projects tied to the current government. Without creating programmes catered especially for border islands, peripheral conditions are likely to remain the same. Even with the development of fishery in the border islands – an aspect much closer to the lives of the indigenous islanders – without appropriate consideration of islandness and a comprehensive understanding of the actual needs of border islands, there is bound to be unintended and unwanted outcomes.

Developing the fisheries sector is an important part of President Jokowi’s vision for making Indonesia a world maritime fulcrum. The main elements of the vision are to increase marine production, secure Indonesian seas and protect the coastal environment. This makes Natuna District an ideal place to develop the fisheries sector, as it overlaps national programmes in border development and maritime development. Due to an increased monitoring of Natuna’s seas, from 2014 to 2019, 539 foreign ships (55% Vietnamese) were caught for illegal fishing. The government’s efforts have been highly appreciated by the fishermen of the Riau Islands, especially in protecting islands from foreign trawlers (Kompas, 2019). Unfortunately, with the decrease of foreign ships, another threat comes from within Indonesian borders. To help guard Indonesia’s northern-most seas, fishing ships from Java and Sumatra Islands have been urged to fish in Natuna’s seas. As explained in Chapter 4, Riau Islands’ own fishermen only want to operate small boats, and are unwilling to change their traditional laid-back ways of life to operate with larger ships. Hence, fishermen from other parts of Indonesia have been ‘invited’

by the central government. However, this decision has negative implications. A major fish trader in Kepulauan Anambas District explained that these Indonesian ships have marginalised traditional fishing boats in the area, in a similar way to the foreign ships:

“It’s difficult to tell them; they are Indonesian fishing boats but from other areas. They have better, more modern fishing equipment, whilst we are still using traditional equipment. We don’t prohibit them fishing here, but they need to follow the regulations. They should only fish more than 12 miles from the outer islands, not between the islands. The village authorities get a piece (bribe), they just stay quiet. I always talk about this to the (local government) staff, but they ask why there are no reports from the village. Of course, the village won’t report, they have already got a part (of the money). This makes the small fishermen oppressed with nowhere to complain. (The large ships) have negatively affected local fishermen; they (local fishermen) usually get more than Rp.2 million now they only get Rp.1 million worth of fish (each time they go out fishing). What is the problem? Because there is no more fish left, the village should act. We don’t disagree with other ships coming but they should obey the rules.” (A02, 17/9/2018)

For Indonesia, the main concern is clearing the territorial waters of foreign trawlers. The livelihood of islanders has not been fully understood in depth and has become the lowest priority for the state. Recently, in 2020 hundreds of ships and thousands of fishermen from the north coast of Java (Indonesia’s main island) were sent to fish in the Kepulauan Anambas and Natuna District’s EEZ. If organised well, this is a good solution to occupy the deeper seas, but who will guarantee that the local fishermen’s fishing area will not be taken over by these additional new ‘foreign’ ships? The case is another demonstration of how the intention to protect and de-peripheralise small islands is actually an agenda to project state power, which may actually result in peripheralising the communities that were meant to be protected even further.

To support fishery in the peripheral islands, the government has also invested in an integrated fishery facility (SKPT) in Lampa Strait, Natuna District. SKPT was designed to be a one-stop service, consisting of an integrated cold storage system and ice maker, auction

market, fuel station and fishing equipment stores. The facility aims to increase fishery production, increase fishermen's income and tax revenue, while facilitating Indonesia's own large fishing ships operating in Natuna's seas to deter foreign trawlers. PERINDO, a state-owned enterprise, serves as the main fish collector in SKPT; the fish are collected from fishermen in Natuna and distributed to Tanjungpinang, Batam, Kalimantan and Jakarta.



Figure 6-11. SKPT Natuna
(Source: KKP, 2018)



Figure 6-12. A van bringing some ice for a fishing vessel in SKPT Natuna
(Source: Author's documentation, 2018)

The SKPT fulfilled its purpose to increase fishermen's welfare. It provided an alternative place to sell fish besides the usual market and the *towkay* (Chinese fish collectors). It also helped supply ice and fuel directly to where boats and ships dock, whereas before fuel had to be transported from an inland station to the ports. While it supported fishermen, it influenced a change in the daily lives of the islanders in an interesting way. A local government official in the Natuna District shared his daily experiences regarding this matter:

“There are two sides of Susi's (The Minister of Marine and Fishery) programme; the price of fish brought from the fishermen by the SKPT is good and more stable. This has affected fish prices in general, including fish brought to the market. If the market won't accept it at the new price, the fishermen can always bring them to SKPT. As government staff, our wages have not been raised so we can feel the difference. For example, we used to buy 1 fish for Rp.15,000 (around £1) but now we can only get half.” (N04, 4/5/2018)

These effects are also felt on the smaller islands; SKPT became such an easy place to sell fish at a good price that they often sell all their fish and only bring back to their own islands smaller, less valuable fish, if any at all. In one interview, a village leader in Pulau Tiga Barat Island, Natuna District, apologised for arriving late for our interview session. The reason he was late interestingly captured the new reality of how SKPT has changed many things in daily life. He explained:

“I just came back from SKPT to buy fish, because there will be a community event soon. Fishermen don't bother to sell fish in the islands anymore, it's hard to find fish on our island, because now they sell it all to PERINDO.” (NI7, 20/5/2018)

The islanders sold all their fish to PERINDO, forgetting that there was going to be an event, and re-bought their own fish at a much higher price from PERINDO. The village leader explained that previously fishermen would sell to the *towkay* and also bring some to the village to sell. Now the villagers can still get fish from the fishermen if they order it a day before, but they have to match price with PERINDO. For those that do not have a fisherman in the family (such as local government officials, teachers, or widows), fish have become a rare and

expensive commodity on their islands. Besides the influence on daily life, an official in the Natuna District's Department of Fishery provided further insight as to the larger impact of the SKPT. The official explained that, compared to government investment, the benefits are still very small. Only fishermen on the islands (Ranai and Pulau Tiga Islands) around SKPT can enjoy the good price that their fish are bought. The larger fishing boats benefit from their services (mainly fuel and ice), but only few sell their fish to PERINDO, as they already have their own network. The district government does not receive anything from the SKPT either; everything is run by the central government. And if there were any income from fishing retribution, it would go to the province.

The central government's development of the peripheral islands has been linked to the state's efforts to guard Indonesian sovereignty and to develop the marine sector. While the main narrative of the programme has been to prioritise socio-economic development for the peripheries, the findings show how border development has more emphasis on the state's presence and control over peripheral areas. The central government's efforts, such as deterring foreign trawlers, the Sea Toll, Palapa Ring and the SKPT, have been a good start, but they are only partial solutions for the peripheral islands. Sub-districts listed as border areas have not seen significant differences in development. In summary, from the islanders and island governments' perspective, the border development programmes have not been as great as publicised in the national media. Even though the programmes were made *for* the peripheral areas, the central government seemed to ignore the local island geographies and local people of peripheral areas in the Riau Islands. The border development programmes did not significantly change the peripheral conditions of the small islands. In contrast, there have been other programmes targeted for a much wider scope of beneficiaries of peripheral areas, where the

locals have expressed being lifted out of peripheral conditions, making them actively part of development – these are the Rural Funds and Rural Development programmes.

6.3.2. Rural development

In addition to the border areas, President Jokowi's mission to develop Indonesia from the periphery also targets the least developed areas and rural areas in general. The majority of Riau Islands' islands are categorised as rural areas inhabited by traditional fishing communities, thus are eligible to receive Village Funds. The Village Funds, or *Dana Desa* (DD), which was created in 2015, is an interesting case to observe because it is a trial of how the state decentralises development to the lowest governing institution – the village – to decide and implement development themselves. The Village Funds differ from previous village development programmes in a number of ways. The previous village development programme, called National Programme for Community Empowerment or PNPM, was funded by the World Bank and had a more NGO-style implementation. In PNPM, assisting institutions carried out planning, administration and implementation on behalf of the community, whereas the Village Fund programme relies more on democratic decisions, local initiative and efforts. Another main difference is that PNPM was a rolling fund, implemented in stages in different areas at a time, whilst for Village Funds, funding up to Rp.1 billion (about £60,000) was distributed simultaneously to all villages throughout Indonesia. Local governments are also obliged to allocate local matching funds called Village Fund Allocation (ADD), which needs to match at least 10% of the Village Funds.

Small islands are considered to be the same as other villages; there is no geographical prioritisation. However, the amount of funds is adjusted based on certain variables based on the Ministry of Finance's regulation No. 199/PMK.07/2017, including population, poverty level,

area, and geographical difficulties. The Village Funds has been very popular amongst villages and the central government has widely publicised its success, claiming to have built 191,000 km of roads, 1,140 km of village bridges, 9,000 village markets, 959,000 clean water facilities, and other infrastructures such as reservoirs, village health facilities and sanitary facilities from 2015 to 2019 (Kemenkeu, 2019). The Village Fund has given opportunities for islands to build piers and improve communications by installing internet satellite dishes. The village chief of Mantang Island District views the programme as positive, and said it was tied to the satisfaction of President Jokowi's administration, a common positivity shared amongst other villages:

“This year we have built two community piers. In 2017 (we built) four piers. Because we are a coastal community, piers are important. People want to stay close to their boats. Piers use DD and ADD. While if there is a big project like a circular road around the island, there has been central government funding, implemented by local government departments or directly by the Ministry of Public Works. Programmes like these are proof of the president's ‘developing from the peripheries’ (vision). We can really feel it.” (B13, 2/6/2018)



Figure 6-13. Mantang Village’s financial report displayed in the centre of the island (Source: Authors’ documentation, 2018)

From a local perspective, the Village Fund programme has contributed to the de-peripheralisation of small islands in social and political aspects by providing development funds alongside the autonomy needed. However, there have also been challenges in implementation. Since the start, the Village Fund programme has been controversial; critics predicted that villages are not ready to handle large amounts of money and work with formal systems of project planning, implementation, transfers and reporting. Accountability was also questioned, since controlling 500 district governments has already been challenging. The fact that central government intended to give block grants to more than 60,000 villages is understandably

questionable. The Minister of Villages, Disadvantaged Areas and Transmigration admitted in a formal statement in 2017 that it was a risk the state was willing to take:

“We know that the majority of village administrators are not ready to manage this amount of money. However, it is the president’s commitment to develop villages, if we don’t start now, we never will, because we have a large country.” (Simorangkir, 2017)

Monitoring, coordination and accountability, as predicted, became an issue for local governments and programme officers. From 2015 to 2019 there were 473 cases of Village Fund corruption across Indonesia (Ramadhan, 2020). Another main problem reported by local government officials was the capacity of village staff. Many did not have sufficient education or experience in handling formal proposals and projects with the necessary detailed reporting requirements. The village leaders were also considered as being incapable of making the right decisions, even though they were offered assistance and regularly attended district and sub-district coordination meetings. There are 275 villages in the Riau Islands Province spread across 394 inhabited islands; monitoring becomes an issue for local governments. An official within the Natuna District’s Department of Community and Village Development (DCVD) admitted there had been cases where villages reported an accomplishment of activities proposed, but when visited the department found these activities had not been done. Tighter administration has been developed to anticipate these issues; now villages are monitored by seven institutions, including the police. Apart from accountability, local governments have complained about how the scheme was not well planned. The top-down programme was drafted and implemented in a short period leaving many flaws in implementation, especially for the small islands. An official within Natuna District’s DCVD explained:

“The village fund is based on local discussions, but very much directed towards certain development. Prioritised programmes include making a village reservoir, sports facilities, and developing village products. Different ministries use village funds to claim their own achievements through these prioritised

programmes. Not all of this can be implemented or is suitable for our island villages. I think it should depend on each village's needs, with good assistance to help them achieve their goals." (N19, 17/5/2018)

Local governments believe the implementation of the Village Fund is a mix between very centralised programmes and many unbeneficial projects proposed by villages, such as beautifying villages and celebration events. The programme is seen as highly centralistic with littler consideration of the local context, being instead filled with national political interests. An official within Bintan's DCVD explained:

"The ministry makes sudden changes in a short period. The central government adjusted programmes to labour intensive construction where at least 30% of budget is used to pay villagers working in construction process, which is usually done by voluntary work. The government might see this as a temporary solution to give the community fresh money, but our islanders have more money from fishing and are not too skilful in construction so it cannot be implemented here. We have to play around with administrative reporting. To be honest, I think this is a way to 'bribe' the village people before the next presidential election." (B16, 25/6/2018)

This thought is shared amongst many local government officials interviewed regarding the Village Funds. The sustainability of the programme and how it will help villages in the long run is questionable. Many local government officials agreed that the central government might as well let local governments distribute and manage the village funds to better synchronise island development. Returning to the discussion of small islands' peripherality, although there are critics about the arrangements, implementation and evidence of village-level corruption, overall, the Village Funds programme has had positive feedback from islanders and has played an important role in bringing state presence closer to the people. Hence, there are certainly positive aspects of the programme, along with imperfections that can be improved. Alongside village development, to further show the state's commitment to developing the peripheries, the central government has also strengthened public services in peripheral areas – especially health

and education. As shall be discussed below, similar to the Village Funds programme, the provision of health and education in the peripheral areas is widely celebrated by those in the periphery, but still needs improvement, especially in adjusting to small islands' geography.

6.3.3. Health and education provision for peripheral areas

In health provision, the efforts to deliver services to peripheral areas is part of the vision to develop the periphery and is also part of Indonesia's National Health Service (JKN), which was established in 2013. To make the universal health system work, the health service needs to reach every single citizen, even in the most remote and peripheral area (Sari et al., 2019). Hence, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has been a leading ministry concerning service delivery in peripheral areas, especially small islands. The MoH targets certain areas, including less developed areas, border areas and archipelago regions (DTPK), as well as areas with significant health problems (DBK) with many small islands in favour of these targeted service provisions. The MoH launched a programme called *Nusantara Sehat* or Healthy Nusantara (Nusantara is another name for the Indonesian archipelago) in 2015 dedicated to provide health services for less developed and remote areas by recruiting and giving incentives to health professionals to work in remote and peripheral areas. Until 2018, more than 7,000 health professionals have been spread across Indonesia to help deliver health services (Sulistyawati, 2019). To provide communities with specialist doctors, the MoH also launched a programme called Specialist Doctor Mandatory Assignment (WKDS) since 2017, where after finishing their specialist education, doctors are obliged to work for one year in places designated by the MoH, mostly in targeted areas, before being able to practice independently.

All health departments in the Riau Islands interviewed in this research were happy to accept the health professionals sent by the MoH, either through *Nusantara Sehat* or WKDS.

Without this, local governments would find it difficult to fill positions in remote islands and provide health services, even when new health clinics have been built. Whilst this has been a positive development, the findings highlight a number of issues in which local governments have raised concerns. First, regarding the uneven spread of health professionals; in *Nusantara Sehat*, placement is decided voluntarily by applicants. Applicants generally choose to go to slightly peripheral areas, that are usually still on the main island or near the main island. Very rarely do participants choose to go to the most remote areas. An official at the Natuna District's Health Department explains:

“Not everyone wants to be placed in a remote island. The programme for specialist doctors (WKDS) is compulsory, but I don't think anyone would want it of their own will. We can't find people for this position (the most remote islands), even the central government finds it hard to attract people, despite the incentives.” (N06, 7/5/2018)

The *Nusantara Sehat* programme publishes available positions and receives documents online as the first stage of recruitment. The website publishes information of placement area and the type of profession needed (doctor, nurse, pharmacist, etc.). People can apply individually to a specific area or become part of a team of health professions which will then be assigned by the MoH. An official within the Bintan District's Health Department explained that positions published by the MoH are based on requests from local government. However, not all the positions sent by *Nusantara Sehat* are the same as requested, due to low interest from individual applications. An official within the Lingga District's Health Department provided another interesting insight:

“*Nusantara Sehat* focuses in villages and remote areas. This is important, but in our district capital, the doctors and facilities aren't complete yet either, whereas all the patients from villages and sub-districts will be referred to us (main island). I think this should also come to attention of the central government. When we have a meeting with central government staff, we always communicate our condition, but their response is always that they will make a note of it and come back to us.” (L14, 9/7/2018)

The official also explained another concerning aspect of health service provision in peripheral areas, especially on small islands. The National Health Service (JKN) is considered to be too rigid. The system does not take into account the additional costs associated with transport between the islands, the transporting of patients between islands when referring from a clinic to hospital, and the spread of equipment needed across islands, etc. The Health Department official considered the local health system used before JKN to be more appropriate, as it was more flexible and could adjust to local needs. While central government intervention has been helpful to supply peripheral islands with health professionals, certain adjustments are needed to have more fruitful outcomes on the peripheral islands.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has programmes similar to those of the Ministry of Health. Act 14/2005 has already stated that those in peripheral areas will receive certain incentives, but this was more of a guidance which depended on implementation by each local government. The MoE launched a programme called *Maju Bersama Mencerdaskan Indonesia* (MBMI) or ‘Moving Forward Educating Indonesia’ in 2011, targeted at special areas. This consisted of a short-term solution named SM3T where university graduates would serve one year in targeted areas with a small wage (about £120/month) and continue with professional teacher training funded by a scholarship from the state, and a long-term programme called PPGT where high school graduates from targeted areas are selected and recruited in professional teacher training. In line with the state’s mission to develop from the periphery, the Ministry of Education has similar programmes with *Nustantara Sehat*. In 2015 – the early years of President Jokowi’s administration – the central government launched a programme called *Guru Garis Depan* (GGD) to provide a more permanent solution. Teachers are contracted for at least 10 years to serve in remote schools. GGD teachers are permanent government-paid

teachers and will have incentives for serving in rural areas. In the first year of the programme more than 7,000 teachers were recruited, mostly young teachers who had just earned their teaching degree. In 2017, the government targeted to recruit 17,000 GGD teachers spread to 15,000 villages in less developed and border areas (Kemendikbud, 2017). Teachers already teaching in targeted areas were also included in the programme, so they can receive incentives to stay. The Karimun District in Riau Islands Province received 158 GGD teachers in 2017, who were then spread to the most remote islands. Natuna, Kepulauan Anambas and Bintan District each received 17, 38 and 17 respectively (Antara Kepri, 2017; Batampos, 2018; Setda Natuna, 2017; Tanjungpinang Pos, 2017).

While these programmes helped to increase the number of teachers in the Riau Islands, it has not yet filled all the needed positions of teachers in the most remote islands. While new teachers recruited by GGD come to the islands, current teachers previously recruited through SM3T who are finishing their contract are ready to move back to the mainland or where they came from. An official from Natuna District's Education Department argued that "Nobody genuinely wants to really spend their life in these places (remote islands), with very few exceptions." They explained that, besides being isolated, there are language and cultural barriers too; not everyone can speak Indonesian, the national language. An official within the Lingga District's Education Department explained that there are also administrative 'glitches' that make some areas especially marginalised from the state-led distribution of teachers:

"The Ministry of Education (MoE) sends teachers and incentives for teachers to targeted villages that are least developed. The status of remote and less developed village is based on village administrator's evaluation. Sometimes they don't fill in the forms correctly or their ego is too high to admit that they are less developed. The additional funding from MoE and teachers sent is based on data from the Ministry of Village, Least Developed Areas and Transmigration. So, in many cases the village is very remote with no proper infrastructure but does not administratively fall under targeted areas. GGD teachers do not come there and other recruited teachers become very reluctant to teach, as there are no financial incentives." (L5, 3/7/2018)

The official suggested that if local governments were to be given the extra funding for teacher incentives and the autonomy to recruit themselves, there would be a better chance of placing people in the right places. The state's intervention in health and education provision on the peripheral islands has been the least conflicting intervention with local governments, compared to border and rural development programmes. For both public health and education services, the central government's intervention has been valuable for the increase in health and education professionals. However, it is only a partial and, in many cases, temporary solution for small islands. The local governments suggest more local government involvement in state-led public service provisions to ensure appropriate distribution amongst the islands. In summary, the central government's intervention for the periphery has largely been welcomed by the islanders and island governments, but the findings discussed here demonstrate how state intervention without consideration of islandness and the local context can create unwanted conditions. The findings also show how state-led interventions in development for the peripheries can still be used to advance political interests and motives of those in the centre.

6.4. Chapter conclusion

This final empirical chapter has discussed how small islands' peripheralities are shaped and changed through the interests and interventions of external metropolises that have the capacity to coerce power and utilise the islands. In this context the focus is the Indonesian state, and how its interests and interventions can change development course of small islands and their peripherality. As there has been little state intervention specifically designed to address the issues of peripherality in small islands, in order to understand the potential and risk of state-led intervention in small islands, this chapter has looked into two main types of interventions

which have juxtaposed small island geographies; development *in* the peripheries and development *for* the peripheries. Both types of intervention have contributed to the shift of small islands' development, creating new centralities as well as new peripheralities. The chapter shows that the central government's direct interventions in small islands have the same risks of being infiltrated by political interests and corruption as local government management of the islands. This chapter has also shown how the implementation of central government programmes has not acknowledged islandness as an ontological resource (Stratford, 2008), risking sacrificing the islanders for the state's own interests and for the sake of showcasing political narratives of 'developing the peripheries'.

This chapter began by examining the state's interests in the peripheral islands. While acting as an "imperial" power, the state is also influenced by external forces and other "imperial" powers; namely regional economy in the development of FTZs around Singapore, geopolitics concerning China's claim over the South China Sea and international movement of asylum seekers *en route* to Australia but stuck in the Riau Islands. While the state has publicised the positive sides of central government development and their utilisation of the peripheral islands, and even highlighted the positive contributions it has made for local people, the actual voices and detailed experiences of the islanders and island governments rarely reach mainstream national media.

The state's economic development of the Free Trade Zones has changed the course of development for the entire Riau Islands, both in positive and negative ways. Besides creating an economic centre, it has also culturally and politically marginalised the local Malays. But discussed further in this chapter was the central control of the FTZ by making it into a National Strategic Area (KSN), which is seen by local governments as a violation of island governments' rightful jurisdiction over the sea. It also risks increasing illegal activities without the local

governments being involved in decision making and monitoring. There is also suspicion of central government actors' involvement in providing permits for personal interests. In terms of defence, the strengthening of the military deployment in the Natuna District has been publicised as a national priority in defending national maritime borders. The locals do not see that a decrease in the number of foreign trawlers is due to an increase in the size of the navy; the navy has been in Natuna for a long time but did not do anything, as some might even be involved in cover ups of illegal fishing. Hence, the increased monitoring might just be a temporary political project to justify the investment in the military. In reality, those actually living on Ranai Island, together with the military, constantly feel a sense of insecurity. A sense of being used and marginalised by the state is even greater when peripheral islands are used as places to isolate and offshore activities unwanted by the centre. The findings clearly show how the state's developments in the peripheries have not been sensitive enough towards the local island context, hence damaging the delicate social fabric and marginalising islanders.

The second part of this chapter discussed the efforts of the state to support development *for* the peripheries. The government has made a number of champion projects for border islands, including backbone infrastructure in transportation, telecommunications and fisheries for the Natuna and Kepulauan Anambas Districts, which have been widely publicised as successes by the central government. However, according to local governments, they have not yet contributed to significant differences to daily life. Prioritised development for border islands has also not been as fascinating as publicised; in many ways it has actually been criticised by local governments, as there is no secured funding and more administrative work. In the Natuna District, there has been a centralisation in planning and overlapping local jurisdictions which are much despised by local governments. On the other hand, rural development in the form of the Village Funds programme has been much appreciated by the community, as they are given

funding and autonomy. Despite the popularity, local governments have argued how the programme was not well planned. They were also suspicious of political interests in the programme, as more funds have suddenly been distributed to rural areas through Village Funds prior to the next presidential elections. The state-led intervention in the peripheries most appreciated by local governments is the efforts to provide health and education services in peripheral areas, but even so, this is still considered a partial and temporal solution and has not provided a comprehensive solution for public services on small islands.

Islanders and local governments have often resisted and despised the implementation of state-led interventions on small islands. From analysing all of the state's intervention in the small islands, it is clear to see that the central government has not acknowledged what Stratford (2008:161) calls the "ontological power of islandness" and lacks sensitivity towards the local geographic and social contexts. The state has applied standardised and proscriptive models of development (Clark, 2013). Relating back to the debates over whether the central government mistrusts local government in using resources and autonomy, this chapter has highlighted how almost every intervention of the state has a political motive to strengthen the state's centre and for the interests of actors in the central government. Hence, it could not be justified that the state's direct interventions on the islands are better and more accountable than those of local governments. Although, it is seemingly easier to monitor the accountability of central government rather than dispersed autonomies, state-led interventions on small islands have risks of being hijacked by actors' and political interests just as much as local government-led interventions. Another important finding is that the central government's 'commitment' towards prioritising development for certain areas is often just tied to existing development plans, and the significance of such prioritisation can hardly be seen. The central government's agenda in developing 'in the peripheries' and 'for the peripheries' still leaves many

imperfections, confusions and partial solutions for the small islands. Thus, state-led developments for small islands need to move beyond just securing funding or prioritising development and begin to incorporate ‘Nissology’ – the understanding of islands (Depraetere, 2008; McCall, 1994), to fully understand islands and islanders on their own terms. The central government as a benevolent “imperial” power for the islands, should be able to address the interests of islanders whilst fulfilling its own interests, and protecting the islanders from other “imperial” powers that have interests in the islands and seas of the Riau Islands.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Research summary and conclusions

This thesis has addressed the ongoing debates regarding the management of small islands in Indonesia by examining the nexus of island geographies and governance relations in the production and alteration of peripherality. Only recently has the issue of small islands' peripherality been discussed at the national level, the main debate being whether the support towards small islands should be more of a direct intervention by the state or decentralised to local governments. The theoretical framework upon which this thesis is built is mainly derived from three bodies of academic literature; Island Studies, literature on peripherality mainly from Regional Studies, and the broad literature on geography of power, central-local governance relations, and decentralisation. Additional material on postcolonialism and development provide context to the case study being a developing country riddled with informalities and sometimes corruption. Riau Islands Province has been selected as the case study for this thesis for two main reasons; it is the province with the largest number of small islands, and has a range of central government intervention, hence making it ideal for a this type of research.

This thesis has disentangled the complexities and provided a more comprehensive way to analyze complex and overlapping arrangements of socio-material components using an Assemblage approach and an analytical lens adopted from theories on peripherality. The assemblage comprises of various components: mainly island geography, actors and institutions – carrying with them different capacities and interests and governance systems. The assemblage itself is constantly influenced by its environment and external factors; in this case the most prominent influence relates with postcolonialism, where the assemblage stands on a colonial

conditioning and operates in an increasingly globalised world, saturated with notions of neo-colonialism. The assemblage is also dissected across different dimensions (economy, social, and political) and different scales in order to identify peripheralities and the strand of relations leading to its production or alteration.

Before diving into the summaries and conclusions, let us first acknowledge that island peripheralities does not only refer to peripherality felt by those on islands, but in a wider sense, we can define island peripheralities as perceptions and perspectives of peripherality across different dimensions and scales that in some way or another, either direct or indirect, are influenced by island geographies. The plural form ‘peripheralities’ is more appropriate than island peripherality, as the research shows, a multiplicity of centrality and peripherality can coexist and juxtapose at a given space and time. The empirical chapters have provided findings of how different parts of the assemblage works. First, island geography’s role in an assemblage is to mediate capacity (including resource and enforcement) in producing peripheralities. Island geographies can contain and obstruct the flow of resource and enforcement. Second, the empirical chapter shows how government or institutional systems (administration, bureaucracy, central-local government arrangements) has a relatively fixed nature, hence can obstruct, filter, or permit the flow of resource and authority. This is balanced by the third finding, that shows informalities (actors and acts) can ignore, bypass and effect systems, which in turn influence the flows of capacity through the systems shaping alternative conditions and central/peripheral perceptions. These pointers lead to a conclusion that: island peripheralities are produced and altered through the dynamic interactions of actors or institutions carrying different interests and capacities mediated by island geographies, operating through formal and informal systems.

The first empirical chapter, Chapter 4, serves to fulfill the first research objective to understand how island geographies (islandness, island size, topography, resources and society)

interact with other components of the assemblage in shaping social, economic and political conditions. The chapter has provided important insights on the significance of island geography in producing a multiplicity of peripheralities and centralities, by directly obstructing flows of government resources to the islands. However, the findings also show that many peripheral conditionings are actually indirectly produced through the interaction of island geography with existing government systems.

Islanders interact with a number of systems that make them economically central and peripheral at the same time. As island geography mediates resource and authority, systems that are not adapted for island geographies may become the cause of peripherality. The cross-border trade of fish and consumer products are mediated by Chinese *Towkays* (business owners) where many transactions are made informally, without tax and minimum government restriction, allowing the islanders to integrate in the economic centrality of the Malacca region. On the other hand, border systems are strict on fuel and gas, so they rely on government distribution system for fuel and gas with expensive distribution price, and sometimes have to deal with limited fuel and gas during strong winds. Informalities have helped bypass systems for fish and consumer products but not for fuel and gas, producing centrality and peripherality in the same archipelagic setting. Another example of systems obstructing the flow of resource and capacity is how bureaucracy systematically de-prioritises small islands, creating administrative challenges in supplying medicine to smaller islands. This supports (Chittoo, 2011) claim of the importance of island-oriented public administration, which has surprisingly been very lightly touched upon in academic discourses.

Chapter 5 focuses on changes in central-local government arrangements. This chapter provides interesting findings in regards to the political dimensions. From the national perspective, decentralisation has been a success in terms of keeping the peripheries loyal to the state, avoiding political disintegration of the archipelago state – as Ramage (2007) describes Indonesia’s approach “democracy first, good governance later”. The decentralisation arrangements allowed local governments to self-govern, central government resources to be transferred to localities, and retain revenue shares from natural resource and local taxes.

The findings show that islands and archipelagic geographies, provide a strong basis to serve as political narratives in negotiating government arrangements. Riau Islands distinct archipelagoneess supported the rhetoric to separate from the mainland and establish a new province, also a basis for archipelago provinces to request more funding. The establishment of local governments proved, to some extent, de-peripheralise the islands economically, but at the same time, the mechanism of local democracy allowed Batam to have the greatest number of parliament members that make decisions for the entire Riau Islands, despite being a metropolitan island inhabited mostly by migrants that relate neither with archipelagoneess or Malayness. In this case, the Malays become politically peripheral in their own islands. The findings confirm the literature in how local democracy in island settings is not always a good option. Democratic mechanisms including elections can more easily be tinkered with in remote places and money politics is much easier. The findings also show that democratic system is sometimes not wanted by people as it disrupted grass root social structures, increasing micro political rivalry, peripheralising opposing political groups. Decentralisation does not always have to be democratic (Smith, 1985). In fact, the findings show more attention need to focus on non-political governance systems. Local governments still face bureaucratic challenges in island governance, especially after the recentralisation of authority over resources. Island

governments no longer have authority over the sea between their islands, nor over natural resources.

Following discussions on governance, Chapter 6 takes on another perspective, focusing on the centre towards small islands. The findings show that the central interest *in* the islands have, in various degrees, contributed to the marginalisation of the indigenous islanders and the island governments, even in the development of new economic centres. The state uses its capacity to take control over resources, and populate islands to support state agendas. Islanders often suffer from this forced in-migration, as small islands geographies tend to amplify social tensions due to their boundedness (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018; Warrington & Milne, 2007). The case of Riau Islands is, what some call, a subtle form of internal colonialism (Androus & Greymorning, 2016; Royle, 2001).

In terms of economic interests, the state's stronger control in National Strategic Areas (KSN) in the Riau Islands means that local governments cannot access the benefit from the economic growth in their territory, yet they are burdened with externalities and responsibilities as a result of economic activities, such as pollution from shipping and marine ecosystem degradation. In terms of border islands, increasing military personnel in the islands has created tensions with the locals, where the locals have reportedly been oppressed. Small islands have also become places to detain illegal migrants, and more recently COVID suspects coming in from Wuhan, China at the beginning of the pandemic. In terms of state's development *for* the peripheries. Despite benefitting from state-led development for border, remote and rural areas, the findings show that without specifically targeting small islands, these development programmes are only partial and short-term solutions.

The following provides the concluding points derived from the findings:

1. On perspectives of island peripheralities

In discussions of island peripheralities, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of identifying multiple peripheralities in different dimensions and scales that can coexist. Limiting discussions of peripherality at a certain dimension and scale, ignores the peripheral and central conditions in other aspects. By juxtaposing different dimensions, we can observe how the grassroots fishery economy of Riau Islands is vibrant and productive, yet local governments revenue from this sector is miniscule, which can further have implications on the lack of resource to support and develop the islands. On the other hand, identifying different scales can help provide a better understanding of relationality between actors and systems at various levels.

2. On island relations

The findings show a number of aspects influencing island relations, and implicating the production and alterations of peripheralities. Firstly, European colonial and post-colonial practice of bordering has influenced central-peripheral relations of islands in many ways, which in turn affect perceptions of peripherality in the islands through the differentiation between islands and mainland/continents, or between clusters of islands provide a strong basis for imagining territories. The Riau-Johor Sultanate was divided by the British and Dutch colonial powers along the Malacca Strait, while the Sultanate of Sulu was dissected between main island of Borneo and the smaller islands to the north. As a postcolonial state, the birth of Indonesia also created state borders which made island societies that were previously at the centre of their own world, find themselves at the periphery of a distant polity and discover an arbitrary border suddenly reinforced by state military. Interestingly, bordering also affects governance at a local

level. In the early years of independence, the Riau Lingga Sultanate, which was governed from Bintan Island, was incorporated in the nation of Indonesia as a province. A few years later, the centre of governance was moved to a new capital on the mainland Sumatra, and the Riau Islands become the subordinate of a territory that was formerly under their rule. Further changes in central-peripheral relations were also affected by the bordering of island geographies.

Secondly, island relations are influenced by central government prioritisation affecting flows of government resource from the centre to the peripheries. Due to the maintenance of a strong centrality in Java, combined with policies to strengthen and develop border islands, liminal islands find themselves peripheralised. Not close enough to centres, but not peripheral enough to receive flows of resource from the capital. This halo effect can clearly be observed in the case study of Lingga district, where it is neither border nor close enough to an economic mainland. To overcome peripherality, Lingga is currently adapting unconventional strategies to gain more central government connection, including transforming Lingga Island to become a producer of rice, tapping funding from the Ministry of Agriculture, despite the islanders having no farming experience.

Thirdly, informal networks have proven to be as important as formal networks in determining central-peripheral conditions. Islands relations are dependent on geography and various actors mediating movement of capacity, ideas, and resource. Multiple 'regions' are produced and overlap as a result of different relations. The assemblage approach has helped to identify the roles of different actors involved in creating multiple networks in the Riau Islands. In this case, the Chinese Towkay (business owners) mediate cross-border transactions in the Malacca region. Fish and other goods can move swiftly in this 'virtual' region, where other spatial orderings are somehow ignored. The findings show how islanders may be central in a

virtual region while being peripheral through other networks. Thus, informal actors mediating relations are also crucial in determining central-peripheral island relations.

3. Island governance and peripheralities: a focus on systems

The empirical chapters provide abundant evidence that shows how governance systems greatly influence how island governments are able to provide services as needed by their islands, and how systems can also be the cause of peripheralisation. A mainland-based template of bureaucratic systems has created unreasonable development targets for island governments, forcing local resources to be used for central government development goals, that do not always reflect the actual needs of the islands. This imperfect system has often been balanced by informalities, either by islanders themselves or government officials, such as turning a blind eye on illegal border-crossing and trade. As Stratford (2008) argues, islandness can be used as an ontological tool to guide island governance, on the other hand, without government systems catered for small islands, there can be unwanted outcomes.

4. Development by whom? Centralised vs decentralised

Based on the thesis findings, we can compare the implications of different centralized and decentralised approaches of small island governance. The issue of small islands is currently not on the list of state priorities, the central government does not currently have policies or studies specifically on the peripherality of small islands. Evidence from the findings show that central government deployment of programs for the peripheries, have not been sustainable solutions for small islands. Despite the shortcomings, it seems the establishment of local governments and the decentralisation of autonomy and resources has been central in the rise of

awareness and discussions on small island peripheralities. The advocacy of small islands has been a bottom-up process through various channels.

However, when development is decentralised too far down, the findings from the Village Fund Programs show that island communities are not yet able to manage development themselves. Of course, they should be involved, but not as the main actors in charge of development programs. Development by the peripheries can be mediated by the government. Thus, based on this thesis' findings, local governments have the best chance to lead the way for developing small islands. However, this also needs the support of more flexible island-oriented systems, in terms of central-local governance arrangements and bureaucratic systems, as well as close monitoring and guidance from the central government.

Finally, the author would like to refer to a paper on similar issues of decentralising development in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, Hart despises a supposedly neutral governance stance, He says:

“The great thing about modern states and their bureaucracies is that in principle everyone is treated the same, as equals. That is also the worst thing about modern states: they are impersonal and indifferent to who people really are, with all their differences.” (Hart, 2001:340)

The thesis emphasises the importance of an islandness approach where small islands are concerned. Small islands have unique geographies, sensitive ecosystems and social systems which need to be understood comprehensively and managed accordingly for the sake of the islanders. Without this, the findings show numerous unintended externalities stemming from changing central-local government arrangements and state-led interventions, as they conflict with existing island networks and social fabric, disadvantaging the indigenous islanders. While the issue of resource and authority will further depend on political debates at the national level,

this thesis has identified numerous bureaucratic arrangements that can be improved and adjusted for small island regions, and can be a starting point to work on an islandness approach in governing small islands. It is not an issue of innovative governance *per se*, but more important, building the awareness of islandness at all levels of governments.

7.2. Significance of research

This thesis has made a contribution in integrating three bodies of literature – island studies, governance and studies on peripherality, that often intersect but the conceptual relation between the two has not been thoroughly explored. The novelty of the framework adopts an assemblage approach to bring together socio-material nexus of geography and governance relations in a postcolonial conditioning. Theories of peripherality is used to provide an analytical lens, where a multiplicity of peripheralities may be seen to co-exist and overlap at different dimensions and scales.

This thesis provides an interesting case of island governance relations in a developing country, riddled with informalities. The findings provide new perspectives of understanding the relations between island geography and governance in shaping central-peripheral conditions. The thesis provides a nuanced perspective of informalities shaping central conditions, and formalities that may contribute to peripheralities. The identification of nodes of interactions producing peripheral conditions can be further be examined for possible solutions.

7.3. Limitations of research

There are a number of important points to emphasise about this thesis' research limitations. Firstly, the scope of this research setting is limited to the Riau Islands Province. It has been chosen due to its large number of islands, the variety of central government interests

and central-local government arrangements which can also provide a general insight for other Indonesian small islands. Despite this systematic attempt to find the most suitable case study for the purpose of possible generalisation, every island has its own unique geography, and local government quality depends on available human resources and local politics. Islands also vary administratively across Indonesia; while the Riau Islands consists completely of small islands where each district and the province can call themselves, island governments, many other islands are administratively part of a mainland government, hence finding different administrative and political challenges and constraints.

Secondly, due to limited time, budget, and safety concerns, this research is mainly based on interviews from government staff, local institutions and community leaders on the main island in each visited district in the Riau Islands Province. Field work was carried out in only 13 islands out of 400 inhabited islands in the Riau Islands Province. Conditions of daily experiences on more remote islands are based on information from these interviews. Additional primary data from interviewing islanders and observing daily life can only be made on the few islands visited during the field work. Also, this research was carried out before, what the locals call, the 'North Wind' season where tides are high and many islands become isolated. The conditions in this season can only be based on interviews without the research having first-hand experience on this issue. Grass root perspectives on peripherality are not fully captured in this research; mostly through the narratives of the selected interviewees and informal 'chats' with the locals during the fieldwork.

Thirdly, there has been a limitation of quantitative data and official documents from the local governments, due to lengthy bureaucracy and unorganised government data. There were several documents that may have been useful for this research and would have helped triangulate findings from interviews; for example, data relating to 'islandness cost' referring to

the additional governance cost due to island geography, which may include inter-island transportation expenses for government staff, teachers, students, health workers and patients, medical and learning material distribution, also price difference between islands. Data regarding projects in each island would have also been useful to understand the spread of central and local government projects throughout the archipelago. Such data needs to be collected in each local department separately with their own bureaucracy, which could not be accomplished during this research.

7.4. Policy implications and future works

A number of policy implications can be derived from this thesis. First and foremost, is the need to acknowledge Islandness as an ontological resource for governance (Stratford, 2008). The central government's commitment to take care of islanders of around 6,000 small inhabited islands across the country will send out a strong political statement that the state is serious on building on its maritime vision, starting from its smallest islands. Small islands are unique geographies having distinct natural and social ecologies; hence every aspect of government mechanism needs to adjust to small island conditions. This includes administration and bureaucracy to be adjusted for the islands, and island-proofing small islands from national policies that may actually be harmful for small islands. A good benchmark for this is the Scottish Island Act made effective in 2018, which aims to promote islanders' voice, harness island resources and enhance islanders' well-being. It comes with a national island plan and island community impact assessment to ensure this aim is achieved. Unlike Japan's Remote Island Development Act, the Scottish Island Act also provides small islands with more autonomy, especially over their marine area, for example in terms of fishing licensing.

Regarding autonomy, local autonomy over the marine area is a crucial part of empowering islands. This is part of the state's acknowledgement of islandness and archipelagoness, where sea and islands are a single entity formed through archipelagic networks. This thesis has found that local governments play an important role in supporting islanders: hence supporting island governments with more autonomy over their marine area provides them with additional resources as well as a sense of belonging and pride to be an islander. In the long run, this can decrease island issues such as de-population and reverse the general conception of small islands as peripheral places. Until now, island governments such as the Riau Islands that have more marine area compared to their land area do not derive any economic benefit from their marine sector, as the sea over 12 miles from shore is managed by the central government, and island governments do not receive a fair share of revenue from the marine sector. The findings show that large fishing boats from Java pay their retribution to the central government, but in some cases they also fish in marine territories dedicated for traditional fishers, hence more local control over fishing license can also help protect local fishers.

For border islands in the Riau Islands, the issue of cross-border trade is important. The rigid borders have cut the islanders off from their closest mainland that they have been trading with for generations before the birth of Indonesia and Malaysia. The local governments' stance to turn a blind eye on illegal cross border trade is not a sustainable solution. Cross-border trade between islanders and their closest mainlands across the Malacca Strait need to be formalised to support efforts to de-peripheralise the Riau Islanders. The findings show rigid state borders force the most peripheral islands to rely on Indonesian distribution, but while doing so, the central government has not been able to guarantee the distribution of goods to small islands at the same reasonable price. The findings indicate that the well-being of those in peripheral

islands has been sacrificed for the sake of national border rhetoric. The state has not taken advantage of Malaysia's telecommunication infrastructure passing through Kepulauan Anambas and has not formalised cross-border trade for fuel and other important commodities with Malaysia for the sake of national integrity, not wanting those in border islands rely too much on neighbour states. On the other hand, ironically, Indonesian companies have been selling off sand illegally to Singapore. Strengthening local government capacity and creating a more flexible island-based bureaucracy, as suggested above, has its risk of being misused, but the solution is not centralisation, rather a development of more robust control mechanisms. A change towards better governance of small islands can be a pilot project for better island governance at a larger scale for the archipelago state.

Considering the research findings, research limitations and policy recommendations, a number of suggestions is made for future work. For the Indonesian setting, more islands and island governments need to be researched using the same approach this thesis has provided to capture a wide range of central-local government relations and more diverse island geographies. This will help build a better model applicable to the entire archipelago. An ethnographic research on islands' peripherality will also help build better understanding of the implications of changes of governance relations in island societies. And finally, for the purpose of Indonesia's small island policies, quantitative research may focus on islandness costs, inter-island transportation networks, inter-island trade and spread of development budget to understand the geography of island development. For the wider academic discussions about island governance, more research on central-local government relations needs to be conducted, especially for developing archipelagic states, where issues of informality coexist with formal governance relations. This will help enrich Island Studies with more robust applicable discussions, especially for developing island states.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET/ *LEMBAR INFORMASI PARTISIPAN*

RESEARCH TEAM/ *TIM PENELITI*

Principal Researcher/ *Peneliti Utama* : Mohamad Rachmadian Narotama, PhD Candidate
Lead Supervisor/ *Pembimbing Utama* : Dr. John Round, University of Birmingham
Co-Supervisor/ *Pembimbing Kedua* : Dr. Julian Clark, University of Birmingham

RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Mohamad Rachmadian Narotama, a PhD Candidate at University of Birmingham (UoB) is conducting this research under the supervision of Dr. John Round and Dr. Julian Clark from The University of Birmingham (UoB). The UoB Research Ethics Officers have all given their written support for this research. The aim of this research is to critically assess how governance relations and island geographies produce and alter peripherality.

The background of this research is the increase of acknowledgement and current movement of Indonesia's government towards developing its peripheral smaller islands (around 17 thousand) through a combination of central government programmes and strong autonomous local government whom are directly elected by the people. This raises question to how the process of island development will unfold, in the context of a developing archipelago country, with around 600 ethnicities and 500 locally elected governments. Placing the role of developing thousands of islands in the hand of this many autonomous governments will have challenges in development and monitoring.

Mohamad Rachmadian Narotama adalah kandidat PhD dari Universitas Birmingham yang sedang melakukan penelitian dibawah bimbingan Dr John Round dan Dr Julian Clark dari Universitas Birmingham (UoB). Komite Etik UoB telah memberikan ijin untuk penelitian ini. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengamati secara kritis bagaimana hubungan pemerintah dan geografi pulau kecil menghasilkan dan merubah kondisi keterpinggiran.

Latar belakang dari penelitian ini adalah meningkatnya perhatian dan upaya pemerintah Indonesia dalam mengembangkan pulau-pulau kecil (sekitar 17 ribu) melalui perpaduan dari program pemerintah pusat dan pemerintah daerah yang otonom, dimana pimpinan daerah dipilih langsung oleh masyarakat. Hal ini menuntun pada pertanyaan utama bagaimana proses pembangunan pulau-pulau kecil terjadi dalam konteks negara kepulauan yang masih berkembang, dengan sekitar 600 suku dan 500 pemerintah daerah. Mempercayakan pembangunan ribuan pulau pada sekian banyak daerah otonom secara terpisah memiliki tantangan dalam pembangunan dan pengawasan.

There are wide bodies of literature concerning development, decentralisation and local governance yet to place them in the context of island geography is a very lightly touched subject.

Based on the research gaps above, the aim of this research is to contribute to the understanding of island development process by local actors (local government, representatives, and leaders) in sub national jurisdictions of developing archipelago countries. In this research Riau Archipelago Province in Indonesia is used as case study with further objectives of the research

1. Identify how island geographies contribute to peripherality
2. Examine how changes in local government capacities alter peripherality
3. Examine implication of state interest in small islands

PARTICIPATION AND QUESTIONS BEING ADDRESSED

Your participation will involve a recorded interview at your office or other agreed location and will take approximately 1 hour. The questions will be based on research aim and objectives, relevant to your capacity.

RIGHTS AS PARTICIPANTS

1. You have the right to withdraw your participation (without disclosing any reason) without prejudice or negative consequences at any time.
2. You have the right to have any questions relating to this project answered at anytime.

Ada banyak sekali literatur mengenai pembangunan wilayah, desentralisasi dan pemerintah daerah, namun masih sangat sedikit pembahasan yang mengaitkan semua literatur tersebut dengan konteks geografi kepulauan.

Sehubungan dengan gap penelitian diatas, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk turut berkontribusi pada pemahaman mengenai proses pembangunan pulau-pulau kecil oleh aktor lokal (pemerintah daerah, perwakilan masyarakat dan pemimpin daerah) di negara berkembang kepulauan. Dalam penelitian ini, Provinsi Kepulauan Riau di Indonesia digunakan sebagai studi kasus dengan penjabaran sasaran penelitian sebagai berikut:

1. Mengidentifikasi bagaimana geografi kepulauan berkontribusi pada keterpinggiran
2. Meneliti perubahan kapasitas pemerintah daerah merubah kondisi keterpinggiran
3. Meneliti implikasi adanya kepentingan pemerintah pusat di pulau kecil

PARTISIPAN DAN PERTANYAAN YANG AKAN DIAJUKAN

Bentuk partisipasi berupa wawancara yang direkam di kantor Anda atau lokasi lain yang telah disepakati dan akan memerlukan waktu sekitar 1 jam. Pertanyaan yang diajukan akan berdasarkan tujuan dan sasaran penelitian, sesuai dengan kapasitas Anda.

HAK SEBAGAI PARTISIPAN

1. Anda memiliki hak untuk membatalkan partisipasi kapanpun (tanpa harus memberikan alasan) tanpa ada penilaian buruk maupun konsekuensi negatif.
2. Anda berhak mendapatkan jawaban atas semua pertanyaan terkait penelitian ini kapanpun

BENEFITS

This research will contribute to the understanding of central and local governance in small island development, thus leading to a more sustainable island development scheme.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for your participation in this research.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Data collected from all participants will be treated as confidential and will be a part of PhD Thesis and be reported or published in journals, conferences, and other academic publications resulting from the research's findings. All data will be stored with password-protected document at university secure server, be treated and transferred as confidential and only researcher and supervisors (according to University of Birmingham Research Data Archive) have access to the raw data. Data will be stored for a period of 10 years for further analysis and publications resulting from the research findings.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

If potential participants agree to participate, then the researcher will inform orally and provide written informed consent form before interview begins so that participants' rights of their data are clearly described.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact one of the research team members below.

Principal Contact

Mohamad Rachmadian Narotama-PhD Candidate
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
University of Birmingham
Phone: [REDACTED]
e-mail: [REDACTED]

MANFAAT

Penelitian ini akan berkontribusi pada pemahaman peran pemerintah pusat dan daerah dalam pembangunan pulau-pulau kecil, sehingga mengarah pada skema pembangunan pulau-pulau kecil yang berkelanjutan.

RESIKO

Diperkirakan tidak ada resiko apapun untuk partisipasi Anda dalam penelitian ini.

PRIVASI DAN KERAHASIAAN

Data yang dikumpulkan dari partisipan akan dikelola sebagai data rahasia dan akan menjadi bagian dari disertasi PhD yang akan dilaporkan, dipublikasikan di jurnal, konferensi dan publikasi akademik lain dari hasil temuan dalam penelitian ini. Semua data akan disimpan dalam server aman milik kampus yang dilindungi dengan sandi, akan dikelola dan dipindahkan sebagaimana data rahasia dimana data mentah hanya dapat diakses oleh peneliti dan pembimbing (Sesuai Kearsipan Data Penelitian Universitas Birmingham). Data akan disimpan selama masa 10 tahun untuk analisis lebih lanjut dan publikasi yang dihasilkan dari temuan dalam penelitian ini.

PERSETUJUAN UNTUK PARTISIPASI

Apabila Anda setuju untuk berpartisipasi, peneliti akan menginformasikan secara lisan dan memberikan lembar persetujuan tertulis sebelum wawancara dimulai agar Bapak/Ibu mengerti dengan baik hak sebagai partisipan dan cara data akan diolah.

PERTANYAAN LEBIH LANJUT MENGENAI PENELITIAN

Apabila ada pertanyaan mengenai penelitian ini, atau memerlukan informasi tambahan untuk membantu Bapak/Ibu menentukan keikutsertaan dalam penelitian ini, mohon dapat menghubungi salah satu tim peneliti dibawah.

Kontak Utama

Mohamad Rachmadian Narotama-Kandidat PhD
Pusat Penelitian Perkotaan dan Wilayah
Sekolah untuk Ilmu Geografi, Bumi dan Lingkungan
Universitas Birmingham
Telpon [REDACTED]
e-mail: [REDACTED]

Secondary Contact

Dr. John Round – Lead Supervisor
School of Geography, Earth and Environmental
Sciences
University of Birmingham
Phone: [REDACTED]
e-mail: [REDACTED]

Kontak Sekunder

Dr. John Round – Pembimbing Utama
Sekolah untuk Ilmu Geografi, Bumi dan
Lingkungan
Universitas Birmingham
Telpon: [REDACTED]
e-mail: [REDACTED]

**CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS
REGARDING THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the University Research Ethic Officers by e-mail at ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk or by telephone [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] Details of the complain procedure are available from the above address.

**KEKHAWATIRAN ATAU PENGADUAN
MENGENAI PENELITIAN**

Apabila ada pengaduan mengenai partisipasi Bapak/ Ibu dalam penelitian ini, mohon dapat menghubungi Petugas Etika Penelitian dari Universitas melalui e-mail ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk atau melalui telpon [REDACTED]. Rincian mengenai tata cara pengaduan akan didapatkan dari alamat email diatas.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form/ *Lembar Kesediaan Partisipan*

Participant Number :

Small islands in a large archipelago state: Examining small islands' peripherality and governance relations in Riau Islands Province, Indonesia

Pulau-pulau kecil di negara kepulauan besar: meneliti keterpinggiran dan hubungan pemerintahan di Provinsi Kepulauan Riau, Indonesia

This thesis project, being conducted by M.R.Narotama, is a research on small island peripherality, examining governance relations and island geographies. You will be asked to be involve in an interview of approximately 1 hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you wish.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. Your data will be anonymous. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions during the interview session, and you may withdraw from the study at any time during data collection. If you withdraw, you will still receive the gift.

The researcher can be contacted by telephone [REDACTED] or by e-mail [REDACTED]. He will be glad to answer your questions about this research or you may contact his lead supervisor Dr. John Round (email [REDACTED] or telephone [REDACTED]). I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Review Committee at University of Birmingham. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, you may contact the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer (email [REDACTED] ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk or contact by telephone [REDACTED]).

Penelitian ini dilakukan oleh M.R.Narotama mengenai keterpinggiran pulau kecil, khususnya hubungan pemerintahan dan geografi kepulauan. Kami mohon kertilbatan Bapak/ Ibu dalam sesi wawancara selama 1 jam pada tempat yang disepakati bersama. Anda dapat menolak menjawab pertanyaan apapun yang dikehendaki dalam sesi wawancara tersebut.

Tidak ada resiko terkait partisipasi Anda dalam penelitian ini. Data Anda akan dirahasiakan dan disimpan oleh peneliti. Partisipasi Anda sepenuhnya merupakan sukarela tanpa kewajiban apapun. Anda dapat menolak menjawab pertanyaan dalam sesi wawancara, dan dapat menarik kembali informasi dan partisipasi kapanpun selama masa pengumpulan data.

Peneliti dapat dihubungi melalui telepon [REDACTED] atau email [REDACTED]. Peneliti akan menjawab pertanyaan mengenai penelitian ini. Sebagai alternatif, Anda dapat menghubungi dosen pembimbing dalam penelitian ini; Dr John Round (email [REDACTED] atau telpon [REDACTED]). Penelitian ini telah mendapatkan persetujuan dari Komite Etis Universitas Birmingham. Apabila ada komentar atau kekhawatiran dalam partisipasi Bapak/Ibu, Anda juga dapat menghubungi Petugas Etis Penelitian (email [REDACTED] ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk atau telpon [REDACTED]).

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

Saya yang bertandatangan di bawah, menyetujui bahwa (mohon centang kotak yang sesuai)

1.	I have read the information sheet related to the research project and understand the aims of the project. <i>Saya telah membaca lembar informasi yang terkait dengan penelitian ini dan memahami tujuan dari penelitian</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation. <i>Saya telah diberi kesempatan untuk menanyakan terkait penelitian ini dan terkait partisipasi saya</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project. I am fully aware that I am not obliged to answer any question, but that I do so at my own free will. <i>Saya secara sukarela berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini dan paham bahwa tidak ada kewajiban untuk menjawab pertanyaan bila saya tidak mau</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn. <i>Saya paham bahwa saya dapat mengundurkan diri dari penelitian tanpa perlu memberikan alasan, saya tidak akan mendapatkan penalti karena mengundurkan diri dan tidak akan ditanya kenapa saya mengundurkan diri.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me. <i>Prosedur mengenai kerahasiaan informasi yang saya berikan telah dijelaskan kepada saya</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	The use of the data in research, academic publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me <i>Penggunaan data dalam penelitian, publikasi akademik, penggunaan data bersama dan penyimpanan telah dijelaskan kepada saya.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form. <i>Saya paham bahwa peneliti lain akan mendapatkan akses ke data saya hanya bila mereka setuju untuk merahasiakan data saya dan bila setuju dengan syarat lain disepakati dalam form ini.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I am also aware that this project had been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Committee at university of Birmingham I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Research Ethics Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<p><i>Saya paham bahwa penelitian ini telah ditinjau dan disetujui oleh komite etik University of Birmingham, dan saya dapat menghubungi mereka bila saya rasa ada permasalahan atau komentar mengenai partisipasi saya dalam penelitian ini.</i></p> <p>(email ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk or telephone + [REDACTED])</p>	
9.	<p>I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form</p> <p><i>Saya bersama peneliti menyetujui untuk menandatangani lembar persetujuan partisipasi ini</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent form.

Dengan sukarela saya memberikan persetujuan saya untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Saya akan mendapatkan salinan dari lembar persetujuan ini.

Participant Signature/*Tandatangan Partisipan*

date/ *tanggal*

Researcher Signature/ *Tandatangan Peneliti*

date/ *tanggal*

Appendix C: Interview Guide

A. General interview guide for local government

1. Background
 - a. Are you originally from the Riau Islands? If you from a mainland, what do you think on the difference between living in the mainland and on a small island?
 - b. How long have you been working in your current position?
 - c. Have you visited many islands in your jurisdiction, do you know the surrounding islands well?
2. Small island geography and peripherality
 - a. How do you think small islands' geography affect daily life and government affairs relating to your department?
 - b. What do you think about your own island jurisdiction? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this island region for the islanders, business and government?
3. Changing governance arrangements, between decentralisation and recentralisation
 - a. In retrospect, if you have already been in Riau Islands, how do you think the establishment of local governments influences changes in small island's peripheral conditions?
 - b. Are there any cultural and political benefits of local autonomy for the islanders?
 - c. How do you think your department has contributed towards the betterment of small islands? Has a specific island-approach been developed? How do you prioritise resources?
 - d. Regarding local autonomy, do you think guidelines and limitations from the central government and the freedom to self-govern are well-balanced for small islands?
 - e. Regarding democracy, do you think there is truly fair election and transparent politics here? Does the elected politician represent the voice of islanders?
 - f. Regarding political leadership, how significant is leadership in changing peripheral conditions of small islands? Do political leaders originally from these islands have better understanding of island governance?
 - g. Do the legislative and executive bodies work well together in solving island issues?
 - h. What difference has there been in terms of efforts to support small islands since a number of district responsibilities have been centralised to the province level?
4. Central government interventions in small islands
 - a. Does the central government give any prioritization or support for small islands? Do you think the central government has supported small islands enough?
 - b. What kinds of central government development are there in your jurisdiction? What benefits does it bring for local governments or directly for the islanders?
 - c. Are there any conflict of interests between central and local governments? If so, how does your department balance the interest of the state and interests of the islanders.
 - d. How far is the local government involved in central government programmes? (coordination, suggestions, resource, etc.)

B. Interview guide for non-government institutions, community or cultural representatives and businesses

1. Background
 - a. Are you originally from these islands? How well do you know the surrounding islands?
 - b. What is your main activity/business?
2. Influence of small island geography
 - a. How does small island geography affect your professional affairs and daily life activities?
 - b. What are the geographical advantages and disadvantages of this island region for the islanders and business?
3. Local governments
 - a. What difference do you notice before and after the establishment of new district/ province governments?
 - b. Do you think the local government is doing well in developing small islands?
 - c. Do you know your elected leader and elected local parliament members? What do you think about their qualification?
 - d. Do the elected leader and local parliament members often involve the community in policy discussions and decision-making process?
 - c. Do you think the local politicians have represented the islanders well? Do you think they understand what is best for the islands?
4. Central government intervention
 - a. What do you think about the state's acknowledgement and support for small islands?
 - b. What do you think of central government policies, projects or development programmes in your island region? How beneficial is it for you? Is there any conflict with the locals?