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## The Creation of new autonomous regions: Is this a solution for regional welfare ?

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### ABSTRACT

*This research analyzes whether expansion is a solution based on a competitive perspective, with a focus on the Nagari expansion in West Pasaman Regency. We collected data for this research using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with key informants from the Nagari government and local communities. The findings indicate that a nagari's expansion does not necessarily lead to its advancement. Many new nagari have not been optimal in managing resources, and there are ownership conflicts and competition between the parent region and newly emerging nagari, as well as the political transition process, which is hampering sustainable development. Therefore, while regional expansion offers new opportunities, the obstacles encountered underscore the necessity of assessing and enhancing policies to ensure the community's sustainable benefits and the attainment of Nagari autonomy.*

*Key word: New Autonomous Regions; Welfare State; Public Policy; Good Government*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Expansion is an aspect of regional planning, based on the opinion of Michael A. Trueblood and Walte Hondale. Fragmentation is the splitting of a government area into several new governments (Santoso, 2012). Expansion is also a concrete form of implementing regional autonomy which is quite a controversial topic. In almost the last decade, regional expansion policies have continued to receive serious attention. Proposals for the formation of new regions continue to increase, requiring strict monitoring and evaluation mechanisms from the central government (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023)

Since its initial implementation, the regional expansion policy has given rise to various pros and cons. On the one hand, expansion is expected to increase community participation in regional government, as well as accelerate local infrastructure and economic development (Jia et al., 2020). On the other hand, there are concerns that expansion could lead to administrative fragmentation, increased bureaucratic costs, and potential conflict between regions (Smith, 2023). Various reasons were put forward to support regional expansion. First, expansion is considered necessary to improve public services. Second, expansion aims to create equitable development, considering that many areas are left far from the regional government capital. Third, expansion is often also influenced by local political dynamics, where regional elites try to share power and accommodate the interests of various parties (Gustafsson & Scurrah, 2019).

One of the regions in Indonesia that is implementing expansion is West Sumatra Province, where there has been an increase in the number of new nagari, especially in West Pasaman Regency. Initially the number of nagari in West Pasaman Regency was 19 nagari, until in 2017 these nagari developed 71 new nagari, resulting in an increase in the number of nagari of around 373.68%. The following table shows the increase in the number of nagari based on the data below:

**Table 1.** Number of Nagari in West Pasaman Regency Before and After Expansion

No	Nagari name	District name	Number of New Nagari	Total Nagari
1	Air Bangih	Sungai Beremas	0	1
2	Ujung Gading	Lembah Melintang	8	9
3	Lingkuang Aua	Pasaman	7	16
4	Aua Kuniang		4	
5	Aia Gadang		2	
6	Kajai	Talu	0	7
7	Talu		4	
8	Sinuruk		0	
9	Kinali	Kinali	15	17
10	Katiangan		0	
11	Muaro Kiawai	Gunung Tuleh	2	7
12	Rabi Jonggor		3	
13	Batahan	Ranah Batahan	4	7
14	Desa Baru		1	
15	Parit	Koto Balingka	5	6
16	Sungai Aua	Sungai Aua	6	7
17	Koto Baru	Luhak Nan Duo	7	9
18	Kapa		0	

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19	Sasak	Sasak	3	4
		Total	71	90

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*Source: Dpmn West Pasaman Regency 2023*

This phenomenon of nagari expansion can be analyzed from a competition perspective. In this view, each expansion region gets new opportunities and access in managing existing natural resources (van Vliet, 2019). In the sense that the existing expansion provides equal opportunities for regions to compete in developing their region (Faggian et al., 2019). In this perspective the meaning of competition can be a challenge. With the expansion policy, the parent nagari and the expanded nagari will have the same competition, because each region competes to gain broad access in existing resource transactions (Nikijuluw, 2021). In this view this allows for competition in various fields such as trade, tourism, transportation and other sectors. In this view, most of the regions that have just bloomed are still in the process of political transition, thus allowing minimal attention to development and being unable to organize themselves after expansion. When a new government takes over, a political transition occurs. This transition can involve changes in power structures, policies, and priorities. At the start of a political transition, a new government may face various challenges and obstacles. Lack of attention to development in the early stages, new governments may tend to focus more on political transition. If the new government is unable to organize itself well, this could have a negative impact on the stability and performance of the government and the threat of bankruptcy (Smith, 2023)

Based on previous research regarding branding conducted by (Faguet, 2004). In the country of Bolivia with the title Does decentralization increase government responsiveness to local needs?: Evidence from Bolivia. *Journal of public economics*, 88(3-4), 867-893. The result is that decentralization can be an effective tool in increasing government responsiveness to local needs in countries like Bolivia. However, the success of decentralization remains dependent on good implementation and adequate institutional support and capacity at the local level. Similar results were also produced by (Enikolopov & Zhuravskaya, 2007) in 75 developing countries and countries in transition during 1975-2000. With the title Decentralization and political institutions. *Journal of public economics*, 91(11-12), 2261-2290. The results of this research provide a strong basis for supporting decentralization policies as a tool to promote better governance and more effective public services in various countries. Apart from this research, there are also many previous studies which state that expansion has a positive impact on the government, including (Smoke, 2001), *Fiscal decentralization in developing countries: A review of current concepts and practice*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development,

However, regional expansion also faces challenges and criticism. Previous research states that expansion has a negative impact on society and the government, including research conducted by (Fisman & Gatti, 2002), "Decentralization and Corruption: Evidence across Countries" which results in this research finding that the implementation of decentralization policies often causes an increase in the level of corruption at the local level. This is because there are more opportunities for abuse of power and resources at lower regional levels. Apart from that, research was conducted by (Ilmam et al., 2023). *Impact of Regional Expansion Policy*. *Jurnal Cahaya Mandalika* ISSN 2721-4796 (online), 4(3), 1247-1253 produces negative impacts of expansion including community concerns about their rights, lack of community involvement in their duties, and imperfect communication.

Due to differences in opinion from several previous studies regarding expansion, researchers are interested in studying whether regional expansion, in this case the expansion of nagari, is a solution when viewed from a competition perspective. Where areas that have just implemented

expansion face several problems, such as new nagari in West Pasaman Regency still depend on funding from the central government and are not yet able to be independent in managing their resources optimally. Apart from that, the expansion process is still in the process of political transition, as well as the Nagari-nagari that have just been expanded in West Pasaman Regency are currently still being led by PJ. Walinagari from 2017 to 2024 and produces the image of a nagari that is like a sub-district, where the leadership is held by the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) for almost a decade. As we know, the main characteristic that differentiates between nagari/villages and sub-districts is that villages have autonomy in the form of recognition, while sub-districts usually implement autonomy which is a gift from the regional or central government. (Katiman, 2021). Apart from that, there are fundamental differences between villages and villages. sub-district includes the filling in of village head and sub-district heads. Where the village head is usually elected directly through the village head election by the village community, while the sub-district head usually comes from the state civil apparatus who is elected by the sub-district head and appointed by the regent (Anshari, 2018). The long process of selecting the walinagari and the preparation period for the nagari-nagari in West Pasaman Regency hampers the creation of nagari autonomy, because the PJ.walinagari only has control over the administration section and the PJ.Walinagari does not have the authority to create the nagari's vision and mission, as well as the work program in the nagari. This is in accordance with the opinion (Perdana et al., 2023) which states that if the position of village head is not filled by a definitive official, the village will not function well according to the goals of the government and village community, because village head officials have limited authority such as in drafting village laws.

If the condition of the nagari-nagari in West Pasaman Regency is left until 2025, the situation can be exploited for political agendas and regional head campaigns. This is reinforced by research by Budi Ali M. Sarumpet, as mentioned in the article (Santoso, 2012), which shows that the problem that often arises in new autonomous regions is the implementation of regional elections that exceed the stipulated time limit, on the grounds that the institutions are not yet ready. and regional infrastructure. Based on the presentation of several points, it shows the need for better evaluation in the implementation of nagari expansion. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the expansion policy of nagari-nagari in West Pasaman Regency, with a focus on the case of expansion in the nagari Muaro Kiawai Barat and Ranah Koto Tinggi, and see whether expansion is the right solution to achieve the objectives of implementing the expansion?

## **2. METHOD**

This study applies a qualitative method approach. (Fossey et al., 2002). suggests that qualitative research aims to understand phenomena, such as the behavior, perceptions and actions of research subjects, holistically through word-based descriptions. words and language, in certain natural contexts using a variety of natural methods. Qualitative research is applied in natural object settings, with the researcher acting as the main instrument. This research uses a qualitative descriptive design to obtain an in-depth picture of the phenomenon of nagari expansion in West Pasaman Regency (Sinuff et al., 2007). The research location focused on the West Pasaman Regency Community and Nagari Empowerment Service, especially Nagari Muaro Kiawai Barat and Ranah Koto Tinggi. Research subjects included government officials from the West Pasaman Regency Community and Nagari Empowerment Service, PJ. Walinagari, and community leaders as representatives of the nagari community. The data collection technique in this research is by using indirect observation, interviews with purposive sampling, and documentation (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Meanwhile, the data analysis technique is carried out qualitatively (Bachiochi & Weiner, 2004).

### **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The perspective of encouraging oneself to compete, in this view states that regional expansion provides equal opportunities for each region to compete in managing the available natural resources. With expansion, regions that were previously under the same government can gain autonomy to encourage increased investment and infrastructure development in new regions, so that they can more optimally manage existing resources. Thus, expansion can create new jobs and spur regional economic growth (Wang et al., 2022)

In implementing expansion, nagari resources play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of nagari government, because they provide the necessary foundation for various activities in nagari (Yuskar et al., 2024). With proper management, these resources can be used to improve welfare and develop the local economy. Referring to the results of an interview with PJ Walinagari in the High Koto realm regarding management from a competition perspective as follows: "The potential of our nagari's natural resources, especially in the paratourism and maritime sectors. The long distance of around 25 KM from the Walinagari office means that the outermost Jorong is not given much attention. With this expansion it is hoped that we can maximize the potential in our Nagari. Currently in 2023 the new nagari budget focuses on nagari operations, meanwhile the establishment of nagari-owned business entities and community empowerment, especially in the field of fish breeding, will only be realized in 2024 (Marwin, 2023)

Another argument put forward by the people of Muaro Kiawai Barat highlights the importance of expanding nagari in the context of creating competitiveness in the future. According to the informant, the expansion of nagari will provide a strong impetus for each nagari to improve the quality of management of existing resources in order to compete in a wider arena. The informant's opinion is as follows: "With the expansion, nagari is required to be able to get its original income by managing existing resources through its own business entity (BUMNAG) to optimize the potential of existing resources in the nagari, although up to now at the end of 2023 it has not there is a nagari-owned business entity. "In my opinion, BUMNAG Muara Kiawai Barat, because here the main resource is oil palm heads, would be good in the field of oil palm veron trade" (Kasman, 2023).

Another opinion that strengthens the two views above is from the secretary of the nagari empowerment service, West Pasaman Regency, "Expansion is one option because with the increase in the number of villages, new job opportunities will be added and there will also be nagari-owned business entities (bumnag). Even though in 2023 the new nagari will not yet receive village funds and will only get ADN of around 500-700 million a year and that is only used enough for nagari operations (Putra, 2023).

The three informants above representing the existing nagari consider expansion as a strategic step in managing resources to encourage themselves to compete between nagari, with the hope of achieving better progress. However, until 2024 there will be no form of management of nagari resources, especially in the use of natural resources. The revenue from the new nagari fund (ADN) budget was realized in the newly definitive nagari operations and several empowerment programs for the nagari civil apparatus. The acquisition of funds from these villages before and after is definitively presented in the table:

**Table 2.** Acquisition of Nagari Muaro West Kiawai Funds from 2017-2024

No	Year	ADN (Natural Fund Allocation)	DD (Village/Nagari Fund)	PBH (Tax and Levy Funds)	Total
1	2017(Nagari Preparation)	200 million	-	-	200 million
2	2018(Nagari Preparation)	200 million	-	-	200 million

No	Year	ADN (Natural Fund Allocation)	DD (Village/Nagari Fund)	PBH (Tax and Levy Funds)	Total
3	2019(Nagari Preparation)	200 million	-	-	200 million
4	2020(Nagari Preparation)	200 million	-	-	200 million
5	2021(Nagari Preparation)	200 million	-	-	200 million
6	2022(Nagari Preparation)	200 million	-	-	200 million
7	2023(Definitive)	581 million	-	-	581 million
8	2024(Definitive)	729 million	863 million	32 million	1,62 Billion

*Source: Processed by Researchers, 2024*

**Table 3** Acquisition of Funds for Nagari Ranah Koto Tinggi

No	Year	ADN (Natural Fund Allocation)	DD (Village/Nagari Fund)	PBH (share of taxes and levies)	Total
1	2017(Nagari Preparation)	225 million	-	-	225 million
2	2018(Nagari Preparation)	225 million	-	-	225 million
3	2019(Nagari Preparation)	225 million	-	-	225 million
4	2020(Nagari Preparation)	225 million	-	-	225 million
5	2021(Nagari Preparation)	225 million	-	-	225 million
6	2022(Nagari Preparation)	225 million	-	-	225 million
7	2023(Definitive)	618 million	-	-	618 million
8	2024(Definitive)	765 million	888 million	39 million	1,69 Billion

*Source: Processed by Researchers, 2024*

Based on table 2 and 3 above, it can be concluded that the expansion of nagari-nagari in West Pasaman Regency could be a strategy to obtain funding allocations from the central government. Since

becoming definitive in 2023 to 2024, each nagari has received an increase in funds, but the distribution of these funds has not been optimal, especially in managing natural resources and contributing to increasing the nagari's competitiveness. This perspective also discusses the emergence of ownership conflicts. Where it is hoped that equitable development and reduction of disparities between regions can be achieved. However, expansion can also trigger competition and conflict, especially in the trade, tourism, transportation and other sectors. Based on the analysis of the interview results, we can see that conflicts over ownership and management of natural resources emerged at the beginning of the expansion of several nagari, because at that time the conflicts that emerged were issues of customary territory and administration. However, to minimize this conflict, West Pasaman Regency Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2018 was issued in article 15 paragraph 2 which reads: The expansion of the Nagari Government does not change the pre-existing nagari traditional territory and does not expand the existing Nagari Traditional Density. This is in line with the opinion of the secretary of the West Pasaman community and nagari empowerment service: "In the early days of expansion, the conflict that emerged was a latent conflict between the government and traditional institutions, at which time there was a shared understanding that the expansion of nagari was not an expansion of customary territory, but rather administrative territory" (Putra, 2023).

Other conflicts that arise as a result of expansion originate from differences in interpretation of claims of ownership rights to certain natural resources, or disagreements with management policies proposed by the new nagari government. These issues create inter-nagari tensions and complicate efforts to reach agreements that satisfy all parties. The chairman of the Nagari Muaro Kiawai Barat deliberative body also explained the natural resources of his village. In detail, the following are the results of interviews with related sources: "The reason why Nagari Muara Kiawai does not want to expand its nagari is because the new nagari has abundant resources compared to the main nagari, for example in the nagari from Muara Kiawai Barat which in its territory has 3 companies which have been providing income. The largest from the main nagari are prablik Bss (Berkat Sawit Sejahtera), AWL (Agri Wira Ligatsa), and waste management factory. "One of the conflicts to date is that the waste management factory is still in the process of being handed over by the main nagari to Nagari Muara Kiawai Barat, which incidentally belongs to Nagari Muara Kiawai Barat because it is located in its administrative area" (Kasman, 2023).

Based on these interviews, researchers concluded that the parent region, which was previously rich in natural resources, found itself losing most of its natural wealth after the formation of the new nagari. The new nagari that was formed felt that it had full rights to natural resources because the area was administratively under the new nagari government. This problem arises because the main nagari feels that it has lost several sources of income for its nagari, where previously it was the main nagari that managed and maintained the sustainability of these resources, so it felt entitled to some of the profits generated. This dispute not only affects social relations between people in the two regions, apart from that there is mediation and clearer regulations regarding the distribution and use of natural resources, so that both parties can get fair rights without causing further tension. This conflict shows how important careful planning and effective communication are in the regional expansion process, so that the expected development goals can be achieved without causing negative impacts for the parties involved.

In the perspective of encouraging oneself to compete, there is a point that also discusses that regions that have just experienced expansion are often still in the process of political transition, which can result in minimal attention to development and difficulties in organizing themselves after expansion. These political transitions can involve changes in power structures, policies, and priorities. A lack of attention to development in the early stages may occur because the new government may tend to focus more on the political transition itself.

In implementing the expansion of nagari in West Pasaman Regency, this view, especially during the government transition period, is very relevant. Currently, the nagari are still led by temporary officials appointed directly by the regent, so attention to nagari management and development has not yet become the main focus. As is known, temporary officials appointed by the regent have limitations in running the nagari government, such as limitations in making nagari

regulations and planning nagari programs. Situations like this mean that the nagari in West Pasaman Regency tend to have the characteristics of a sub-district-style government, and this has been going on since 2017 until possibly after the election of a new regent in 2025. "The definitive nagari-nagari apparatus still uses the preparatory nagari apparatus that selected in 2017, while members of the nagari deliberative body were elected by community representatives in 2023. Walinagari elections will not be held until 2025 due to budget limitations, updating population data, and regulations on postponing the walinagari election until the regional head election" (Putra, 2023).

The length of the process for selecting new mayors is also in line with information obtained from several other informants, especially from West Pasaman Regency expansion figures, namely: "In facing the transition there has been no further evaluation of the expansion villages. The autonomy of the old villages was formed because of the length of time the election of new mayors took. In 2018, I wrote to the regent as a representative of the Bamus to immediately hold regional elections, but this was ignored. 90 new nagari 3 definitive nagari, too many pj in West Pasaman Regency. "This is an omission of the ignorance of the nagari community and too many PJs which have no correlation with government knowledge, most of them come from teachers and even health workers" (Syahrin, 2024).

In reality, the length of the process of selecting a new mayor is directly related to slowing down the progress of nagari development which ultimately creates nagari competitiveness. The long time required to carry out the election of a new mayor has an impact on leadership uncertainty at the nagari level, which in turn can hamper short-term and long-term development plans. The length of the mayoral election process is also influenced by regulations at the district level which may not carry out elections immediately. As we know, the nagari in West Pasaman have been led by temporary officials for approximately 7 to 8 years. This condition creates uncertainty in leadership and hinders the nagari's ability to make strategic decisions and implement development programs effectively. In West Pasaman Regency Regional Regulation Number 2 of 2018 in article 17 paragraphs 4 and 5, there are strict details regarding the term of office of the Preparatory Nagari Mayor. This article stipulates that the position of Wali Nagari preparatory can only be filled by Civil Servants or Regional Government Civil Servants, with a maximum term of office of one year which can be extended twice in one term of office.

Based on several points that have been discussed in the competition perspective which includes discussion regarding natural resource management which can increase the competitiveness of nagari, researchers can conclude that expansion to increase the competitiveness of nagari has not shown significant results. This can also be strengthened by the status of the Developing Village Index (IDM) each is an index used to measure the level of village development holistically and comprehensively. This index covers various aspects such as health, education, economy, infrastructure and the environment. With the IDM, it is hoped that it can provide a clearer picture of the conditions in each nagari. The IDM of West Pasaman district before and after expansion, namely

**Table 4.** West Pasaman Regency Development Village Index (IDM) achievements before and after expansion (2022-2023)

No	Regency	Year	Independent	Proceed	Develop	Left behind	Very Left behind	Number of Nagari
1	West Pasaman	2022	2	15	2	0	0	19
2	West Pasaman	2023	6	25	54	5	0	90

Sumber: <https://ppid.sumbarprov.go.id>

Initially, the preparatory village in West Pasaman faced big challenges because it did not yet have a Village Development Index (IDM), which is an important benchmark in assessing village progress. This situation changes in 2023 when these nagari change their status to definitive. The West Pasaman regional government in collaboration with the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration issued IDM for 71 new nagari. This step was taken as a



condition for obtaining village funds in 2024. Most of the new nagari in West Pasaman have succeeded in obtaining developing IDM status, although there are some who are still behind in this assessment. Changes in status can also be seen in the nagari which were previously part of the main nagari, which now after expansion, such as the nagari Muaro Kiawai Barat and Ranah Koto Tinggi, have turned into developing nagari.

However, it should be noted that the expansion of the nagari does not automatically raise the economic status and development of the nagari region to become advanced. One of the main characteristics of a nagari with developing IDM is the existence of adequate social, economic and ecological resources, although their management is not yet fully optimal. Villages with developing IDM status have a Developing Village Index (IDM) with a value less than or equal to 0.7072, but greater than 0.5989. This shows that although there has been progress in several aspects, further efforts are still needed to achieve optimization in village development (Jember, 2024).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This research reveals that although regional expansion in West Pasaman Regency brings several new hopes, there are several problems that hinder the achievement of the expansion's goals. The expansion aims to equalize development, empower local communities, and strengthen local identity. However, there are several problems of dependence on funds from the central government, problems of resource ownership, influence and local political interests. These problems show that the goals of expansion and nagari autonomy have not been achieved optimally, so it can be concluded that expansion does not have a positive correlation in supporting the economic progress of a nagari. Expansion without careful planning and adequate support can actually hinder progress. The focus should be on increasing government capacity and wise resource management to encourage nagari progress and competitiveness.

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