

## **Sub-National Diplomacy : A Case Study of Opportunitites and Challenges Between South Sulawesi and Ehime Prefecture**

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### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini menganalisis strategi paradiplomasi antara Provinsi Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia, dan Prefektur Ehime, Jepang, dalam kerangka kerja sama *sister province*. Paradiplomasi menjadi alat yang penting bagi pemerintah daerah untuk memperkuat hubungan internasional, khususnya di bidang ekonomi, pendidikan, dan budaya. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis, dengan menggunakan analisis dokumen berupa buku-buku, laporan resmi pemerintah Sulawesi Selatan dan Ehime, jurnal, koran, sumber-sumber online, dan laporan-laporan yang relevan. Selain itu, wawancara tatap muka juga dilakukan dengan para pemangku kepentingan utama, termasuk analis dari Biro Pemerintahan dan Otonomi Daerah dan penerjemah dari Subbagian Kerjasama Sulawesi Selatan. Temuan-temuan tersebut menyoroti potensi yang signifikan di bidang perikanan, pertanian, dan pengembangan sumber daya manusia. Namun, tantangan seperti transisi kepemimpinan, keterbatasan anggaran, dan hambatan komunikasi menghambat implementasinya. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya

perencanaan strategis dan komitmen politik untuk meningkatkan efektivitas kerja sama sub-nasional internasional.

**Kata Kunci:** Paradiplomasi; *Sister Province*; Sulawesi Selatan; Prefektur Ehime.

### Abstract

*This research analyzes the paradiplomacy strategy between South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, and Ehime Prefecture, Japan, within the framework of sister-province cooperation. Paradiplomacy is an essential tool for local governments to strengthen international relations, especially in the fields of economy, education, and culture. This qualitative research uses a descriptive-analytical approach, using document analysis in the form of books, official reports of the South Sulawesi and Ehime governments, journals, newspapers, online sources, and relevant reports. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including analysts from the Government and Regional Autonomy Bureau and translators from the South Sulawesi Cooperation Section. The findings highlight significant potential in fisheries, agriculture, and human resource development. However, challenges such as leadership transition, budget constraints, and communication barriers hinder implementation. The study emphasizes the importance of strategic planning and political commitment to improve the effectiveness of international sub-national cooperation.*

**Keywords:** Paradiplomacy; Sister Province Cooperation; South Sulawesi; Ehime Prefecture

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, characterized by a complex and interconnected global environment, paradiplomacy has emerged as a strategic alternative for local governments in addressing cross-border challenges that often exceed the capacity of traditional diplomacy mechanisms. This concept has given rise to a substantial academic discourse, with prominent scholars such as Joseph Nye underscoring the significance of soft power in international relations. Soft power, non-military and non-economic forms of persuasion, enables non-state actors to wield influence in the global arena. Conversely, Robert Keohane underscores the pivotal role of international institutions and interdependence as mechanisms that facilitate structured cooperation among diverse actors (Keohane, 2020; Nye, 2023). Anne-Marie Slaughter further elaborates on this concept by emphasizing the significance of network diplomacy, which fosters cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration to address global issues comprehensively (Slaughter, 2013). Concurrently, Natarajan et al. (2021) employ a multidimensional approach to paradiplomacy, emphasizing sister-province cooperation as a means to demonstrate how local government initiatives can generate tangible economic and social impact (Natarajan et al., 2021).

In comparison, while Nye, Keohane, and Slaughter establish the theoretical framework underlying the shift from traditional diplomacy to a more inclusive and networked approach, Natarajan et al. provide an empirical application that integrates the concept in a regional context. This comparison underscores the necessity for a paradigm shift in international relations, one that demands a combination of soft power, institutional roles, and collaborative networks to optimize cross-border cooperation in a practical way that can also directly contribute to thinking about the role of sub-national actors in international relations. The debate opens up space for in-depth analysis of the effectiveness and legitimacy of international cooperation carried out by non-state entities through the sister province approach.

The practice of sister provinces, also known as twin cities or twin provinces, is a tangible form of paradiplomacy in which local governments engage in cross-border cooperation to promote economic growth and knowledge exchange. This cooperation is not only based on financial interests but also as a form of commitment to strengthen strategic relations between regions through the exchange of technology, human resources, and investment. This approach is predicated on the optimization of local advantages by each party with the overarching objective of achieving common goals (Marsya, 2021). This research specifically examines the government's implementation of paradiplomacy in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, in cooperation with Ehime Prefecture, Japan. The international

collaboration carried out through the sister province mechanism is expected to increase the economic growth of the two regions, especially in the marine, agricultural, livestock, plantation, education, and tourism sectors. This strategic collaboration between the two parties opens up opportunities to integrate the advantages of each region in facing increasingly complex global dynamics (Amra & Benyamin L, 2023).

The South Sulawesi province is located on the island of Sulawesi and is characterized by its unique geographical and economic features. The province possesses a wealth of natural resources, including beautiful coastlines, breathtaking mountains, and significant ports such as Makassar, which serves as a central hub for trade and transportation activities in eastern Indonesia. The diversity of its natural potential contributes to South Sulawesi's status as a strategic region with a distinct charm in various economic sectors, such as fisheries, agriculture, and tourism (Diskominfo, 2020). In the context of the decentralization of power and the promotion of regional autonomy in Indonesia, the South Sulawesi Provincial Government has taken a proactive stance in navigating the global economic landscape. The autonomy granted to regions has been instrumental in fostering flexibility, allowing for the development of independent policies and the establishment of international cooperative relationships. A notable example of this is the sister province mechanism, which was initiated through ministerial regulations from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mukti, 2020).

The term "sister province" originates from the widely discussed "sister city" concept and aligns with national policies such as Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 25 of 2020 and Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation No. 3 of 2019. Empirical research highlights the effectiveness of cross-regional cooperation in fostering economic growth and regional development (Natarajan et al., 2021). This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the sister province program between South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, and Ehime Prefecture, Japan, in enhancing economic growth and cross-border knowledge exchange. While paradiplomacy and sister-province cooperation have been explored in literature, scholars hold varying perspectives. Stone & Douglas (2018) argue that paradiplomacy is a strategic response to globalization, emphasizing the role of local governments in international relations. Marsya (2021) focuses on its practical application in driving local economic growth through technology exchange and investment, while Natarajan et al. (2021) propose a multidimensional approach integrating theoretical analysis and empirical assessment. Mukti (2020) underscores regional autonomy as the foundation of paradiplomacy, and Safitiri (2020) identifies key opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, Amra & Benyamin (2023) present a case study

illustrating the economic synergy between South Sulawesi and Ehime through human resource and technology exchange (Amra & Benyamin L, 2023; Hu et al., 2021; Marsya, 2021; Mukti, 2020; Safitiri, 2020; Stone & Douglas, 2018).

Although existing studies discuss theoretical and practical aspects of paradiplomacy, a significant research gap remains in conducting in-depth empirical analyses of intergovernmental cooperation between regions with similar characteristics. The selection of Ehime Prefecture as a strategic partner is based on shared natural resources and economic potential, fostering long-term mutual benefits (Safitiri, 2020). This study examines the opportunities and challenges in implementing sister-province cooperation, highlighting both its economic potential and structural obstacles that may arise in the process.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Paradiplomacy**

The theoretical framework of this study is predicated on the concept of paradiplomacy, mainly as manifested through the sister province mechanism. Various local governments have adopted this mechanism to establish cooperative relationships with foreign entities. Paradiplomacy, in essence, refers to the behavior and capacity of sub-state entities, such as local or regional governments, in conducting foreign relations to promote trade, investment, and various potential cooperative endeavors beyond the official borders of the state. As articulated by Takdir Ali Mukti (2015), paradiplomacy signifies the endeavor by local governments to attain their distinct objectives through international relations that frequently transcend the direct oversight of the central government (Mukti, 2015). This concept emerged in conjunction with the implementation of post-reform regional autonomy in Indonesia, a period that was marked by the enactment of Law No. 22 of 1999, subsequently updated with Law No. 32 of 2004. The most recent iteration of this legislation is Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, which endowed regions with authority to manage their household affairs and opened access to participation in foreign relations through the practice of paradiplomacy (Sinaga, 2010).

Paradiplomacy, a concept that combines the terms "parallel" and "diplomacy," was first introduced by Panayotis Soldatos in the 1980s. The term was later developed by scholars such as Aldecoa, Keating, Boyer, and Ivo Duchacek, who referred to it as "micro-diplomacy" (Mukti, 2013). At the core of paradiplomacy lies the notion that local governments possess the capacity to engage in international relations autonomously, thereby promoting their interests through diverse forms of cooperation, including cultural, economic, and social exchanges

(Kuznetsov, 2014). Paradiplomacy can be classified into three distinct categories: Regional Trans-border Paradiplomacy, Trans-regional Paradiplomacy, and Global Paradiplomacy. The Global Paradiplomacy type, involving direct contact between a non-central government in one country and a sub-national partner in a distant country, serves as the foundation for sister province cooperation between the South Sulawesi Provincial Government and Ehime Prefecture (Aldecoa & Keating, 2018).

Sister province cooperation itself is a manifestation of paradiplomacy that seeks to realize a strategic relationship between two regions with equal administrative status despite being under the auspices of different countries. This concept not only aims to strengthen cultural relations and friendship between communities but also to increase trade, tourism, and investment through the exchange of knowledge and experience. As explained by Souder et al. (2005) and Clarke (2009) in Salma (2015), sister provinces are efforts to build sustainable partnerships through program exchanges, cultural initiatives, and support for local economic growth (Salma, 2015). This cooperation is usually supported by official documents such as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which serves as the legal basis and guideline for the implementation of cooperation between the two parties.

In this research, the concept of paradiplomacy is utilized as a theoretical framework to comprehend the cooperative relationship between the South Sulawesi Provincial Government and Ehime Prefecture. This approach underscores that the success of international cooperation between local governments is contingent not only on the similarity of the status and characteristics of each region but also on their capacity to complement each other in addressing prevailing challenges. The foundational principles that underpin sister-province cooperation encompass administrative similarity, regional characteristic similarity, and the presence of problems that necessitate collaborative efforts. Consequently, the two entities can leverage opportunities to transfer knowledge, technology, and experience, thereby enhancing the quality of public services and fostering sustainable economic growth (Primawanti et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the benefits of sister-province cooperation between South Sulawesi and Ehime extend beyond economic growth, fostering improved social relations, cultural exchange, and human resource development, which contribute to international understanding and local peace. Long-term partnerships between local governments strengthen community ties and create a foundation for deeper cooperation in key sectors such as economy, tourism, and education (Cohen, 2021). Through a multitrack diplomacy approach, this cooperation also allows for direct exchanges between actors in the two regions, ranging from governments to civil society, which can lead to more effective solutions to common problems. This

collaboration facilitated through a multitrack diplomacy approach, allows direct interaction between government and civil society actors, leading to more effective problem-solving. Sister province cooperation functions not only as a platform for mutual prosperity but also as a strategic mechanism to optimize regional potential and resources. Mukti (2015) highlights the significant role of sub-state actors in expanding international cooperation networks through shared interests and mutual benefits. This study examines the opportunities and challenges in the South Sulawesi–Ehime partnership and explores strategies to overcome obstacles through collaborative and integrated approaches (Mukti, 2015). By employing the sister province concept within the broader framework of paradiplomacy, this research provides a structured analysis of cooperation mechanisms, benefits, and challenges. Ultimately, it contributes to the literature on paradiplomacy and international relations, offering practical recommendations for policymakers to develop effective and sustainable cooperation strategies.

### **3. Research Method**

This research method employs a qualitative approach, specifically an in-depth qualitative case study, with a focus on the dynamics of the cooperative relationship between South Sulawesi and Ehime Prefecture. This methodological approach enables researchers to explore the historical, structural, and interaction processes of the two government entities as one overarching "case" with multiple units of analysis (Yin, 2018). The case study design was selected because it can accommodate the exploration of contemporary phenomena in real-life situations, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are difficult to separate (Yin, 2018). The analysis was conducted in a descriptive and analytical manner. The study examined patterns of collaboration, resulting policies, as well as obstacles and opportunities that arise at the bureaucratic and local community levels.

The collection of data entailed the implementation of triangulation of methods, a technique intended to guarantee the validity and reliability of the findings (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995). The primary data sources comprised in-depth interviews with key informants, including regional autonomy bureau analysts, functional translators in the Cooperation Subdivision, and related officials, as well as direct observation of the meeting forum. Secondary data sources encompassed policy documents, official government reports, news archives, scientific journals, and online publications through Hasanuddin University Library and other relevant locations (Fadli, 2021). The data were analyzed through open and thematic coding to identify patterns of interaction, driving factors, and structural barriers that influence the effectiveness of cooperation (Saldaña, 2021). The validity of the study was reinforced

through member checking with multiple informants and the establishment of an audit trail for the research documentation (Yin, 2018).

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Profiles of South Sulawesi and Ehime

Prior to the establishment of Indonesia's independence in 1945, South Sulawesi province possessed a distinctive historical trajectory. The region, comprising a multitude of independent kingdoms, was inhabited by four predominant ethnic groups: the Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, and Toraja. During this period, three prominent kingdoms emerged: Luwuq, Gowa, and Bone. These kingdoms reached their zenith in the 16th and 17th centuries, establishing trade and amicable relations with Europeans, Indians, Chinese, Malays, and Arabs. Concurrent with the evolving geopolitical landscape of the nation, following its independence, the government promulgated Law No. 21 of 1950, which established the administrative region of Sulawesi. Subsequently, this region transformed the autonomous region of South and Southeast Sulawesi through the enactment of Law No. 47 of 1960. Subsequent administrative processes culminated in the delineation of South Sulawesi as a distinct region through Law No. 13 of 1964, thereby establishing a novel administrative structure that incorporated the proximate small kingdoms into a unified province, which is now a constituent of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Website Resmi Provinsi Sulawesi Selatan, 2023).



**Figure 1.** Map of South Sulawesi Province

Source: Geografi.org (2022)

In terms of topography, South Sulawesi has an area of approximately 46,717.48 km<sup>2</sup> with a strategic geographical location, namely between 0°12' to 8° South latitude and 116°48' to West Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, and Southeast Sulawesi Provinces border it. It is



overflowed by the Makassar Strait, Bone Bay, and Flores Sea (Website Resmi Provinsi Sulawesi Selatan, 2023). The region's geographical characteristics foster population growth, which was documented at 8.9 million individuals in 2020, with a density of 193.2 people/km<sup>2</sup> dispersed across 24 districts/cities. This further reinforces the province's strategic position as a pivotal center of administrative and economic activities in eastern Indonesia (BPS Sulawesi Selatan, 2024).

The economic potential of South Sulawesi is evident from the diversity of leading sectors, including plantations, fisheries, marine, agriculture, mining and energy, tourism, and trade. In the plantation sector, commodities such as sere, coffee, coconut, nutmeg, tobacco, sugarcane, palm oil, pepper, cashew, cloves, and cocoa are mainstays, with cocoa production reaching around 118.77 thousand tons in 2019 (BPS Sulawesi Selatan, 2025b). The fisheries and marine sector contributes significantly to national exports, primarily through seaweed commodities that account for 33.33 percent of national production and whose export value soared to reach 256 million US dollars, up 66.88 percent from the previous year (Budi, 2022). Similarly, the agricultural sector supports food security, and the mining sector, although its contribution tends to decline, still makes a stable contribution to the provincial GRDP (BPS Sulawesi Selatan, 2025a). In the geopolitical and economic context, South Sulawesi has carved out an essential role in international relations, one of which is through cooperation with Japan. Makassar City, as the center of government and trade in the region, utilizes its strategic position as the Center Point of Indonesia to develop trade and cultural exchanges with partner countries. The cooperation that has materialized, for example, in the form of a sister province relationship between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture in Japan, demonstrates the harmony between the two regions that are similar in terms of natural resources and topography while encouraging increased investment and technology transfer (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2023).

Ehime Prefecture, located on Japan's Shikoku island, boasts a rich and diverse historical and economic profile. In 2020, Ehime had a population of 1,334,841, and it is recognized as one of the prefectures with industrial potential focused on agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, and tourism. The city of Matsuyama serves as the center of government and economy. Ehime's rich historical tapestry, spanning from ancient times to the modern era, is exemplified by the Kojiki records. These records recount tales of a princess who wed the deity Okuninushi and the region's involvement in significant historical events, including epic battles, Mongol invasions, and the Meiji Restoration period (Bafage Group, 2023). The modern era in Ehime commenced in 1871 with the transition from the feudal system to a prefectural system under

the Meiji government, which resulted in significant advancements in various industries, including shipbuilding, chemistry, and textiles (Website Resmi Prefektur Ehime, 2013).



**Figure 2.** Map of Ehime Prefecture

Source: Mapsworld.com (2024)

The division of Ehime into three areas, Toyo (east), Chuyo (central), and Nanyo (south), reflects the region's diverse industrial structure, with each area developing its distinctive industrial clusters. For instance, Toyo is home to paper manufacturing, electronics, and biotechnology, while the Chuyo region, which includes Matsuyama City, is a political and economic center with a variety of leading manufacturers, including seafood processing and traditional ceramics. The Nanyo region, benefiting from a favorable climate, has evolved into a pivotal center for agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, thereby augmenting the competitiveness of the fishing industry and pearl farming. This diversity and specialization contribute to Ehime's strategic importance on Japan's industrial landscape while concurrently fostering robust trade and cultural relations with international partners, such as South Sulawesi (PPI Ehime, 2023).

The cooperation between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture exemplifies the strategic efforts of both regions in optimizing economic and cultural potential through bilateral cooperation involving various sectors. The two areas exhibit similarities in terms of topography, natural resource wealth, and their strategic position as regional hubs that support trade, investment, and knowledge exchange. The establishment of formal agreements has the potential to open up economic opportunities and enhance cultural and educational interactions, which in turn contribute to technological advancement and innovation on both sides. This systematic integration of history, culture, and economic development demonstrates that

international cooperation between South Sulawesi and Ehime has a solid foundation and is relevant for facing global challenges and seizing opportunities in the modern era (Bafage Group, 2023; Prefektur of Ehime, 2013).

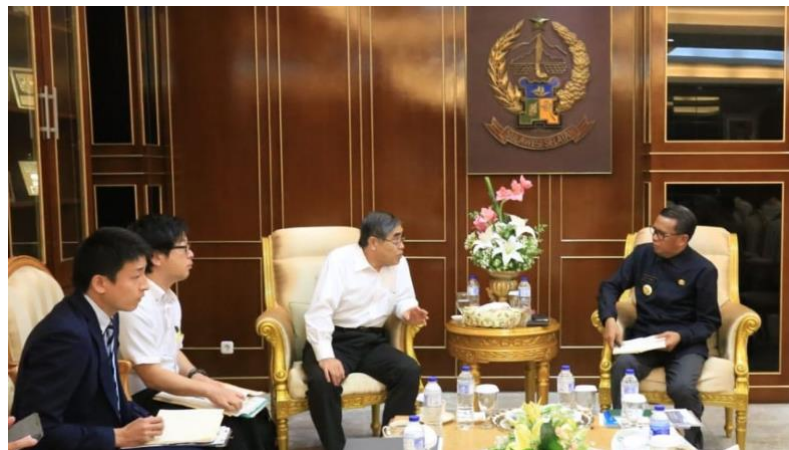
#### **4. 2 Legal Basis and Stages of Cooperation between South Sulawesi and Ehime**

The legal basis and stages of implementation of cooperation between the Government of South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture are used as a strategic foundation for establishing international cooperative relations through the sister province mechanism. The legal basis that serves as a reference in this context is divided into several significant instruments, beginning with Article 29 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties in 1969, which stipulates that all components of the central and regional governments are obligated to honor and enforce commitments established in international agreements. Additionally, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, in Article 11, paragraph (1), authorizes the president to enter into agreements with other nations. Additionally, Law No. 37/1999 on Foreign Relations stipulates that any foreign relations and cooperation undertaken by local governments must be in consultation and coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Further complementary regulations include Article 10 paragraph (2) of Law No. 23/2014 on Regional Government, which underscores the implementation of foreign policy as the exclusive prerogative of the central government.

It is also important to note that the legal bases of this cooperative relationship are found in several key documents, including the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 24 of 2000 concerning International Agreements, Government Regulation No. 28 of 2018 concerning Regional Cooperation, Government Regulation No. 10 of 2011 concerning Procedures for Procuring Foreign Loans and Receiving Grants. The legal bases also encompass the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 24 of 2000 concerning International Agreements, Government Regulation No. 28 of 2018 concerning Regional Cooperation, Government Regulation No. 10 of 2011 concerning Procedures for Procuring Foreign Loans and Receiving Grants, Permendagri No. 25 of 2020 concerning Procedures for Regional Cooperation with Regional Governments Abroad and Regional Cooperation with Institutions Abroad, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Regulation No. 03 of 2019 concerning General Guidelines for Foreign Relations by Regional Governments (Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy, Cooperation Sub-Section of the Government of South Sulawesi Province, 2019). These legal bases serve as guidelines for local governments in carrying out each stage of foreign relations systematically, in accordance with the Standard Operating

Procedures (SOP) set by the Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2023).

This cooperation process begins with the pre-marketing, mapping, and exploratory stages. In this initial stage, the South Sulawesi Provincial Government, as the initiator, together with cooperation partners, conducts mapping to identify the potential and characteristics of priority areas, which are then explored to find out more about cooperation opportunities that can be optimized in accordance with national development. For example, in the context of sister province cooperation with Ehime Prefecture, the mapping shows that there are similar characteristics between the two regions, which is evident from the statement of the Governor of South Sulawesi, Nurdin Abdullah, when receiving a visit from the Deputy Governor of Ehime on November 27, 2018, in Makassar.



**Figure 3.** The Governor of South Sulawesi and the Deputy Governor of Ehime met and discussed the possibility of making the two regions a sister province

Source : M Fatteh/Humas Pemprov Sulsel (2018)

In his statement, he said that in addition to the similarity factor, the selection of Ehime was also based on previous cooperation experiences, which included ambulance assistance, fire extinguishers, and other logistical support. This statement emphasizes that through exploration, the South Sulawesi government hopes that later cooperation can encourage industrial relocation, especially in the fields of aquaculture, plantations, and human resource capacity building (Lubis, 2020; Sri Ayu, 2018).

After the exploratory stage, the process continues with consultation and coordination involving relevant parties, especially with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, and agencies in charge of foreign relations. At this stage, the results of the exploration

were outlined in the form of a Letter of Intent (LoI) as a statement of intent to continue the cooperation. The Letter of Intent was signed by high-ranking officials of both parties, namely the Governor of South Sulawesi, Nurdin Abdullah, and the Governor of Ehime, Tokihiro Nakamura, on January 15, 2019 at the South Sulawesi Governor's Office.



**Figure 4.** Letter of Intent signing process for South Sulawesi-Ehime sister province cooperation

Source: Government Bureau of South Sulawesi Province (2019)

During the meeting, the two regional leaders affirmed the principles of equality and mutual benefit that form the basis of cooperation and emphasized that this cooperation is a continuation of the historical relationship that has lasted for nearly a decade. The statement was reaffirmed through a declaration that the previously established collaboration will soon be made permanent to support strategic areas such as strengthening human resources, trade, tourism, agriculture, livestock, and fisheries (Mawan, 2019; Media Sulsel, 2019)

Furthermore, this cooperation must obtain approval from the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of South Sulawesi Province as a form of political accountability and legitimacy (Prawitno et al., 2022). This approval process begins with the submission of a request letter to the Chairman of the Regional Parliament of South Sulawesi, followed by a plenary meeting that results in approval of the Draft Regional Regulation regarding sister province cooperation, which is then outlined in the South Sulawesi Regional Parliament Decree Number 18 of 2020 (Andika, 2020).



**Figure 5.** The sister province cooperation between the South Sulawesi Provincial Government and the Government of Ehime Prefecture, Japan, has been approved by all factions in the South Sulawesi DPRD through a plenary meeting  
Source: Government Bureau of South Sulawesi Province (2020)

The subsequent stage in the process is verification by the Ministry of Home Affairs. In this stage, the cooperation plan is submitted for consideration and to ensure its compatibility with central government policies. Based on these considerations, the local government then drafts a cooperation script. This script is prepared in three language versions so that it can be understood by both parties (Prawitno et al., 2022). The preparation of this text was carried out intensively through regular meetings between the relevant Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) within the South Sulawesi Provincial Government from March to April 2020 (Sulselprov.go.id, 2020). The next stage in the implementation series was negotiations by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which involved joint meetings between the local government and cooperation partners to discuss details and adjust the political and juridical aspects of the cooperation text. On September 3, 2020, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these negotiations culminated in a final agreement that was subsequently utilized as the foundation for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (Sulselprov.go.id, 2020).

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) represents the culmination of a series of cooperative stages, which were executed on December 16, 2020, amid the ongoing global pandemic. This was achieved through a hybrid system combining online and offline meetings. This process was represented by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Governor of South Sulawesi, Nurdin Abdullah, and the Governor of Ehime, Tokihiro



Nakamura. The signing was carried out in Jakarta and witnessed virtually by relevant officials, including representatives of the Regional Parliament and Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) within the South Sulawesi Provincial Government.



**Figure 6.** Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing process by South Sulawesi and Ehime

Source: Government Bureau of South Sulawesi Province (2020)

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) explicitly delineates the priority areas of cooperation, encompassing the domains of the fish and seafood processing industry, agriculture and plantations, creative economic development, and human resource capacity building. This accord not only symbolizes the commitment of both parties to perpetuate existing cooperative endeavors but also establishes a framework for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The culminating stage of this process is the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of each cooperation activity, which is to be carried out in accordance with the terms of the MoU, equipped with an action plan framework that is then monitored and evaluated regularly by the Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure the suitability and effectiveness of the cooperation program (Diskominfo, 2020; Lubis, 2020; Media Sulsel, 2019; Prawitno et al., 2022).

## **5. Discussion**

### **5. 1 Sister Province Cooperation Opportunities between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture**

Recent international cooperation between local governments has resulted in significant opportunities for sub-state actors to enhance regional independence and competitiveness

through paradiplomacy. In the context of strengthening regional autonomy, the practice of national and international cooperation, such as sister provinces, facilitates the exchange of experiences, technologies, and problem-solving strategies among local governments. A notable illustration of this cooperation is the partnership between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture in Japan, which is founded on the principles of regional autonomy and the equal standing of the involved governments (Neves, 2010). This cooperative endeavor has been propelled by the necessity to harmonize regional interests with those of the nation, ensuring that each phase of collaboration is predicated on objectives that are mutually beneficial and that guarantee the long-term viability of the relationship through exhaustive negotiations and the formulation of ancillary documents such as Letters of Intent (LoI), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and Draft Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) (Neves, 2010).

The South Sulawesi Provincial Government has demonstrated a commitment to implementing international cooperation through a paradiplomacy approach. This approach involves exchanges in various sectors, ranging from the economy, agriculture, fisheries, and education to culture and sports. The process begins with the signing of a LoI, which is a form of mutual statement of intent. This statement emphasizes the equality of administrative status between the two governments. In this case, the Staff Expert of Cooperation Sub-Section of Cooperation of the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy explained that:

*"A sister province is a cooperation between the provincial government and an equivalent regional government abroad, meaning that they have the same position and equal administrative status."*

It ensures that any cooperation is always based on the principle of equality and complementarity of each region's potential. The signing of the MoU then became a further step that specifically outlined the initial areas of cooperation, namely in the fisheries, agriculture, education, culture, and sports sectors, which then became the basis for the preparation of the Draft MoA to formulate a more detailed cooperation agreement.

The implementation of this sister province cooperation presents potential strategic opportunities, the first of which relates to the similarity of position and administrative status. This similarity allows South Sulawesi Province to gain knowledge and experience in governance through direct interaction with Ehime Prefecture, which has extensive experience in paradiplomacy cooperation. This is a valuable opportunity to increase the capacity and competence of South Sulawesi's local government in facing global and domestic challenges.



The Staff Expert of Cooperation Sub-Section of Cooperation of the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy explained that:

*"South Sulawesi has previously engaged in foreign cooperation, particularly in the form of investment from abroad, grant cooperation, and other forms of collaboration. However, this cooperative endeavor with Ehime Prefecture, in the form of a sister province partnership, marks a novel undertaking for South Sulawesi."*

The potential for broader cross-sectoral collaboration is anticipated to persist beyond the stipulated duration of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2025, thereby facilitating the exploration of new sectors with the potential to stimulate economic growth and regional development.

The second opportunity that arises is the similarity in regional characteristics and potential of the two regions. South Sulawesi Province, with its rich natural resources in fisheries, agriculture, plantations, and creative industry sectors, has much in common with Ehime Prefecture, which also excels in agriculture, fishing, and seafood processing. These similarities not only encourage cooperation in technology transfer and productivity improvement strategies but also open up space for a two-way exchange of knowledge. In this case, the exploratory process that has been carried out shows that both parties have understood each other's potential so that cooperation can be directed at strategic efforts such as the development of tuna fish farming that emphasizes the efficiency of fishing techniques and post-harvest processing, as well as the development of the plantation sector focused on citrus cultivation with assistance in providing superior seeds and modern technology in nurseries. The results of the interview with the Expert Staff of the Cooperation Sub-Section of the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy confirmed that:

*"At the direction of Prof. Nurdin, we are preparing the PKS in stages, starting from PKS in the fields of fisheries and plantations first."*

The South Sulawesi Provincial Government has prepared a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) that identifies opportunities for cooperation in the fisheries sector as one of its primary objectives. The South Sulawesi region boasts abundant maritime potential, particularly in the domain of tuna farming, which presents a range of strategic advantages. The escalating demand for tuna in international markets, notably in Japan, underscores the imperative for the adoption of more efficient fishing technologies and contemporary post-harvest management strategies. Ehime Prefecture's demonstrated proficiency in fisheries technology offers a valuable opportunity for South Sulawesi to transfer knowledge and

technology, thereby enhancing the productivity and efficiency of local fishermen. Furthermore, this cooperation facilitates access to a broader export market, enabling fishery products from South Sulawesi to penetrate the Japanese market and generate substantial economic value. Moreover, the collaboration encompasses seafood processing, which is anticipated to enhance the value chain and exert a favorable economic influence on the region.

The agriculture and plantation sectors have been identified as key areas of collaboration between the two regions. South Sulawesi Province has expressed an interest in receiving assistance from Ehime Prefecture, particularly in the domain of citrus cultivation. The assistance sought includes the provision of superior seeds and the implementation of modern technology in nurseries and post-harvest management. The intent of this collaboration is twofold: to enhance the quantity and quality of crops and to develop effective marketing strategies for penetrating domestic and international markets. The partnership involves the facilitation of knowledge exchange through joint research, workshops, and webinars, providing farmers and industry leaders in South Sulawesi with direct access to expertise from Ehime. This exchange is expected to enhance productivity and efficiency in the plantation sector, thereby contributing to the region's economic growth. The reciprocal nature of this knowledge exchange ensures that both areas can benefit from the adaptation of best practices to their specific conditions.

In addition to the fisheries, agriculture, and plantation sectors, cooperation in the seafood industry, particularly the salt industry, offers attractive opportunities. South Sulawesi Province, especially the Jeneponto District, which is known as the largest salt-producing center on Sulawesi Island, has the potential to become a major supplier of salt raw materials for Ehime Prefecture. Given Ehime's continued reliance on foreign raw materials, the potential for local salt supply is poised to generate significant economic collaboration. Furthermore, the optimization of technology utilization and human resource capacity building in the salt processing sector is a pivotal aspect of this collaboration. The technology transfer support and training for salt farmers in Jeneponto is expected to improve production efficiency and the quality of salt produced, thus enabling the industry to meet international standards and open up more excellent investment opportunities. This is also encouraged by South Sulawesi Governor Nurdin Abdullah's statement highlighting the potential to supply the salt industry in Ehime with quality raw materials from Indonesia while reducing dependence on imports (Media Sulsel, 2019).

Beyond these particular domains, avenues for collaboration encompass the advancement of the creative economy and the cultivation of human capital. While this domain

was not initially prioritized, its integration into the strategic plan signifies an acknowledgment of the immense potential that arises from the exchange of experiences and expertise. The reciprocal exchange of students and civil servants between the two regions is anticipated to fortify collaborative networks and streamline the dissemination of best practices in government management, public administration, and innovation in the tourism and creative industry sectors. Ehime Prefecture's experience in developing tourism based on culture and natural resources can serve as a valuable reference for South Sulawesi, particularly in the management of tourist destinations with the potential to attract more visitors and stimulate local economic growth. This collaborative effort is anticipated to establish an innovative ecosystem involving multiple sectors, with the objective of generating a sustained positive impact on both regions.

A further element that reinforces the prospects for collaboration between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture is the strategic function of regional leaders. The Governor of South Sulawesi, Nurdin Abdullah, who possesses an educational background and study experience in Japan, has cultivated close personal relationships with officials in Ehime Prefecture. This proximity not only facilitates communication and negotiations but also creates opportunities for broader cooperation in the future. The relationships cultivated during his tenure in Bantaeng Regency underscore the significance of personal connections and alumni networks in propelling the agendas of diplomacy and international cooperation. The Expert Staff of the Cooperation Sub-Section of the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy has underscored that the initiation of this cooperative endeavor constitutes a continuation of the relationship that has been cultivated since the Bantaeng period. This relationship represents a significant asset for South Sulawesi in fostering deeper twin-province cooperation and mitigating potential challenges that may emerge in the future.

## **5. 2 Challenges of Sister Province Cooperation between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture**

The challenges of sister-province cooperation between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture cannot be separated from the internal and external dynamics that both parties must face. Internally, the change of leadership is the main challenge that is quite significant. In February 2021, there was a shift in leadership in South Sulawesi Province when the elected Governor, Prof. Nurdin Abdullah, was replaced by the Acting Governor, Andi Sudirman Sulaiman, after his arrest by the KPK. This change had a significant impact on planned

programs, including sister province cooperation with Ehime Prefecture. Functional Translator at the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy revealed:

*"Yes, it is true. After the arrest incident, Governor Nurdin Abdullah was replaced with Plt. Andi Sudirman Sulaiman, at that time, had an impact on many programs, especially in this sister province. Starting with the preparation of the people, activities, and much more that must be repeated to explain to the new leadership."*

This change in leadership forced the rearrangement of the previously established cooperation team, causing the process of implementing cooperation to be delayed and deadlocked, as reflected in the Decree of the Governor of South Sulawesi No. 661 of 2021 concerning the formation of the Sister Province Coordination Team and Joint Working Group. Although there has been a re-discussion, many aspects must be reviewed again, starting from coordination of studies between agencies to communication with partners in Ehime Prefecture.

In addition, language and communication barriers have also become essential obstacles in the implementation of this cooperation. The Functional Translator at the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy explained that in discussions on the design of collaboration, language barriers became a barrier to optimizing communication between OPDs in South Sulawesi and colleagues in Ehime. This obstacle not only hindered the exchange of information but also led to miscommunication when drafting the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). For example, the draft MoA on fisheries cooperation, the draft did not explain in detail the expected technology, so in the reply from Ehime Prefecture, there was confusion about the type of fish processing technology owned, which then forced a re-explanation and a visit for clarification directly to the Japanese side.

Another significant obstacle is related to the budget. The COVID-19 outbreak had a massive impact on regional budget allocations, where funds that should have been used to support cooperation activities were diverted to the health sector for pandemic management. Ms. Staff Expert of Sub-Section Cooperation at the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy revealed:

*"At that time, after we sent the MoA draft that was designed together by the provincial government team, a few weeks later, we received a reply from Japan. The reply was about what was accepted and what was rejected, including that they invited us to come there to see the conditions and adjust the MoA that was made. But because of these factors, for example, Mr. Nurdin was replaced, then Covid was still Covid, and there was no budget because it was used for other fields to overcome this Covid."*

As a result, the limited funds hampered the planned visit and implementation of the cooperation, so the MoA drafting process did not progress significantly.

Beyond internal factors, external challenges also played a role in altering the dynamics of this sister province's cooperation. Initially, eight areas of cooperation were proposed; however, they were subsequently narrowed down to four priority areas: fisheries, plantations, creative economic development, and human resource capacity building. This realignment occurred in direct response to the repercussions of the ongoing pandemic, the novel strain of which had ramifications both domestically in Indonesia and its international relations. The Functional Translator at the Bureau of Government and Regional Autonomy has stated that the adjustment of this area of cooperation was a response to the limitations posed by the pandemic, where the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was done online. This shift in the modality of collaboration necessitated a strategic realignment, where both parties concentrated their efforts on sectors deemed as priority and urgent, consequently leading to the deferment of numerous other initiatives. This shift led to the disappointment of stakeholders who had high initial expectations, affecting the perception that the collaboration had not yielded substantial benefits for South Sulawesi.

## **6. Conclusion**

The sister province cooperation between South Sulawesi Province and Ehime Prefecture exemplifies a form of paradiplomacy that has the potential to strengthen international relations at the sub-national level. The collaboration encompasses pivotal sectors such as fisheries, agriculture, and human resource development, thereby providing substantial opportunities for the two regions to engage in the exchange of experiences, technologies, and strategies to enhance local economic competitiveness. However, the implementation of this cooperation faces various challenges, including leadership changes that impact policy continuity, budget constraints due to competing development priorities, and communication barriers that hinder coordination between the two parties. Long-term strategic planning is necessary to enhance the effectiveness of this cooperation, which incorporates the reinforcement of regulations, the sustainability of policies, and the political commitment of local governments. Furthermore, the enhancement of systematic communication and coordination mechanisms has the potential to mitigate technical barriers that impede program implementation. With a more structured approach and support from various stakeholders, this sister province cooperation has the potential to become a successful model of paradiplomacy that other regions can replicate in building more productive and sustainable international relations.

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