The Dialectics of Political and Administrative Rationality in the Deliberative Process of Village Development Planning

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A R T I C L E I N F O

Abstract

This study analyzes the dialectic between political and administrative rationality in the deliberative development planning process in Pentadio Timur Village, Gorontalo Regency. The village planning process is often in tension between political interests (the aspirations of residents and local elites) and administrative rationality (rules, data, and technocratic procedures). Using a qualitative approach and case study method, this study explores the dynamics of the Village Development Planning Meeting (Musrenbangdes) as a deliberation space between political and administrative actors. The results show that political rationality plays a crucial role in maintaining the social legitimacy of village government, while administrative rationality ensures program efficiency, accountability, and sustainability. When both are able to interact collaboratively, the deliberative process produces planning that is inclusive and adaptive to community needs. However, the imbalance between these two rationalities remains a challenge, primarily due to the limited technical capacity of the apparatus and the influence of electoral interests.

Keywords: Political Rationality, Administrative Rationality, Deliberation, Village Development, Governance

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INTRODUCTION

Village development is a national priority to strengthen regional autonomy and achieve equitable prosperity. Since the enactment of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, villages have had greater autonomy in development planning, implementation, and evaluation. However, inclusive development has not yet been fully realized. Inequality between villages and cities, as well as between political and administrative interests, remains a fundamental problem in the local development process (Taufiq et al., 2022; Suharto & Lestari, 2023). In this context, the Village Development Planning Deliberation (Musrenbangdes) forum is a crucial platform for understanding how village actors negotiate political and administrative rationalities in the deliberative process.

At the implementation level, village development planning is often characterized by a dialectic of two distinct rationalities: a political rationality emphasizing legitimacy

and representative interests, and an administrative rationality oriented toward procedures, efficiency, and accountability (Florini, 2018; Dunn, 2018). When political rationality is too dominant, development policies tend to be populist and unsustainable. Conversely, when administrative rationality is too strong, citizen participation weakens and policies lose social meaning (Akbar et al., 2020). The interaction between these two rationalities poses a major challenge in creating deliberative village governance that is responsive to community needs.

The Gorontalo context exemplifies this tension. Djafar (2025) found that development policies in this region demonstrate a paradox: increasing physical development is not always accompanied by improvements in the community's quality of life. Poverty in Gorontalo remains high—reaching 15.2%, above the national average of 9.4%—indicating that a development orientation that places greater emphasis on infrastructure has failed to address the social welfare dimension. This pattern is also found at the village level, where development programs often reflect political interests rather than the substantive needs of residents. Therefore, the study of Pentadio Timur Village is relevant for uncovering how the dilemma of political and administrative rationality plays out in the deliberative development planning process.

Deliberative governance theory offers an important perspective for understanding how public decisions should be made through dialogue and rational argumentation (Florini, 2018; Rafinzar et al., 2023). In the context of village governance, the deliberative process ideally allows all actors—village heads, village officials, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), and residents—to participate equally in determining development priorities. However, practice in the field shows that power relations, electoral interests, and limited administrative capacity often hinder genuine deliberation (Olken, 2010). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of political and administrative rationality in this process is crucial for finding more equitable and participatory forms of governance.

Research on political and administrative rationality at the village level remains relatively limited. Most studies on development in Gorontalo focus primarily on poverty and social inequality (Djafar, 2025; Nurcholis et al., 2019), while the political-administrative dimension of decision-making is rarely discussed in depth. Yet, understanding the dialectic of these two rationalities is crucial to explaining why the development planning process is often compromising and does not always produce policies based on the real needs of the community. By positioning the Musrenbangdes process as a deliberative space, this study contributes to broadening the perspective of village governance in the context of local politics.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Method: This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design focused on understanding the dynamics of political and administrative rationality within the deliberative forum of the Village Development Planning Meeting (Musrenbangdes) in Pentadio Timur Village, Telaga Biru District, Gorontalo Regency. This approach was chosen because it allows for exploration of social interaction and decision-

making processes that cannot be measured quantitatively but rather require understanding through the meanings and social constructions of policy actors. The research location was purposively selected due to the active public deliberation and dynamic village government structure of Pentadio Timur Village. The informants included the village head, village secretary, BPD chairperson and members, village officials, and community leaders. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies of the RPJMDes, RKPDes, and minutes of the 2022–2024 Musrenbangdes.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2014), which encompasses data reduction, data presentation, and thematic conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by grouping information based on the themes of political dominance, administrative compliance, and patterns of deliberative compromise. Data presentation was arranged in a categorization matrix to map the relationships between actors and the dynamics of rationality that emerged during the Musrenbangdes forum. The validity of the findings was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as member checking with key informants to avoid interpretation bias. This approach ensures that the research results have a high level of validity, are empirically relevant, and are able to holistically describe the dialectic between political and administrative rationality in the deliberative process of village development planning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Deliberation Structure in the East Pentadio Village Musrenbang

The Village Development Planning Deliberation (Musrenbangdes) in Pentadio Timur Village is the primary deliberative forum serving as a platform for community participation in the development of the Village Government Work Plan (RKPDes). This activity is held annually and serves as a strategic platform for determining the direction of village development policies. Based on field observations and documentation from 2022–2024, the Musrenbangdes was attended by village government officials, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), community empowerment institutions, religious leaders, women's leaders, youth, and marginalized community groups. The forum's formal structure demonstrates open, participatory participation, but substantively, it remains dominated by the village government elite, particularly the village head and his staff.

Limited community participation is evident in deliberative capacity and technical understanding of planning mechanisms. Most participants attend merely as listeners, while groups familiar with the policy process—such as village officials and the BPD—play a key role in determining program priorities. This situation indicates that the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes) functions more as an administrative instrument than a platform for substantive deliberation (Sukri, 2025; Akbar et al., 2020). Thus, community participation is more representative than deliberative, with residents legitimizing policy drafts prepared by the village government.

The deliberative process in East Pentadio demonstrates two

interacting layers of rationality: political rationality and administrative rationality. Political rationality is prominent at the aspiration gathering stage, when the village head and officials attempt to accommodate various proposals from hamlets to build social legitimacy and public support. Conversely, administrative rationality becomes dominant at the finalization stage of planning documents and budget preparation, when the village government aligns community proposals with fiscal capacity, technical regulations, and district government guidelines (Nawawi, 2025; Florini, 2018).

The interaction of these two rationalities illustrates the political-administrative dialectic in village development governance. As explained by Taufiq et al. (2022), the effectiveness of deliberative forums is determined not only by the openness of public participation but also by the institutional capacity to manage vertical and horizontal compromises of interests. In the context of East Pentadio, the village head acts as a mediator, maintaining a balance between community aspirational demands and the administrative constraints of the village government. This pattern demonstrates that political rationality plays a role in building social legitimacy, while administrative rationality ensures the efficiency and accountability of development programs.

Conceptually, the dynamics of these two rationalities are visualized in Figure 1, which illustrates the proportion of rationality dominance in the deliberative process of the Village Development Planning Meeting (Musrenbangdes). Based on the analysis, approximately 71% of the deliberation process is dominated by political rationality, particularly at the stage of gathering public aspirations and representation, while the remaining 29% is controlled by administrative rationality, which is strongly present at the technocratic planning and budgeting stages.

Figure 1. Deliberation Structure in the East Pentadio Village Musrenbang
Source: Field observations, 2025

The visualization in Figure 1 shows that political rationality is more intense than administrative rationality in the Musrenbangdes process. This means that social legitimacy and the interests of community representatives remain dominant factors compared to technocratic rationality based on data and regulations. This condition confirms that deliberation at the village level remains at a semi-participatory stage, where final decisions remain controlled by the village administrative structure. Thus, the deliberation pattern in East Pentadio reflects the dialectical reality of village development governance, which attempts to harmonize two rationalities: political as a source of legitimacy, and administrative as a foundation for efficiency and procedural compliance.

Political Rationality: Legitimacy and Representation of Aspirations

The political rationality of the village development planning process in East Pentadio is evident in the village government's focus on maintaining social legitimacy and representing community aspirations. The village head and his staff face socio-political pressure to accommodate various community proposals, particularly regarding infrastructure projects and social activities. This pattern reflects the dynamics of political rationality focused on social image building and strengthening electoral legitimacy, as emphasized by Aspinall (2025) and Olken (2010).

Based on interviews and analysis of the 2021–2024 Village Development Work Plan (RKPDes) documents, it appears that populist and visual programs, such as improving neighborhood roads, constructing public facilities, and socio-religious activities, are more readily accepted in the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes). These projects are perceived as providing immediate benefits and strengthening the village head's leadership image. However, this tendency often comes at the expense of long-term administrative rationality focused on efficiency and sustainability (Wahyudi et al., 2024).

This trend can be seen in Figure 2, which shows an increasing trend in alignment between central and provincial political policies and village-level implementation over the past four years. Despite this increased synergy, the dominance of political legitimacy-oriented policies is evident in the faster increase in the Central Policy Alignment rate compared to the District Implementation Rate.
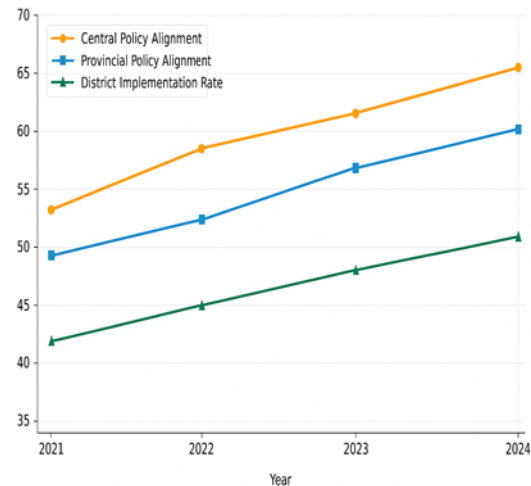

Figure 2. Trends in Village Development Policy Synchronization and Implementation 2021–2024
Source: Secondary Data Analysis of the RPJMDes & RKPDes Pentadio Timur, 2021–2024

The figure shows that policy synchronization between the central government and villages increased from 52% to 65%, while the rate of policy implementation at the village level increased more slowly, from 39% to 49% during the 2021–2024 period. This gap indicates that despite efforts to strengthen administrative rationality, political dynamics still dominate the implementation process. This means that village development policies still tend to be guided by political logic to maintain social legitimacy, rather than solely by data- and regulatory-based technocratic rationality.

Thus, political rationality in East Pentadio plays a crucial role in strengthening the relationship between the village government and the community, but also poses a dilemma regarding long-term policy consistency. This pattern reinforces the findings of Taufiq et al. (2022) that, in the context of local governance, political legitimacy is often a prerequisite for administrative

success, but has the potential to hinder the objectivity of rational and sustainable development planning.

Administrative Rationality: Efficiency and Technical Compliance

Administrative rationality in development planning in East Pentadio Village rests on the principles of efficiency and regulatory compliance, which is realized through the alignment of each proposed program with formal planning documents such as the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes), guidelines for the use of Village Funds, and regional development priority indicators. Village officials, particularly the village secretary and the head of planning affairs, play a crucial role in coordinating planning stages to ensure they align with legal frameworks and the village's fiscal capacity. Consistent with the opinions of Nawawi (2025) and Florini (2018), administrative rationality requires that every development program be not only legally valid but also effective, efficient, and publicly accountable. Based on the analysis of the 2021–2024 Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) and Village Work Plan (RKPDes), the efficiency of village program implementation increased from 39% in 2021 to 49% in 2024. Meanwhile, the level of policy alignment between the central and village governments (Central Policy Alignment) increased from 52% to 65%, and the level of provincial policy alignment rose from 47% to 59% during the same period. These improvements indicate that village officials are increasingly able to align development policy direction with regulations across levels of government. However, these achievements also demonstrate a gap between political policy direction and administrative capacity in technically implementing policies. In other words, administrative efficiency is developing positively, but still lags behind the strengthening of the political dimension oriented towards social legitimacy.

Field findings indicate that village officials attempt to implement technocratic filtering of community aspirations raised in the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes). Proposals lacking a strong legal basis, inconsistent with the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes), or exceeding the village's fiscal capacity are generally postponed or adjusted. However, limited technical capacity and a lack of expert assistance lead to compromise decisions, where some projects are accepted despite failing to meet administrative criteria, solely to maintain social stability and community trust. This situation illustrates the practice of adaptive-compromising administrative rationality, as explained by Abreu et al. (2021), who argue that in the local context, administrative decisions are often negotiated with political considerations to ensure public acceptance of policies.

Conceptually, this dynamic demonstrates that administrative rationality in East Pentadio Village functions as a balancing mechanism between regulatory compliance and social acceptability. Improving administrative efficiency, on the one hand, strengthens the village's governance capacity, but on the other, remains under pressure from political demands to maintain legitimacy. In this context, Florini (2018) refers to this pattern as a form of adaptive governance—that is, governance that adapts to socio-political dynamics without losing the foundations of

administrative efficiency and accountability.

Thus, it can be concluded that during the 2021–2024 period, administrative rationality in East Pentadio Village experienced positive growth of 10 percentage points (from 39% to 49%), indicating improvements in procedural efficiency and regulatory compliance. However, this improvement still needs to be strengthened by developing the technical capacity of the apparatus and a data-based evaluation system to ensure the sustainability of village development that is accountable, efficient, and aligned with community needs.

Dialectics and Deliberative Negotiation

The Village Development Planning Deliberation Forum (Musrenbangdes) in East Pentadio serves as the primary space for village policymakers to negotiate between two rationalities: political and administrative. The village head acts as a mediator, connecting community interests (political representation) with demands for efficiency and procedural compliance (administrative rationality). The deliberation process in this forum is dynamic, with every decision resulting from a dialogue between social legitimacy and technocratic rationality. As noted by Rafinzar et al. (2023) and Akbar et al. (2020), public deliberation at the village level is not merely a consultative forum but also an arena for negotiating power and policy rationality.

The research findings indicate three dominant patterns in the deliberative dynamics of Musrenbangdes in East Pentadio Village. First, adaptive compromise (40%), a pattern in which projects are revised to comply with administrative

requirements without diminishing the essence of community aspirations. This pattern reflects the ideal form of deliberation, as it balances political and administrative rationality. Second, political dominance (35%), which arises when public pressure is high, causing officials to prefer accommodating residents' proposals to maintain the village head's social legitimacy. Third, administrative dominance (25%), which occurs when fiscal conditions and technical directives from the sub-district force the village to reject several non-priority proposals to maintain budget efficiency.

The proportions of these three patterns can be seen in the following analysis, which shows that adaptive compromise is the most frequent deliberative mechanism (40%), followed by political dominance (35%) and administrative dominance (25%). This pattern indicates that village governments tend to choose an adaptive middle ground to maintain social stability and smooth government administration.
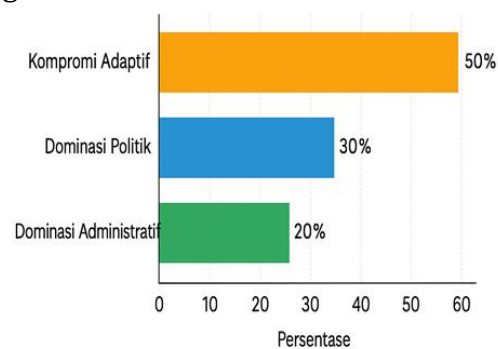

Figure 4. Dialectical Patterns and Deliberative Negotiations in the East Pentadio Village
Source: Primary Data Analysis, 2025

The figure illustrates how adaptive compromise is the most effective deliberative strategy in resolving the tension between political and administrative logics. Political rationality provides space for

citizen participation and social legitimacy, while administrative rationality ensures policy accountability and efficiency. In this context, deliberation serves as a unifying mechanism that allows differing interests to be managed constructively.

Thus, it can be concluded that the deliberative dialectic in East Pentadio is not confrontational, but rather coexistent and negotiative. Political and administrative rationalities complement each other in a pattern of adaptive interaction, reinforcing the concept of deliberative governance, as explained by Florini (2018) and Taufiq et al. (2022), that ideal governance is not the dominance of one rationality over the other, but rather a dynamic balance between the two to realize inclusive, accountable, and sustainable village policies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development planning process in Pentadio Timur Village reflects a dialectical interaction between political rationality and administrative rationality within the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes). Political rationality plays a vital role in maintaining social legitimacy and representing community aspirations, while administrative rationality ensures efficiency, regulatory compliance, and policy accountability. Rather than functioning in conflict, the two rationalities coexist through an adaptive compromise that allows decisions to be made inclusively and responsively to community needs. Thus, the balance between political legitimacy and administrative rationality serves as a fundamental basis for achieving deliberative, participatory, and sustainable village governance.

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