

SUBNATIONAL MARITIME DIPLOMACY IN ADVANCING SDG 14: A CASE STUDY OF SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES GOVERNANCE IN BERAKIT VILLAGE, RIAU ISLANDS

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) promotes the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, a critical issue in maritime border regions where ecological pressures intersect with complex governance arrangements. In archipelagic states such as Indonesia, achieving this goal requires coordination across governance levels, particularly in coastal communities dependent on small-scale fisheries. However, limited studies examine how local governments act as diplomatic actors in advancing sustainable fisheries governance. This qualitative case study analyzes fisheries governance in Berakit Village, Riau Islands Province, a coastal border community facing transboundary fishing pressures. Data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and field observations. The findings show that subnational maritime diplomacy supports SDG 14 implementation by strengthening spatial regulation under the Coastal and Small Islands Zoning Plan (RZWP3K), promoting selective fishing gear, and supporting community-based monitoring to deter Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. These initiatives contribute to ecosystem protection, sustainable harvesting, and improved access for small-scale fishers. The study highlights the strategic role of subnational actors in linking local fisheries governance with global sustainability commitments in maritime border contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship on ocean governance emphasizes the importance of multilevel governance, adaptive governance, and fisheries co-management in addressing the complex challenges of marine resource sustainability.

Multilevel governance theory highlights how authority and decision-making are distributed across interacting institutional layers, from international regimes and national governments to regional and local actors. Within coastal fisheries, this framework is closely linked to co-management arrangements, where governments and fishing communities share responsibilities in resource regulation, monitoring, and compliance. Complementing these perspectives, adaptive governance emphasizes institutional flexibility and learning processes that allow governance systems to respond to ecological uncertainty and changing marine conditions. In Indonesia's archipelagic coastal regions, these theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant as small-scale fisheries operate within dynamic socio-ecological systems where local knowledge, community participation, and decentralized administrative authority play crucial roles in sustaining marine resources.

Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), which focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources, has become a central pillar in global marine governance. As the world's largest archipelagic state, Indonesia faces structural challenges in translating SDG 14 commitments into effective local implementation, particularly in maritime border regions characterized by ecological vulnerability, transboundary fisheries interactions, and decentralized governance arrangements (Subekti, 2020). While national policies such as marine spatial planning and fisheries regulation provide a formal framework, implementation gaps persist at the local level where small-scale fishers operate within complex socio-ecological systems (Subekti, 2020).

In Indonesia's decentralized governance system, subnational governments are granted significant authority in marine resource management, especially after the consolidation of regional autonomy reforms. This institutional configuration creates opportunities for local governments to act not only as administrative units but also as strategic governance actors capable of engaging in what is conceptually understood as subnational maritime diplomacy. Rather than being limited to formal foreign policy activities, this form of diplomacy operates as an interface between local communities, national regulators, and cross-border stakeholders. However, despite the growing body of literature on paradiplomacy and regional autonomy, limited empirical research examines how subnational diplomatic practices contribute concretely to the achievement of global sustainability goals such as SDG 14.

The Riau Islands Province represents a particularly relevant context for such analysis. Geographically located along strategic maritime routes and directly facing neighboring states, this region experiences continuous pressure from cross-border fishing activities, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing risks, and marine ecosystem degradation. Within this setting, Berakit Village in Bintan Regency functions as a frontline coastal community whose economic survival depends heavily on small-scale fisheries. The village's position in northern Bintan places it in direct interaction with transboundary marine spaces, making it both geopolitically significant and ecologically sensitive (Almaududi & Perikanan, 2024).

Existing studies on maritime paradiplomacy in Indonesia largely emphasize political autonomy, cross-border economic cooperation, or security dimensions. Meanwhile, research on SDG 14 implementation tends to focus on national regulatory reforms, marine conservation programs, or blue economy initiatives (Habibie et al., 2024). The intersection between subnational diplomacy and sustainable fisheries governance remains underexplored. Specifically, there is insufficient understanding of how local governments operationalize SDG 14 targets such as sustainable marine ecosystem management (Target 14.2), ending overfishing (Target 14.4), and securing access for small-scale fishers (Target 14.b) through institutional coordination, spatial regulation, and community-based monitoring mechanisms.

This study addresses that gap by examining how subnational maritime diplomacy contributes to the operationalization of SDG 14 in Berakit Village, Riau Islands. The central research question guiding this article is: How does subnational maritime diplomacy function as a governance mechanism in advancing SDG 14. To answer this question, the study employs a qualitative case study approach, drawing on interviews, field observations, and policy analysis. The article argues that subnational maritime diplomacy in Berakit should be conceptualized not merely as external engagement or symbolic representation, but as an adaptive governance mechanism that enhances regulatory coherence, strengthens ecological compliance, and empowers small-scale fishing communities. By positioning paradiplomacy within the framework of sustainable development governance, this research contributes

theoretically to the integration of multilevel governance theory with SDG operationalization debates, while empirically providing evidence from Indonesia's archipelagic border region. Through this analysis, the study expands the understanding of how decentralized maritime governance structures can bridge global sustainability commitments and local fisheries practices, offering insights for other coastal border regions facing similar transboundary ecological pressures.

This study contributes to the growing literature on sustainable ocean governance by demonstrating how subnational maritime diplomacy operates as a bridging mechanism within multilevel governance structures. While existing studies on paradiplomacy often focus on cross-border political engagement or regional economic cooperation, empirical research rarely examines how such practices intersect with sustainable fisheries governance and SDG implementation at the community level. By examining the governance dynamics in Berakit Village, this research shows that subnational diplomatic practices can emerge through everyday coordination between local fishers, village authorities, and regional fisheries institutions. These interactions facilitate regulatory compliance, strengthen community-based monitoring, and support the implementation of key SDG 14 targets, particularly sustainable marine ecosystem management and the protection of small-scale fisheries access. The novelty of this research lies in integrating multilevel governance, adaptive governance, and fisheries co-management perspectives to explain how subnational diplomatic practices contribute to the operationalization of global ocean sustainability goals within Indonesia's decentralized maritime governance system.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a single-case study design to examine how subnational maritime diplomacy contributes to the advancement of SDG 14 in local fisheries governance. A qualitative case study allows for an in-depth exploration of governance processes and institutional interactions within their real-life context, as emphasized by John W. Creswell and Robert K. Yin. Berakit Village in Bintan Regency, Riau Islands Province, was purposively selected due to its strategic location in Indonesia's northern maritime boundary and its strong dependence on small-scale fisheries. This setting provides a relevant empirical context where decentralized marine governance, local livelihood practices, and sustainability commitments intersect. The unit of analysis in this study is the governance interaction between local actors and institutional arrangements that shape sustainable fisheries management.

Data collection was conducted over two months, from August to September 2025. The study involved twelve informants selected purposively, consisting of two stakeholders from the provincial government level, five stakeholders at the village level, and five small-scale fishers. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, complemented by field observations and document analysis, including regional development plans, fisheries governance frameworks, and the Coastal and Small Islands Zoning Plan (RZWP3K). Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through three stages: coding to identify key concepts from interview transcripts and field notes, categorization to group related codes into broader analytical clusters, and theme construction to interpret patterns related to institutional coordination, fisheries regulation, community monitoring, and their alignment with SDG 14 targets—particularly Targets 14.2, 14.4, and 14.b (Syekh & Cirebon, n.d.). The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source and method triangulation and cross-checking interpretations with selected informants, while ethical standards were maintained through informed consent and confidentiality procedures. However, as a single-case qualitative study, the findings are context-specific and primarily intended to provide analytical insights rather than broad statistical generalization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that subnational maritime diplomacy in Berakit Village operates as a practical governance mechanism that connects local fisheries management with Indonesia's broader commitment to SDG 14 (Life Below Water). Rather than functioning solely as symbolic cross-border engagement, subnational diplomacy in

this context manifests through institutional coordination, spatial regulation, community-based monitoring, and policy advocacy that directly affect sustainable fisheries governance outcomes.

Institutional Coordination and Spatial Governance

One of the most tangible contributions of subnational maritime diplomacy to SDG 14 in Berakit Village can be observed in the strengthening of spatial governance through the Coastal and Small Islands Zoning Plan (RZWP3K) (Adiyanto et al., 2025). Local government actors have actively engaged in coordination processes aimed at protecting traditional fishing grounds from encroachment by industrial-scale vessels. This intervention is particularly significant in a maritime border context where spatial ambiguity often generates ecological pressure and social conflict. By clarifying fishing zones and reinforcing recognition of small-scale fishing areas, the local governance system contributes directly to SDG 14 Target 14.2, which calls for the sustainable management and protection of marine ecosystems.

Empirical findings suggest that clearer spatial delineation reduces tensions between small-scale fishers and larger commercial operators, thereby limiting excessive extraction in nearshore waters. Spatial certainty not only decreases conflict but also enhances predictability in resource access, allowing fishers to adjust practices within recognized ecological boundaries. Through consultative forums and dialogue with regency-level authorities, village representatives have articulated local ecological concerns—such as seasonal fishing patterns, habitat sensitivity, and traditional use zones—into formal planning discussions. This process demonstrates how subnational maritime diplomacy operates vertically by translating community-based knowledge into institutionalized regulatory instruments.



Figure 1. FGD with provincial government, village and fisherman stakeholders (August 28, 2025)

Source: Research team documentation (2025)

From a governance perspective, this dynamic reflects the logic of multilevel coordination in which local actors participate in shaping policy frameworks rather than merely implementing centralized directives. The incorporation of local claims into zoning documents strengthens regulatory legitimacy and fosters compliance among resource users. In turn, improved legitimacy enhances the effectiveness of ecosystem-based fisheries management, as rules are perceived as context-sensitive and socially grounded. In this sense, spatial governance in Berakit illustrates how subnational diplomacy functions not as symbolic engagement but as a concrete mechanism for aligning local ecological practices with national sustainability commitments under SDG 14 (Fitrah et al., 2023)

Table 1, The strategy, objectives, and implementation in Berakit Village

Strategy	Objectives	Forms of Implementation in Berakit
Cross-country Collaborative Diplomacy Advocacy for Sustainable Fisheries Policy	Establishing maritime cooperation with neighboring countries	Border dialogue, joint fishing patrols, safe fishing zone agreements
Empowering the Local Maritime Economy	Fighting for pro-fisherman regulations	Proposal for a local regulation on coastal fisheries and protection of traditional fisherman
Regional Maritime Data and Digitalization	Reducing economic inequality among fishermen	Marine product downstreaming and maritime cooperative programs
Academic Cooperation and Maritime Community	Strengthening the policy information base	Mapping marine potential and GIS-based fisheries information systems
	Strengthening regional diplomatic capacity	Collaboration with Raja Ali Haji Maritime University and the Community

Source: Research team documentation

Community-Based Monitoring and IUU Fishing Prevention

Another important finding concerns the strengthening of community participation in surveillance and monitoring activities aimed at preventing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. In the waters surrounding Berakit Village, collaboration between small-scale fishers, village authorities, and maritime security institutions has gradually evolved into a semi-institutionalized monitoring arrangement. This development is particularly significant in a maritime border context where state patrol capacity is structurally limited by geography, budget constraints, and jurisdictional complexity. The involvement of local fishers therefore fills critical enforcement gaps and contributes directly to SDG 14 Target 14.4, which calls for effectively regulating harvesting and ending overfishing.

The analytical significance of this finding lies in the transformation of fishers from policy subjects into governance co-producers. Rather than being positioned merely as regulated actors, local communities become active contributors to regulatory enforcement. Their daily presence at sea, ecological familiarity, and capacity to detect abnormal fishing patterns provide a form of embedded surveillance that formal institutions cannot easily replicate. This participatory model strengthens early detection of destructive or unauthorized fishing practices and reduces the time lag between violation and response. In governance terms, it reflects a shift from hierarchical enforcement toward collaborative compliance.

Importantly, community-based monitoring in Berakit does not undermine state authority but enhances it through social legitimacy. When enforcement mechanisms are perceived as co-created rather than externally imposed, compliance tends to increase because rules are seen as aligned with shared ecological interests. This reduces resistance and lowers the cost of enforcement. The layered system—combining local vigilance with institutional authority—creates a hybrid regulatory structure in which coercive capacity and social norms operate simultaneously. Such arrangements are consistent with adaptive governance principles, where flexibility, feedback loops, and multi-actor coordination strengthen system resilience in the face of ecological uncertainty.

From a paradiplomacy perspective, these monitoring practices also illustrate that subnational maritime diplomacy extends beyond formal cross-border negotiations into operational governance functions (Paradiplomasi & Tidore, 2025). Local authorities facilitate communication channels between community actors and national maritime institutions, thereby institutionalizing responsiveness to ecological risks in transboundary waters. In maritime border regions where illegal fishing often involves actors operating across jurisdictions, localized reporting networks become an essential complement to intergovernmental cooperation (Bimo & Widiana, 2024). Thus, subnational diplomacy

functions not only externally but internally—by reorganizing domestic governance relationships to respond more effectively to transboundary pressures (Mukti & Muhammad, 2021). Rather than operating solely as an external representational activity, subnational maritime diplomacy becomes embedded within regulatory coordination, information exchange, and compliance mechanisms. Through these operational linkages, local actors actively participate in shaping enforcement responses to transboundary fisheries pressures, thereby transforming paradiplomacy into a practical instrument of adaptive marine governance (Agung et al., 2021).

Local authorities play a mediating role by establishing and maintaining communication channels between community actors and national maritime institutions, thereby embedding ecological responsiveness within the governance structure. Through routine coordination, reporting mechanisms, and consultative engagement, they ensure that local observations regarding illegal fishing activities, habitat degradation, and shifting fishing patterns are transmitted to higher regulatory levels. This structured flow of information institutionalizes timely responses to ecological risks in transboundary waters, reducing delays between detection and enforcement. In doing so, subnational actors strengthen regulatory coherence and enhance the adaptive capacity of maritime governance systems facing cross-border environmental pressures (Pujayanti, 2019). In maritime border regions, where illegal fishing frequently involves actors moving across overlapping jurisdictions, localized reporting networks serve as a critical complement to formal intergovernmental cooperation. While bilateral or national-level agreements provide the legal framework for enforcement, their effectiveness often depends on timely and accurate information from the ground. In this context, community-based detection and reporting mechanisms enhance situational awareness and enable faster institutional responses to transboundary violations (Timur et al., n.d.). Consequently, subnational diplomacy operates not only in the external sphere of cross-border engagement but also within the domestic governance architecture, restructuring coordination patterns among local communities, regional authorities, and national institutions to strengthen responsiveness to cross-jurisdictional ecological pressures. (Yani & Serikat, 2024).

The broader implication is that effective SDG 14 implementation in decentralized maritime systems depends on governance intermediaries capable of integrating community knowledge with regulatory authority. In Berakit, subnational maritime diplomacy enables this integration by fostering trust, coordination, and shared responsibility. As a result, fisheries governance becomes more adaptive, socially embedded, and ecologically responsive, reducing overexploitation risks while strengthening institutional legitimacy in a sensitive maritime border environment.

Selective Fishing Gear and Ecological Compliance

Another significant dimension of SDG 14 operationalization in Berakit Village concerns the gradual promotion and adoption of environmentally selective fishing gear. Findings from interviews and field observations indicate increasing awareness among small-scale fishers regarding the ecological consequences of destructive fishing practices, particularly those that damage seabed habitats, coral structures, and juvenile fish populations. Although economic limitations continue to shape fishing decisions, the transition toward non-destructive gear reflects an evolving understanding of sustainability as both an ecological and economic necessity. This shift directly supports SDG 14 Target 14.2 on ecosystem protection and Target 14.4 on regulating harvesting practices.

Subnational maritime diplomacy plays a facilitative role in this transformation by linking local fishing communities with broader networks of knowledge, policy communication, and sustainability initiatives (Suherman et al., 2020). Through coordination with regency authorities, research institutions, and conservation-oriented actors, local government structures act as intermediaries that transmit regulatory information and technical guidance to fishers. This horizontal connectivity enables the diffusion of ecosystem-based fisheries management principles at the community level. It also reflects the broader function of paradiplomacy as a governance interface, connecting global sustainability discourse with localized practice.

Analytically, the adoption of selective fishing gear illustrates how adaptive governance operates through incremental behavioral change rather than abrupt policy imposition. In decentralized maritime systems such as Indonesia, strict top-down enforcement often encounters socio-economic constraints that limit effectiveness. By contrast, participatory and communicative approaches strengthen compliance by embedding ecological norms within

local practice. This gradual internalization of sustainability principles enhances regulatory legitimacy and reduces long-term enforcement costs.

Moreover, the emphasis on selective gear contributes to ecological resilience by protecting critical habitats that function as spawning and nursery grounds. In nearshore ecosystems where small-scale fisheries dominate, maintaining habitat integrity is central to sustaining biomass levels and preventing recruitment overfishing. The Berakit case therefore demonstrates that subnational maritime diplomacy does not operate exclusively at the institutional or diplomatic level, but also shapes micro-level practices that collectively influence marine ecosystem health.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the operationalization of SDG 14 in Berakit is not confined to formal planning documents but is embedded in everyday fishing decisions. By facilitating communication, fostering ecological awareness, and aligning regulatory expectations with livelihood considerations, subnational maritime diplomacy contributes to a gradual restructuring of fisheries governance toward sustainability. This reinforces the argument that in maritime border contexts, adaptive and participatory governance mechanisms are essential for translating global sustainability commitments into locally legitimate and ecologically meaningful outcomes.

From a governance perspective, the promotion of selective fishing gear represents more than a technical adjustment; it constitutes a normative transformation in resource-use behavior. Rather than relying solely on prohibitive regulation, local authorities and supporting institutions have emphasized awareness-building, training, and gradual compliance. This approach reduces resistance by framing ecological protection as aligned with long-term livelihood security. Fishers increasingly recognize that habitat degradation ultimately undermines fish stock regeneration and income stability. In this sense, ecological compliance emerges not merely from external enforcement but from an internalized logic of sustainability.

Access for Small-Scale Fishers (SDG 14.b)

A further critical dimension of SDG 14 implementation in Berakit Village concerns the protection of access rights for small-scale fishers, which directly corresponds to SDG 14 Target 14.b. In maritime border areas, competition over fishing space often reflects unequal power relations between small-scale artisanal fishers and larger commercial operators. The findings indicate that local authorities in Berakit have actively advocated for the recognition of traditional fishing grounds and prioritized small-scale access within zoning discussions and licensing processes. This effort mitigates the marginalization risks commonly experienced by artisanal fishers in decentralized yet market-driven fisheries governance systems.

From a political economy perspective, access to marine resources is not merely a technical regulatory issue but a question of distributive justice. Small-scale fishers depend heavily on nearshore ecosystems for daily subsistence, while larger vessels typically possess greater mobility, capital, and technological advantage. Without institutional safeguards, spatial liberalization may inadvertently privilege capital-intensive actors and accelerate resource depletion. In this context, subnational maritime diplomacy functions as a corrective mechanism that rebalances asymmetrical power relations by institutionalizing protections for vulnerable fishing communities.

The advocacy role performed by local government actors reflects an important shift from passive implementation of national policy to active mediation of competing economic interests. Through consultative engagement with regency authorities and alignment with provincial zoning frameworks, Berakit's representatives have articulated livelihood concerns as integral components of sustainable governance. This vertical interaction illustrates how subnational actors influence policy interpretation and operationalization, ensuring that sustainability commitments incorporate social equity considerations rather than focusing solely on ecological indicators.

Analytically, the recognition of small-scale access rights strengthens governance legitimacy and long-term compliance. When fishers perceive that regulatory frameworks protect their livelihood security, they are more likely to support conservation measures and adhere to ecological restrictions. This creates a mutually reinforcing relationship between social protection and environmental sustainability. In decentralized maritime systems such as Indonesia, where authority is distributed across governance levels, such mediation becomes crucial for preventing policy fragmentation and social conflict.

Moreover, securing access for small-scale fishers enhances community resilience in the face of market volatility and cross-border pressures. Maritime border regions are particularly susceptible to fluctuating fish prices, transboundary fishing incursions, and regulatory uncertainty. By formalizing access rights and clarifying spatial entitlements, subnational governance reduces vulnerability and strengthens adaptive capacity at the community level. This demonstrates that SDG 14 implementation cannot be detached from questions of economic security and institutional inclusion. By mediating access rights, integrating local claims into zoning frameworks, and reinforcing institutional recognition of artisanal fisheries, local actors contribute to a more equitable and resilient model of sustainable fisheries governance. In this sense, the advancement of SDG 14 depends not only on ecosystem protection but also on safeguarding the structural conditions that enable small-scale fishing communities to survive and participate meaningfully in marine governance.

Protecting Access for Small-Scale Fishers

Protecting access for small-scale fishers in Berakit Village cannot be understood solely as a matter of allocating fishing space; it represents a broader governance strategy to secure livelihood sustainability within a competitive and geopolitically sensitive maritime environment (Susanti et al., 2020). In border regions, small-scale fishers often operate in waters that are simultaneously subject to national jurisdiction, cross-border mobility, and commercial expansion. Without institutional recognition, their traditional fishing practices risk being displaced by capital-intensive operations or regulatory ambiguity (Perikanan & Padjajaran, 2025). The findings indicate that local authorities in Berakit have taken proactive steps to formalize recognition of customary fishing zones within spatial planning discussions and to advocate for licensing procedures that do not disproportionately burden artisanal fishers (Ham & Hukum, 2023).

This protective function reflects a deeper logic of distributive governance. Access to marine resources determines not only economic survival but also social stability within coastal communities. When small-scale fishers face shrinking access due to industrial encroachment or complex administrative requirements, vulnerability increases and compliance with conservation measures may weaken. By contrast, when access rights are institutionally safeguarded, fishers gain greater predictability and security, which encourages long-term investment in sustainable practices. In this way, social protection becomes directly linked to ecological stewardship.

Subnational maritime diplomacy plays a mediating role in negotiating these access arrangements across governance levels. Village representatives and regency authorities engage in dialogue to ensure that provincial zoning regulations reflect local dependence on nearshore fisheries. This vertical articulation allows local livelihood concerns to be embedded within higher-level regulatory frameworks, reducing the risk that centralized policy design overlooks community realities. Rather than operating as passive implementers of national directives, subnational actors function as intermediaries who recalibrate policy interpretation in light of local socio-ecological conditions.

The protection of small-scale access also strengthens institutional legitimacy in decentralized maritime systems such as Indonesia. Legitimacy emerges when governance frameworks are perceived as fair, inclusive, and responsive to community needs. In Berakit, recognition of artisanal fishing zones reinforces the perception that sustainability policies do not privilege large-scale actors at the expense of local livelihoods. This legitimacy enhances voluntary compliance and reduces the likelihood of conflict between resource users.

Furthermore, safeguarding small-scale fisheries contributes to long-term adaptive capacity. Artisanal fishers often possess generational ecological knowledge regarding seasonal patterns, habitat conditions, and species behavior. Protecting their continued participation in marine governance ensures that such knowledge remains embedded within the management system. This strengthens resilience against ecological uncertainty, climate variability, and market fluctuations that characterize maritime border economies (Naila et al., 2025). Subnational maritime diplomacy enables this balance by integrating distributive justice into spatial governance and fisheries policy advocacy. The case demonstrates that sustainable fisheries governance in border contexts depends not only on conserving marine ecosystems but also on maintaining the structural conditions that allow artisanal fishing communities to remain viable, recognized, and institutionally included within the broader maritime governance framework.

Subnational Maritime Diplomacy as an Adaptive Governance Mechanism

Subnational maritime diplomacy in Berakit Village ultimately functions as an adaptive governance mechanism that connects local practices, national regulatory structures, and global sustainability commitments within a dynamic maritime border environment. Rather than being confined to symbolic representation or external engagement, it operates through continuous coordination, negotiation, and policy translation across governance levels. In decentralized systems such as Indonesia, where authority over marine affairs is distributed among village, regency, provincial, and national institutions, adaptive capacity depends heavily on the ability of subnational actors to mediate these overlapping jurisdictions (Hadiyan et al., 2024).

The findings suggest that subnational maritime diplomacy enhances governance flexibility by creating feedback loops between community experience and regulatory design (Trebucq, 2025). Local ecological knowledge, conflict dynamics, and livelihood concerns are articulated upward through consultative forums, while national sustainability commitments—particularly those related to SDG 14—are translated downward into operational practices. This bidirectional flow reduces policy fragmentation and strengthens coherence between planning instruments, enforcement strategies, and everyday fishing behavior. Adaptive governance, in this context, is not merely about responding to environmental change but about continuously recalibrating institutional arrangements to align ecological protection with social realities.

A key characteristic of this adaptive mechanism is its reliance on relational coordination rather than rigid bureaucratic hierarchy. Trust-building among fishers, village authorities, regency officials, and maritime security institutions creates a governance environment where information circulates more effectively and collective problem-solving becomes possible. In maritime border areas marked by transboundary fishing pressures and fluctuating ecological conditions, such relational networks are crucial for timely response and regulatory adjustment. Subnational maritime diplomacy therefore operates as a connective infrastructure that sustains institutional responsiveness.

Moreover, this adaptive function allows local governance systems to manage uncertainty. Marine ecosystems are inherently variable, and border waters are exposed to external fishing incursions, market shifts, and climatic fluctuations. Through layered monitoring, participatory zoning processes, and advocacy for small-scale access, subnational actors contribute to a governance structure capable of absorbing shocks without collapsing into conflict or overexploitation. The capacity to adjust practices incrementally—whether through gear modification, surveillance coordination, or spatial clarification—demonstrates institutional learning over time.

Theoretically, positioning subnational maritime diplomacy as an adaptive governance mechanism expands conventional understandings of paradiplomacy (Fora, 2015). Rather than viewing it solely as subnational participation in international relations, the Berakit case illustrates its embedded role in domestic sustainability governance. It becomes a functional interface through which global norms such as SDG 14 are localized, negotiated, and operationalized. This reconceptualization highlights that the effectiveness of global sustainability agendas depends not only on national commitments but also on the adaptive intermediation performed by subnational institutions.

In sum, subnational maritime diplomacy in Berakit contributes to a governance model that is flexible, participatory, and resilience-oriented (Alvin & Yulianti, 2017). By integrating ecological protection, distributive justice, and multilevel coordination, it demonstrates how border communities can translate global sustainability frameworks into context-sensitive institutional practices. Such a model underscores that sustainable fisheries governance in archipelagic and border settings requires continuous negotiation and institutional learning, anchored by subnational actors capable of bridging scales of authority and spheres of policy action.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that subnational maritime diplomacy plays a practical role in advancing SDG 14 through locally embedded governance practices. The case of Berakit Village in the Riau Islands shows that local government actors function not only as policy implementers but also as intermediaries who translate global sustainability commitments into operational fisheries governance. The implementation of SDG 14 is reflected in

strengthened spatial regulation, participatory monitoring to deter IUU fishing, the promotion of environmentally selective fishing gear, and institutional protection of access rights for small-scale fishers.

The findings indicate that sustainable fisheries governance in coastal border regions depends on multilevel coordination and local legitimacy. Clear spatial zoning reduces ecological pressure and conflict, community-based monitoring complements state enforcement, and the protection of artisanal fishing access integrates social equity into sustainability policies. Together, these elements form a governance configuration that strengthens ecological compliance while maintaining community participation. Theoretically, this study contributes to paradiplomacy scholarship by demonstrating that subnational maritime diplomacy operates not only through external engagement but also through domestic governance functions that connect community knowledge, regulatory frameworks, and national sustainability commitments. At the policy level, the findings suggest that national fisheries governance should strengthen coordination with local authorities, expand participatory monitoring mechanisms, and safeguard small-scale fisheries access to ensure effective SDG 14 implementation. Future research should conduct comparative studies across other coastal border regions to assess how different institutional arrangements influence the effectiveness of subnational maritime diplomacy and its contribution to sustainable marine governance.

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