



Institutional Process in the Implementation of Special Autonomy: A Historical Institutionalism Analysis of Papua Barat Daya Province, Indonesia

Yakob Kareh¹, Sukri², Muh. Akmal Ibrahim²

¹Doctoral Student of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

²Department of Administrative Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Yakob Kareh

Email: yakob.kareth.0408@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines how institutional processes in Papua's Special Autonomy (Otsus) have formed, evolved, and reproduced over more than two decades under Law No. 21/2001 and its 2021 revision. Persistent weakening of MRP representational functions, vertical-horizontal fragmentation, and stagnation in Indigenous Papuan empowerment indicate that Otsus implementation cannot be explained solely through formal institutional design. Drawing on Historical Institutionalism, this study analyses three dimensions of institutional effectiveness: regulatory and procedural clarity, consistency of fund-implementation flows, and effectiveness of coordination and evaluation forums. A qualitative historical-institutional case-study design was applied using process tracing and within-case analysis. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with provincial officials, former Otsus drafters, customary leaders, MRP representatives, NGO actors, academics, and Indigenous Papuan community representatives, supported by document analysis of Otsus laws, implementing regulations, presidential regulations, provincial budget documents, audit reports, and media archives. Coding was conducted using NVivo and validated through triangulation and member checking. The findings show strong normative-administrative clarity, with regulatory foundations scoring 9/10, but weak operational-sequential clarity, with planning sequence, budget flow, and evaluation scoring 4, 3, and 3. Implementation consistency is reproductive rather than transformative: regulations, work units, master plans, and budgets are reproduced, while substantive empowerment remains limited. Layering dominates institutional change, producing old-pattern persistence in MRP functions and budget-authority structures. Coordination forums operate as adaptation channels but fail as policy-feedback mechanisms. The study contributes the concepts of reproductive continuity and transformative continuity to explain why formal stability has not produced substantive institutional transformation in a newly established peripheral province.

Introduction

The implementation of Papua's Special Autonomy represents one of Indonesia's most significant experiments in asymmetric decentralisation, designed to address long-standing socio-political tensions, historical justice claims, and persistent development disparities experienced by Indigenous Papuans (Sarjito & Mursidi, 2025; Silambi et al., 2023).

Institutionalised through Law No. 21 of 2001 and substantially revised by Law No. 2 of 2021, Otsus extends beyond administrative decentralisation by recognising Papua's distinctive socio-cultural identity and granting broader authority over governance, fiscal management, and development planning. The policy introduced several unique institutional arrangements, including the Papuan People's Assembly (Majelis Rakyat Papua/MRP), dedicated Otsus fiscal transfers, and participatory planning mechanisms based on customary territories, all intended to create a governance system that is more inclusive, culturally responsive, and oriented towards Indigenous empowerment (Billy Muskitta Bastian Erlando et al., 2025; Ohoiwutun, 2025).

Despite these institutional innovations, more than two decades of implementation have generated persistent concerns regarding the effectiveness of Otsus institutions in achieving their intended objectives. Numerous evaluations indicate that institutions established to strengthen Indigenous representation and regional autonomy have gradually experienced functional weakening rather than institutional consolidation (Kareh et al., 2025; Wellens & Jegers, 2014). The representational role of the MRP has remained limited in influencing strategic planning and budgeting decisions, while coordination between provincial and regency or municipal governments continues to suffer from fragmented authority and weak policy synchronisation (Aulia & Tambun, 2025). Consequently, institutional reforms introduced through the revision of the Otsus Law have not consistently translated into more effective governance or stronger Indigenous participation. These persistent shortcomings raise a fundamental question of why formally strengthened institutions continue to generate relatively unchanged implementation outcomes over time (Sarjito & Mursidi, 2025; Tryatmoko, 2026).

Understanding this paradox requires moving beyond conventional evaluations of policy performance toward an examination of how institutions emerge, evolve, and reproduce themselves over time. Historical Institutionalism (HI) provides an appropriate analytical framework because it conceptualises institutions as historically embedded arrangements whose present performance is strongly shaped by earlier political choices and sequential institutional development (Pilon, 2021). Rather than viewing institutions as static organisational structures, HI explains how critical junctures establish institutional trajectories that subsequently become self-reinforcing through mechanisms of path dependency (Pierson, 2000). Institutional persistence therefore reflects not merely legal continuity but also the accumulation of rules, routines, and power relations that constrain future reform options. As a result, institutional reforms frequently produce incremental adjustments rather than fundamental transformation (Thelen, 2004). Within the Papuan context, the revision of the Otsus Law and the establishment of new autonomous provinces, including Papua Barat Daya, illustrate such gradual adaptation. While these reforms introduced additional regulations and organisational arrangements, many institutional practices remain characterised by entrenched bureaucratic routines, elite domination, fragmented authority, and the continued marginalisation of customary institutions and Indigenous civil society actors (Rakia et al., 2022; Situmorang, 2025).

Historical Institutionalism further argues that institutional continuity does not necessarily imply institutional effectiveness. Pierson (2000) explains that increasing returns generated through early institutional choices often reinforce existing governance arrangements, making subsequent reforms path dependent rather than transformative. Expanding this perspective, Thelen (2004) demonstrates that institutional change commonly occurs through gradual mechanisms such as layering, displacement, drift, and conversion, whereby new institutional elements coexist with rather than replace existing arrangements. Gerschewski (2021) further argues that accumulated layers of institutional change may either transform institutional logic or simply reproduce existing governance patterns depending on how new rules interact with established structures. These theoretical insights provide an important lens for understanding

why repeated regulatory reforms in Papua have generated institutional stability without necessarily improving governance effectiveness.

Although studies on Papua's Special Autonomy have extensively examined governance performance, decentralisation outcomes, fiscal management, and Indigenous representation, most have adopted structural, legal, or evaluative perspectives that assess institutional success or failure as relatively static conditions. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to the historical processes through which institutional arrangements have evolved, accumulated, and reproduced across successive reform periods. Consequently, existing scholarship provides limited explanation of why institutions that appear normatively progressive continue to experience functional weakening in practice. This gap suggests the need for a longitudinal institutional perspective capable of tracing how foundational decisions, subsequent reform episodes, and cumulative institutional adjustments interact to shape present governance outcomes.

This study employs Historical Institutionalism to examine the institutional process underpinning the implementation of Papua's Special Autonomy. Rather than evaluating Otsus solely in terms of policy outputs, the study investigates how institutional trajectories have been formed, maintained, and modified across more than two decades of implementation. Specifically, it analyses three dimensions of institutional effectiveness: (1) the clarity of regulatory procedures and standard operating procedures (SOPs), (2) the consistency of fund implementation flows, and (3) the effectiveness of coordination and evaluation forums. By linking these dimensions to the mechanisms of path dependency and gradual institutional change, this study contributes to a deeper explanation of why Otsus institutions continue to exhibit strong formal continuity while producing relatively limited substantive transformation.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative historical-institutional case study to examine how the institutional process of Papua's Special Autonomy has been formed, evolved, and reproduced over more than two decades. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research aims to understand institutional dynamics as historically contingent processes rather than to establish statistical relationships among variables. The study is grounded in the Historical Institutionalism perspective, which explains institutional development through temporal sequencing, critical junctures, path dependency, and gradual institutional change (Hall, 2009; Pierson, 2000; Thelen, 2004). A case-study strategy was adopted because it enables an in-depth investigation of institutional processes within their actual political, historical, and governance contexts, allowing the researcher to capture complex interactions among actors, institutions, and policy developments that unfold over time (Lim, 2025; Priya, 2021). Papua Barat Daya Province was selected as the research setting because it is Indonesia's newest autonomous province established following the revision of the Special Autonomy Law, providing a strategic context for examining whether recent institutional reforms have generated substantive transformation or merely reproduced existing institutional arrangements.

Research Participants and Data Sources

The study relied on both primary and secondary sources of evidence to construct a comprehensive understanding of the institutional process of Special Autonomy implementation. Primary data were collected through purposively selected informants who possessed direct knowledge and experience regarding the formulation, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of Otsus institutions. Purposive sampling was employed because the research required participants with substantial institutional knowledge rather than

statistically representative respondents (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). Informants consisted of provincial government officials responsible for Otsus implementation, members of the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), representatives of the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP), members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRP), former members of the Otsus drafting team, customary leaders, academics specialising in decentralisation and Papuan governance, representatives of non-governmental organisations, and Indigenous Papuan community leaders. Data collection continued until analytical saturation was achieved, indicated by the recurrence of similar information across interviews and the absence of substantially new insights.

Secondary data were collected to complement and verify interview findings through documentary analysis. These documents included Law No. 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua, Law No. 2 of 2021, Government Regulations No. 106 and No. 107 of 2021, Presidential Regulation No. 24 of 2023 concerning the Master Plan for the Acceleration of Development in Papua (RIPPP), provincial planning and budgeting documents, regional budget reports, audit reports, government evaluation reports, media archives, policy documents, and relevant academic publications. The integration of multiple documentary sources enabled reconstruction of the historical trajectory of Otsus institutions while strengthening the credibility of the empirical findings through data triangulation.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and documentary analysis conducted between March and June 2026 in Papua Barat Daya Province. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allowed flexibility to explore participants' historical experiences while maintaining consistency across key themes relevant to the research objectives. Interview questions focused on the establishment of Otsus institutions, major institutional changes following the enactment of Law No. 21 of 2001 and its subsequent revision, coordination among governmental and customary institutions, implementation of Otsus funding, institutional challenges, and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Special Autonomy governance. Interviews were complemented by documentary analysis to identify institutional regulations, administrative procedures, policy changes, and historical developments that shaped the implementation of Otsus over time. Documentary evidence also served to validate interview narratives and reconstruct institutional sequences more systematically.

Data Analysis

Data analysis combined process tracing and thematic analysis within the analytical framework of Historical Institutionalism. Process tracing was employed to reconstruct the chronological sequence of institutional development from the enactment of Law No. 21 of 2001 through the revision of the Special Autonomy framework under Law No. 2 of 2021 and the establishment of Papua Barat Daya Province. This approach enabled the identification of critical junctures, causal mechanisms, and institutional sequences that influenced subsequent governance trajectories (Hofmann & Yeo, 2024; Johnson et al., 2025). Particular attention was given to how institutional arrangements were established, how reforms accumulated over time, and whether these reforms altered or reproduced existing institutional patterns.

Thematic analysis was subsequently conducted using NVivo software to organise and interpret qualitative data systematically (Dhakal, 2022; Naeem et al., 2023). The analysis began with open coding to identify recurring concepts emerging from interview transcripts and documentary evidence. These initial codes were subsequently grouped through axial coding into broader analytical categories reflecting the key concepts of Historical Institutionalism,

including path dependency, critical junctures, institutional layering, displacement, drift, conversion, policy feedback, and institutional continuity. Finally, selective coding integrated these themes into a coherent explanation of institutional development and governance outcomes. The interpretation of findings was guided by three analytical dimensions: the clarity of regulatory procedures and standard operating procedures (SOPs), the consistency of Otsus fund implementation, and the effectiveness of coordination and evaluation forums as institutional feedback mechanisms. These dimensions enabled assessment of whether institutional change reflected reproductive continuity, in which institutions largely reproduce existing governance patterns, or transformative continuity, in which institutional adaptation produces substantive improvements while maintaining institutional stability.

Result and Discussion

Findings are organised around the three indicators, prefaced by process-tracing of critical junctures shaping the trajectory of Otsus institutions.

Critical Junctures and the Path-Dependent Trajectory

Process tracing from 2001 to 2025 identifies a sequence of critical junctures that shape, but do not fundamentally redirect, the Otsus institutional trajectory. Figure 1 maps these junctures alongside three phases of institutional evolution.

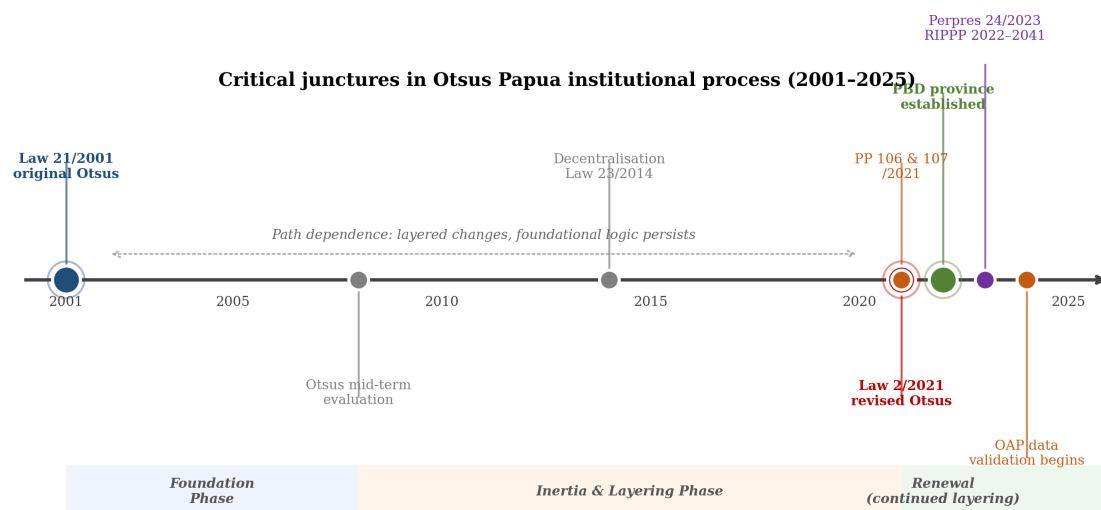


Figure 1. Critical junctures in the Otsus Papua institutional process (2001–2025)

Source: Process tracing of policy documents, evaluation reports, and informant interviews, 2026

Figure 1 reveals three phases. The Foundation Phase (2001–2008) established Law No. 21/2001 as the foundational architecture MRP, special status, dedicated funding which set the institutional template that subsequent layers would build upon. The Inertia and Layering Phase (2008–2021) is characterised by minor adjustments (the 2008 mid-term evaluation, the 2014 Decentralisation Law) that did not redirect the trajectory but accumulated procedural complexity. The Renewal Phase (2021–2025) features unusually dense critical junctures: Law No. 2/2021 (Otsus revision), PP No. 106 and 107/2021 (operational regulations), Papua Barat Daya province establishment in 2022, Presidential Regulation No. 24/2023 (RIPP 2022–2041), and OAP data validation initiation in 2024. Despite this density, the pattern is one of

layering rather than displacement: new elements are added atop the foundational logic without substituting it. As Pierson (2000) predicts, path dependency operates not by precluding change but by channelling change into trajectories that preserve foundational logic—a precise description of Otsus’s 24-year arc.

Clarity of Regulatory Procedures and SOPs

The regulatory architecture is hierarchically complete Law No. 2/2021, PP No. 106/2021, PP No. 107/2021, Presidential Regulation No. 24/2023, the provincial budget structure providing normative basis, authority allocation, planning sequences, and budget frameworks. However, fieldwork reveals that clarity is concentrated at normative-administrative levels and weakens dramatically at operational-sequential levels. Figure 2 documents this gap across seven implementation stages.

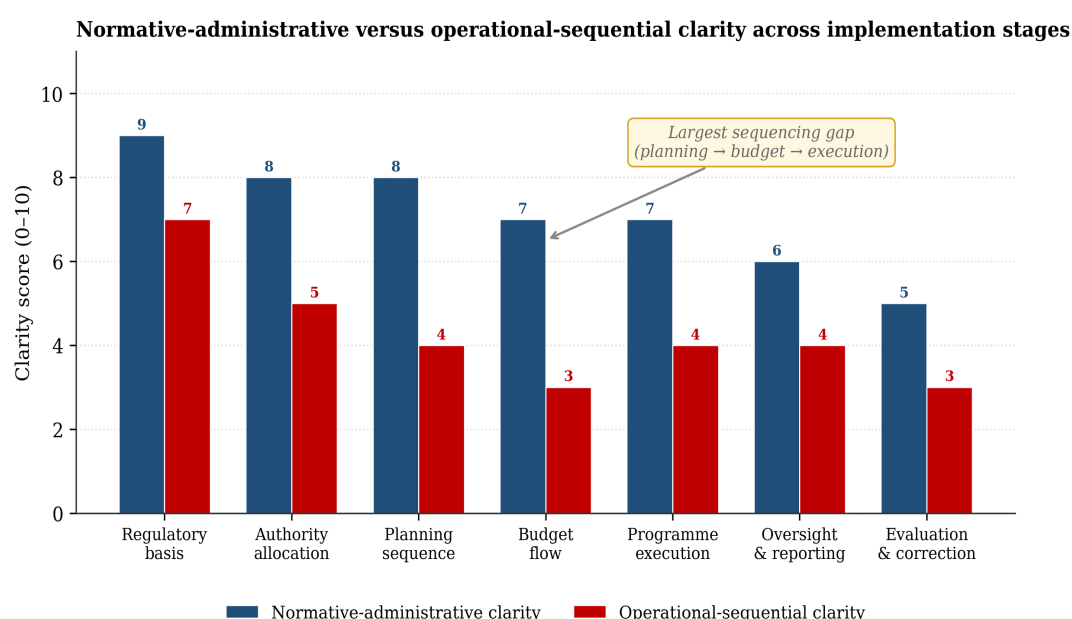


Figure 2. Normative-administrative versus operational-sequential clarity across implementation stages

Source: Thematic coding of policy documents and FGD with implementation actors

Figure 2 reveals a systematic pattern. Regulatory basis (9 vs 7) and authority allocation (8 vs 5) show modest gaps, but planning sequence (8 vs 4), budget flow (7 vs 3), oversight and reporting (6 vs 4), and evaluation and correction (5 vs 3) show widening operational deficits. The largest gap appears in the planning→budget→execution sequence, where formally complete documents (RIPPP, RAPPP, Musrenbang Otsus, RKA-SKPD) fail to produce timely, integrated operational flow. FGD evidence confirms this: planning and budget officials describe overlapping authority narratives between Law No. 2/2021, PP No. 106/2021, and PP No. 107/2021; physical-project execution is regularly delayed because technical engineering documents (DED, KAK) and tender processes can only be prepared in the current fiscal year; and budgetary inflexibility means current-year preparation for next-year programmes is restricted. This is precisely Pierson’s (2000) timing-and-sequencing problem: temporal misalignment between regulation, planning, budgeting, and execution generates path dependency in administrative ineffectiveness rather than path dependency in effective coordination.

The pattern echoes Irawan & Adam (2023); Madubun & Madubun (2023), who finds that Otsus Papua implementation faces low collaboration particularly at implementation, resource management, and monitoring-evaluation stages. (Shey Blandine & Koulle Brigitte Christelle, 2025) similarly identify weak evaluation, financial management, and institutional design that fails to translate policy into welfare outcomes. The convergence across studies indicates that the problem is structural to Otsus rather than location specific.

Consistency of Fund Implementation Flow

Implementation consistency in Otsus Papua Barat Daya is formally strong but substantively limited. Across the three institutions examined MRP, regional government, and technical agencies/districts a distinctive layering pattern emerges (Figure 3) in which incremental and adaptive change accumulate without displacing dominant old patterns.

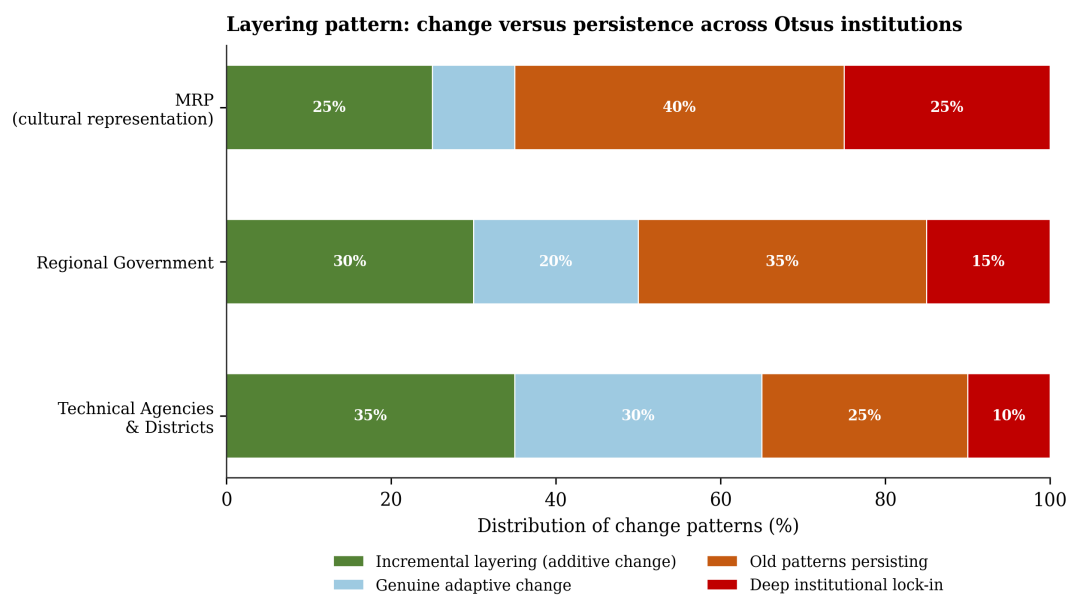


Figure 3. Layering pattern: change versus persistence across Otsus institutions

Source: Thematic coding of FGD and interview data

Figure 3 displays a striking gradient. MRP exhibits the highest persistence (40% old patterns + 25% deep lock-in = 65% unchanged) and the lowest genuine adaptive change (10%). This reflects the institution's representational role: while its normative mandate has been expanded through Law No. 2/2021 (verification of OAP data, broader consultation requirements), its operational capacity budget, transportation, organisational support, political enforcement power has not been correspondingly strengthened. The result is what (Thelen, 2004) describes as functional layering: new responsibilities are added without corresponding capacity, producing apparent change without substantive transformation. Regional government shows a middle pattern (50% old + locked-in, 50% change-oriented), with new Otsus-affairs units established and coordination layers added, but with budget decisions remaining concentrated in TAPD-Sekda-Bappeda procedural chokepoints. Technical agencies and districts show the greatest adaptive capacity (65% change-oriented), reflecting their operational proximity to programme delivery but adaptation is operational rather than institutional, occurring within budget rules and authority structures they cannot modify.

This pattern confirms Carstensen & Röper (2022) layering mechanism in operation: institutions change continuously but rarely fundamentally. Continuity here is reproductive rather than transformative the trajectory persists through procedural channels (regulation, budgeting, programme delivery, reporting), but the substantive logic shaping OAP outcomes remains essentially unchanged from 2001 foundations. Muindi et al. (2022); Oderinde et al. (2024); Ramli et al. (2025) confirm this from the receiving end: Otsus produces measurable economic effects for OAP communities, but the magnitude is limited by implementation precision, beneficiary access, and programme continuity features determined by the same procedural architecture that has persisted for two decades.

Effectiveness of Coordination and Evaluation Forums

Coordination and evaluation forums Musrenbang, tiered coordination meetings, technical-agency forums, Papua Steering Board are formally established and operationally active, yet the question is whether they function as policy feedback mechanisms capable of producing institutional correction. Figure 5 maps the policy feedback loop and identifies where it breaks. (Figure 4, presented later, summarises the overall continuity-transformation position.)

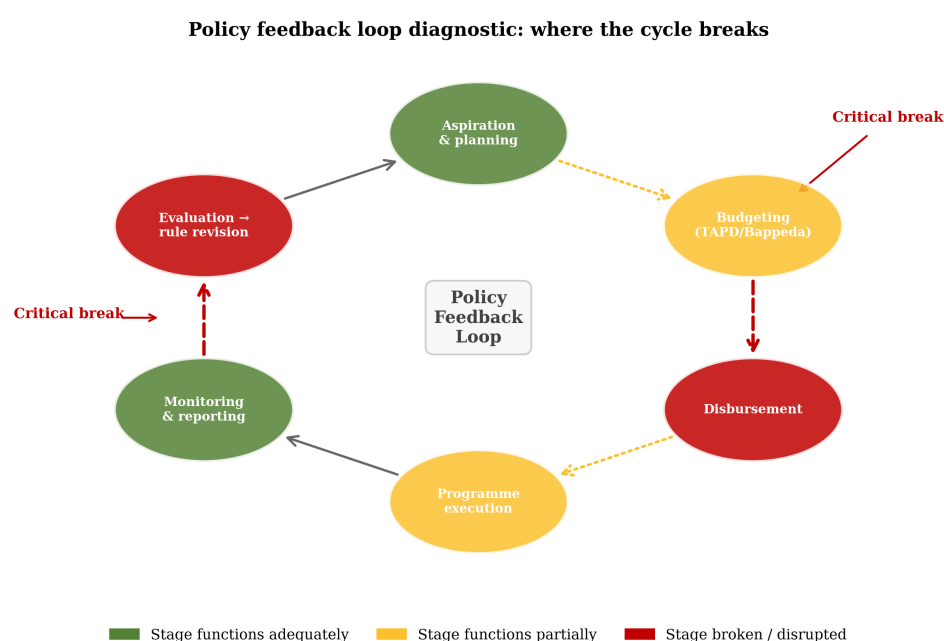


Figure 5. Policy feedback loop diagnostic: where the cycle breaks in Otsus Papua Barat Daya

Source: Synthesis of process tracing and FGD analysis on coordination and evaluation, 2026

Figure 5 reveals that the policy feedback loop breaks decisively at two points. The first break occurs at the budgeting→disbursement transition: although planning forums (Musrenbang Otsus) and budgeting mechanisms (TAPD, BPKAD) are formally connected, disbursement is regularly delayed and inflexible, producing the recurring pattern of late fund availability that prevents adequate annual planning. The second break occurs at the evaluation rule-revision transition: while monitoring and reporting (the green segment) function adequately data flows up, reports are filed the conversion of this feedback into institutional learning, rule revision, or programme correction is weak. This is the classic Pierson (2000) institutional lock-in: stages operate, but feedback does not feedback. Programme execution and budgeting function only partially, generating friction that accumulates across cycles.

Kareh et al. (2025) document the same pattern through a network-governance lens: Otsus affirmation requires collaboration between provincial government, MRP, and customary communities, but the network operates through unequal nodes where customary norms must defer to formal bureaucracy. The result is what Carstensen & Röper (2022) term layering with conversion failure: new forums and consultation mechanisms are added (layering), but the underlying logic does not convert from administrative compliance to substantive partnership.

Synthesis: Reproductive Continuity in the Continuity–Transformation Space

Reading the three indicators together produces a coherent diagnosis. Figure 4 positions Otsus Papua Barat Daya in a continuity-transformation space defined by two axes: procedural/formal continuity (horizontal) and substantive/adaptive transformation (vertical).

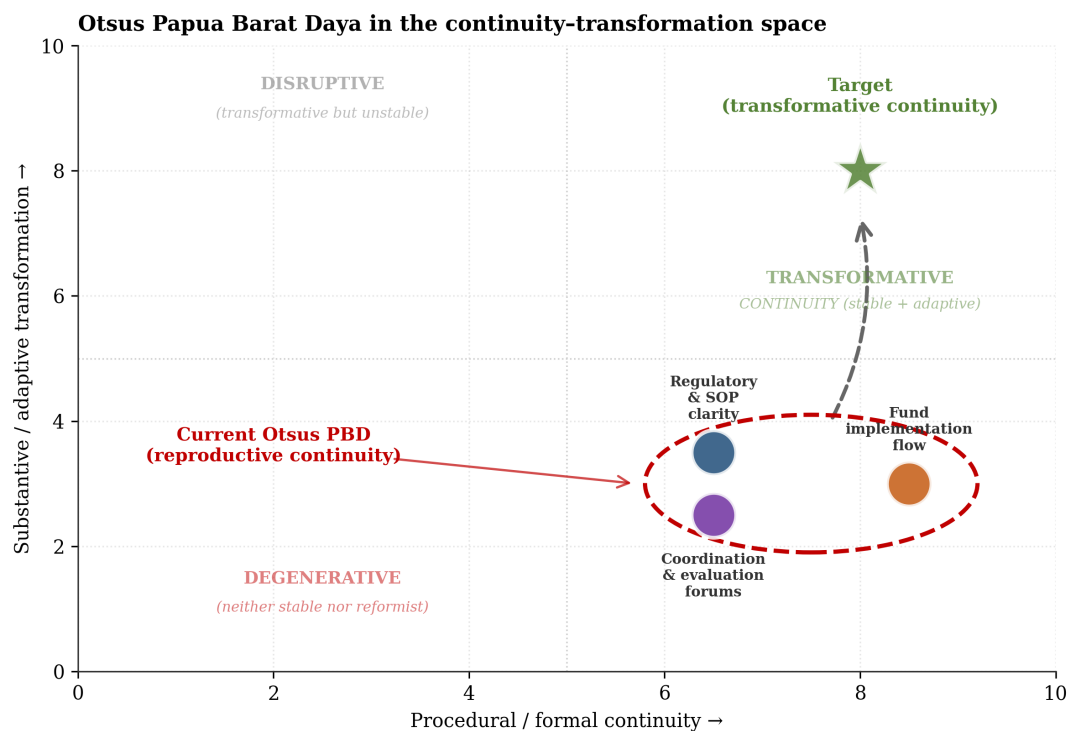


Figure 4. Otsus Papua Barat Daya in the continuity-transformation space

Source: *Synthesis of Historical Institutionalism analysis across three indicators, 2026*

Figure 6 places all three indicators in the lower-right “reproductive continuity” quadrant strong procedural continuity (6.5–8.5) but weak substantive transformation (2.5–3.5). This quadrant is distinct from the upper-left “disruptive” quadrant (transformative but unstable, the failure mode of unsuccessful radical reform) and the lower-left “degenerative” quadrant (neither stable nor reformist, the failure mode of state collapse). Otsus institutions are not failing in either of these conventional senses they are stably reproducing themselves while failing to transform. The target position is the upper-right “transformative continuity” quadrant: maintaining institutional stability while genuinely adapting to OAP needs, customary institutions, and local conditions.

Table 1. Summary of Historical Institutionalism findings across three process indicators

Indicator	Status	Principal Finding
Regulatory & SOP clarity	Normative-strong, operational-weak	Regulatory basis clarity 9/10 but planning sequence 4, budget flow 3, evaluation 3; timing-and-sequencing gap concentrated at planning→budget→execution transitions.
Fund implementation flow	Reproductive continuity	Across MRP, regional government, and technical agencies: layering dominates over genuine transformation; MRP 65% unchanged vs technical agencies 65% adapted-but-bounded.
Coordination & evaluation forums	Loop broken at two points	Forums function as communication channels but not as feedback mechanisms; critical breaks at budgeting→disbursement and at evaluation→rule-revision; institutional lock-in on ineffective trajectories.

Source: Historical Institutionalism analysis of three process indicators

Institutional Path Dependency in the Implementation of Papua's Special Autonomy

This study's findings position Otsus implementation in Papua Barat Daya within Historical Institutionalism's account of how institutions reproduce themselves over time. The central proposition is that the Otsus implementation problem is not primarily technical but historical-institutional: foundational decisions in 2001 established a path that subsequent critical junctures have layered upon without redirecting. The 2021 Otsus Law revision, the 2022 establishment of Papua Barat Daya province, and the 2023 Presidential Regulation on RIPPP despite their normative significance operate as layering events rather than displacement events. Each adds new rules, new structures, new forums to the existing architecture, but the foundational logic of bureaucratic-procedural compliance, central fiscal control, and weak representational operationalisation persists.

The first analytical dimension reveals that regulatory clarity has not converted into operational clarity (Figure 2). Pierson (2000) identifies timing-and-sequencing as the central mechanism through which path dependency operates: when the temporal order of regulation, planning, budgeting, execution, and evaluation does not align, even well-designed rules generate friction rather than function. The Otsus case demonstrates this precisely. Law No. 2/2021 mandates that Otsus funds support OAP-prioritised programmes; PP No. 106/2021 distributes implementing authority; Presidential Regulation No. 24/2023 establishes RIPPP and RAPPP planning instruments; and the FY 2024 budget operationalises fiscal flows. But the temporal sequence is broken planning instruments are finalised after fiscal calendars require execution; budgetary nomenclature does not accommodate customary-territory categories; technical documents (DED, KAK) cannot be prepared sufficiently in advance; evaluation results from cycle N rarely inform rule revision for cycle N+1. The result is that aparatur are caught between formally complete rules and operationally incomplete sequences reproducing administrative friction rather than transformation.

The second analytical dimension shows that implementation consistency in Otsus Papua Barat Daya is consistently reproductive rather than transformative (Figure 3). Carstensen & Röper (2022) distinguish between layering (adding new elements while leaving old logic intact), displacement (replacing old elements), drift (changing effects without changing rules), and conversion (using old rules for new purposes). Otsus exhibits layering with conversion failure: new responsibilities, forums, and consultation mechanisms have been added across two

decades, but the underlying institutional logic administrative compliance, central fiscal control, weak representational operationalization has not converted to substantive partnership with OAP institutions. MRP is the clearest illustration: its formal mandate has expanded under Law No. 2/2021, but its operational capacity has not been strengthened proportionately, producing what Pierson (2000) terms institutional lock-in on a trajectory of representational hollowness. Technical agencies and districts show the greatest behavioural adaptation, but this adaptation occurs within unchanged authority and budget structures and therefore does not propagate into institutional transformation.

The third dimension reveals that coordination and evaluation forums function as adaptation channels but not as policy feedback mechanisms (Figure 5). (Pierson, 2000) identifies institutional learning as the key counterforce to lock-in: institutions avoid trajectory failure when they can convert experience into rule revision. The Otsus case shows that the feedback loop breaks at two critical transitions: budgeting→disbursement (where formal planning does not translate to timely fiscal flow) and evaluation→rule revision (where monitoring data does not convert to programmatic correction). These breaks are not random; they correspond precisely to the institutional nodes TAPD, Bappeda, central fiscal authorities that hold the greatest path-dependent power, consistent with the structural finding in the companion study on institutional structure (Article 7 of this dissertation series). Badjuka et al. (2024); Jayuska et al. (2025); Wirawan et al. (2025) confirm that the broader network of Otsus implementation requires collaboration between provincial government, MRP, and customary communities, but operates through unequal nodes where customary norms must defer to formal bureaucracy.

Theoretically, the convergent finding leads to a central contribution: the distinction between “reproductive continuity” (institutions persist by repeating old patterns) and “transformative continuity” (institutions persist while genuinely adapting). This distinction extends Mahoney and Thelen’s (2010) typology by clarifying that continuity itself can be of two qualitatively different kinds. Otsus Papua Barat Daya exhibits reproductive continuity: stable enough to operate, layered enough to appear dynamic, but not transformative enough to deliver OAP welfare outcomes commensurate with two decades of investment. The shift toward transformative continuity requires not more regulation or more reform episodes but structural changes that close the broken feedback loop strengthening operational capacity of representative bodies (MRP, DPRP), expanding nomenclature for customary territories, restructuring budgetary timing to align planning with execution, and converting evaluation results into binding rule revision.

Limitations include the single-case design, which provides depth but limits statistical generalization; comparative studies across Indonesia’s asymmetric-decentralization cases (Aceh, Yogyakarta, Jakarta) would strengthen external validity. The 24-year process tracing relies on document analysis and retrospective interviews, which can be subject to recall bias for early-period events; archival research could supplement this. The cross-temporal analysis identifies layering but does not directly observe the moment when alternative trajectories were foreclosed; comparative-historical research designs could probe these counterfactuals more rigorously.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of Special Autonomy (Otsus) in Papua Barat Daya is characterised by reproductive continuity rather than transformative continuity. From a Historical Institutionalist perspective, institutional reforms introduced through the revision of the Otsus Law and the establishment of Papua Barat Daya Province have largely reinforced existing governance arrangements instead of fundamentally transforming them. Although the regulatory framework has become increasingly comprehensive, operational implementation

remains constrained by fragmented planning, budget sequencing, limited institutional capacity, and weak policy feedback mechanisms. Consequently, institutional layering has accumulated over time without altering the underlying logic of bureaucratic administration and centralised control. The study's principal theoretical contribution is the distinction between reproductive continuity and transformative continuity, offering a refined explanation of why stable institutions may continue to reproduce limited governance outcomes despite repeated reforms. Achieving transformative continuity requires strengthening the operational capacity of representative institutions, improving the integration of planning and budgeting processes, recognising customary governance within administrative systems, and institutionalising evaluation as a mechanism for continuous policy learning. These findings contribute to Historical Institutionalism by demonstrating how gradual institutional change can preserve governance stability while simultaneously constraining substantive transformation in asymmetric decentralisation.

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