



Paradiplomacy and Regional Development in Global South: Bureaucratic Processes and Stakeholder Perspective in Cirebon Regency, Indonesia

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Abstrak

Pembangunan daerah di kawasan Global South menuntut peran aktif pemerintah daerah dalam merespons globalisasi, kompetisi investasi, dan ketimpangan wilayah. Artikel ini menganalisis peran paradiplomasi dalam mendukung pembangunan inklusif melalui studi implementasi Program Rebana Metropolitan di Kabupaten Cirebon. Penelitian ini menelaah dinamika aktor, kapasitas kelembagaan, dan tantangan struktural dalam pelaksanaan paradiplomasi. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan wawancara mendalam, studi dokumentasi, dan analisis data sekunder dari instansi terkait. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa meskipun indikator pembangunan manusia dan investasi meningkat, manfaat pembangunan belum terdistribusi secara merata. Paradiplomasi daerah masih dibatasi regulasi sentralistik, kapasitas SDM terbatas, dan lemahnya koordinasi lintas wilayah. Setda, DPMPTSP, dan Bappelitbangda memiliki peran strategis dalam perencanaan dan fasilitasi investasi, tetapi implementasinya belum optimal. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberhasilan Rebana Metropolitan sebagai instrumen pembangunan inklusif bergantung pada penguatan kapasitas kelembagaan, sinkronisasi kebijakan lintas level pemerintahan, serta integrasi aktor lokal dalam pembangunan regional berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Kabupaten Cirebon, Global South, Paradiplomasi

Abstract

Regional development in the Global South requires proactive local government engagement to address globalization, investment competition, and interregional disparities. This article examines the role of paradiplomacy in promoting inclusive development through the implementation of the Rebana Metropolitan Program in Cirebon Regency. The study explores actor dynamics, institutional capacity, and structural challenges in local paradiplomacy. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, including in-depth interviews, document studies, and secondary data analysis from relevant government agencies. The findings indicate that while human development and investment indicators have improved, the benefits of development remain unevenly distributed. Local paradiplomacy is constrained by centralized regulations, limited human resources, and weak cross-regional coordination. Setda, DPMPTSP, and Bappelitbangda play strategic roles in planning and facilitating investment, yet implementation is not fully institutionalized. The study concludes that the success of the Rebana Metropolitan Program as an instrument for inclusive development depends on strengthening institutional capacity, synchronizing policies across government levels, and integrating local actors into sustainable regional development.

Key words: Cirebon Regency, Global South, Paradiplomacy



INTRODUCTION

In the Global South, economic development is increasingly shaped by the interaction of national, subnational, and global actors amid globalization and intensifying interregional competition. These dynamics have encouraged local governments to engage more actively in international cooperation to attract investment and expand market access through what is commonly referred to as paradiplomacy. Paradiplomacy refers to the behavior and capacity of sub-state entities or regional governments to conduct external relations with foreign actors in order to pursue their specific economic and development interests (Mukti, 2020).

In practice, paradiplomacy does not operate independently from national foreign policy. As emphasized by Cornago (2010), paradiplomatic activities are considered normal paradiplomacy when they remain aligned with the central government's foreign policy orientation, allowing subnational initiatives to function in parallel with national diplomacy. In Indonesia, this principle is particularly relevant given the centralized nature of foreign affairs governance, where local governments are expected to internationalize their development agendas without undermining national diplomatic coherence.

Empirically, paradiplomacy practices in Indonesia demonstrate a clear spatial concentration. Records from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Treaty Room indicate that more than 140 international cooperation agreements have been established by local governments with foreign partners, primarily in the form of sister province and sister city arrangements (Mukti, 2015). However, these initiatives are predominantly undertaken by provinces and major cities with stronger institutional capacity and international exposure, such as West Java, DKI Jakarta, and DI Yogyakarta at the provincial level, as well as Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta at the city level. This pattern suggests that paradiplomacy in Indonesia remains unevenly distributed and largely concentrated in economically and administratively advanced regions.

This concentration reflects a broader characteristic of paradiplomacy in developing countries. Rather than being inherently effective, paradiplomacy in the Global South is shaped by structural constraints such as dependence on central governments and persistent interregional disparities. Tavares (2016) notes that subnational actors in developing contexts often engage in international activities with limited institutional autonomy, while Kuznetsov (2015) emphasizes that the scope and impact of paradiplomacy are highly contingent upon legal frameworks and bureaucratic capacity. Consequently, investment-oriented paradiplomacy does not automatically produce inclusive development and may instead reinforce inequalities between core growth areas and peripheral regions.

Indonesia exemplifies this paradox. Although decentralization has granted regions more authority, paradiplomacy is still largely shaped by a centralized governance framework. Under Law No. 23 of 2014, foreign affairs remain the prerogative of the central government, meaning subnational governments cannot conduct international cooperation independently and must follow established approval and coordination mechanisms.

Within this institutional setting, subnational economic paradiplomacy has been incorporated into large-scale initiatives such as the Rebana Metropolitan area in West Java, which is designated as a National Strategic Project. However, existing studies on Rebana predominantly focus on provincial-level growth, infrastructure development, and macroeconomic potential, leaving the operation of paradiplomacy at the regency level relatively underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by examining Cirebon Regency, a peripheral member of the Rebana area that differs from core regions such as Subang and Majalengka. Despite its strategic location, Cirebon continues to face structural development challenges, including a Human Development Index below the provincial average and relatively high unemployment. These conditions make Cirebon a critical case for assessing whether economic paradiplomacy functions as an instrument of inclusive development or instead reinforces spatial inequality.

By focusing on the bureaucratic dynamics of the Regional Secretariat (Sekretariat Daerah/Setda), the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Office (Dinas Penanaman Modal dan Pelayanan Terpadu Satu Pintu/DPMPSTP), and the Regional Development Planning,



Research, and Development Agency (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan, Penelitian, dan Pengembangan Daerah/Bappelitbangda), this study examines how investment-oriented paradiplomacy is formulated and implemented under conditions of limited subnational autonomy. Accordingly, it assesses how local bureaucratic coordination shapes investment-driven development and the extent to which paradiplomacy contributes to inclusive economic outcomes in peripheral regions of the Global South.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine actor dynamics, institutional practices, and policy processes in the implementation of the Rebana Metropolitan Program in Cirebon Regency. A qualitative method is used to capture meanings, perceptions, and practices that cannot be adequately measured quantitatively, in line with Moleong's (2017) emphasis on understanding social phenomena within their natural contexts.

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants from three strategic local government institutions: the Regional Secretariat (Setda), the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Office (DPMPTSP), and the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency (Bappelitbangda). These institutions were selected through purposive sampling based on their formal authority and direct involvement in economic development and investment governance within the Rebana framework.

Secondary data were gathered through document analysis of relevant laws and regulations, regional planning and budgeting documents, and academic literature. Key documents included the Final Report on Investment Opportunities in the Industrial Designated Area of Cirebon Regency (2024) and the Amendment to the Regional Budget Policy (APBD) for the 2023 fiscal year, which provide insights into investment strategies and regional development priorities.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Interview transcripts and relevant documents were coded and thematically organized to identify recurring patterns related to economic paradiplomacy, bureaucratic coordination, and inclusive development. Conclusions were derived through an iterative process of interpretation and verification to ensure consistency between empirical findings and the study's analytical framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data from Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS), the Human Development Index (HDI) of Cirebon Regency exhibited a consistently upward trend during the 2020–2024 period, increasing from 68.75 in 2020 to 72.30 in 2024 (BPS, 2024). This improvement reflects positive developments in health, education, and living standards. Enhancing human resource quality constitutes an important asset for attracting investment, particularly in the Industrial Designated Area (Kawasan Peruntukan Industri/KPI), as a healthier and better-educated workforce tends to boost regional productivity and competitiveness.

From a regional comparative perspective, the HDI of Cirebon Regency remains below that of Cirebon City, which recorded an average HDI of 78.09 over the same period, and has yet to surpass the West Java provincial average (BPS, 2024). This pattern indicates persistent development disparities between core urban areas and surrounding peripheral regions within the Ciayumajakuning region, despite general improvements in HDI across all regencies and municipalities.

Tabel 1. Human Development Index of Ciayumajakuning (Percentage), 2019–2024

No.	Kabupaten/Kota	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Kota Cirebon	74,89	76,26	76,89	77,45	78,09

2	Kab. Cirebon	68,75	69,99	70,92	71,81	72,30
3	Kab. Kuningan	69,38	69,99	70,44	70,99	71,56
4	Kab. Majalengka	67,59	69,42	70,18	70,76	71,37
5	Kab. Indramayu	67,29	68,60	69,52	70,19	70,72

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Cirebon. (2024). *Publikasi Statistik Daerah Kota Cirebon 2024*. Cirebon: Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Cirebon.

Beyond the HDI, challenges to inclusive development are also evident in employment indicators. Data on the Open Unemployment Rate (Tingkat Pengangguran Terbuka/TPT) show that Cirebon Regency experienced a decline in unemployment from 10.38 percent in 2021 to 7.65 percent in 2023 (BPS, 2024). While this trend reflects post-COVID-19 recovery, the unemployment rate remains relatively high when compared to Majalengka Regency, which recorded an open unemployment rate of 4.12 percent in 2023. This condition indicates that labor absorption in Cirebon Regency has not yet progressed optimally.

Tabel 2. Open Unemployment Rate in Ciayumajakuning (Percentage), 2020–2024

No	Kabupaten/Kota	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Kota Cirebon	10,57	10,53	8,42	7,66	6,92
2	Kab. Cirebon	11,52	10,38	8,11	7,65	6,74
3	Kab. Kuningan	11,2	11,68	9,81	9,49	7,78
4	Kab. Majalengka	5,84	5,71	4,16	4,12	4,01
5	Kab. Indramayu	9,21	8,3	6,49	6,46	6,52

Source: Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat. (2024). *Dashboard Statistik Ketenagakerjaan (Pengangguran) Provinsi Jawa Barat*. Bandung: Statistik Jawa Barat.

The economic structure of Cirebon Regency, which is heavily reliant on the industrial sector, further reinforces this vulnerability. Based on Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) data, the industrial sector constitutes the main contributor to economic growth in Cirebon Regency, despite experiencing a contraction of 0.42 percent in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (BPS, 2021). This decline in industrial performance had a direct impact on the wholesale and retail trade sector, which also underwent a significant contraction. Such conditions illustrate a domino effect in which the weakening of the industrial sector adversely affects supporting sectors, including agriculture, forestry, and fisheries as key suppliers of industrial raw materials.

From a demographic and labor perspective, data from Statistics Indonesia indicate that the labor force in Cirebon Regency increased to 1,192.36 thousand individuals in 2023. The Labor Force Participation Rate (Tingkat Partisipasi Angkatan Kerja/TPAK) rose from 65.53 percent in 2022 to 66.16 percent in 2023, and further to 69.27 percent in 2024 (BPS, 2024). This increase signals higher public participation in the labor market. Nevertheless, the growing size of the labor force has not been fully matched by the creation of quality employment opportunities, thereby posing risks to social welfare if not accompanied by more inclusive economic growth.

Table 3. Development of TPAK in Cirebon Regency (Percentage), 2020–2024

Kabupaten/Kota	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Kab. Cirebon	63.79	64.49	65.53	66.16	69.27

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Cirebon. (2024). *Tingkat Partisipasi Angkatan Kerja (TPAK) Kabupaten Cirebon*. Open Data Kabupaten Cirebon.

Income inequality indicators, as measured by the Gini index, also indicate that although inequality in Cirebon Regency is relatively lower than the provincial average of West Java, with a Gini coefficient of 0.355 in 2022, interregional disparities remain a critical issue (BPS, 2023). Differences in welfare levels between urban and rural areas further underscore the position of

Cirebon Regency as a peripheral region that has not yet fully benefited from regional development outcomes.

From an investment perspective, data from the Cirebon Regency Open Data portal show that regional economic development remains predominantly driven by domestic investment (Penanaman Modal Dalam Negeri/PMDN), while foreign direct investment (Penanaman Modal Asing/PMA) remains relatively limited. During the 2020–2022 period, the value of domestic investment consistently exceeded that of foreign investment by a substantial margin, despite fluctuations in the number of foreign investors (Cirebon Regency Open Data, 2024). The dominance of domestic investment suggests that Cirebon Regency continues to face constraints in attracting international capital flows, reflecting the limited capacity of subnational paradiplomacy to access global investment networks.

Figure 1. Number of Foreign and Domestic Investments in Cirebon Regency, 2021–2024

Kabupaten/Kota	Jenis Investasi	Jumlah Investor	Satuan	Tahun
Kabupaten Cirebon	PMA	26	INVESTOR	2021
	PMDN	2015	INVESTOR	2021
	PMA	75	INVESTOR	2022
	PMDN	2610	INVESTOR	2022
	PMA	26	INVESTOR	2023
	PMDN	5453	INVESTOR	2023
	PMA	46	INVESTOR	2024
	PMDN	1191	INVESTOR	2024

Source: **Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Cirebon.** (2024). *Jumlah investor berskala nasional (PMDN/PMA) di Kabupaten Cirebon.* Open Data Kabupaten Cirebon.

Table/Figure 1 indicates that domestic investment (PMDN) continues to dominate investment realization in Cirebon Regency, while foreign direct investment (FDI/PMA) remains relatively low and fluctuates. This condition does not necessarily indicate the ineffectiveness of Cirebon's economic paradiplomacy, but rather reflects broader structural and contextual constraints that shape subnational investment outcomes in peripheral regions.

First, the dominance of PMDN suggests that Cirebon's investment environment is still primarily embedded within domestic production networks, where local and national investors possess stronger informational advantages, institutional familiarity, and risk tolerance compared to foreign investors. In contrast, FDI inflows are more sensitive to regulatory certainty, infrastructure readiness, and global market conditions—factors that remain unevenly distributed within the Rebana Metropolitan area.

Second, Cirebon Regency occupies a peripheral position within the Rebana framework when compared to core growth areas such as Subang or Majalengka, which benefit from large-scale strategic infrastructure projects and industrial clustering. This peripheral status limits Cirebon's immediate attractiveness to foreign investors, particularly in capital-intensive sectors that typically drive FDI. As a result, paradiplomacy in Cirebon operates under structural asymmetries that constrain its short-term impact on FDI realization.

Third, fluctuations in FDI are also influenced by external factors beyond local government control, including global economic uncertainty, shifting investment patterns, and the centralized nature of Indonesia's foreign investment governance. Despite decentralization, foreign investment approvals and international economic engagement remain tightly regulated by the central government, restricting the autonomy of local governments in directly negotiating and securing FDI.

In this context, economic paradiplomacy in Cirebon should be understood not solely as an instrument for immediate FDI attraction, but as a long-term strategic process aimed at improving international visibility, institutional readiness, and policy coherence. The predominance of PMDN



thus reflects a transitional phase in which domestic investment functions as an entry point for broader economic integration, while paradiplomacy serves to gradually enhance Cirebon's capacity to engage international investors more effectively.

Paradiplomacy and Its Relevance to Inclusive Regional Development: A Study of the Rebana Program

The Rebana Metropolitan Program was formally established through Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2021 on the Acceleration of Development in the Rebana Area and Southern West Java. Designated as a National Strategic Project, Rebana reflects the central government's long-term vision to develop a new economic growth hub in West Java through industrial expansion, logistics development, and international investment. The program encompasses seven administrative regions, including Cirebon Regency and City, Subang, Majalengka, Indramayu, Kuningan, and Sumedang, and integrates key growth nodes such as Cirebon, Patimban Port, and Kertajati West Java International Airport to enhance regional competitiveness and interregional connectivity (Hartoyo et al., 2023)

From a paradiplomacy perspective, the Rebana Metropolitan Program shows how subnational economic diplomacy in developing countries operates within both local development interests and national-level constraints. Duchacek (1990) explains that paradiplomacy is a permanent phenomenon, meaning that subnational governments will continue to engage in international activities, either as a complement to, parallel with, or in coordination with central government diplomacy. This indicates that paradiplomacy is not an exceptional practice, but a normal part of multi-level governance.

At the local level, paradiplomacy reflects regional efforts to pursue development objectives. Mukti (2013) views paradiplomacy as a way for local governments to build international networks in line with their local development needs. Similarly, Keating (1999) argues that regions engage in paradiplomacy due to economic, political, and cultural motivations. In the context of developing regions, economic motivations such as attracting investment, promoting tourism, and expanding market access tend to be the most dominant.

The capacity of local governments to conduct paradiplomacy is shaped not only by motivation but also by institutional and legal constraints. Kuznetsov (2015) emphasizes that paradiplomacy depends on national regulatory frameworks, which determine the scope of subnational international engagement. In developing-country contexts, this results in paradiplomacy being closely coordinated with, and limited by, centralized governance structures. This condition is evident in the implementation of the Rebana Metropolitan Program in Cirebon Regency. Despite its status as a National Strategic Project, Cirebon lacks autonomy to engage independently in international cooperation, requiring paradiplomatic activities to follow central government approval mechanisms. Consequently, local economic paradiplomacy evolves gradually and remains aligned with national policy priorities.

Field findings further show that local bureaucratic capacity shapes the developmental role of paradiplomacy. Institutions such as DPMPSTSP primarily function as investment facilitators, while direct engagement in international economic diplomacy remains limited. Overall, Cirebon's experience indicates that paradiplomacy within the Rebana framework is a constrained and ongoing process, whose contribution to inclusive development depends on institutional capacity and coherence with national governance structures.

Efforts to Integrate Cirebon's Development within a Framework of Interregional Cooperation and Investment

Within the Ciayumajakuning framework, DPMPSTSP of Cirebon Regency positions the region as a strategic node for investment and downstream industrial development, based on its role as a logistics and distribution hub along the Pantura corridor and as a gateway connecting Jakarta–Karawang–Subang with eastern West Java. This positioning underscores Cirebon's structural interdependence with surrounding regions and frames interregional integration as a



prerequisite for sustainable development, reflecting a form of subnational economic paradiplomacy oriented toward regional coordination.

DPMPTSP promotes downstream industrialization by prioritizing sectors with local value-added potential, such as salt production, fisheries, processed food, and batik. This strategy seeks to strengthen linkages between large industries, MSMEs, and regional supply chains, positioning Cirebon not only as a production site but also as a locus of value creation. These efforts are supported by the development of industrial zones and infrastructure connectivity, including access to Kertajati Airport and Patimban Port, which reinforce Cirebon's integration within the Rebana Metropolitan network.

As the main investment service institution, DPMPTSP adopts a service-oriented approach through streamlined licensing via the OSS-RBA system, investment potential mapping, and Investment Projects Ready to Offer (IPRO). While investment realization has fluctuated declining sharply in 2022 before rebounding in 2023 it remains dominated by domestic capital, with limited foreign investment. Despite initiatives such as regional investment forums, integration efforts continue to face challenges related to regulatory discrepancies and coordination across regions, indicating that effective regional integration depends on stronger cross-regional governance and facilitation at the provincial level.

Dynamics and Preliminary Outcomes: Between Inclusivity and the Reproduction of Inequality

Since its launch, the Rebana Metropolitan Program has generated renewed optimism regarding the acceleration of economic growth in West Java, particularly through the development of strategic infrastructure, industrial zones, and the strengthening of regional connectivity (Hartoyo et al., 2023). However, implementation dynamics at the local level reveal a degree of policy ambivalence. On the one hand, Rebana offers significant opportunities for accelerating development and attracting investment; on the other hand, its implementation patterns carry the potential to reproduce interregional and socio-economic inequalities.

Cirebon Regency, despite its considerable potential as a logistics hub, industrial area, and labor reservoir, continues to face serious challenges in realizing inclusive development. Investment tends to be concentrated in large-scale strategic projects, such as the Rebana Metropolitan initiative and port development, while other regions and sectors have not been equally integrated. Although local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have begun to be incorporated into regional supply chains, in practice they still face constraints in accessing capital, technology, and markets compared to large investors. This condition indicates that despite Rebana's normative objective of regional integration and equitable development, there remains a tangible risk of inequality reproduction.

Leveraging Cirebon's Geostrategic Position within Subnational Cooperation Frameworks

Cirebon Regency's geostrategic position provides a potential basis for attracting investment through subnational cooperation. Assets such as Cirebon Port, integrated land-sea connectivity, moderately scaled industrial zones near toll roads and labor centers, and major transport corridors including the Pantura route, toll roads, and railways support logistics efficiency for domestic and export markets. In response, Cirebon has sought to promote an integrated industrial-logistics ecosystem through interregional coordination forums, digitalized licensing, and synchronized spatial planning to enhance investment certainty.

Institutionally, Bappelitbangda views subnational diplomacy as a form of cross-border cooperation to support regional development. However, its implementation remains limited and weakly institutionalized. Although there is interest in engaging international partners, particularly for investment, these initiatives are constrained by centralized authorization, bureaucratic procedures, and limited organizational capacity. As a result, paradiplomacy at the regency level remains largely reactive rather than strategic.



Productivity indicators further reveal structural challenges. During 2019–2021, labor productivity declined across several Rebana regions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Agricultural productivity in Indramayu and Subang remained low, while manufacturing in Cirebon Regency faced constraints related to infrastructure and utility access. Despite its designation as a manufacturing node, Cirebon recorded the lowest manufacturing labor productivity within the Rebana area.

Regional development patterns also indicate limited inclusivity. Klassen typology analysis shows shifts toward pressured or lagging categories in several regions, suggesting that economic growth under the Rebana framework remains concentrated in selected nodes with uneven spillover effects (Meliana et al., 2024).

Socio-economic indicators reinforce this trend. Poverty in Cirebon Regency rose from below 10 percent in 2019 to 11.24 percent in 2020, alongside an increase in open unemployment to 11.52 percent. Although unemployment declined to 8.11 percent by 2022, it remained above the national average. Overall, while the Rebana Program provides a platform for economic growth and subnational cooperation, limited infrastructure readiness, human capital constraints, and uneven benefit distribution risk reinforcing regional inequality rather than supporting inclusive development.

Evaluation of Key Actors and Supporting Regulations in the Implementation of the Rebana Metropolitan Program

The implementation of the Rebana Metropolitan Program depends not only on the strength of central regulations, particularly Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2021, but also on the capacity of key actors at the regional level. In Cirebon Regency, DPMPSTP and Bappelitbangda play strategic roles in investment management, interregional coordination, and the facilitation of cooperation that may develop into forms of subnational paradiplomacy. However, their effectiveness remains constrained by structural and institutional limitations.

DPMPSTP of Cirebon Regency has not yet actively conducted direct foreign investment promotion through international forums or overseas missions, resulting in a largely reactive investment strategy dependent on central and provincial facilitation. At the local level, DPMPSTP focuses on licensing simplification, FDI services, coordination with investors, and administrative facilitation. Nevertheless, regulatory delays, limited fiscal capacity for incentives, and constraints in human resources particularly in operating the OSS-RBA system continue to limit its ability to attract foreign investment and integrate local MSMEs into the investment ecosystem.

Interregional investment cooperation within the Rebana framework is further hindered by bureaucratic complexity, sectoral ego, regulatory disparities, and uneven institutional capacity across regions. The absence of clear revenue-sharing mechanisms, unresolved land and spatial planning issues, limited integrated data systems, and insufficient infrastructure increase regulatory uncertainty and administrative risk for investors.

From Bappelitbangda's perspective, subnational diplomacy is understood as cross-border cooperation to support regional development within nationally defined limits. However, this understanding has not yet been fully institutionalized in regional planning documents. Centralized regulatory structures, limited human resources, weak documentation, and dependence on provincial and central government facilitation constrain Bappelitbangda's role in advancing paradiplomacy initiatives.

The evaluation reveals a persistent gap between the policy vision of the Rebana Metropolitan Program and local implementation capacity. Despite a strong legal foundation, centralized bureaucracy, limited institutional consolidation, and weak coordination among key actors risk undermining the program's potential as a tool of subnational paradiplomacy, thereby limiting its contribution to inclusive and sustainable regional development.



Paradiplomacy Bureaucratic Processes and Multidimensional Constraints

Paradiplomacy in Cirebon Regency operates through a bureaucratic chain involving three key institutions; Bappelitbangda, the Regional Secretariat (Setda), and DPMPTSP. These actors perform complementary roles in planning, coordination, and implementation of investment cooperation, illustrating that subnational paradiplomacy functions through a complex institutional ecosystem rather than a linear process. While this configuration supports inclusive regional development, it is simultaneously constrained by centralized governance structures.

Bappelitbangda acts as the primary policy planner by formulating medium and long-term development strategies through instruments such as the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah/ RPJMD) and the Development Planning Consultation Forum (Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan/ Musrenbang). Within the Rejana Metropolitan framework, it seeks to align interregional development and integrate external cooperation opportunities. However, international cooperation initiatives remain highly dependent on approval from central government institutions, which limits regional flexibility and slows responses to global investment opportunities.

Setda functions as an administrative gatekeeper, ensuring procedural compliance and alignment with national regulations through coordination mechanisms such as the Regional Cooperation Coordination Team (Tim Koordinasi Kerja Sama Daerah/TKKSD). Although this role maintains legal certainty, it also reinforces centralized control, resulting in cautious administrative practices that delay the implementation of paradiplomacy initiatives.

DPMPTSP serves as the technical executor, directly engaging with investors through licensing, investment facilitation, and regional promotion. As the institution most exposed to global market dynamics, DPMPTSP plays a central role in attracting investment and promoting local economic potential. Nevertheless, its operational autonomy remains limited by planning directives and procedural oversight from Bappelitbangda and Setda.

The interaction among these institutions highlights that the effectiveness of Cirebon's paradiplomacy depends on inter-agency coordination and clear role distribution. In practice, DPMPTSP faces persistent constraints, including sectoral ego among regions, regulatory discrepancies, limited fiscal capacity, unclear revenue-sharing mechanisms, and weak institutional support. Although governance reforms such as the OSS-RBA system, digital spatial planning, and investment acceleration teams have been introduced, challenges related to human resources and integrated cross-regional data remain unresolved.

Interregional coordination within the Ciayumajakuning area is conducted through meetings, data exchange, and joint investment promotion forums, with DPMPTSP Cirebon often acting as a coordination node. However, this coordination remains largely ad hoc and sectoral, lacking an integrated subnational diplomacy framework embedded in regional planning documents. Consequently, paradiplomacy in Cirebon continues to face tensions between regional ambitions for cross-border engagement and institutional constraints, limiting its capacity to support inclusive and sustainable regional development.

Local–Central Actors and Dynamics in Cirebon Regency's Paradiplomacy

The Paradiplomacy in Cirebon Regency cannot be separated from layered power relations and coordination mechanisms between local actors and the central government. Although local governments possess initiatives to engage in subnational and international cooperation, their room for maneuver remains constrained by a centralized national regulatory framework. This dynamic produces a form of paradiplomacy that is inherently negotiative, bureaucratic, and highly dependent on the alignment of interests across levels of government.

At the local level, the DPMPTSP of Cirebon Regency serves as the principal actor in investment-oriented paradiplomacy. Its role is exercised through regional investment promotion, licensing facilitation, and active participation in regional economic forums. Coordination with other areas within the Ciayumajakuning region is conducted through inter-agency coordination meetings, investment data exchange, policy benchmarking, and joint participation in promotional



events. In practice, DPMPTSP Cirebon frequently assumes a central nodal role in managing data and facilitating cross-regional investment promotion.

However, the effectiveness of DPMPTSP's role is largely contingent upon its coordination with Bappelitbangda and other technical local government agencies. Investment policy formulation does not operate in isolation but is embedded within regional planning instruments such as the RPJMD and RKPD. This process involves cross-agency consultation forums, mapping of investment potentials and priorities, integration of programs and funding schemes, as well as joint monitoring and evaluation. Within this framework, Bappelitbangda functions as the strategic planning actor responsible for ensuring that investment directions align with the region's development vision and the broader needs of the Ciayumajakuning area.

Despite this role, Bappelitbangda faces significant institutional constraints in the implementation of paradiplomacy. Centralized regulations governing foreign cooperation, limited human resources with expertise in international cooperation governance, and the absence of operational technical guidelines constitute major obstacles. Although Cirebon Regency has previously participated in donor-funded programs and interregional cooperation initiatives, weak documentation and evaluation practices hinder institutional learning. As a result, cross-border cooperation remains heavily dependent on facilitation by the provincial and central governments. This asymmetry of authority further weakens the position of local governments, as every foreign cooperation initiative must undergo lengthy and uncertain approval processes at the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as evidenced by the prolonged delay of the Cirebon–Yangjiang cooperation plan despite having reached the Letter of Intent stage.

The paradiplomacy in Cirebon Regency also involves non-state actors, particularly foreign investors and business actors; however, their contributions remain weakly institutionalized. Foreign direct investment (FDI) from various countries is largely concentrated in the industrial sector and the development of the Rebana area, with the local government primarily acting as a regulatory guardian and investment climate facilitator. In contrast, the involvement of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), academics, and civil society remains limited and largely elitist, despite the normative requirement for DPRD approval. This condition results in a form of paradiplomacy dominated by a core bureaucratic circle, thereby constraining opportunities for innovation and weakening social legitimacy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study shows that paradiplomacy in Cirebon Regency through the Rebana Metropolitan Program has the potential to support inclusive regional development, although the benefits of development remain uneven and the region is still dependent on domestic investment. Limited institutional capacity, centralized regulations, and weak inter-agency coordination hinder the effectiveness of paradiplomacy, while the strategic roles of the Regional Secretariat (Setda), DPMPTSP, and Bappelitbangda are not yet fully institutionalized. Therefore, the success of the Rebana Metropolitan Program depends on strengthening local bureaucratic and institutional capacity, improving coordination across agencies, and integrating local actors in planning and implementation. By adopting this approach, paradiplomacy can serve as a long-term strategy to enhance regional competitiveness, institutional readiness, and policy coherence, ensuring that economic growth delivers more inclusive and sustainable outcomes for the people of Cirebon Regency. development.

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