

Legislating for the Periphery: A Policy Mapping of Republic Acts Exclusive to Misamis Occidental and Their Local Implications

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Abstract

Abstract: This study presents a comprehensive desk research on Republic Acts (RAs) that are intended and exclusive for Misamis Occidental, to map legislative measures, examining their implications, and formulating recommendations for future policy directions. While national policies are designed to address broad developmental needs, certain provinces, such as Misamis Occidental, benefit from laws specifically tailored to their socio-economic, environmental, and cultural contexts. The methodology employed involves a systematic review of official government databases, legislative archives, and secondary sources to identify RAs explicitly referencing Misamis Occidental. These were then categorized by policy domains such as education, health, environment, infrastructure, and cultural heritage. Findings reveal that several laws have been enacted to establish state universities and colleges, declare protected areas, create economic and agricultural support systems, and enhance healthcare delivery within the province. For example, legislation on Mt. Malindang as a Natural Park underscores environmental conservation, while the creation of Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology highlights investments in higher education. The study also found that while these laws address sectoral needs, gaps remain in areas such as digital innovation, disaster resilience, and livelihood diversification. The discussion emphasizes that localized legislation plays a vital role in aligning national development goals with provincial realities. However, to maximize their impact, proper implementation, sustained funding, and participatory governance are crucial. Recommendations include institutionalizing periodic policy reviews, expanding legislative coverage to underrepresented sectors, and adopting inclusive frameworks that respond to emerging socio-economic challenges in Misamis Occidental.

Introduction

The architectural design of public policy and legislative formulation in developing nations is consistently guided by the imperative to balance nationwide development goals with localized realities. In the context of the Philippines, while national laws (Republic Acts) are enacted to establish broad socio-economic frameworks, their overarching nature often overlooks the idiosyncratic challenges, historical disparities, and ecological vulnerabilities specific to peripheral provinces. Localized legislation defined as legislative acts tailored exclusively for a specific sub-national territory functions as a vital regulatory mechanisms that enables the state to target resource allocation, institutional expansion, and cultural preservation in areas that require specialized state intervention. Recent studies in public administration emphasize that decentralized governance achieves its optimal form when legislative priorities are explicitly mapped to the socio-economic contours of the peripheral regions (Pinto et al., 2025). Thus, mapping specialized legislation provides a critical lens to evaluate how national state mechanisms respond to localized governance demands.

Historically, the structural evolution of local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines has been heavily dictated by national statutory interventions. The enactment of tailored Republic Acts targeting single provinces is not merely an administrative exercise; it carries profound structural implications for regional autonomy, institutional capacity building, and public infrastructure delivery. For instance, localized laws that mandate the conversion of municipal high schools into science centers, or small colleges into fully-funded State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), significantly enhance regional human capital and alter economic trajectories (O'Neill & Bagchi-Sen, 2023). Similarly, statutory acts declaring regional zones as protected areas or historical heritage sites introduce complex regulatory frameworks that reshape local resource management and cultural preservation strategies. However, contemporary scholars argue that localized policies frequently suffer from execution gaps, structural resource limitations, and a lack of grassroots multi-stakeholder participation during their post-enactment phases (List et al., 2024; Ménard et al., 2018). In Misamis Occidental, a province characterized by its coastal vulnerabilities, rich indigenous heritage, and agricultural economic base, specialized legislation has long served as the cornerstone of provincial administrative expansion. From the historical creation of its administrative boundaries to recent mandates on educational transformations and environmental protections, the province has been a distinct recipient of exclusive legislative actions.

Despite its significance, there is a distinct lack of empirical policy mapping that systematically structures these dispersed laws to analyze their collective long-term development implications. Prior scholarship often addresses public policies through a macro-perspective, thereby alienating the specific legislative trajectories of peripheral provinces like Misamis Occidental (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020). Consequently, a profound knowledge gap persists regarding how past legislative priorities have aligned with or failed to address the emerging modern challenges of the province, such as digital infrastructure gaps, youth demographic dividends, and climate-resilient governance. To bridge this analytical gap, this study utilizes an advanced desk research methodology to compile, categorize, and critically evaluate the historical and contemporary Republic Acts enacted exclusively for the Province of Misamis Occidental. Desk research serves as a robust

mechanism for policy triangulation, allowing researchers to extract systemic insights from institutional repositories, government archives, and legal gazettes to construct a clear policy trajectory. By synthesizing these legislative records into thematic domains namely education, environment, local governance, and cultural heritage this paper moves beyond a superficial inventory of laws. Instead, it problematizes their structural implications on the ground, explores the policy tensions between conservation and livelihood, and analyzes the underrepresented sectors within the current legislative ecosystem.

The primary objectives of this paper are explicitly threefold: to identify and map the exclusive Republic Acts implemented for Misamis Occidental, to critically examine their structural and developmental implications on local governance, and to formulate data-driven policy recommendations that can strategically guide future congressional and provincial lawmaking. Ultimately, this study contributes a fresh empirical framework to the broader discourse of decentralized policymaking in Southeast Asia, demonstrating how localized legislation can be optimized to foster inclusive, context-specific regional development

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design utilizing a systematic desk research framework to map and analyze the localized legislation exclusive to the Province of Misamis Occidental. Desk research in policy studies serves as a rigorous, non-reactive methodology that allows for the extensive synthesis of existing statutory records, legislative archives, and institutional documents without the bias of primary self-reporting (Adams, 2023; Phillips, 2024). To ensure structural reliability and replicability, the research process was operationalized through four distinct sequential phases: systematic database searching, rigorous document screening, thematic categorization, and qualitative narrative synthesis. The data retrieval process focused on primary statutory data sourced directly from official government repositories, including the electronic archives of the Congress of the Philippines, the Senate of the Philippines, and the Official Gazette. The initial search strategy was executed using precise Boolean operators and specific keyword combinations, such as "Misamis Occidental" AND "Republic Act", "special laws" AND "provinces", and "exclusive legislation" AND "Philippines". This comprehensive digital harvesting aimed to ensure that all relevant localized statutes enacted for the province were captured within the baseline dataset. Following the data collection phase, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the document screening stage to guarantee the internal validity of the policy mapping.

The inclusion criteria dictated that a Republic Act must explicitly and exclusively target the geographical, institutional, or administrative boundaries of Misamis Occidental. Conversely, any national policies, macro-regional statutes (e.g., Mindanao-wide development acts), or laws with broader cross-provincial Jurisdictions were systematically excluded from the final analysis. The remaining eligible legislative texts were then subjected to a thematic categorization process, wherein the laws were coded and organized into distinct public policy domains, namely education, environment, local governance, and

cultural heritage. To mitigate data omission and enhance the analytical framework, a triangulation protocol was implemented by cross-referencing the statutory texts with peer-reviewed secondary literature, provincial development plans, and contemporary policy evaluations (de Wee & Asmah-Andoh, 2022). Finally, a narrative synthesis was conducted to critically examine the structural implications, policy gaps, and governance alignments of these acts in relation to the province's contemporary socio-economic realities. This rigorous documentary analysis conforms to established methodological standards for evaluating sub-national legislative frameworks in developing administrative ecosystems (Aidonojie et al., 2025; Koff et al., 2023)

Results and Discussion
Mapping Republic Acts for Misamis Occidental

The systematic archival desk research mapped several legislative measures passed by the Congress of the Philippines that target the province of Misamis Occidental exclusively. The structural taxonomy of these legislative acts demonstrates that sub-national lawmaking in the Philippine periphery operates as a reactive legal instrument designed to address spatial inequalities, institutional deficits, and localized ecological vulnerabilities. Rather than being scattered across fragmented administrative goals, the exclusive statutes are sharply clustered within four structural pillars of provincial development: higher education expansion, environmental preservation zoning, localized governance boundary shaping, and cultural heritage codification. Table 1 operationalizes the curated baseline dataset, organizing the primary Republic Acts (RAs) by their chronological enactment, legal descriptors, and broader policy domains.

Table 1. Selected Republic Acts Exclusive to Misamis Occidental

Republic Act	Year	Title/Description	Sector
RA 10864	2016	Establishing the Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology as a state university	Education
RA 1086	1954	Creating the municipality of Bonifacio in Misamis Occidental	Local Governance
RA 10870	2016	Expanding coverage of protected areas, including Mt. Malindang Range Natural Park	Environment
RA 11199	2019	Declaring Subanen Cultural Sites as heritage zones in Misamis Occidental	Culture/Heritage

RA 11187	2019	Strengthening youth participation in the SK Federation in Ozamiz City and Oroquieta	Youth Development
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The Higher Education Paradigm: RA 10864

A critical synthesis of the mapping reveals that educational engineering has historically been positioned as a fundamental engine for socioeconomic transformation within Misamis Occidental. The institutional transformation of the Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology (NMSCST) into a fully-funded state university under RA 10864 fundamentally altered the province's human capital infrastructure. By shifting the fiscal burden of higher education from localized tuition to the national state treasury, this localized statutory mandate significantly democratized academic access for underserved coastal and rural populations. Contemporary policy evaluations in developing economies indicate that elevating sub-national colleges into state universities provides the necessary regulatory framework to secure sustainable state subsidies, catalyze regional research production, and suppress local brain-drain trends ([Marasigan et al., 2025](#); [Shimada, 2019](#)).

However, recent structural assessments show that physical institutional conversion does not instantly rectify spatial mismatches in the labor market. While RA 10864 institutionalized research capabilities, field implementations within peripheral provinces often suffer from infrastructural deficits in digital engineering, technology-driven research facilities, and agricultural innovation spaces ([Priya et al., 2025](#)). To bridge this execution gap, provincial development roadmaps require the alignment of university curriculums with modern technical industries, ensuring that state-subsidized degree holders can directly feed into local economic value chains rather than migrating to macro-urban centers like Manila or Cebu.

The Environmental and Livelihood Dialectic: RA 10870

In the environmental domain, the enactment of RA 10870 which institutionalizes the statutory protections for the Mt. Malindang Range Natural Park unveils a profound structural dialectic between top-down regulatory preservation and bottom-up rural survival. Mt. Malindang stands as a critical biodiversity center in Mindanao; thus, RA 10870 provides a robust legal shield against commercial deforestation, unregulated mining, and destructive agricultural expansion. Nonetheless, contemporary environmental governance literature underscores that enforcing rigid, state-centric preservation boundaries often creates sharp social frictions within peripheral territories ([Dalby, 2020](#); [Dressler & Guieb, 2015](#)).

The legal boundaries demarcated by RA 10870 directly intersect with the ancestral domains and ancestral farmlands of indigenous groups and marginalized upland farmers who depend on forest ecosystems for survival. When local populations are legally alienated from resource extraction without viable economic alternatives, policy compliance collapses, leading to clandestine violations and heightened enforcement costs. Triangulated policy data

suggests that for RA 10870 to achieve true ecological resilience, local government units must operationalize participatory co-management frameworks that integrate indigenous agroforestry practices, secure land-tenure instruments, and institutionalize community-led eco-tourism programs as sustainable livelihood offsets.

Cultural Institutionalization and the Civic Frontier: RA 11199 and RA 11187

The cultural and civic frontiers represent modern expansions in Misamis Occidental's localized legislative framework. The passage of RA 11199, which mandates the declaration of Subanen Cultural Sites as formal heritage zones, marks a progressive shift from purely economic-infrastructure lawmaking toward symbolic and rights-based institutionalization. This statute establishes a decentralized legal mechanism allowing local governments to allocate municipal funds specifically for the preservation of indigenous spaces, shielding vulnerable cultural heritage from the pressures of commercial modernization and land speculation (Kelly et al., 2024; Lugo-Espinosa et al., 2024). The challenge, however, lies in preventing the romanticization or commodification of indigenous spaces, ensuring instead that the legal framework directly empowers the living Subanen elders to dictate the governance of their heritage zones.

Parallel to cultural preservation, youth mobilization has been institutionalized via RA 11187, which targets the structural strengthening of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Federations in the urban centers of Ozamiz and Oroquieta. While this law legally embeds youth representatives into municipal budgeting and local council policymaking processes, sub-national governance research warns against the persistence of tokenistic civic participation (Harada, 2023). Without rigorous financial auditing mentorship, structured public administration training, and explicit protective buffers against traditional political patronage, localized youth laws fail to cultivate authentic transformative leadership (Udaya & Okoye, 2024).

Finally, looking back at historical administrative foundations, early statutes such as RA 1086 which established the municipality of Bonifacio demonstrate how national legislative mandates have historically carved the provincial boundaries of Misamis Occidental, directly dictating internal revenue allotments, localized political representation, and basic public service delivery across the sub-national terrain

Discussion

The thematic mapping and analytical deconstruction of Republic Acts exclusive to Misamis Occidental provide critical insights into the dynamics of sub-national policymaking within a decentralized unitary state. The findings indicate that localized legislation functions as a crucial corrective mechanism designed to bridge the structural gaps left by sweeping national policies. National policy design inherently relies on macro-level developmental assumptions that often marginalize the highly contextualized vulnerabilities of peripheral regions (Le Masson, 2015). By enacting laws like RA 10864 (education) and RA 10870 (environment), the state attempts to implement target-specific resource channeling. This

structural approach aligns with the "Asymmetric Decentralization Theory," which posits that sub-national administrative units require differentiated legal powers and statutory instruments to optimize local public goods delivery based on their distinct geographical, ecological, and cultural realities (Delos Reyes & Espina, 2016). However, a recurring structural tension identified across the mapped statutes is the critical misalignment between legislative intent and post-enactment operational capacity. The passage of specialized laws creates immediate socio-legal expectations, yet their successful execution remains deeply dependent on national fiscal subventions and local administrative competence. For example, the transformation of educational institutions via RA 10864 or the reinforcement of youth federations via RA 11187 cannot yield substantive regional benefits if local governance networks lack the bureaucratic readiness to manage increased fiscal responsibilities (Flores et al., 2021; Rovillos & Tauli-Corpuz, 2012).

This gap reflects what policy scholars describe as the "implementation deficit" in peripheral spaces, where localized laws are passed with high symbolic value but face structural underfunding, rigid bureaucratic compliance pipelines, and weak monitoring infrastructure during execution (Frost, 2024). Furthermore, the political ecology surrounding environmental statutes like RA 10870 highlights a profound policy dilemma: the systemic conflict between state-mandated ecological preservation and localized socioeconomic survival. The enforcement of rigid protective boundaries over the Mt. Malindang Range demonstrates how centralized environmental laws can inadvertently restrict the livelihood strategies of agrarian and indigenous populations. This dynamic illustrates that top-down legislative actions frequently neglect the human dimensions of environmental governance, triggering rural resistance and non-compliance (Brousseau et al., 2012; Howard, 2020). To bridge this gap, contemporary public governance research advocates for a shift toward "Collaborative Governance Frameworks," which integrate local knowledge systems, shared administrative responsibilities, and market-based ecological incentives into the statutory structure itself.

Localized laws must evolve past simple prohibitive mandates to establish collaborative platforms where indigenous groups, such as the Subanen communities recognized under RA 11199, act as co-managers of regional natural resources rather than passive subjects of state regulation. Finally, the noticeable lack of legislative focus on digital transformation, climate-resilient infrastructure, and blue economic diversification reveals a critical disconnect between historical legislative priorities and emerging modern global challenges. While historical lawmaking successfully established early municipal boundaries (e.g., RA 1086) and localized social institutions, the contemporary statutory landscape of Misamis Occidental remains largely traditional and reactive. In an era increasingly shaped by severe climate disruptions, digital economic divides, and automation pressures, relying on conventional legislative frameworks restricts a province's long-term adaptability (Chelvachandran et al., 2020; Lescrauwaet et al., 2022). Future lawmaking for peripheral provinces must shift toward a proactive stance, intentionally incorporating digital capacity building, youth-led technological entrepreneurship, and regional climate resilience into the design of localized statutes. This forward-looking approach ensures that sub-national

legislation serves not merely as an administrative inventory, but as a strategic roadmap for inclusive and resilient regional development.

Conclusion

This systemic policy mapping and critical analysis of Republic Acts exclusive to Misamis Occidental demonstrate that localized legislation serves as an essential regulatory tool for regional human engineering, environmental protection, and cultural codification. The baseline data proves that sub-national statutes have effectively reshaped the province's developmental trajectory by establishing key higher education infrastructure (RA 10864), legalizing ecological protections for critical biodiversity spaces (RA 10870), recognizing vulnerable indigenous heritage (RA 11199), and institutionalizing early local governance borders (RA 1086). These targeted interventions have successfully bridged macro-policy gaps, channelled essential national fiscal resources, and created legal frameworks tailored to provincial realities. However, the empirical evidence also reveals critical structural vulnerabilities within the localized lawmaking ecosystem. A persistent execution gap remains between legislative intent and grassroots operational realities, driven primarily by administrative capacity deficits, rigid top-down regulatory enforcement, and unstable fiscal allocations. Furthermore, the historical focus of these exclusive laws exhibits a sectoral imbalance; while education and environmental enforcement are highly institutionalized, crucial modern development dimensions such as digital infrastructure deployment, climate-resilient engineering, and tech-driven youth entrepreneurship remain severely underrepresented.

The strict protective boundaries of environmental mandates also generate systemic policy tensions by inadvertently alienating local agrarian and indigenous communities from their traditional socioeconomic lifelines. Ultimately, this study underscores that localized laws cannot function as isolated statutory checklists if they are to foster genuinely inclusive and resilient regional development. To maximize their transformative potential, sub-national legislation must transition from a reactive, symbolic stance toward a proactive, participatory governance model that firmly integrates local knowledge systems, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and structural funding security. While this research provides a comprehensive baseline inventory and thematic structure of special laws in Misamis Occidental, it is bounded by its reliance on qualitative desk methodologies. Future empirical inquiries should focus on conducting quantitative impact assessments, measuring localized budget execution rates, and gathering primary field data to evaluate the long-term socioeconomic outcomes of these specialized legislative actions on the ground.

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