




Analyzing the Social Ecology of Tourism by Local Communities in the Baluran National Park Area

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Abstract. Indonesia's tourism is slowly becoming a new pawn for the community's economic development. This is considering that Indonesia consists of various regional characters and biota. One of the locations in this context of tourism is the Baluran National Park area, located in Situbondo, East Java. Communities around the area also rely on the results of the existence of those National Parks. Therefore, the socio-ecological dynamics of tourism will undoubtedly be different compared to other locations. This research orientation aims to ensure community development around the Baluran National Park Area significantly. This study uses qualitative research methods to process data collection and analysis to obtain specific and comprehensive data. The results of this study get several transitional narratives of the people living around Baluran National Park in developing their socio-ecological tourism potential. Through these narratives, they can provide an overview of the future potential for developing eco-based tourism in local communities in the Baluran National Park area.

Keywords: Community Development, Baluran National Park, Ecotourism.

1 Introduction

Looking at the tourism context today, ecotourism has been a type of tourism developing worldwide, including Indonesia. It can be seen from the context of tourism development, particularly in rural areas now preferring ecotourism as sustainable tourism [1]–[3]. Tourism has developed rapidly in Indonesia, particularly in ecotourism-based locations, with the policies issued by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy [4]. Although the Covid-19 pandemic has put the tourism industry at the local level to a halt, the ecotourism aspect in Indonesia has recovered gradually with significant growth [5]. This is because tourism is one of the economic growth agents launched by the Government to increase the State Income and Expense Budget (Indonesian: Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Negara, after that called APBN).

Recalling the significant ecotourism development, particularly in rural areas, developing a sustainable tourism model is required to improve its potency and marketability to tourists [6], [7]. Therefore, this study tries to raise the ecotourism-based

tourism potency, particularly in management mechanisms and environment-based tourism development model in which people still benefit from conserving the natural environment around them. Seeing the context of tourism, the concept of environmental consciousness is one of the important points in which the improvement of welfare should be proportional to the optimization of environmental quality in the tourism region [8]–[10]

Situbondo, as a region with great natural potency, contributes to the development of ecotourism in its territory [11]. Being one of the featured tourist sites in Indonesia, Banyuwangi moves to develop its tourism aspect, particularly based on ecology [4]. The location reasonably known to tourists, Baluran Ecotourism, located in the southeastern part of East Java, uses ecology concept in optimizing their tourism. Looking at the tale's successful ecotourism concept, it is noteworthy how ecology-based tourism development can be applied and developed in broader model or policy. This is because the ecotourism-based tourism model developed by stakeholders in this area is expected to affect other ecology-based tourist destination locations throughout Indonesia. Therefore, this study will later analyze the concept and system developed by Baluran Ecotourism to make a social-economic transformation in different location.

As a result, with the help of various parties who both have awareness regarding sustainable development, the people of Wonorejo Village have begun to choose other professions in the field of ecotourism gradually. This is a good picture, considering that previously, some of them decided to work as poachers in the protected forest area of Baluran National Park. Therefore, this study focuses more on how the ecotourism mechanism developed by the people of Wonorejo Village participates in the context of ecology-based tourism. This change is an example of how communities in remote areas can be directed to a better path in an ecological and economic context. This research wants to explain how the concept of community development was developed by former hunters around Baluran National Park. This is important considering the pattern of competition between communities (former hunters) who then become actors in ecotourism around the Baluran National Park.

2 Methods

This research uses qualitative methods to dig deep data on research subjects related to tourism ecology. The study subjects this time were individuals who were part of a group managing tourist sites in Baluran, Situbondo. Information exploration was carried out on this subject because they experienced and understood the conditions of management and planning in social reality. Contextual studies will be carried out periodically and regularly. This research related to ecotourism will focus more on the perspective of the managing community, especially their experience in interpreting what has been done and gone through. [12], [13]. The choice of a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach is considered more suitable, especially given later models developed by stakeholders in tourist areas in the context of ecotourism and model components that will be used for tourism development in East Java. In collecting data, observation was used, where the researcher and the team put more emphasis on aspects of

habit and looking at the social realm where agents dynamically interact with one another. Another essential thing is in-depth interviews with driving individuals in the tourist area, as well as interviewing several former poachers. The interviews were carried out and followed the flow of the informants so as not to seem rigid so that the data obtained could flow. In addition, related to the need for secondary data such as document archives and photos/videos are also brought to obtain more comprehensive information.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 *Ecotourism as an Alternative Tourism*

Indonesia is well-known for the natural beauty and biodiversity it has. Therefore, it is well established that the Indonesian Government makes tourist destinations one of the national strategic programs to increase Indonesia's income and popularity. Even the government considerably supports tourism activists in the regions as the people's significance attempt [4]. One of the tourism types expectedly to develop and exerting a significant effect on the people favorable to local and foreign tourists is ecology-based or ecotourism. This ecology-based tourism flourishes in many regions, the primary objectives of which are to improve the people's welfare and to grow ecological consciousness among tourists and organizers [7]–[10].

The strategy later being a key to tourism ecosystem development is to conserve the environment and to provide ecology and culture-related education to the people, particularly the young generation [7], [9], [14]. This, of course, expectedly has a systemic impact on the sustainability of tourism existing in Indonesia. Active public participation in the tourism development process and environmental conservation is expected to significantly impact the people and the region itself. It is in line with Fennell's explaining that not merely the process of developing ecotourism-based tourist sites relies on the environmental aspect as the tourist site to get profit, but also how to generate the process of implanting the ecological conservation aspect to the people and the young generation in the region [9], [10].

In the context of Indonesia, Kemenparekraf tries to make branding stimulation, particularly to tourism regions that apply ecological concepts as their primary goal [4]. This reinforcement, as explained by Kemenparekraf, is in line with Fennell explaining that the sustainable tourism should be business-, socio-economic-, cultural sustainability-, and environmental conservation-oriented [4], [10]. Therefore, the government assists in the process of selecting tourist sites through good management social, economically, culturally, and ecologically. Situbondo, a national and international tourist site, also has some ecology-based tourism types, such as Baluran Ecotourism. It is essential to see the tourism development dynamics and process carried out by the two tourist objects in the process of being a national ecotourism center.

3.2 *Community-Based Tourism and Ecotourism Development in Wonorejo Village*

Ecotourism management relies on more than just the assistance of third parties such as government and industry. More importantly, collaboration is established with stakeholders in the tourist site [15], [16]. This is because sustainable tourism development needs leading agent in the sustainability process itself, the people [17]. The community empowerment process is one of the keys to the sustainability of development conditions in the region. Thus, the critical point is how the people can remain powerful without being dependent on the institutions beyond them. Community Tourism (CBT) has been an alternative to tourism world in which development is conducted from the inside with equivalent and bottom-up processes [18]–[20].

Just like sustainable development, the concept brought by CBT is related to what is developed in ecotourism and *Kemenparekraf*, in which collaboration and participation of agents in the management are essential. Development is not only defined physically, but there should be an optimization, mainly related to social, economic, and cultural contexts in line with the ecological aspect [3], [16], [19]. The Baluran Ecological Tourism community does this in a protected forest area to improve economic welfare. The process of environmental sustainability itself needs to be followed up and optimized. Baluran Ecological Tourism seeks to maintain the environmental ecosystem in the region to attract tourists to visit with a limited number as an effort to preserve nature [21].

At the beginning of the development of ecotourism in the Wonorejo Village area, various obstacles were encountered. However, the manager of the Baluran Ecotourism, M. Nurdin Razak, continues to provide attention and enthusiasm to improve the economic context of the residents in the Wonorejo Village area to become a tourist-friendly location. Residents experienced various obstacles at the beginning of the ecotourism context, such as changing the habitus of hunting animals in the national park area. However, with the help of various parties, including foreign NGOs, they have helped residents to leave their former jobs as poachers. If in the past the residents in the Wonorejo Village area hunted deer, bulls, or other protected birds and animals in the Baluran National Park area, now they have tried to change them to other jobs such as tour guides to opening guest houses for tourists visiting Baluran.

These changes have increasingly made many developments for the people of Wonorejo Village. If in the past Wonorejo village was better known as a producer of poachers, now tourists and the public are more familiar with this location as a lodging area for those visiting Baluran. This certainly has a positive impact on the economy for the people of Wonorejo Village and ecological benefits for the sustainability of nature tourism in the Baluran area. Promoting tourism that is echoed to increase the economic potential of eco-tourism is also balanced with the seriousness of residents in improving their potential. This can be seen from how they try to learn simple foreign languages, considering that many foreign tourists visit and are interested in living in the area. Therefore, increasing the capacity and capability used by residents helps them manage ecological tourism in the Baluran National Park area.

The complex sustainable tourism development requires a multidisciplinary perspective. Through eco-based tourism objects such as those in the Baluran region, it is hoped that they can provide an overview and outlook for the broader community in general and sustainable tourism activists, in particular, to increase their potential in a better direction. This research not only shows the model built by the community managing ecological tourism in the Baluran National Park area, but is also able to stimulate other tourist objects to improve the context of sustainable tourism development without having to destroy nature. Ecological balance and tourism will ultimately impact the community and the ecology as a whole, especially in the area around Baluran National Park. The description of the model related to community development in the Baluran area will provide enthusiasm and a pattern of exposing community potential to communities with almost the same characteristics. However, currently, the pattern depiction still needs to be more detailed because a more complex and specific study is required. At least the pattern of change from former hunter communities to ecotourism actors can significantly impact the community's economy and the preservation of nature around the Baluran National Park area.

4 Conclusion

Observing the development of ecotourism in the Wonorejo Village area shows how the community has the same desire regarding ecological development. However, in the past, the perspective on ecotourism was still foreign and confusing to the public. As a result, poaching has become one of the sources of income for some people in Wonorejo Village to boost the economy. However, this changed when the concept of ecotourism was introduced, providing a different perspective for residents who eventually switched professions to the tourism-based work sector. This change certainly has a positive impact on residents economically and good news for the development of ecological habitats in the Baluran National Park area. Development of the Community Based Tourism combined with Ecotourism into one unit can be applied in a more comprehensive form by the people in the Wonorejo Village area. Ecotourism is one of the keys to restructuring the concept of tourism in the area around the Baluran National Park. This is proven by the decrease in the number of poachers and the increase in the community's economy and environmental conservation around the Baluran National Park.

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