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ANALYSING CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPING ECOTOURISM VILLAGE IN SLEMAN, YOGYAKARTA, INDESIONA: A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyse challenges faced in developing ecotourism village in Indonesia. Issue of sustainability has become a debate among scholars as to how the development of ecotourism village will benefit society or villagers and at the same time preserve environment and traditional values. Further, the research also identifies the capacity of human resources in developing ecotourism village. It's argued that if relevant factors in initiating the development of ecotourism village can be identified, suitable programs can be developed and

implemented from small to large scale, enhance the life of villagers, and preserve natural as well as cultural environments. This study used qualitative research method. This method systematically describes the facts or characteristics of a particular population or a particular field factually and accurately. Findings of research indicate some challenges if ecotourism village in Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia is to develop. The first is to change the mindset and to build awareness of villagers. It is because the villagers will be the main actors that will run the ecotourism village. Second is to identify village potentials to be develop and becomes the uniqueness of the village. Third is how local government regulate and protect the development of ecotourism village. Fourth is to involve other tourism actors in the process. Based on the findings, outcomes of research are programs that need to carry out and at the same time involve villagers in developing ecotourism village. Future research is needed as to how to involve other stakeholders in contributing to the development of ecotourism village.

Keywords

Ecotourism Village, Community Development, Challenges, Government, Villagers, Private Sectors

1. Introduction

The development of concept of "ecotourism" cannot be separated from the change of development paradigm, especially after the 2000s. Community-oriented development, in part, has an impact on the development of the world tourism industry. In the world of tourism, this concept means how people around the tourist destination can benefit from tourism activities. At the same time the natural environment must remain beautiful.

The integration of tourism with conservation was first made widespread by Budowski in 1976 in an article entitled *Tourism and conservation: conflict, coexistence or symbioses*. While the use of the term 'ecotourism' can be traced only as far back as the late 1980s (Orams, 1995). Ecotourism is an alternative tourism that arises as a consequence of dissatisfaction with the form of tourism that is less concerned with social and ecological impacts, and is more concerned with economic benefits and human convenience alone (Nugraheni, 2002).

Indonesia is known as the largest archipelago country in the world. According to the data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2010 was as much as 17,504 islands. Around 7,870 of them have names, while 9,634 do not have a name. The beautiful nature

and diversity of culture coming from more than one thousand ethnic groups in Indonesia are potential elements of tourism in Indonesia.

Tourism in Indonesia is an important component of the Indonesian economy as well as a significant source of its foreign exchange revenues. The vast country of sprawling archipelago has much to offer. They are from natural beauty, historical heritage to cultural diversity. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to Indonesia's GDP in 2014 was IDR 325,467 billion (US\$26,162 million) constituting 3.2% of the total GDP. By 2019, the Indonesian government wants to have doubled this figure to 8 percent of GDP and the number of visitors needs to double to about 20 million (Indonesia Investments, 2014). The tourism sector ranked as the 4th largest among goods and services export sectors.

In the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum, Indonesia jumped from 70th position in 2013 to 50th position in 2015 (WEF, 2017). It is a remarkable improvement. This jump was caused by Indonesia's rapidly growing number of foreign visitor arrivals, national prioritization of the tourism industry and investment in infrastructure (for example the mobile phone network now covers most areas of the country, while air transport infrastructure has been expanded). The report states that the competitive advantages of Indonesia are price competitiveness, rich natural resources (biodiversity), and the presence of several heritage sites (Indonesia Investments, 2016). Nevertheless, the report from the same organization also states that Indonesia does not provide enough emphasis on environmental sustainability (WEF, 2015). Thus, it is important for the Indonesian government to develop tourism that based on natural

There are still many things that Indonesian Government has to do if it wants to compete with other countries in tourism field. One of the things that Indonesian government does to explore new tourist destination and local culture is by adopting the concept of ecotourism. The adoption of the concept enables the preservation of natural environment nature and brings to surface the traditional values of local wisdom. As a result, this kind of tourism leads to the growth of society economy.

Sleman Regency of Yogyakarta Province in Indonesia has a potential to be developed into ecotourism territory. With around 86 villages, fertile soil and located close to active volcano of Merapi, the development of ecotourism territory will contribute to the enhancement of

community economy. Nonetheless, the challenge is how this project will benefit villagers whilst at the same time preserves the condition of villages and traditional values that is strongly held by villagers. Thus, analysing challenges of developing ecotourism village from the perspective of community development is interesting to look at. The novelty of the research lies on how the concept of community development can be adopted in developing ecotourism village in Sleman.

2. Theoretical Review

2.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is often claimed to be the most expanding sector in tourism industry. Timothy and White identified that the emergence of the concept of ecotourism is due to negative environmental impacts that have been created by traditions of mass tourism and undifferentiated marketing. As a consequence, concerned stakeholders like tourism agencies, government, and researchers have begun to advocate sustainable tourism, which later known as ecotourism (Timothy & White, 1999).

Some scholars have been attempted to identify the concept of ecotourism. Elizabeth Boo equates ecotourism with nature-tourism (Boo, 1990). Tickell defines ecotourism as ‘travel to enjoy the world’s amazing diversity of natural life and human culture without causing damage to either’ (Blamey, 1997). Meanwhile, a more recent definition is given by the International Ecotourism Society. It defines ecotourism as a *responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education*. Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests (TIES, 2015). Novelty of this definition is the inclusion of aspects of interpretation and education.

In developing countries, the concept of ecotourism also incorporates community development, environmental conservation and preservation of local values. Ecotourism village is a type of tourism that has become the foundation for sustainable tourism development. It places villagers not merely as the object of tourist attraction, but also as the tourism actor. In developing ecotourism village, support and synergy of various stakeholders are crucial.

2.2. Community Development

In general, community development can be defined as development activities directed to increase community access to achieve better socio-economic-cultural conditions. The United Nations definition of community development as stated in Kobani (2015) describes it as "a

process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems". So that people in those places are expected to become more independent with better quality of life and well-being.

It is noteworthy that community development programme is about people's mobilization for action, but people are naturally resistant to change because of the uncertainty of the consequence of such change on them. The situation becomes worse when such change or community development effort does not conform to the people's age long traditions and customs, making people oppose such change and never wanted to be part of such programmes; even when these programmes are imposed on them, they end up abandoning them (Adekola & Egbo, 2016).

The community development program has three main characters: community based, local resource based and sustainable. Two targets to be achieved are: target community capacity and welfare objectives. The first objective of community capacity can be achieved through empowerment efforts. Community members can participate in production processes or supporting institutions in the production process. Equity with no distinction between status and expertise, security, sustainability and cooperation (Cooperation), all are running simultaneously. According to Beeton, as tourism relies on visiting places and people, it cannot exist outside a community. So, both tourism and communities must be viewed simultaneously – any change to one will affect the other. Consequently, tourism is one of the most significant community development tools, particularly in marginal or peripheral communities such indigenous, remote and rural communities (Beeton, 2006).

Actually, the existence of community development program in Indonesia has been regulated legally in several laws in the environmental sector, for example in Article 7 of Act No. 23/1997 on environmental management which stated that "the community has the same and the broadest possible opportunity to play a role in environmental management". Furthermore, in Article 7 paragraph 2 mentioned Implementation of provisions in paragraph (1) is done by:

- a. Increasing independence, community empowerment, and partnership.
- b. Giving growth to community capability and initiative;
- c. Increasing community responsiveness in carrying out social supervision;
- d. Providing suggestions;
- e. Conveying information and/or conveying reports.

Thus, combining the concept of ecotourism and community development in analysing challenges of developing ecotourism village is interesting as both offer similar value such as sustainability. Community development is a process in which the people of a community attempt a collaborative effort to promote what they consider to be the well-being of their community (Behzan, Sahebzadeh & Ahmad, 2012).

3. Research Method

This study used qualitative research method. It is expected to obtain a complete picture and deep understanding of challenges to develop ecotourism village in Sleman Yogyakarta based on a community development approach.

In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation that:

- seeks answers to a question
- systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question
- collects evidence
- produces findings that were not determined in advance
- produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study

(College of Computer and Information Science, 2015)

Qualitative research shares these characteristics. This type of research will be able to capture a wide range of qualitative information with thorough descriptions and full of nuances that are more valuable than just a statement of the amount or frequency in numerical terms.

Data collection methods used were as follows:

- a. In-depth interview was conducted by asking the informant based on interview guide has been prepared. In particular, the interview was done toward head and staff of Sleman Tourism Agency, tour and travel association, and hotel public relations managers.
- b. Library Study, researchers used a wide variety of data and theories collected through books, journals, newspapers, papers, seminars and online information such as research support policies in the field of higher education and other written materials as the basis of writing.
- c. Participatory observation was used for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviours in their usual contexts. In particular this technique was used to identify village potentials for ecotourism.

- d. Focus group discussion, a tool that is effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented (College of Computer and Information Science, 2015). It is a way to identify the need of villagers, to change the mindset of villagers and involve them in the ecotourism programs.

4. Research Result and Discussion

A tourist destination is a combination of many products and services that are put together. It is, however, a challenge to build a new tourist destination. What interesting about this is sometimes there are not many changes needed to build a new destination. One of the reasons is the desire of visitors to enjoy natural atmosphere of the destination, for example, countryside, rice field, and traditional life that can be found in a village.

Tourism Village can be defined as *where small groups of tourist stay in or near traditional, often remote villages and learn about village life and the local environment* (Inskip, 1991). Meanwhile OECD defines village (rural) tourism as *tourism taking place in the countryside* (OECD, 1994). It is a place that has certain characteristics and values that can be a special attraction for tourists with a special interest in rural life. This suggests that the main attraction of a tourist village is the life of the villagers and natural atmosphere that are unique and cannot be found in urban areas. Simply saying, the success of development of sustainable tourism in the village lies in empowerment of local community as an actor in building, owning and managing direct tourist facilities and services (Suarthana, *et al.*, 2015).

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) encourages Indonesia to further maximize the development of village-based tourism. In addition to attracting more tourists, the development of tourism villages also provides an impact of equitable distribution at the village level and raises community's economy (Muliarta, 2011).

Ecotourism villages in Sleman Yogyakarta are developing very dynamically and are able to drive the tourism sector. At the end of 2013, the classification of ecotourism villages was introduced. It included very independent, self-contained, developing, and growing categories. Until now, of 38 ecotourism villages, there is 1 very independent ecotourism village, 7 self-contained ecotourism villages, 8 developing ecotourism villages and 15 ecotourism villages with

growing classification. Meanwhile, there are 7 ecotourism villages that need to be reactivated (Tempo.Co, June 2013). This data shows how challenging it is to develop ecotourism village.

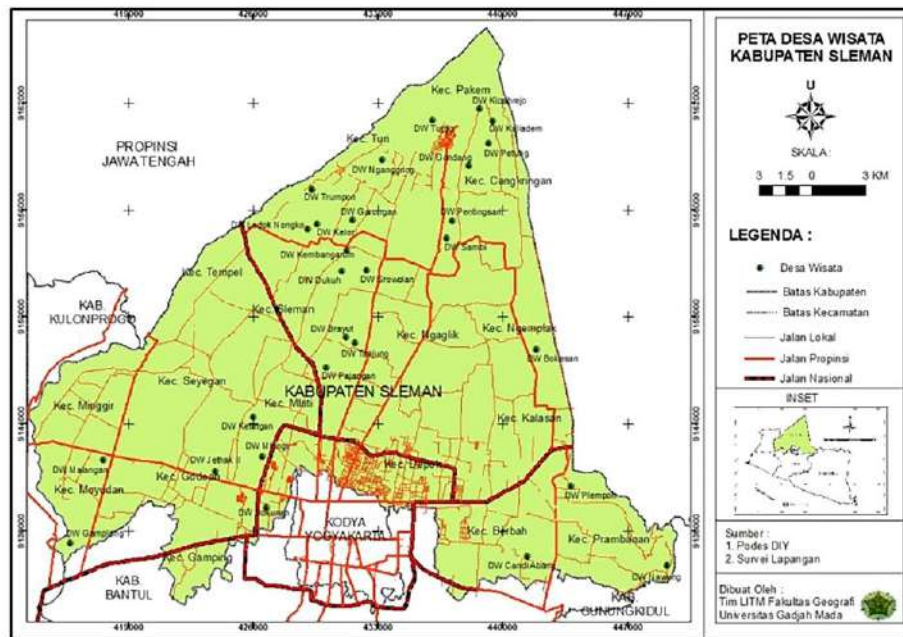


Figure 1: Map of Ecotourism Villages in Sleman Yogyakarta (FKDW, 2010)

In order to identify challenges of developing ecotourism in Sleman, first thing to do was to map relevant stakeholders. Relevant stakeholders are those who contribute to or be influenced by the development of ecotourism village. Based on Act No. 32/2004 on regional development autonomy in Indonesia, there are three significant stakeholders that contribute to the development of ecotourism village. They are community, government and private sectors. Thus, a model can be introduced as follows:

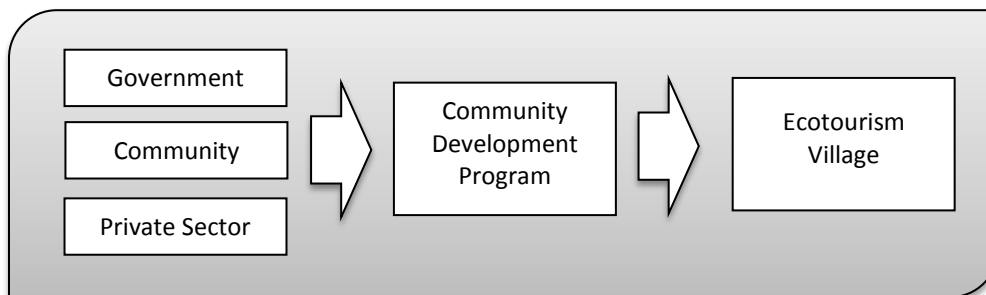


Figure 2: Development Model of Ecotourism Village

This model describes that principally all three stakeholders play significant role in developing ecotourism village. In-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and observation

were done to identify challenges from these stakeholders. These challenges are described as follow:

1. Community

Often when we think of the term community, we think in geographical terms. Our community is the location (i.e. city, town or village) where we live. When community is defined through physical location, it can be defined by precise boundaries that are readily understood and accepted by others. Communities can also be defined by common cultural heritage, language, and beliefs or shared interests. These are sometimes called communities of interest (Frank & Smith, 1999). Villagers are stakeholders who should benefit the most from the development of ecotourism village. The biggest challenge is to change the mindset and to build awareness of villagers. It is because the villagers will be the main actors that will run the ecotourism village. In some villages, the refusal of the concept of ecotourism village is due to lack of understanding of the concept. It is as if the villagers were asked to change their way of living and their village would turn into something different, despite the village potentials to be tourist destination.

On the other hand, we found ecotourism villages where the management tended to neglect the village. It was because the mindset had not been changed and the awareness had not been built. They tended to follow and to adopt the concept of other villages without consulting government or getting any help from other parties. Consequently, seven villages in Sleman Regency had been classified as not well-managed. The same case was also found in the research done by Khlaikaew *et al.* They said that the community has faced with various managerial operations; for instance, tourism marketing concepts, tourist behaviours, channels of distribution, and tourism networks (2017).

Thus, one of the main strategy for the development of ecotourism village is the need for strong commitment from all components of the village to equate opinions and perceptions. If mindset had been formed, then potentials of a village to be an ecotourism village could be identified and explored. This commitment is the strongest support for the realization and sustainability of the tourism village (Nugroho, 2015). There should also be strong commitment to cooperate with local government and if necessary cooperate with private parties. Think about and identify the impact if private parties are to be involved, in particular tour and travel agencies. These commitments can only be achieved if the new mindset has been formed.

The involvement of villagers in the development of ecotourism village does not merely facilitate their understanding of local tourism, but also improve the quality of planning and decision to include the views of locals (Beierle & Konisky, 2000). The management of tourism village can improve economic, social and cultural life, including in relationship concept where the individuals can preserve the environment. By participating in environment preservation, it is a form of symbiotic mutual relationship.

2. Village Potentials

The rural life in Indonesia is still identical with comfortable atmosphere, beautiful nature and peaceful and full of togetherness among the villagers. The village becomes a symbol of Indonesian tradition inherited from generation to generation. However, many villages scattered throughout the country are now storing various economic and social problems in its development. One important thing is the challenge of developing the potentials of the village. Village potentials in some of tourism village in Sleman have not been identified well.

According to Head of Cultural and Tourism Agency of Sleman Yogyakarta, management of ecotourism village, with the help from government, needed to identify the village potentials through a joint discussion of all components of the village. These potentials could be developed to be the uniqueness of the village. They can be beauty of nature, paddy fields, richness of flora and fauna, socio cultural, society, traditions or things that are unique. There are villages where not many changes are required as the village are already interesting. But there are also villages where new creation of potentials is necessary after observation and assessment is conducted.

3. Government

The third challenge is how local government regulates and protects the development of ecotourism village. In 2015, Cultural and Tourism Agency of Sleman Yogyakarta had drafted a regulation that determined basic aspects of development and communication for the tourism village. According to the head of the agency, there were four aspects that became the main focus of the regulation. They were destination development, industrial development in rural tourism area, tourism village marketing development, and institutional structure (Purnama, 2016). Especially for the fourth aspect, Cultural and Tourism Agency of Sleman Yogyakarta encouraged tourism villages to form legal entities, e.g. cooperatives. The reason was because many corporations and assistances in the tourism sector that required the recipient must be incorporated. "But not only for that reason the legal entity is needed by the tourism village. This

effort is done to encourage the tourism village to be more professional, " said head of the agency. With this regulation, tourism village was directed to be well managed under the coordination of the Cultural and Tourism Agency of Sleman Yogyakarta. The regulation draft, however, was still being sought for approval from local legislatures. The long process of approval had somehow affected the development of ecotourism village in Sleman.

Another challenge was that many village potentials were not well developed due to funding problems. Considering this condition, Minister of Village, Development and Transmigration issued a Minister Regulation No. 5/2015 on the priority use of village fund. Thus, with the existence of village funds currently managed directly by the village, the various potentials of the village can be developed for the benefit of the village and the welfare of its community.

Each village received a maximum fund of IDR 1.4 billion per village per year which was given in some phases. The allocation of village funds was calculated based on the number of villages and allocated with respect to population size, poverty rate, geographic area, and geographical difficulty level. In accordance with the mandate of the minister regulation, the purpose of rural development was to improve the welfare of rural communities and the quality of human life and poverty alleviation through the fulfilment of basic needs, development of village facilities and infrastructure, building local economic potential, and sustainable use of natural resources and environment. Therefore, in the period 2015-2019 rural development has been directed to strengthening villages and their communities, as well as the development of growth centres in rural areas to promote sustainable, socially, economically and ecologically sustainable rural development and encourage rural-urban linkages (Mustafa, 2015). So far, the village had not been viewed as a potential supporting entity for economic development, despite the fact that this nation's food supply came from the village. Thus, the role of government in developing ecotourism village is crucial to ensure that the development goes to the right way.

4. Private Sector

The involvement of private sector in tourism industry is a must if ecotourism in rural area wants to grow. Yogyakarta is known as the second tourist destination in Indonesia, after Bali. Thus, it is a challenge for the government to also introduce new kind of tourism, beside the existing tourist destination such as Borobudur and Prambanan temples. In order for ecotourism villages to be visited by tourists, Cultural and Tourism Agency of Sleman Yogyakarta needs to

engage Association of the Indonesian Tour and Travel Agencies that helps connecting tourists needs with ecotourism village attraction. In this case, travel agencies play important role as they are familiar with the tourists needs. The challenge is to assure that tourists visiting ecotourism village are satisfied with the attraction and rural life exhibited in the village.

Another association that Cultural and Tourism Agency of Sleman Yogyakarta needs to engage is Association of Indonesian Hotels, especially four and five-star hotels that are located in Sleman regency. Hotel management can help management of ecotourism village on issues like expanding tourism marketing, improving human resource capacity, raising local potentials, and applying tourism business standards (Sukarmi, 2016). Through mutual relationship, the management of ecotourism village can be developed better.

Based on these four challenges which engage three main stakeholders—community, government and private sector—programs that principally empower villagers in developing ecotourism village and preserve the beauty of environment can be developed. Community development programs developed based on potentials to be identified at Pentingsari ecotourism village were as follow:

- Agriculture. Agricultural activities carried out by planting food crops and provide knowledge to tourists about farming activities with the land as a planting medium.
- Jogging and tracking. The Pentingsari ecotourism village is located between two rivers (Pawon and Yellow river). With the river passing by the rice paddies, up and down the cliffs with a very unique and beautiful tunnel, passing in the shade of various types of forest plants. The rim of the river is perfect for jogging and tracking.
- Outbound. Outbound activities are held for children by playing educational games and being taught the concept of independence. As for adults, outbound is held by the river bank with guided from ecotourism village management.
- Learning *Batik*. Pentingsari village has a special package for visitors who want to learn batik, participants will be taught how to colour batik on white cloth as a medium.
- Learn to create Janur crafts. Crafts made of coconut leaves and can be made of various shapes, such as flowers commonly used for weddings.
- Mushrooms and Coffee Processing. Visitors will be guided to see how the process of mushroom cultivation, ranging from planting to processing into various culinary.

- Then there is also a coffee bean processing activities started from picking, cleaning the skin, then roasted until the last traditional pulverized (Suarthana, et al. 2015).



Picture 1 & 2: *Tourists plant rice in paddy field* (Harian Lampung, 2015).



Picture 3 & 4: *Colouring Batik and Organic Farming*

5. Conclusion

Ecotourism can be adopted to increase the community economy. At the same time, the adoption of the concept preserves the beauty of the natural environment. The challenge of developing an ecotourism village is how to involve relevant stakeholders. In the case of this research they include community, government, and private sectors. The challenge was to synergize the roles of these stakeholders through community development approach. The biggest challenge was how to involve villagers since the beginning of the development process. It is because they would be the main actors who run the ecotourism village. If their mindset and awareness of the advantage of ecotourism village has been established, the rest of the process can follow.

The community development approach enables community or villagers to be the main actor of the ecotourism village. Suitable programs were developed in consultation with government and private sectors. Through community development approach, community

actively involved in managing ecotourism village. At the same time, this new change removes social, economic and political barriers.

Further study on the issue of ecotourism is interesting especially in looking at other potential stakeholder involvement. Also, how community development may lead to the development of creative economy of community that contributes to the development.

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