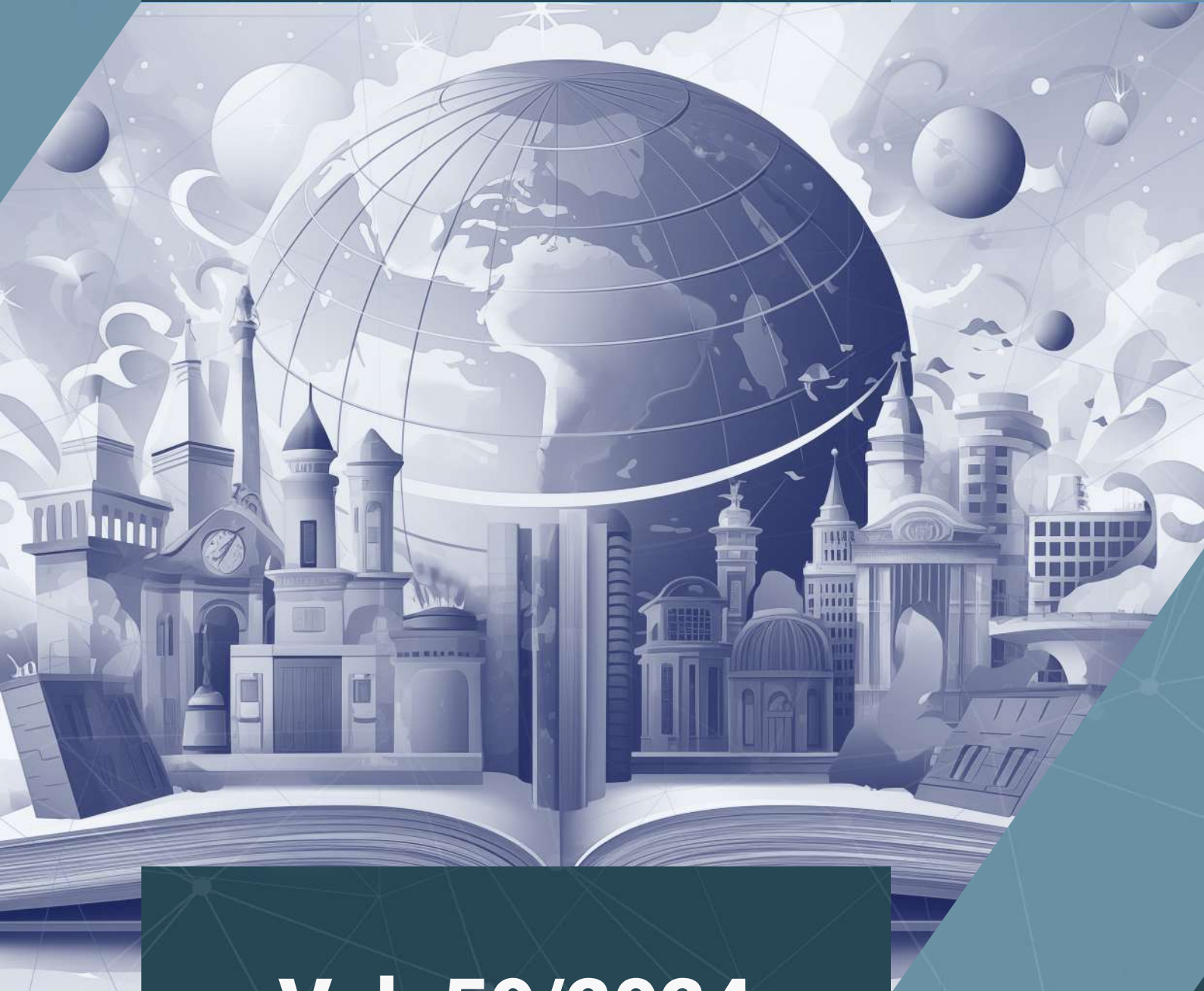




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Policy Networks in Ecotourism Governance: Evidence from Local Perspective

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Abstract. This study examined the governance of ecotourism at Dalegan Beach, with a focus on policy networks. The goal is to provide insights concerning actor, role, functions, characteristic, power relations and strategies, as well as factors driving and inhibiting the formation of network. The qualitative method was used to collect data through observations, in-depth interviews with informants, and document studies. The findings showed that the participation and roles of stakeholders, ranging from provincial governments to local communities, had a significant impact on beach tourism management. Despite the establishment of policy networks, challenges such as membership instability and coordination limitations among stakeholders linger. The concept of policy networks as a dynamic interaction system underscores the evolving relationships among various actors in the policy environment. These interactions are influenced by factors such as interests, preferences, and power dynamics among actors, which are used to influence decision-making processes and policy outcomes. The strategies employed by each actor can affect network dynamics and the policy process outcomes. Therefore, changes in the structure or power relations among actors in policy networks can impact the shape and direction of the policies.

Keywords. Policy Networks, Ecotourism Governance, Dalegan Beach, Gresik

Introduction

Ecotourism is a crucial sector in the global tourism industry, promoting nature conservation, local culture, and sustainable development (Firman et al., 2023; Mondino & Beery, 2019a). In this context, understanding the significant role of ecotourism governance is essential in ensuring that tourism practices are responsible and sustainable (Rinzin et al., 2007). Several ecotourism destinations encounter critical challenges due to the over-exploitation of natural resources, environmental degradation, and conflicts with local communities (Javanmardi et al., 2023; Mensah, 2019; Pham Hong et al., 2021). Therefore, a firm approach to ecotourism management is important to reduce negative impacts and ensure long-term benefits for both the environment and local communities (Cvetković et al., 2023; Sobhani et al., 2023; Waldemar & Dajer, 2024).

Previous studies on ecotourism governance at beaches have reported several crucial aspects to ensure sustainability in coastal areas. These critical aspects include sustainable natural resource management and development, active participation of local communities,

collaboration between government and the private sector, control of visitors, as well as ecosystem-based methods (Huang et al., 2023; Mondino & Beery, 2019b; Persada et al., 2023; Phelan et al., 2020; Pineda et al., 2023; Tamrin & Lubis, 2023; WONDIRAD et al., 2020). For example, Pineda et al. (2023) stated the importance of community participation in managing coastal resources, while Phelan et al. (2020) focused on the significance of ecosystem-based methods in maintaining coastal ecotourism sustainability. These findings provide valuable guidance for stakeholders in developing effective strategies to sustain and maximize the economic, social, and environmental benefits of beach tourism.

Forje and Tchamba (2022) stated that ecotourism governance varies across different countries and is impacted by government policies, local culture, and tourism development levels. Advanced tourism industries, such as those in Spain and Uzbekistan, apply sophisticated management strategies comprising various stakeholders (Jeong et al., 2023; Rocio et al., 2023). In developing countries, methods that consider local economic development and natural environment conservation are often prioritized (Manjengwa, 2007; Üzülmöz et al., 2023). Preliminary studies conducted in these countries provided valuable insights for addressing specific challenges. For example, Indonesia focuses on managing marine conservation areas in coastal regions and promoting sustainable fisheries (Tamrin & Raharja, 2021; Tranter et al., 2022; Üzülmöz et al., 2023).

Ecotourism governance, including collaboration, international organizations, and other stakeholders is part of a broader framework used by various countries (Alfiandri & Irawan, 2023; Rina Herawati et al., 2024; Sentanu et al., 2023; Tamrin et al., 2024b). This collaboration facilitates the exchange of information and cooperation among actors in developing standards, guidelines, and frameworks for sustainable governance (Berardo et al., 2020; Tamrin et al., 2024a).

The development holds significant urgency for communities for several reasons (Prasetyo *et al.*, 2020). Firstly, it plays a crucial role in conserving the natural environment, which is the basis for human and ecosystem survival. By promoting responsible and sustainable tourism practices, ecotourism protects biodiversity and ensures the availability of essential natural resources for communities (Baydeniz et al., 2024; Samal & Dash, 2023). Additionally, ecotourism serves as a catalyst for empowering local economies by providing job opportunities and additional income, which helps to alleviate poverty levels (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021; Snyman, 2014). Interactions with visitors promote recognition, preservation, and increased awareness of local culture, enriching the identity and cultural sustainability of the communities. As a result, ecotourism provides economic, social, and cultural benefits while supporting environmental conservation and promoting sustainability at both local and global levels (Barkauskienė & Snieska, 2013; Habibulloev et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, ecotourism has encountered several challenges that must be addressed to ensure sustainability and positive environmental impact, including the local communities (Alfiandri & Irawan, 2023; Muhtar & Riswanda, 2023). For instance, preliminary studies (Achuk Eba & Ckiaimz Enamhe, 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2019) stated that the management of vulnerable natural resources intensified by ecotourism, often increased environmental pressure such as coral reef damage, deforestation, and overfishing. Additionally, conflicts with local communities regarding land rights, use of natural resources, and fair income distribution are significant concerns (Mondino & Beery, 2019a; Nurhayati et al., 2019). Other conflicts include the inadequate tourism development, environmental and cultural preservation, poor supervision, minimal law enforcement, insufficient infrastructure and accessibility in specific ecotourism destinations. Therefore, enhancing public awareness and environmental education

is crucial for promoting sustainable ecotourism development in the country (Kia, 2021; Prayitno et al., 2023; Tamrin et al., 2022).

The management of beach ecotourism in the Dalegan area of Gresik Regency often encountered challenges including various policy actors. First, conflicts of interest frequently arise among the local government, stakeholders, and the tourism sector (Tamrin et al., 2024b). The local government aimed to realize economic development and increased revenue through tourism, while communities prioritized self-management without intervention from the Gresik Regency government. Second, cooperation and coordination among policy actors, such as the Department of Tourism and Creative Economy, Culture, Youth and Sports of Gresik Regency, the Department of Culture and Tourism, including the Department of Marine and Fisheries of East Java Province, were often ineffective. Synergy among these institutions could have helped implement integrated and holistic policies in beach ecotourism management (Tranter et al., 2022). Third, the participation of the private sector, village governments, and tourism operators in policy networks is also suboptimal. Absolute cooperation among the government, private sector, and beach ecotourism operators is crucial to supporting sustainable ecotourism initiatives that positively impact local communities (Graci, 2013; Zainal et al., 2024). Therefore, concerted efforts from various policy actors are needed to develop strong cooperation, enhance inter-agency coordination, and strengthen community participation in managing Dalegan Beach ecotourism in Gresik Regency.

The coastal area of Dalegan Beach served as both a tourism destination and an economic resource for local communities and the government. Local communities actively engaged in tourism activities and used marine resources to improve the well-being of the community. However, sustaining these activities requires integrated governance (Appiah et al., 2023; Sulistyadi et al., 2024), such as cooperation among various stakeholders, including the government, tourism sector, universities, media, local communities, and the environment. Environmental considerations should support other sectors in the Development program (Buchari et al., 2024). This study aimed to examine tourism governance using a policy network method.

Policy Network of Tourism Sector

Previous studies focused on the role and dynamics of policy networks in tourism development and related resource management in various locations. Dredge (2006) stated the importance of careful management in fostering innovative partnerships between local governments and the tourism industry. Meanwhile, Mariane et al. (2022) stated the need for a policy network model that supports the implementation of sustainable tourism policies, particularly focusing on the participation of cultural sector actors and communities. Simon and Molan (2022) stated the lack of participation from the private sector, NGOs, and academics in cultural tourism development, focusing on the need for a more inclusive network. Nguyen et al. (2022) explored the concept of co-competition in sustainable tourism development in Vietnam, concentrating on the importance of co-competition strategies within the policy network framework. Suwitri (2008) and Permana et al. (2013) examined policy formulation related to flood mitigation, waste management, and urban development, focusing on conflicts among advocacy coalitions, lack of stakeholder integration, and limitations in policy formulation processes. Furthermore, Muhtar and Riswanda (2023) studied community-based housing and settlement development in Bandung Regency, specifically examining policy integration gaps and shortcomings in stakeholder participation. These studies concentrated on the importance of

effective and inclusive policy networks in facilitating sustainable tourism, addressing environmental issues, and fostering local community development.

Policy is a series of proposed actions or activities within a particular environment to achieve specific targets (Zulfian, 2014). William N. Dunn stated that public policy is a complex pattern of interdependent choices made by government bodies or departments, including decisions to either act or abstain from certain actions (Dunn, 1981). Subsequently, Edward and Sharkansky (1979) stated that public policy comprised government declarations and actions, including the objectives of established programs. Public policy also has a coercive nature that distinguished it from private organizations (Rusli, 2014) and often requires legalization in the form of law (Muhafidin, 2020b). However, innovation in public policy is significant in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation process (Muhafidin, 2020a).

Previous studies stated that actors and policy institutions strategically determine policy processes and strategies (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Weimer & Vining, 2017). These policy actors, including policymakers, and advocacy groups, consistently engaged in public policy analysis (Salaputra et al., 2013). The stakeholders consisted of internal bureaucratic and external actors concerned in policy interaction and distribution. Official actors comprised government agencies, the president, and the judiciary, while unofficial actors included interest groups, political parties, and citizens. Howlett, Ramesh, and Madani (2011) categorized these actors into elected and appointed officials, interest groups, study organizations, and mass media. The diverse roles comprised providing information and exerting influence on policy processes (Madani, 2011).

The focus in policy networks is on the interdependent relationships among actors in public policymaking, due to the inability to achieve set objectives independently (Kickert et al., 1997). The roles of actors such as governments, NGOs, and the private sector significantly influenced policy success (Muhtar & Riswanda, 2023). However, failures in policy networks often occur due to inadequate intensive relationships, unclear objectives, insufficient information, and lack of commitment (Kickert et al., 1997).

Previous studies on policy networks are important because it determine the roles of actors in setting policy agendas (Dredge, 2006). The roles facilitated coordination between the public and private sectors, as well as enhanced the efficiency of public policy implementation (Rhodes, 1996). Policy networks represent a modern form of governance characterized by informal, decentralized, and horizontal relationships where government organizations no longer hold central positions (Kenis & Schneider, 1991). It also enabled continuous communication among various actors, including formal organizations, government agencies, local activists, and international support groups (Wang & Ran, 2023).

Actor-network theory, developed by Bruno Latour, describes the complex relationships among actors in a social network. This theory focused on interactions concerning material and semiotic elements, including punctualization, translation, and problematization (Latour, 2005). However, the theory proposed by Van Waarden (1992) focused on the role of networks in the policymaking process, namely the concerned actors, functions, and power relationships. The theory proposed by Hugh Compston (2009) viewed policy networks as arenas of interaction among political actors, focusing on decisions and political strategies [click or tap here to enter text..](#) Additionally, the Policy Network Theory developed by E. H. Klijn, Koppenjan, and Rhodes analyzed the significance of relationships between actors in the policy process. Klijn and Koppenjan (2014) explored the network structure and resource exchange, while Rhodes (2006) focused on the integration and relationships with the public. Based on these references, it was reported that different theoretical methods provided a deep understanding of how the

dynamics of actor relationships influenced the public policy process, from formulation to implementation.

Method

The study used a qualitative method to investigate the phenomenon of policy networks in the governance of ecotourism at Dalegan Beach. The Dalegan Beach, located in Gresik Regency, East Java Province, was selected as the study site due to the promising potential for tourism development, reflecting the increasing public interest in this sector. Additionally, Dalegan Beach located 40 kilometers from the city center, is a favorite destination for the community particularly during holidays and vacation seasons.

The study used a descriptive method to describe the phenomenon thoroughly (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015). It also adopted a comprehensive case study method, comprising all aspects, from design logic to data collection techniques and analysis (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2018). The focus is on policy networks in the governance of ecotourism at Dalegan Beach, due to various dimensions such as the relevant actors, poor strategies, network failure, institutionalization, rules of conduct, and power relations (Rhodes, 2006; Waarden, 1992). Data collection methods comprised observations, in-depth interviews with informants, and document studies. The selected informants included tourism stakeholders such as the government, community, and private sector. These individuals were selected purposively based on the relevant competencies and knowledge. The qualitative analysis was conducted through the reduction stages, presentation, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2014). This process is important for maintaining data validation and the objectivity of the findings.

Result and Discussion

Actor and Agent

The actors and agents managing ecotourism at Dalegan Beach play a crucial role in shaping policies and ensuring effective implementation. These specific roles are fundamental factors influencing the dynamics of the network and implemented policies.

Several actors and agents participated in the management of ecotourism at Dalegan Beach, including the East Java Provincial Departments of Culture, Tourism, Marine, Fisheries, the Gresik Regency Department of Tourism, Creative Economy, Culture, Youth, Sports, the Dalegan Village Government, Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group of Dalegan Beach), and CV Mahera. Each party played a distinct role in the following aspects, namely tourism development, coordination, community empowerment, and destination promotion. Additionally, the active participation of the local community is important in supporting ecotourism management, fostering job opportunities, and regional economic empowerment.

Table 1 shows that the participation and roles of various actors are highly significant, ranging from the provincial government to the village level, including private parties and the local community. The East Java Provincial Government, through the Department of Culture and Tourism and the Department of Marine and Fisheries, coordinates the management and development of tourism in accordance with established policies. Meanwhile, at the local level, the regency government manages tourist destinations through the Department of Tourism and Creative Economy. The village government directly engaged in daily management and initiatives for local community empowerment. The Pokdarwis, representing the local community, also contributed to tourism operations. However, through collaborative efforts and

cooperation among these actors, ecotourism management at Dalegan Beach can proceed sustainably, providing optimal benefits for the local community and the environment.

Function of Network

In the governance of tourism at Dalegan Beach in Gresik Regency, the effective functions of policy networks include:

1. **Access to Decision-Making Processes:** Actors within the policy network enjoy fair and easy access to decision-making processes. This comprised the right to express certain perspectives, provide input, and influence policymakers while considering diverse viewpoints and interests.

In managing Dalegan Beach, various actors with different interests, such as the Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, Marine and Fisheries, and the village government, engaged in decision-making processes characterized by conflicting agendas. This pattern included inter-actor dynamics, where CV Mahera, a private entity, also influenced decision-making processes by considering personal interests.

2. **Coordination and Collaboration among Actors:** The policy network entailed collaboration and coordination among actors to effectively manage ecotourism. This included the role of Pokdarwis as the daily manager responsible for the village government jurisdiction, while development decisions required approval from CV Mahera.

The effective and sustainable operation of tourism activities at Dalegan Beach relied on the division of responsibilities and authorities among various actors. For example, the Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism is responsible for sustainable tourism development and empowering local communities. Simultaneously, the Provincial Department of Marine and Fisheries focuses on coastal utilization permits and empowering surrounding communities. The discrepancies between actual needs in the field and criteria set by authorities, such as the Village Head, pose serious challenges. This mismatch restricts flexibility in recruiting management staff and affects the quality of services offered to visitors. Therefore, it is essential to continue improving dialogue and coordination among actors to ensure that the implemented policies are in line with the actual needs of the tourist site.

3. **Implications of Cooperation Agreements:** The agreement between the beach tourism manager and CV Mahera played a significant role in the governance and development of tourism at Dalegan Beach. The payment of land rent and development provisions covered in the agreement are crucial factors influencing decision-making and program implementation. Disputes or discrepancies between the parties regarding these aspects tend to complicate decision-making processes and restrict the planned development programs. Therefore, maintaining good communication between the beach tourism manager and CV Mahera, alongside carefully negotiation of the agreement terms, is essential. This ensures the achievement of mutually beneficial agreements for all relevant parties and supports sustainable tourism development.

Approval from CV Mahera is important as it restricts development progress and introduces uncertainty regarding the course of tourism development. Furthermore, this agreement demanded that the tourism manager show proficient, flexible, and adaptive managerial skills to comply with the regulations and business needs effectively.

The complexity and dynamics within the policy network related to beach tourism management require effective coordination, cordial relationship management, and consultation with various stakeholders to achieve sustainability and optimal development. Based on the interview results and analysis, it was reported that the policy network played a crucial role in

the governance of Dalegan Beach tourism in Gresik Regency. While fair access in decision-making is important, there is a significant pattern among stakeholders, specifically regarding rights to manage and benefit from tourism resources. The tourism development had challenges associated with the overlapping roles of Pokdarwis, CV Mahera and dependence on external approvals. The implications of cooperation agreements between the manager and CV Mahera influenced the financial aspects and business strategies of management. Continuity in policies and business practices that support tourism development is essential, with effective coordination among stakeholders and proficient supervision by tourism managers to achieve sustainable management objectives.

Structure of Network

The policy network structure referred to the pattern of relationships among actors responsible for managing the Dalegan Beach ecotourism area. It comprised membership, and coordination types, as well as the condition of relationships among these actors. Interview results showed the unstable nature of community membership and engagement in ecotourism area management, influenced by changes in village leadership and budget constraints for meetings and socialization. This had a negative impact on the understanding and support of the community for Dalegan Beach management.

The coordination among policy actors, such as the Dalegan Village Government, the Department of Tourism, and Pokdarwis, was also limited. This lack of communication hindered the establishment of a shared understanding of the potentials and needs for Dalegan Beach tourism development, slowing tourism growth. Furthermore, the low commitment of the Village Head to allocate funds for community empowerment through ecotourism programs restricted development. Differences in understanding between the Village Government and the Department of Tourism also led to inconsistencies in actions taken by both parties, hindering the synergy and collaboration needed for sustainable development.

This phenomenon had several implications, such as membership instability and community participation, coordination and communication limitations, constraints in fund allocation and support, as well as the crucial role of government in managing the Dalegan Beach ecotourism area. In policy network theory, the structure in managing the ecotourism area was interpreted as a pattern of relationships among decision-makers and policy implementers. This structure comprised membership, coordination types, and the condition of relationships among these actors.

Regarding membership, instability arose due to changes in village leadership and the voluntary nature of community engagement as the main managers. This dynamic complexity within the policy network showed that changes in actors influenced policy direction and implementation. Changes in village leadership may lead to shifts in tourism development priorities and strategies, while voluntary community participation as the main managers impact the consistency and continuity of management activities. Therefore, membership stability within the policy network is crucial for ensuring continuity and consistency in managing Dalegan Beach.

Various types of coordination, such as facilitation, coordination, and consultation, exist among policy implementers. However, communication gaps between the Dalegan Village Government and the Department of Tourism hindered mutual understanding and effective coordination in Dalegan Beach tourism development. Lack of effective communication between these parties led to misunderstandings concerning the needs and expectations of one another, thereby hindering collaborative efforts to manage and develop the beach tourism potential optimally. Therefore, further efforts are required to strengthen coordination

mechanisms and communication among relevant agencies, enhancing the effectiveness of cooperation in managing Dalegan Beach tourism.

The relationship status among actors significantly influenced the structure of the policy network. For example, differences in understanding between Dalegan Village and the Department of Tourism led to inconsistencies in actions taken and affected the level of support and synergy among these actors. The discrepancies impede progress in managing and developing Dalegan Beach tourism, as conflicting opinions hinder collective efforts toward common goals. Efforts are required to strengthen relationships among actors as well as promote a better understanding of common objectives and the benefits of cooperation in ecotourism management.

The policy network framework applied to the management of Dalegan Beach ecotourism showed the complex relationships and interactions among various actors. The greatest challenge is achieving effective coordination and collaboration for sustainable development. This network structure comprised government institutions at the provincial and regency levels, village governments, local community groups, and the private sector, such as CV Mahera. Each actor had different interests and roles in tourism management, leading to tensions in decision-making processes. Therefore, concerted efforts were required to build trust, ensure effective communication, and establish solid coordination mechanisms to address these challenges, as well as collectively achieve sustainable tourism development objectives.

Characteristics of institutionalization

The institutionalization level refers to the formal characteristics and stability of the network, with higher institutionalization leading to greater effectiveness. The results of interviews and observations indicated a lack of higher level institutions serving as forums for cooperation and coordination among actors and managers of ecotourism at the sub-district or regency/city levels. In addition, the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDES), expected to contribute to the management of the Dalegan Beach tourism, had remained stagnated due to lack of commitment from members and executives.

In the management of Dalegan Beach ecotourism, the Department of Tourism and Culture of Gresik Regency stated that it did not directly participate in the policies implemented by the Village government. The department regretted the lack of active communication from the village government regarding the development of Dalegan Beach tourism potential. Although communication with Pokdarwis is effective, interactions with the village government were limited due to several concerns. The tourism development process had a sustainable orientation, including cooperation with the private sector, following Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2017. The absence of institutional structure in ecotourism management, with the Village Head as the main policy maker, created some problems. These include lack of transparency, poor community participation, and low accountability in decision-making. The ecotourism development process increased community awareness of the respective rights to natural resources and the importance of understanding privileges. Even though ecotourism ideas are in line with local values, realizing active community participation remained a significant challenge.

Based on the findings regarding the characteristics of institutionalization, it was observed that the management of ecotourism at Dalegan Beach encountered significant challenges. The low level of institutionalization was reflected in the absence of clear and formal institutional structures in the management process. While the participation of the private sector is an important strategy, communication barriers persists between the Dalegan Village Government and related parties such as the Department of Tourism and Culture of Gresik

Regency (DISPARBUD). The dominant role of the Village Government in decision-making lacked the support of institutions that ensured transparency and accountability. Despite the transformation in awareness among ecotourism activists, existing institutions failed to effectively engage other actors, including academics, businesses, and the media.

Rules of Conduct

An analysis of the rules governing the policy network for managing ecotourism at Dalegan Beach showed several practical findings and theoretical implications. In this context, ambiguity or differing perceptions of these rules of conduct led to fragmentation and uncertainty among actors, including the Village Government, Pokdarwis, BUMDES, CV Mahera, and other relevant agencies. The dependence on external approval from CV Mahera, the landowner, relied on the importance of external stakeholder participation in decision-making related to tourism development. This indicated that the established rules of conduct within the policy network significantly influenced the dynamics of inter-actor relationships.

The importance of synergy between the Village Government and related agencies such as the Gresik Regency Department of Tourism and Culture indicated that despite the village government autonomy in managing local tourist destinations, technical and financial support from these agencies is essential for optimizing local tourism potential and enhancing community welfare. The practical implications of this analysis entailed the need for clarification and consistency of rules of conduct among actors. Furthermore, efforts to foster better cooperation are crucial in improving tourism management and development effectiveness.

This analysis theoretically focused on the importance of understanding and managing the rules of conduct in policy networks to avoid actor fragmentation, strengthen cooperation, and improve the efficiency of policy implementation. It also focused on the need to improve or ensure existing rules of conduct are in line with the objectives of ecotourism management and regional development as a whole. This is crucial in managing Dalegan Beach ecotourism, as well as establishing a uniform perspective of the objectives and realization process. Therefore, there is a need to improve existing rules of conduct to be in accordance with the objectives of ecotourism management and regional development.

Power Relations

Power relations, a major characteristic of policy networks, were observed through the distribution of power. This process includes allocating resources among actors and organizational structures, including the identification of needs.

In the context of beach tourism management, power distribution and the roles of various actors affect operational effectiveness, as well as local development and welfare. For example, the active engagement of Pokdarwis in mapping issues and identifying solutions for village development can enhance community participation in decision-making, including strengthening local self-reliance. However, constraints related to permits and authority centralized in CV Mahera tend to restrict broader initiatives and development, specifically when the commercial interests of landowners are not in line with local needs or environmental sustainability. Additionally, transparency in management and recruitment processes is crucial for fostering accountability and community welfare. A transparent and objective recruitment process ensured the workforce had appropriate competencies and provided fair opportunities for all stakeholders.

Based on the analysis, several conclusions were drawn from the Dalegan Beach tourism management situation. First, power distribution patterns were evident among the Village

Government, Pokdarwis, and CV Mahera. Although Pokdarwis played a strategic role as the main ecotourism manager, the authority was limited by permits from CV Mahera, the landowner. The Village Government acted as the policy initiator, provided budgetary support but lacked full authority. Second, dependency on the private sector, especially CV Mahera, raised concerns about absolute authority, risking the interest of the village. Criticism was also directed toward the recruitment process of workers, which was perceived as lacking professionalism by Pokdarwis due to transparency issues. Finally, there is a need for more effective coordination among stakeholders, including the government, local authorities, business sector, and community, to optimize ecotourism development in the region.

Implications of this situation in policy network theory included the complexity of inter-organizational relationships, dependence on external resources, limitations in authority, decision-making, and the need for better coordination to achieve sustainable ecotourism development. Therefore, improvements in power distribution, increased transparency, and better cooperation among relevant parties are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of Dalegan Beach tourism management.

Actor Strategies

The actors used policy networks to manage respective interdependencies to meet relevant needs, represent distinct interests, and achieve desired objectives. In addition, collaboration and network engagement are essential for actors to attain desired outcomes in policy contexts.

Several essential strategies and dynamics were revealed in the management of Dalegan Beach ecotourism. First, the Head of the Village played a strategic role in developing tourism potential with a vision to build various attractions, such as a tourist market, despite infrastructure remaining a barrier. Second, the participation of local communities, especially communities of Dalegan Village, significantly contributed to maintaining cleanliness and enhancing the tourism environment, although governance needed improvement. Third, Dalegan Village preferred independent management to maintain autonomy and avoid excessive external interference. Fourth, although there were efforts to collaborate with the Department of Tourism and Culture through financial assistance, obstacles in communication and collaboration need to be addressed. Finally, transparency and improved communication among all stakeholders are crucial to improving the effectiveness of managing Dalegan Beach ecotourism.

Based on the analysis of actor strategies in the development of Dalegan Beach ecotourism, several implications were associated with policy network theory. First, the dependency on actor networks, despite Dalegan Village opting for independent management, remained intricately connected within a cooperative network alongside the Department of Tourism and Culture. This indicated the mutual interdependence among actors aimed to achieve common objectives. Second, the relationship between Dalegan Village and the Department of Tourism and Culture concentrated on the importance of inter-organizational relationships within policy networks. Despite challenges in communication and collaboration, cooperative efforts showed that actors needed to work together to achieve shared objectives. Third, the strategic role of the Village Head in the development of Dalegan Beach ecotourism reported that actors with significant power or authority can influence the direction and policies within policy networks. Fourth, there is a need for improved communication and transparency among the actors to reduce conflicts and enhance cooperation in decision-making within policy networks.

Factors Driving and Inhibiting the Formation of Networks in the Management of Dalegan Beach Ecotourism

The management of ecotourism at Dalegan Beach in Gresik Regency encountered several complex challenges. Firstly, the integration among actors is not optimal, which leads to significant challenges in achieving sustainable development. A major issue is the low frequency of interaction among the Head of the Village, Pokdarwis, and the Department of Tourism and Culture, indicating barriers to effective coordination and communication. The leadership role of the Village Head in directing development strategy implementation was not fully optimized, possibly due to a lack of understanding or adequate support. The inactive support from the BUMDES in providing operational funds was also an additional constraint. Despite established management structures, implementation was hindered by ineffective collaboration and consistent support from relevant parties. Enhancing integration and cooperation among these actors is crucial to address these constraints and ensure the long-term success of ecotourism management at Dalegan Beach.

Secondly, The sustainability of membership in the management of Dalegan Beach required special attention to ensure inclusive and democratic participation from the local community. Despite the active participation of the community, constraints related to the appointment system of Pokdarwis members were currently managed by the Village Head. To enhance stability and broader representation, ensuring the community and Pokdarwis participate in the membership appointment process is important. As a result, the process would be more inclusive and democratic, leading to accurate representation and the active participation of various stakeholders associated with Dalegan Beach. Strengthening such participation and engagement would facilitate the achievement of sustainable development objectives and environmental preservation in the feasible area.

Thirdly, aside from challenges related to membership and participation, issues concerning material resources, especially funding, also posed significant obstacles in managing Dalegan Beach. Achieving the management target of 40% becomes difficult due to various obstacles related to land status and the often-stalled process of applying for assistance. These difficulties indicated the need for greater attention to land regulations and administrative processes to ensure smooth and sustainable funding. Furthermore, leasing village assets to private parties raised concerns about the excessive dominance of external authority. Appropriate strategies were adopted to prevent this policy from disrupting the independence and sustainability of Dalegan Beach management as a whole. Addressing these challenges enabled more effective and sustainable beach management in line with the established development objectives.

Improving communication, coordination, and active participation among all stakeholders is essential in facing these challenges. A thorough evaluation of fund management mechanisms and asset leasing policies must be conducted to ensure fairness and sustainability. Engaging the community in decision-making processes regarding tourism management and development is also a critical strategy to ensure the support and active participation of the local communities. This was aimed at ensuring that the management of Dalegan Beach ecotourism served as an effective instrument for promoting sustainable resource management, as well as economic and social benefits to the community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the participation of several actors and agencies such as the East Java Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries,

the Gresik Regency Department of Tourism, Creative Economy, Culture, Youth, and Sports, was considered crucial. These parties played diverse roles, ranging from sustainable tourism development to empowering local communities. The Dalegan Village Government also actively participated in the management, focusing on promoting local economic development and community empowerment initiatives. Additionally, Pokdarwis played a crucial role as a local community representative in day-to-day management, while CV Mahera, as a private entity, leased land for tourism purposes. The active participation of the local community served as a critical factor in maintaining sustainable management, driven by personal interests in securing employment, generating income, and engaging in the tourism value chain. However, challenges persisted in the policy network structure, institutional establishment, and uneven power distribution among the actors. This led to the need for more effective coordination, increased transparency, and stronger institutional development to achieve sustainable ecotourism management.

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