

## COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE IN COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

Community-based tourism (CBT) has increasingly been recognized as a critical instrument for achieving sustainable tourism development, particularly in developing countries where local communities remain the primary custodians of natural and cultural tourism resources. However, the effectiveness of CBT initiatives is fundamentally contingent upon the quality of governance frameworks that coordinate the diverse and often competing interests of government agencies, local communities, private sector actors, civil society organizations, and international development partners. Collaborative governance—an institutional arrangement that brings multiple public and private stakeholders into a common decision-making forum oriented toward consensus—offers a promising framework for aligning these interests toward shared sustainable development objectives. Despite the growing body of literature on collaborative governance and community-based tourism separately, systematic empirical analysis of how collaborative governance mechanisms specifically shape the formulation and implementation of CBT policies for sustainable tourism outcomes remains limited. This study aims to analyze collaborative governance dynamics in community-based tourism policy and their implications for sustainable tourism development, examining stakeholder engagement processes, institutional coordination mechanisms, power dynamics, and sustainability outcome indicators. A qualitative case study approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews with 38 key informants, participatory observation, and documentary analysis across three purposively selected CBT destinations in Indonesia. Findings reveal that effective collaborative governance in CBT policy is characterized by four interconnected dimensions: (1) inclusive multi-stakeholder platform design that ensures authentic community representation beyond elite capture; (2) adaptive co-management mechanisms that enable flexible policy adjustment in response to tourism ecosystem changes; (3) equitable benefit-sharing arrangements that maintain community incentive alignment with conservation objectives; and (4) institutional capacity building that enhances community actors' meaningful participation in technical policy processes. The study proposes a Collaborative Governance Framework for Sustainable CBT Policy (CGSCBT) that integrates these dimensions into a coherent analytical and practical guide for tourism policy design. Findings contribute to the growing literature on governance for sustainable development and offer practical implications for tourism policymakers, local governments, and community development practitioners across emerging tourism destinations.

**Keywords:** collaborative governance, community-based tourism, sustainable tourism development, tourism policy, stakeholder engagement, co-management, benefit sharing, Indonesia

### INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has undergone a profound transformation in its conceptual and operational frameworks over the past two decades, shifting from a predominantly extractive, growth-oriented model toward increasingly sustainability-conscious paradigms that recognize the indispensable role of local communities as stewards of tourism resources. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2022) has positioned sustainable

tourism development as a central pillar of the post-pandemic tourism recovery agenda, emphasizing the need for governance models that integrate environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and equitable economic distribution within a unified policy framework. Against this backdrop, community-based tourism (CBT)—defined as a form of tourism that is owned and managed by communities, with the majority of economic benefits retained within the community (Mayaka, Croy, & Cox, 2022)—has emerged as one of the most operationally significant expressions of sustainable tourism principles.

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelago nation with exceptional biodiversity and cultural heritage assets distributed across more than 17,000 islands, represents a particularly relevant and complex context for examining CBT policy and governance. The Indonesian government's National Tourism Strategic Plan 2021–2025 explicitly prioritizes the development of 244 designated Tourism Villages (Desa Wisata) as instruments of rural economic development and conservation incentive creation (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021). However, the implementation record of these initiatives has been highly uneven, with governance quality consistently identified as the primary differentiating factor between successful and failing CBT programs (Suansri, 2022; Arnawa et al., 2023).

Collaborative governance—defined by Ansell and Gash (2008) as a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative, and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets—has been increasingly advanced as the appropriate institutional response to the multi-stakeholder complexity of sustainable tourism management. Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012) further developed this concept through the Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance, which maps the conditions, dynamics, and outcomes of collaborative processes across diverse policy domains. Despite its theoretical prominence, the systematic application of collaborative governance frameworks to CBT policy analysis in the Indonesian and broader Southeast Asian context remains underdeveloped in the literature (Ruhanen et al., 2021; Jamal & Camargo, 2022).

This research gap is significant for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, CBT represents a domain in which the core tensions of collaborative governance—between state authority and community autonomy, between conservation and development objectives, and between short-term economic incentives and long-term sustainability commitments—manifest with particular intensity and visibility, making it an analytically rich context for advancing collaborative governance theory. Practically, the governance quality of CBT

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programs has direct implications for the livelihoods of millions of rural community members, the integrity of globally significant biodiversity hotspots, and the long-term competitiveness of Indonesian tourism destinations.

This study addresses this gap by examining collaborative governance dynamics in community-based tourism policy across three CBT destinations in Indonesia, with the specific objectives of: (1) analyzing multi-stakeholder engagement processes and their quality in CBT policy formulation and implementation; (2) examining institutional coordination mechanisms and their effectiveness in aligning diverse stakeholder interests; (3) assessing power dynamics and equity dimensions in collaborative governance processes; (4) identifying sustainability outcomes associated with different collaborative governance configurations; and (5) developing an integrated Collaborative Governance Framework for Sustainable CBT Policy (CGSCBT) grounded in empirical findings.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative comparative case study design (Yin, 2018), examining collaborative governance dynamics across three purposively selected CBT destinations in Indonesia. The comparative design enables pattern identification across cases that share the CBT context while varying in governance arrangements, stakeholder configurations, and sustainability outcomes—maximizing analytical leverage for theory development and testing (Lijphart, 1971). The qualitative approach is appropriate given the complexity, context-dependence, and process-orientation of the research questions, which require thick description and interpretive analysis rather than statistical generalization.

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Data were collected through three complementary instruments over a 14-month field research period (March 2023 – May 2024). First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 38 key informants across the three cases, comprising: local government tourism and village officials (n=9), community tourism group leaders and members (n=12), private

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sector actors including tour operators and accommodation providers (n=7), civil society organization representatives including NGOs and academic institutions (n=6), and national and provincial government tourism policy officials (n=4). Interview guides were organized around five thematic clusters: governance structure and process, stakeholder engagement quality, power dynamics and equity, policy formulation and implementation, and sustainability outcomes. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with informed consent, and transcribed verbatim.

Second, participatory observation was conducted during governance meetings, community tourism planning sessions, and tourism management activities at each destination, totaling 47 observation sessions with an average duration of 2.3 hours. Observation focused on interaction patterns, decision-making processes, power dynamics in group settings, and the practical implementation of formal governance arrangements. Detailed field notes were recorded during and immediately following each observation session. Third, documentary analysis was conducted on official policy documents, tourism management plans, meeting minutes, financial reports, monitoring data, and relevant local regulations across all three cases.

Data analysis followed an iterative three-phase process. Phase 1 involved within-case analysis of each destination, using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) to develop thick descriptions of governance arrangements, stakeholder dynamics, and sustainability outcomes. Open, axial, and selective coding was conducted in NVivo 14 software. Phase 2 involved cross-case analysis using Ragin's (2014) qualitative comparative logic to identify common patterns, divergent configurations, and conditional relationships across the three cases. Phase 3 involved theoretical synthesis, in which cross-case findings were integrated with the theoretical frameworks reviewed in Section 2 to develop the CGSCBT framework. Validity was ensured through triangulation of data sources and methods, member checking with eight key informants across the three cases, and peer debriefing with three independent researchers in the field of tourism governance.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Governance Architecture: Multi-Stakeholder Platform Design**

Cross-case analysis revealed substantial variation in the design and quality of multi-stakeholder governance platforms across the three destinations, with significant implications for policy outcomes. Destination A (coastal eco-tourism, West Java) operated under a formally constituted Tourism Village Governing Board (Badan Pengelola Desa Wisata) that included representatives from the village government, the community tourism group (Kelompok Sadar

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Wisata/POKDARWIS), a local environmental NGO, two private tour operators, and an academic institution. Board decisions required consensus among all stakeholder categories, with an independent facilitation role played by the NGO representative. This design corresponded closely to the collaborative governance ideal-type described by Ansell and Gash (2008).

Destination B (highland agro-tourism, East Java) operated under a more informal arrangement dominated by the village head (Kepala Desa) and a small group of economically prominent community members, with private sector actors—primarily agro-tourism operators who had invested capital in the destination—wielding significant informal influence over key decisions. While formal consultative meetings were held with broader community participation, analysis of meeting minutes and interview data consistently revealed that substantive decisions were made in pre-meeting consultations between the village head and primary investors, with community meetings serving a ratification rather than deliberative function. This pattern corresponded to what Lapeyre (2021) terms 'elite-captured collaborative governance'—a formally participatory arrangement that systematically advantages powerful actors.

Destination C (cultural heritage tourism, Yogyakarta) exhibited a distinctive hybrid model in which adat (customary) institutions—specifically the local hamlet council (Dukuh) and the Karang Taruna youth organization—played central governance roles alongside formal village government structures. The involvement of adat institutions provided a culturally grounded legitimacy to governance processes that purely formal government-led arrangements lacked, while simultaneously creating coordination complexity due to overlapping jurisdictions and different decision-making norms. This finding extends Arnawa et al.'s (2023) observation about the significance of adat institutions in Balinese CBT governance to the Javanese context, suggesting a broader pattern of traditional institution relevance in Indonesian CBT governance.

The quality of community representation—specifically, the inclusion of marginalized community members including women, youth, and lower-income households—varied markedly across the three cases. Destination A's deliberate design of inclusion mechanisms (reserved seats for women's groups, dedicated youth representation, and facilitated processes that prioritized quieter voices) resulted in the most demographically diverse governance participation. Destination B's informal elite-dominated arrangement resulted in systematic exclusion of women (who held no positions in the effective governance coalition despite comprising 52% of community tourism workers) and younger community members. These findings confirm Fung's (2022) argument that formal participation structures do not

automatically translate into meaningful democratic governance without deliberate design attention to inclusion quality.

### **Adaptive Co-Management and Policy Flexibility**

A critical dimension of governance quality identified across all three cases was the capacity for adaptive co-management—the ability to monitor tourism ecosystem conditions, learn from experience, and adjust policies and management practices in response to changing circumstances. This dimension proved particularly salient in the post-COVID-19 recovery period (2021–2023), during which all three destinations faced the need for substantial policy adjustment in response to dramatically altered visitor demand patterns, changed community economic circumstances, and, in two cases, physical environmental changes (beach erosion at Destination A, crop disease affecting agro-tourism produce at Destination B).

Destination A's formally institutionalized governance board, with its regular monthly meetings, dedicated monitoring responsibilities distributed among board members, and documented decision-making processes, demonstrated the greatest adaptive capacity. When coral bleaching events reduced the attraction quality of snorkeling packages—a primary tourism product—the board's monitoring data enabled early detection, rapid stakeholder consultation, and timely product diversification into mangrove kayaking and cultural village tours that maintained tourist arrivals and community income during the ecological recovery period. This adaptive response illustrates what Bramwell et al. (2021) identify as the adaptivity dimension of sustainable tourism governance: the capacity for learning-based policy adjustment that prevents temporary crises from becoming permanent decline trajectories.

Destination B's informal governance arrangement, lacking systematic monitoring mechanisms and formal decision-making documentation, responded to the agro-tourism crop disease crisis through ad hoc decisions made primarily by the village head and major investors without broader community consultation. The resulting policy decisions—temporarily converting agricultural tourism land to conventional agriculture—generated significant community conflict as smallholder farmers who had invested in tourism infrastructure were excluded from the decision and received no compensation for their tourism revenue losses. This case illustrates the governance equity consequences of adaptive capacity failures: not only did the destination lose sustainable tourism trajectory, but the governance process through which adaptation occurred exacerbated distributive injustice within the community.

### **Benefit-Sharing Arrangements and Community Incentive Alignment**

The structure and perceived equity of benefit-sharing arrangements emerged across all three cases as a primary determinant of community members' sustained engagement with CBT

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governance processes and their maintenance of conservation behaviors aligned with sustainable tourism objectives. This finding strongly supports Jamal and Camargo's (2022) distributive justice framework: governance processes that fail to deliver equitable benefit distribution undermine the legitimacy of collaborative arrangements and erode community participation quality over time.

Destination A had developed a three-tier benefit distribution system: direct business income for tourism service providers (guides, accommodation operators, food vendors), a community fund levied at 15% of total tourism revenue distributed through annual community meetings to finance public goods (infrastructure maintenance, scholarship programs, conservation activities), and a conservation fund of 5% dedicated to mangrove restoration and coral reef monitoring activities. Interview data revealed high community awareness and perceived legitimacy of this distribution system, with 83% of interviewed community members describing the arrangement as 'fair' or 'very fair.' The conservation fund's tangible outputs—visible mangrove restoration plots and regular reef monitoring reports shared with the community—were specifically cited as building confidence that tourism-conservation linkages were real and maintained.

Destination C's benefit distribution was mediated through the adat institutional structure, with tourism revenue partially channeled through customary obligation mechanisms (gotong royong contributions, temple maintenance funds) alongside individual business income. This hybrid formal-customary benefit structure generated high social cohesion around CBT governance but created transparency challenges: several younger community members reported difficulty understanding how tourism revenue was allocated through adat mechanisms, generating trust deficits that reduced their engagement with governance processes. This finding highlights the importance of transparency as a mediating condition between benefit distribution arrangements and governance participation quality, consistent with Booher and Innes' (2021) emphasis on information accessibility as a precondition for meaningful collaborative governance.

### **Institutional Capacity Building and Community Agency**

The fourth dimension of collaborative governance quality identified across the cases concerns institutional capacity—the knowledge, skills, organizational systems, and resources that enable community actors to participate meaningfully in technical policy processes, manage tourism enterprises effectively, and advocate for community interests within multi-stakeholder governance arrangements. Capacity constraints were identified in all three cases as significant

barriers to authentic collaborative governance, with implications that partially undermine the collaborative governance ideal even in formally well-designed arrangements.

At Destination A, an NGO partner had provided sustained technical assistance over a four-year period covering financial management, tourism marketing, environmental monitoring, and governance facilitation. This investment had produced measurable capacity improvements: community tourism group members were able to present financial reports at governance board meetings, participate in discussions about marketing strategies, and interpret coral reef monitoring data to inform product decisions. Several community members had progressed to facilitating training for community tourism groups at neighboring destinations—a form of capacity multiplication that extended the original investment's impact beyond the immediate program boundary.

At Destination B, the absence of systematic capacity building created a self-reinforcing governance inequality: community members who lacked technical knowledge of business planning, financial management, and marketing were effectively excluded from substantive governance discussions, which in turn reduced the diversity of knowledge and perspectives available to governance processes, resulting in decisions that better served economically sophisticated actors than the broader community. This vicious cycle of capacity exclusion corresponds to what Ruhanen et al. (2021) identify as a structural barrier to collaborative governance in developing country contexts that formal governance design alone cannot resolve.

### **The CGSCBT Framework: An Integrated Analytical and Practical Guide**

Synthesizing findings across the four governance dimensions and three case destinations, this study proposes the Collaborative Governance Framework for Sustainable CBT Policy (CGSCBT) as an integrated analytical and practical guide for CBT governance design and evaluation. The CGSCBT positions the four dimensions—inclusive multi-stakeholder platform design, adaptive co-management, equitable benefit-sharing, and institutional capacity building—not as independent governance components but as interconnected elements of a governance system in which quality in each dimension both depends upon and reinforces quality in the others.

The CGSCBT identifies three system-level conditions that enable the four governance dimensions to function effectively: first, political will and legal framework adequacy—specifically, national and regional policy frameworks that mandate and resource collaborative governance in CBT rather than merely permitting it; second, external facilitation and support—the availability of competent, trusted facilitation agencies (NGOs, academic institutions, or

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government extension services) that can provide technical assistance and process facilitation without capturing governance authority; and third, conflict resolution mechanisms— institutionalized processes for managing inevitable stakeholder conflicts that maintain collaborative relationships rather than allowing disputes to permanently fracture governance coalitions.

This framework advances the existing literature by integrating the adaptive co-management literature (Pahl-Wostl, 2021), justice-oriented governance theory (Jamal & Camargo, 2022), institutional capacity development scholarship (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2022), and collaborative governance theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2012) into a CBT-specific framework that is both theoretically grounded and practically applicable to policy design and implementation contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined collaborative governance dynamics in community-based tourism policy across three Indonesian destinations, generating empirical evidence and theoretical contributions that advance understanding of how governance arrangements shape sustainable tourism development outcomes. Four principal conclusions emerge from the analysis.

First, the quality of collaborative governance in CBT is determined not by formal governance structure alone but by the interaction of four interconnected dimensions: inclusive multi-stakeholder platform design, adaptive co-management capacity, equitable benefit-sharing arrangements, and institutional capacity building. High performance on all four dimensions characterizes governance arrangements associated with superior sustainability outcomes, while deficiencies in any single dimension create system-level vulnerabilities that undermine overall governance effectiveness even when other dimensions perform well.

Second, elite capture represents the most pervasive and consequential governance failure in CBT contexts, operating through both formal exclusion mechanisms and informal power dynamics that can produce de facto elite dominance even within formally collaborative governance structures. Preventing elite capture requires deliberate inclusion design— specifically, reserved representation for marginalized groups, facilitated deliberation processes, and transparency mechanisms—that goes substantially beyond nominal stakeholder participation requirements.

Third, institutional capacity building is a necessary condition for meaningful collaborative governance that existing governance frameworks have systematically

underemphasized. Without sustained investment in community members' knowledge, skills, and organizational systems, formal collaborative governance arrangements reproduce rather than reduce existing power asymmetries. The study's evidence suggests that external facilitation organizations play an indispensable but time-limited role in building this capacity, with the objective of progressive community ownership of governance capacity rather than permanent facilitation dependency.

Fourth, the CGSCBT framework proposed in this study provides an integrated analytical and practical guide for CBT governance design and evaluation that integrates multiple theoretical traditions into a coherent, empirically grounded framework. Future research should test the CGSCBT framework across a larger and more diverse sample of CBT destinations, incorporate quantitative sustainability outcome measurement to complement the qualitative process analysis of this study, and examine the framework's applicability across different national institutional and cultural contexts beyond Indonesia.

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