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The Application of Collaborative Governance in the Development of Sustainable Tourism Destinations: The Bayah Dome Geopark

Dian Wahyu Danial[1]
Department of Government Science[1]
Ahmad Rifa'i[2]
Banten Raya College of Social and Political Sciences (STISIP)[2]
Asep Muslim[3]
Banten Raya College of Social and Political Sciences (STISIP)[3]

Correspondence : Dian Wahyu Danial (diandanial.akademik@gmail.com)

Abstract

The application of collaborative governance in the development of the Bayah Dome Geopark as a sustainable tourism destination is a crucial step toward aligning the interests of various stakeholders to achieve tourism rooted in conservation and economic empowerment. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of the process, structural and cultural barriers, and strategies for strengthening collaborative governance in the development of sustainable tourism at the Bayah Dome Geopark in Lebak Regency. A qualitative descriptive research method with a case study approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with pentahelix stakeholders (government, academia, local communities, business operators, and the media), supplemented by observations and document analysis. The findings indicate that the collaborative process has successfully fostered trust and a shared understanding of geotourism, facilitated by leadership that minimizes power asymmetries. Nevertheless, implementation faces challenges, including disparities in resource capacity, bureaucratic sectoral ego across government agencies, and a short-term profit-oriented mindset among some business operators. The study concludes that strengthening the legal framework through the institutionalization of collaborative Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the establishment of fair benefit-sharing schemes for indigenous communities, and the implementation of integrated budgeting is essential to ensuring ecological and economic sustainability within the Bayah Dome Geopark region.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance, Sustainable Tourism, Bayah Dome Geopark, Tourism Governance, Multi-stakeholder (Pentahelix).

INTRODUCTION

The global tourism sector is currently undergoing a significant paradigm shift—moving away from mass tourism toward sustainable tourism. This global phenomenon necessitates a form of destination management that looks beyond short-term economic gains, requiring a firm commitment to environmental conservation and the protection of cultural heritage (Lestari & Suharyanti, 2020). In this context, the geopark concept has emerged as an innovative model for regional development, integrating geological, biological, and cultural diversity. However, realizing the aspirations of sustainable tourism within a geopark is no simple task, given the inherent complexity of the landscape and its underlying ecological vulnerability (Damanik, 2005).

The success of developing a geopark-based destination depends heavily on how the region is managed. Conventional, top-down, government-centered governance models have often proven ineffective in responding to the dynamics on the ground (Ilhamdi & Novesar, 2026). Conversely, a sustainable tourism approach demands the integration and active participation of various stakeholders

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beyond the public sector. Without harmonious engagement among these entities, achieving a balance between conservation efforts and economic utilization becomes difficult. Therefore, a modern governance approach is required one capable of bridging divergent interests to achieve shared goals (Jafar et al., 2026).

Within the discourse of public administration and tourism management, the concept of collaborative governance serves as both a theoretical and practical solution to the limitations of conventional governance models (Goeyardi et al., 2026). Collaborative governance is generally understood as an arrangement that brings together various stakeholders both public and non-public actors into a collective, consensus-based forum (Wijaya et al., 2023). This model emphasizes the importance of equitable interaction, transparent communication, and joint decision-making processes. Through well-institutionalized multi-actor engagement, it is expected that any policy adopted will be able to accommodate the aspirations of all parties while minimizing the potential for conflict (Sudirman et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, the implementation of collaborative governance is often mapped out through the pentahelix framework, which involves five key pillars: the government, academia, local communities, the business sector, and the mass media (Susanti et al., 2024). The pentahelix collaboration is seen as a way to optimize the unique resources and competencies possessed by each actor (Lubis, 2025). The government acts as a regulator; academia provides scientific research and innovation; local communities serve as guardians of local sustainability; the business sector drives economic activity and investment; and the media expands education and promotion. The synergy among these five elements serves as a crucial form of social capital for fostering the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations (Khanifah et al., 2026).

In reality, however, the application of collaborative governance within Indonesia's tourism sector frequently encounters various structural and cultural obstacles. Common challenges in the field include disparities in capacity and knowledge among actors, a lack of long-term commitment, and the prevalence of sectoral ego a tendency for individual sectors to prioritize their own interests which hinders the fair distribution of roles (Sudirman et al., 2022). Furthermore, asymmetrical power relations often render the involvement of local and indigenous communities merely formal or cosmetic, leaving them without any genuine influence or a meaningful voice. These obstacles subsequently prevent the collaboration process from functioning optimally and, in fact, trigger policy fragmentation (Hanafi, 2022).

These factual conditions underscore the importance of examining the dynamics of relationships among various actors within the Bayah Dome Geopark area, located in Lebak Regency, Banten

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Province. This region in Southern Banten is an emerging strategic tourism area, characterized by high-value geological heritage that is simultaneously vulnerable to degradation (Lestari et al., 2025). The socio-economic dynamics of local communities surrounding the Bayah Dome, intertwined with environmental conservation interests, make this area a highly relevant locus for assessing the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder engagement in the sustainable management of a tourism destination (Prabowo, 2024).

Given this context, this study is both significant and relevant, offering potential contributions to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it is expected to enrich the literature on the application of collaborative governance in tourism sites characterized by complex and vulnerable geological features. Practically, the analysis of the barriers to and opportunities for collaboration is intended to provide strategic recommendations for the Geopark Management Body and local government, assisting them in formulating governance policies that are more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable for the future of the region.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study method to explore the phenomenon of collaborative governance in a deep and contextual manner. The research is situated in the Bayah Dome Geopark area, Lebak Regency, Banten Province—a location selected purposively due to the complex characteristics of the destination, which involve a multitude of stakeholders (Rukin, 2019). Informants were selected using purposive sampling, supplemented by snowball sampling, to identify key actors from the five elements of the pentahelix model: the Geopark Management Body (government), academics, local communities/indigenous groups, tourism business operators, and the mass media. Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and direct field observations of collaborative activities and governance within the tourism destination. Secondary data were obtained through document analysis, including local government regulations, the geopark master development plan, and periodic management reports for the area.

The data analysis process was conducted in an interactive and iterative manner, following the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which encompasses data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Initially, all interview transcripts and field notes were summarized and categorized according to the theoretical dimensions of collaborative governance, such as starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and the collaborative process itself. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the researcher employed triangulation—specifically source and method triangulation—by cross-referencing statements from

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various actors and reconciling interview findings with official documents and empirical realities in the field. This entire methodological framework was rigorously applied to produce an analysis that is objective, credible, and scientifically sound.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics and Processes of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The implementation of collaborative governance in the development of sustainable tourism within the Bayah Dome Geopark was initiated in response to the complex management challenges of an area characterized by both ecological vulnerability and significant economic potential. The Lebak Regency Government, in conjunction with the Geopark Management Body, recognized that conventional, centralized management models were no longer sufficient to address the challenges on the ground. Consequently, a new public space was established to bring together diverse interests through a formal governance forum. This forum was designed to shift rigid, traditional relationships toward a more dynamic and participatory partnership.

The collaborative framework established for the Bayah Dome Geopark adopts the pentahelix model—a governance approach that integrates five strategic societal elements. These five pillars comprise the public sector (represented by local government agencies), the private sector (tourism business operators), the civil sector (local communities and indigenous groups), as well as academics and the mass media, which serve as catalysts. By combining these five elements, the initiative seeks to pool various resources, areas of expertise, and perspectives to achieve a shared collective vision: the creation of a conservation-based tourism destination.

The initial phase of this collaboration involved intensive face-to-face dialogues between the management body and the communities living near the geological heritage sites (geosites). These direct interactions were crucial, serving as a platform to alleviate social tensions and bridge existing gaps in information. Through open and inclusive dialogue, all parties were given the opportunity to voice their aspirations, concerns, and expectations regarding the future development of the geopark area.

Regular face-to-face dialogues gradually fostered a process of trust-building among the various actors involved. During the initial stages of outreach, local communities and customary law groups in the Bayah Dome area tended to be skeptical and resistant toward the conservation agendas proposed by the government. They feared that the geopark designation would restrict access to their living spaces and extinguish their traditional livelihoods. However, through transparent communication

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regarding land-use zoning, these suspicions were gradually allayed and replaced by a sense of mutual understanding.

As mutual trust grew, a commitment to the collaborative process began to take root among non-public stakeholders. Village-level tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) started to participate actively, dedicating their time and effort to maintaining the cleanliness and authenticity of the geological sites in their areas. This commitment did not arise from top-down coercion; rather, it stemmed from an internal realization that the success of tourism management would have a direct impact on the region's reputation and their own collective well-being.

The next crucial stage in this collaborative dynamic is the attainment of a shared understanding regarding the concepts of sustainable tourism or geotourism. Through focused discussion forums, all elements of the pentahelix (multi-stakeholder) framework reached a consensus: the primary orientation for the development of the Bayah Dome Geopark should not be the pursuit of mass tourism volume, but rather the maintenance of high-quality visits that respect nature. This shared understanding aligns the perspective that the protection of geological heritage (geodiversity) and biodiversity serves as the core asset that drives the destination's aesthetic value.

To sustain the momentum of collaboration and prevent it from waning, the stakeholders have worked to create intermediate outcomes with tangible, immediate impacts. Examples of such concrete achievements include the launch of community-based educational tourism packages and the certification of local tour guides. These small-scale successes provide empirical evidence to the community that multi-stakeholder collaboration can yield real economic benefits. Furthermore, these initial wins serve as a motivational boost, encouraging the various actors to remain engaged in larger-scale work programs.

Within this dynamic of multi-stakeholder interaction, the facilitative leadership demonstrated by the Geopark Management Body plays a central role. In this context, a facilitative leader does not act as an absolute authority dictating policy, but rather as a skilled integrator and mediator. The primary responsibility of this leadership is to maintain a harmonious rhythm of communication, facilitate the logistical needs of the forums, and ensure that all agreements reached are translated into concrete actions on the ground.

Moreover, this style of facilitative leadership has proven effective in minimizing the negative impacts of power asymmetry within the forum. In many instances of tourism governance in Indonesia, the voices of marginalized groups—such as indigenous communities—are frequently drowned out by the dominance of large corporate capital or the political interests of the bureaucracy. At the Bayah Dome Geopark, the management team actively upholds the principle of equity by ensuring that local

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communities have a fair say in all strategic decision-making processes concerning the management of tourism zoning.

The involvement of academics in this collaborative process provides a robust scientific foundation for every policy formulated. Researchers from various universities not only conduct inventories and feasibility studies of geological heritage but also engage directly with villages to provide training in destination management. These academics serve as a bridge for knowledge, translating modern tourism management theories into language that is easily understood and applied by local community-based tourism groups (pokdarwis) on the ground.

Meanwhile, mass media plays a crucial role as a vehicle for public education and a promotional tool, amplifying the reach of the Bayah Dome Geopark both nationally and internationally. Rather than acting merely as producers of commercial news, media outlets are actively involved in promoting narratives centered on environmental conservation and the empowerment of indigenous communities. The positive narratives cultivated by the media have consistently succeeded in attracting niche-interest tourists and potential investors who share a commitment to sustainability issues.

Overall, the analysis in this section confirms that the implementation of collaborative governance at the Bayah Dome Geopark has established a solid social foundation through equitable, multi-stakeholder interaction. Although the dynamics between the various actors in the field can be volatile and challenging, the maturity in communication demonstrated by the five elements of the pentahelix model has ensured that the development of the destination remains on the right track. The success of this initial process serves as a valuable social asset for addressing more complex structural obstacles during the subsequent policy implementation phase.

Obstacles and Strategies for Strengthening Sustainable Governance

Although the foundations for communication and the alignment of perspectives among stakeholders were successfully established during the initial phase, the implementation of collaborative governance in the Bayah Dome Geopark continues to face significant structural obstacles. The most fundamental challenge encountered in the field is the asymmetry in resource capacity among the involved parties. Government sectors and large-scale business entities possess a clear advantage in terms of financial resources, access to information, and an understanding of technical regulations. Conversely, local community groups and community-based tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) at the grassroots level often find themselves in a weaker position due to limited managerial capabilities and a lack of literacy regarding the economics of tourism.

This capacity gap directly affects the quality of community participation in decision-making forums. Local residents living near inland geological heritage sites (geosites) often struggle to keep

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pace with the modes of thinking and discussion employed by bureaucrats and academics. Consequently, their involvement in formulating tourism zoning policies risks becoming a mere formality. If left unaddressed, this situation could lead to a form of veiled marginalization, where local communities are relegated to the roles of passive observers or manual laborers on their own ancestral lands and within their own living spaces.

Another equally complex structural barrier is the persistent sectoral ego within the local government bureaucracy of Lebak Regency. Conceptually, a geopark is understood as an integrated area that requires the coordination of work programs across various agencies. In reality, however, horizontal coordination among local government departments—such as the Tourism Office, the Environmental Agency, and the Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency—remains fragmented and partial. Individual government agencies tend to operate in silos, fixated on achieving their own internal key performance indicators (KPIs) without any solid budgetary integration.

The tangible impact of this bureaucratic fragmentation is clearly evident in the lack of synchronization regarding the development of supporting infrastructure in the Bayah Dome Geopark area. For instance, while the Tourism Office may have completed training for tour guides and promoted a specific geosite, the access roads leading to that location—which fall under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Office—remain in a state of severe disrepair. This lack of integrated planning leads to inefficient regional budget allocation and hinders the accelerated development of a tourism destination that is both ready-to-use and highly competitive.

Beyond structural bureaucratic hurdles, the collaborative process also faces cultural barriers, specifically a short-term mindset among some tourism business operators. The private sector—which has yet to fully embrace the principles of sustainability—tends to view the Bayah Dome area merely as an economic commodity to be exploited as quickly as possible to maximize the return on investment. This aggressive profit-seeking orientation often exceeds the area's environmental carrying capacity and disregards commitments to biodiversity conservation, which serve as a core pillar of any geopark.

These challenges are further complicated by an underdeveloped institutional design underpinning multi-stakeholder cooperation. The current legal framework is limited to a formal decree establishing the management structure of the Bayah Dome Geopark Management Body. However, this regulation has yet to be translated into operational, binding technical rules that define the rights, obligations, and legal consequences for any parties that violate the collective agreement. The absence of clear operational rules leaves the commitments of the involved parties weak and susceptible to wavering whenever there is a change in local political leadership.

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In response to the aforementioned obstacles, this study formulates several urgent strategic recommendations to strengthen sustainable governance. The first strategy focuses on reinforcing institutional legality by developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for collaboration that provide legal certainty. These operational guidelines must be mutually agreed upon by all pentahelix stakeholders and formalized through a regent's regulation (peraturan bupati). The SOPs must include clear clauses regarding decision-making procedures, the division of responsibilities, and mechanisms for resolving potential future disputes among the involved parties.

The second strategy involves designing a fair and transparent benefit-sharing mechanism among investors, the management body, and indigenous or customary communities. Economic equity serves as the primary driver for sustaining the long-term commitment of local communities to a conservation-based tourism model. When the community perceives that environmental preservation directly correlates with an increase in their household income, they will naturally become the first line of defense, protecting geological sites from destruction or illegal mining.

The third, equally crucial strategy is the implementation of continuous empowerment and capacity-building programs for local communities. In this context, the academic sector bears a moral responsibility to support local tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) through initiatives such as field-based tourism schools, training in digital financial management, and the standardization of hospitality services. This intensive, institutionalized support aims to enhance the community's bargaining power, enabling them to engage as equal partners with major investors in the management of village tourism assets.

Furthermore, to dismantle the barriers created by bureaucratic sectoral ego, the fourth proposed strategy is the establishment of an integrated budgeting system specifically dedicated to the geopark's strategic programs. The local government needs to designate the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) as the primary coordinator, tasked with overseeing the synchronization of work programs across various regional government agencies (OPD). Through this centralized budgetary oversight, individual agencies are compelled to set aside sectoral egos and integrate into a holistic master plan for regional development.

The role of mass media must also be strategically optimized to serve as a constructive instrument for social oversight. Beyond merely showcasing the natural beauty of the Bayah Dome, the media must have the courage to highlight issues such as social inequality and potential environmental violations committed by certain business actors. Public oversight—facilitated digitally and driven by the mass media—will serve as an effective form of pressure, ensuring that all stakeholders remain committed to the framework of sustainable tourism development.

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In summary, this section underscores that the success of collaborative governance within the Bayah Dome Geopark cannot merely exist as rhetoric or agreements on paper. To overcome challenges such as resource asymmetry, bureaucratic fragmentation, and the pressures of commercialization, strong political commitment from policymakers is essential to execute these institutional strengthening strategies. Only through equitable ground rules, robust capacity among local-level stakeholders, and a well-synchronized bureaucracy can the noble vision of sustainable tourism—one that fosters public prosperity while preserving the environment of South Banten—truly be realized.

CONCLUSION

The application of collaborative governance in the development of sustainable tourism within the Bayah Dome Geopark has successfully laid the foundation for an inclusive partnership through a multi-stakeholder (pentahelix) approach. The collaborative process—driven by face-to-face dialogue and trust-building—has managed to mitigate initial skepticism among the local community and foster a shared understanding of the importance of conservation-based tourism (geotourism). Furthermore, the facilitative leadership provided by the Geopark Management Body has proven effective in minimizing the impact of power asymmetries, ensuring that grassroots community groups retain an equal voice in decision-making. Nevertheless, the success of this initial phase remains constrained by structural barriers, including disparities in resource capacity among stakeholders, strong sectoral egos within the local government bureaucracy, and an institutional design that lacks operational robustness.

As a strategic way forward, this study suggests strengthening the legal framework for collaborative governance by developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that offer legal certainty and are formalized through local regulations. The Lebak Regency Government, in coordination with the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), should act as an integrator to dismantle sectoral silos—utilizing an integrated, cross-agency budgeting system to ensure the synchronization of geopark infrastructure. Additionally, the academic and media sectors should intensify capacity-building programs for local tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) and provide ongoing social oversight. By institutionalizing equitable rules of the game and establishing transparent benefit-sharing schemes for indigenous communities, it is possible to achieve long-term ecological sustainability, the protection of geological heritage, and the economic well-being of the population within the Bayah Dome Geopark region.

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