

## Community-based ecotourism as an alternative to the development of vocational tourism

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**Abstracts.** The concept of ecotourism is one of the alternatives for the development of Wonosadi Forest. Ecotourism focuses on three main things: natural or ecological sustainability, economic benefits, and psychologically acceptable in social life. This study aims to determine the extent to which the concept of community-based ecotourism can be used as an alternative development of Wonosadi forest. Through the development of ecotourism, the forest wonosadi is expected to be able to: 1) build environmental and cultural awareness around the forest area wonosadi 2) reduce the negative impact of damage or environmental pollution, in this case, wonosadi forest and local culture due to ecotourism activities, 3) directly to conservation through contributions from tourist visits, 4) develop a community economy and empower local communities by creating alternative tourism products that prioritize local values and uniqueness. This study used a qualitative approach using FGD (Focus Group Discussion) method and in-depth interview, secondary data study, and literature study. The results of the analysis show that: 1) ecotourism can create business opportunities, 2) ecotourism can increase employment and 3) ecotourism can increase income while increasing equality of local income.

**Keywords:** ecotourism, wonosadi forest park, vocational tourism

### Introduction

Gunungkidul Regency is one of the regencies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta with the capital of Wonosari, with an area of 1,485.36 km<sup>2</sup> or about 46.63% of the total area of the Special Province of Yogyakarta. Wonosari City is located in the southeast of Yogyakarta city and is + 39 km away. The area of Gunungkidul Regency is divided into 18 sub-districts and 144 villages. Most of Gunungkidul's land is marginal land, which in the dry season many lands are unemployed or not cultivated due to lack of water availability. Almost in every sub-district in Gunungkidul district, especially the southern sector or Gunung Sewu zone experience the same difficulties.

Gunungkidul Regency has various economic potentials, ranging from agriculture, fisheries, livestock, forests, flora and fauna, industry, mining and tourism potential. Most of the agriculture in Gunungkidul Regency ( $\pm$  90%) is rainfed dry land that depends on the season, while irrigated rice fields are relatively narrow. Mining natural resources (class C) are limestone, pumice, calcite, zeolite, bentonite, trash, kaolin

and quartz sand. Gunungkidul Regency has a long beach that stretches around 65 km to the south bordering the Indonesian Ocean. The potential of marine and tourism products is very large and open to being developed in addition to the handicrafts, food, and processing of marine products.

Ngawen Subdistrict is one of the developing sub-districts in Gunungkidul Regency. In the regional development plan, this sub-district has the potential for tourism development. This is in line with the policies of the Ngawen District Government and the Gunungkidul District Government as well as being one of the National Development priorities set out in the Nawa Cita of President Joko Widodo's Government namely "Building Indonesia from the periphery by strengthening regions and villages within the framework of a unitary state." In this case, the Gunungkidul Regional Government drafted Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2011 concerning the Gunungkidul District Spatial Plan which aims to realize the Gunungkidul Regency area as a center for business development that relies on

agriculture, fisheries, forestry and local resources to support tourist destinations towards empowered communities competitive, advanced, independent and prosperous. This was confirmed in the Gunungkidul Regency RPJMD Vision for 2016-2021 "Realizing Gunungkidul as a leading and cultured tourist destination towards a community that is competitive, advanced, independent and prosperous in 2021". This vision is interpreted as an effort to develop tourism that optimizes local potential and wealth with the concept of establishing and maintaining the culture, customs, and noble cultural values (privileges). In particular, Ngawen sub-district is included in the Strategic Tourism Region VI in the form of development of leading tourist attractions in the mountains with supporters of cultural tourism.

According to the Department of International Development's regional development scheme (DFID, 2010), the development plan considers five assets, namely: natural assets, human resource assets, financial assets, physical assets, and social assets. Based on the Ngawen in Figures 2014, this sub-district has these five potentials:

1. The total area of 4,659.37 has 23.64% wetlands; dry land covers 38.67% and community forests covering 4.77% of the entire area with the production of food crops and perennials,
2. The productive workforce is 69.78% of the population,
3. Traditional markets and financial institutions spread in each village,
4. Elementary, junior and senior high school education facilities and equivalent in each village,
5. Active social organizations such as farmer groups.

In the regional development scheme, the synergy of the five assets with good management can provide outcomes in the form of increasing economic growth, as well as rising income, reducing food insecurity, and improving food security. Of course, this transformation requires the support of the government and related stakeholders. With the most significant percentage or the majority of the population working as farmers, this asset contributes significantly to the village economy.

Regional assets in the form of community forests provide production results which are expected to emerge as community forest development as one of the village's superior products. Wonosadi, Duren, Beji, Ngawen have the opportunity to develop the same business with a large potential of the land. With the possibility of existing agricultural land, agricultural production and forests in this region can be carried out throughout the year with production yields varying depending on the season. And with the area of land and available human resources, the potential for developing the region as an agricultural and community forest producing area can be sought as the main product. This local potential and wealth is a supporter of tourism development as stated in the 2016-2021 RPJMD.

In this case, the community and social organizations are expected to support the realization of agricultural and community forests as capital for the development of mountainous nature-based tourism. The added value obtained can be a further innovation if this potential is supported by the use of relevant science and information technology to increase productivity.

Secure and sustainable regional economic development is active collaboration between the use of existing resources, the community, and the government. In this context, the government as a regulator plays a strategic role in seeking full opportunities for local communities to participate fully in every economic activity. One of the optimal efforts to utilize local resources is to develop tourism with the concept of Ecotourism. In this context tourism carried out has an integral part of conservation efforts, empowering the local economy and encouraging higher respect for cultural or cultural differences. This is what underlies the difference between the concept of ecotourism and conventional tourism models that already existed before.

In simple terms, the concept of ecotourism connects natural travel with a vision and mission of conservation and the love of the environment. This can occur because the financial benefits derived from the cost of the trip are also used for natural conservation needs and the improvement of the welfare of residents. On the other hand, the concept of ecotourism is also directed at maintaining the local culture and not violating human rights and demographic movements and shifting the idea of world tourism to the

ecotourism model, due to the saturation of tourists to visit artificial tourism objects. Therefore this opportunity should be fully utilized to attract foreign tourists to visit objects based on the nature and culture of residents.

### **Research Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach using the FGD (Focus Group Discussion) method and in-depth interviews (in-depth interviews), secondary data analysis, and literature studies.

To achieve the research objectives, the identification of socio-economic characteristics was carried out using descriptive analysis. This collection was carried out in stages, namely the identification of findings from primary data in the field and continued with the identification of data directly related to the level of community participation in the Development of Tahura. From the data obtained a descriptive analysis was carried out. This descriptive method is a method of examining the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or even a class of events in the present (Nazir, 2014). This method aims to make a description, description or painting systematically, factually and accurately regarding the facts, characteristics, and relationships between phenomena.

The method of implementing this study is complemented by a field survey method where the survey method is an investigation that is held to obtain the facts of the symptoms that exist and look for information factually (Nazir, 2014).

### **Finding and Discussion**

As the vision and mission of the development of the Regency. Gunungkidul was stated in the 2016-2021 RPJMD, the development of the region to realize Gunungkidul as a leading and cultured tourist destination towards a community that is competitive, advanced, independent and prosperous in 2021. One of its mission is to improve the management and protection of natural resources sustainably. In this case, the local government seeks to improve natural resource management (SDA) and a sustainable environment oriented to the preservation of environmental functions for enhancing the welfare of the community by taking into account the carrying capacity of natural resources and the environment. This is in accordance with the

mandate of Law Number 23 Year 2014 concerning Regional Governments whose implementation is directed at accelerating the realization of community welfare through improving services, empowerment, and community participation, as well as increasing regional competitiveness by taking into account the principles of democracy, equity, justice and distinctiveness an area within the system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Likewise in implementing Law No. 41 of 1999 concerning Forestry, the Regional Government facilitates communities in forest management and establishes the basis for exploiting forests and forest resources. Therefore District Government Gunungkidul gave the idea of developing Wonosadi Customary Forest to become Tahura.

The Beji community, in general, is a society that is quite advanced. Some community members are government employees, village officials and quite a lot are educated. The average of the most uneducated young men is at the high school level, and a few of them continue in college. Community social activities are quite advanced judging from community activities that are quite organized. This can be seen from how the community carried out various activities that were incorporated in the RT organization, RW, Karang Taruna, pengajian, yasinan, arisan, sports activities group, PKK, Dasawisma, Farmer Groups, arts groups, and others.

Given the healthy and robust view of the community regarding the existence and management of Wonosadi forests, the future of forest sustainability can still be expected. In general, the opinions of respondents, both the elderly and the younger generation, fully understood the importance of the existence of the Wonosadi forest. They are determined to preserve the Wonosadi forest because of its function for the preservation of abundant water sources throughout the year. The Wonosadi forest must not be damaged or destroyed because they believe that losing Wonosadi's forest means losing a source of livelihood. In the latest development, the realization of Wonosadi forest as a tourist forest has become the people's dream. This is because residents hope there will be additional income for the community.

On the other hand, as a tourist village with iconic forest preservation, ecological wisdom about the existence of Wonosadi forest will be

maintained. In this case, understanding of the function of woods that will be sustainable is understood by the community. But in the context of cultural development, the sustainability of mythology that develops in society cannot be guaranteed. It is possible, the spirit of preserving tradition will continue even though the strength of mythological beliefs can fade and disappear. Adat will be regarded as a legacy that will continue to be also maintained though not all members of the community believe as their parents believe it. However, the composition of the community, which most farmers seem to be seeing is still a good and strong view of the existence and management of Wonosadi forests, the future of forest sustainability can still be expected. In general, the opinions of respondents, both old and young, were very understanding of the importance of the existence of the Wonosadi forest. They are determined to preserve the Wonosadi forest because of its function for the preservation of abundant water sources throughout the year. The Wonosadi forest must not be damaged or destroyed because they believe that losing Wonosadi's forest means losing a source of livelihood.

In the latest development, the realization of Wonosadi forest as a tourist forest has become the people's dream. This is because residents hope there will be additional income for the community. On the other hand, as a tourist village with iconic forest preservation, ecological wisdom about the existence of Wonosadi forest will be maintained. In this case, understanding of the function of forests that will be sustainable is understood by the community. But in the context of cultural development, the sustainability of mythology that develops in society cannot be guaranteed. It is possible, the spirit of preserving tradition will continue even though the strength of mythological beliefs can fade and disappear. Adat will be regarded as a legacy that will continue to be also maintained though not all members of the community believe as their parents think it. However, the composition of the community that most farmers seem will lead to slow changes. Customs with various manifestations will still exist and live in the community around Wonosadi.

The concept of ecotourism is an alternative for the development of Wonosadi Forest. According to The International Ecotourism Society or TIES (in Nugroho, 2011), ecotourism is a tourist trip to natural areas to conserve or

save the environment and provide livelihoods for residents. Further explained that ecotourism is a tourist activity that is packaged professionally, trained, and contains elements of education, as an economic sector/business, which considers cultural heritage, participation, and welfare of residents and efforts to conserve resources and the environment. Ecotourism focuses on three main things, namely the sustainability of nature or ecology, providing economic benefits, and psychologically acceptable in the social life of the community so that this ecotourism activity can directly give access to the community or everyone to see, know, and enjoy the natural, intellectual and cultural experiences of local communities.

Ecotourism (ecotourism) is tourism that relies on aspects of the preservation of nature and culture of the community as an attraction where the principle of sustainability can be maintained (Nurdiansyah, 2014: 18). This ecotourism activity sees nature and culture as not only objects but also something that needs to be preserved and empowered, including humans who live in it. The concept of ecotourism is expected to be able to increase community participation where the community is not just a host but also as an actor or actor in tourism activities. While ecotourism products and services can be grouped into six types (Nugroho, 2011), namely: (1) environmental and cultural sights and attractions, including observation points or cultural offerings; (2) the benefits of landscaping, such as hiking or trekking, (3) accommodation, eg tourist huts, restaurants; (4) equipment and supplies, such as rental of diving and camping equipment; (5) education and skills; and (6) awards, namely achievements in conservation efforts, the many potentials that exist in the Wonosadi forest area such as the wonosadi forest myth and local communities that still maintain the traditions of indigenous peoples, of course, will become one of the ecotourism products that can bring economic value to the local community.

Especially for ecotourism itself is more emphasized on economic benefits for local communities, so that from the existing theory three economic benefits are obtained from tourism activities for local communities or local communities, namely: 1) Able to create business opportunities. The existence of an ecotourism area is expected to be able to attract the interest of residents to have a business or

entrepreneurship by utilizing the potential of the ecotourism area as a business medium. 2) Ready to increase employment opportunities (employment). The existence of an ecotourism area requires more workers to manage the ecotourism area so that it can attract the interest of residents to become labor in the ecotourism area, 3) Able to increase income while increasing income distribution of local communities. This effort can, of course, be made by opening a business of its own or becoming a labor in the tourism services sector, which is most needed by the local population from these activities is to be able to fulfill the needs or daily life of the people and evenly distributed to the local communities around the ecotourism area.

It is hoped that through the development of Wonosadi forest ecotourism, it will be able to: 1) build environmental and cultural awareness around the Wonosadi forest area both for tourists, local communities and policymakers in the fields of culture and tourism, 2) reduce the negative impacts of environmental damage or pollution, in this case, Wonosadi forest and local culture due to ecotourism activities, 3) provide direct economic benefits for conservation through contributions from tourist visits, 4) develop community economics and empower local communities by creating alternative tourism products that prioritize local values and uniqueness. This is the hope for all stakeholders in the Wonosadi customary forest. Ecotourism that will be developed is tourism that is packaged professionally, trained, and contains elements of education, as a sector /commercial business, which considers cultural heritage, participation, and welfare of residents and efforts to conserve resources and the environment. The potential as an educational recreation place and particular interest in the adventure is the motivation of tourists visiting Wonosadi.

### Conclusion

The results of the study show that there are three economic benefits derived from tourism activities for local communities or local communities, namely ecotourism capable of creating business opportunities, ecotourism can increase employment and ecotourism able to increase income while increasing income distribution of local communities. Through the development of wonosadi forest ecotourism, it is hoped that it will be able to build environmental and cultural awareness around the wonosadi

forest area, reduce the negative impact of environmental damage or pollution, provide direct economic benefits for conservation, develop the community economy and empower local communities by creating alternative tourism products.

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