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## Article Title

### **Collaborative Governance in Ecotourism Development: The Role of Political Actors and Institutional Challenges in Barru Regency**

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## ABSTRACT

Ecotourism development in Barru Regency currently faces complex challenges stemming from the disparity between abundant natural resource potential and the readiness of regional government institutions. This study aims to identify and analyze the roles of government and non-government actors, while simultaneously dissecting the relationship between local political dynamics and the effectiveness of ecotourism policy in Barru Regency. The research method applied is a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design, in which primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants from the legislative and executive branches and local communities, using an interactive data analysis model. The results indicate that local political dynamics are the primary determinant of policy effectiveness, as budget politics prioritize large-scale physical infrastructure development over environmental conservation. This condition creates institutional challenges in the form of a regional regulatory vacuum, leading to bureaucratic fragmentation and confusion over authority among technical agencies within the executive branch. Empirical data show a drastic decline in visitation and revenue at government-owned tourism attractions, while the private sector is experiencing massive growth. The weakness of these formal state institutions prompts the emergence of grassroots initiatives from non-government actors at the village level who self-manage governance roles, although these initiatives are threatened by stagnation due to the absence of systemic support. This study concludes that collaborative governance practices in Barru Regency have not yet ideally materialized due to the absence of an inclusive decision-making forum. As a recommendation, the regional government must urgently draft a regional regulation mandating the establishment of a collaborative ecotourism council to synergize the roles of government, village, and private-sector managers into a single sustainable development vision.

*Keywords:* Collaborative Governance; Ecotourism; Institutional Challenges; Local Politics; Political Actors.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism development is a strategic instrument for achieving sustainable development that balances environmental conservation with the economic empowerment of local communities (Kondo et al., 2025). Juridically and administratively, this framework is mandated by Law Number 10 of 2009 on Tourism<sup>1</sup> and Regulation of Minister of Internal Affairs Number 33 of 2009 on Guidelines for Ecotourism Development in the Regions. These policies position local governments as the primary authority for planning, facilitating, and supervising tourism programs, ensuring alignment with conservation principles. Although a normative framework exists at the national level, translating these policies into local regulations frequently encounters structural barriers. These barriers demonstrate that ecotourism management cannot be viewed solely as a technical administrative matter.

The implementation of ecotourism policy at the regional level is fundamentally a complex political arena. In the era of regional autonomy, every policymaking process intersects with power dynamics and conflicts of interest among local actors (Nirwan et al., 2025). The Regional House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* or DPRD), the executive branch, village governments, and community groups each

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<sup>1</sup>Law Number 10 of 2009, as amended several times, lastly by Law Number 18 of 2025.

have distinct agendas that shape the trajectory of tourism governance. The absence of political will among decision-making elites often results in the environmental sector being marginalized by budget politics, which tend to prioritize large-scale physical infrastructure projects. This contestation of interests necessitates a governance mechanism that ensures proportional participation by all stakeholders.

To address the complexity of these conflicting interests, the collaborative governance approach emerges as the most relevant theoretical framework. Collaborative governance is a formal arrangement where public institutions directly engage non-state stakeholders in a consensus-oriented decision-making process (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This approach requires face-to-face dialogue, trust-building, and a shared commitment to achieving public value. In the context of ecotourism, collaboration among the government, the private sector, and civil society is an absolute prerequisite to prevent unilateral environmental exploitation and to ensure that economic benefits are distributed equitably among residents.

In line with the urgency of such collaboration, various previous studies have extensively evaluated the effectiveness of governance and the implementation of tourism policies across different regions in Indonesia. Findings from the majority of these studies confirm that the success of the local government's role depends significantly on the maturity of local regulations and the readiness of established bureaucratic coordination (Jupir, 2013; Muhammad et al., 2022; Rahman & Hidayati, 2023; Fahlevi & Fahlevi, 2024; Nurhalimah, 2024; Indriani, 2025). This literature demonstrates that the existence of specific regional legal instruments provides the primary foundation for government actors to effectively execute their core duties and functions in the tourism sector.

However, a review of this recent literature reveals a significant academic gap. Previous studies have predominantly focused on regions that already possess legal certainty or definitive regional regulations. To date, there remains a lack of academic attention toward the implementation of ecotourism policy in areas experiencing a local regulatory vacuum. In fact, the absence of this legal foundation leads to overlapping roles among political and bureaucratic actors competing for control of resources, highlighting the importance of dissecting the positions of these actors in regional tourism management and retribution policies (Maharani et al., 2023). This theoretical gap provides space for new research to examine governance anomalies amidst institutional limitations.

The condition of regulatory vacuum and its accompanying actor dynamics are tangibly occurring in Barru Regency, South Sulawesi Province. This region possesses highly valuable natural resources for ecotourism, such as the Mount Kappire and Lappa Lona areas. However, the Barru Regency Government has not yet enacted a regional regulation specifically governing ecotourism management as a derivative policy from the central government. The absence of this legal framework results in

weak coordination within the executive branch and minimal budget allocations from the legislative branch. Concurrently, the weakness of formal institutions inadvertently triggers independent initiatives from village governments and local communities to self-manage tourism governance.

Based on the aforementioned problem formulation and academic gap, this study aims to identify and analyze the roles of government and non-government actors in ecotourism development in Barru Regency. Furthermore, this research seeks to examine the relationship between local political dynamics and the effectiveness of ecotourism policy, particularly regarding how power relations, budget politics, and local community initiatives determine the sustainability of tourism programs. The theoretical contribution of this study is to enrich the political science literature on collaborative governance in regions with regulatory limitations. In practice, the findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for the Barru Regency Government in drafting inclusive regional regulations to actualize ecotourism governance grounded in conservation and community empowerment.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative, exploratory case study design to examine the complexity of collaborative governance in ecotourism development (Creswell, 2013). The selection of a qualitative approach is determined by the urgency of uncovering the meaning behind social phenomena and local political dynamics that cannot be measured solely with quantitative instruments. Through an exploratory case study design, this research seeks to uncover the reality behind the absence of regional regulations and investigate how interactions, power relations, and conflicts of interest among actors influence the implementation of tourism policy in Barru Regency. This approach is specifically designed to address issues related to the roles of formal and informal actors, while simultaneously examining the impact of budget politics on the sustainability of environmental conservation programs.

The spatial focus of this research is located in Barru Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The selection of this location is based on empirical evidence demonstrating a gap between the immense potential of natural ecotourism and the lack of operational legal foundations at the local government level. To gather in-depth primary data, informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The informant criteria were strictly established based on level of authority, policymaking track record, and direct involvement in tourism management. Based on these criteria, key informants in this study include members of the DPRD, officials within the relevant executive branch, regional government apparatus, and representatives of grassroots community managers in natural tourism areas.

The primary and secondary data collection processes were conducted through technical triangulation, encompassing in-depth interviews, participant observation,

and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted semi-structuredly to provide informants the freedom to elaborate on their views regarding budget politics, cross-sectoral coordination barriers, and community self-reliance initiatives. Furthermore, participant observation was used to directly assess the infrastructure conditions of ecotourism destinations and to validate claims of local community participation in environmental conservation. Concurrently, document analysis was conducted to examine regional development planning documents and to prove the vacuum of specific legal products that definitively regulate ecotourism governance in the region.

All collected raw data were subsequently processed through the stages of the interactive model of qualitative data analysis, which proceeds circularly (Miles et al., 2014). The first stage is data reduction, where researchers filtered all interview transcripts and field notes to discard irrelevant information. At this stage, data extraction focused exclusively on statements that highlighted contestation of political interests, bureaucratic constraints, and community self-help actions. The second stage is data display. Researchers mapped the reduced narratives into logical cause-and-effect relationship patterns, enabling the comprehensive visualization of the fragmented roles among government actors and the manifestation of constructive resistance from non-government actors.

In the final stage, researchers concluded and verified the displayed data. The field findings, comprising bureaucratic fragmentation and grassroots initiatives, were critically engaged with the parameters of collaborative governance theory. The verification process was conducted continuously by reconfirming findings with different data sources to prevent single interpretation bias. This interactive analysis sequence ensures that the conclusions drawn are not merely descriptive, but capable of formulating a robust analytical synthesis regarding the failure of ecotourism policy effectiveness due to the domination of local political interests and institutional weakness in Barru Regency.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. The Dynamics of Political Actors and Budget Politics in Ecotourism Policy**

The dynamics of ecotourism governance in Barru Regency cannot be separated from the contestation of local political interests, which asymmetrically influences resource distribution. The regional budget allocation process constitutes a primary arena of contestation where the DPRD acts as a rational actor maximizing electoral utility (Nirwan et al., 2025). However, empirical evidence shows a sharp disparity between revenue growth in privately owned commercial tourism destinations and the drastic decline in government-owned ecotourism destinations. This paradox proves that the partisanship of budget politics has not yet addressed ecosystem conservation and the sustainable strengthening

of regional public assets. This imbalance can be traced through a performance comparison of tourism objects across their management categories.

**Table 1. Revenue of Tourism Objects in Barru Regency, 2022–2024**

<b>Tourism Object</b>	<b>2022 (IDR)</b>	<b>2023 (IDR)</b>	<b>2024 (IDR)</b>
<b>Managed by the Regency Government</b>			
Ujung Batu Beach	80,000,000	40,195,000	20,475,000
Lappa Laona	100,900,000	20,545,000	5,405,000
<b>Managed by the Village Government</b>			
Laguna Beach	56,195,000	86,940,000	69,970,000
Maddo Hill	6,176,000	5,754,000	9,444,000
Mount Kappire	12,517,500	3,817,500	2,100,000
<b>Managed by Private Parties</b>			
Dutungan Island	392,000,000	324,350,000	1,154,450,000
Diana Waterpark	693,875,000	892,220,000	1,117,095,000
Nature Islamic Boarding School	9,450,000	5,595,000	4,450,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,351,113,500</b>	<b>1,379,416,500</b>	<b>2,383,389,000</b>

Source: *Processed Data from the Barru Regency Tourism Office Document, 2025.*

Based on Table 1, the tourism sector in Barru Regency recorded a significant increase in total revenue in 2024. Nevertheless, this growth is illusory, as it is purely dominated by privately owned tourism objects such as Dutungan Island and Diana Waterpark, which recorded billions of rupiah in revenue. Conversely, the regency government’s flagship tourism objects have experienced operational bankruptcy. Lappa Laona, which initially recorded revenue of IDR 100.9 million in 2022, plummeted to IDR 5.4 million in 2024. This condition reflects an investment paradox, where the regional government neglects the maintenance of its own public assets while the private sector grows massively without systemic state support (Rahman et al., 2025).

This budget allocation disparity stems from the pragmatic rationality of legislative actors in the regional parliament who are trapped in credit-claiming politics. Members of the DPRD tend to prioritize physical infrastructure programs that yield direct electoral benefits for their constituents over long-term maintenance of ecotourism areas. Consequently, budget proposals for the rehabilitation of public facilities at Lappa Laona or Ujung Batu Beach are frequently sidelined during inter-factional deliberation meetings. This phenomenon demonstrates that every public resource distribution policy is perpetually bound to the power positions and political interests of the respective actors, who often disregard environmental sustainability for short-term political gain (Maharani et al., 2023). A member of the Barru Regency DPRD from the Gerindra Faction confirmed these budgetary

challenges in an interview as follows:

*“Until now, there is indeed no specific Regional Regulation regarding ecotourism. We still refer to general tourism regulations, even though Barru’s natural tourism potential is immense. Funding support remains limited because budget priorities are largely absorbed by infrastructure. In regional politics, each faction has its own priorities. Sometimes we want to push for tourism, but on the other hand, there are other programs deemed equally important by other factions.”*

The statement from a DPRD member confirms the marginalization of the ecotourism sector within the local political constellation. Priorities entirely absorbed by physical infrastructure projects demonstrate the absence of a conservation vision among Barru Regency’s political elites. The contestation of interests among factions leads to public tourism objects being deprioritized in pragmatic negotiations. Regional politicians are trapped in calculations of project visibility, leaving public ecotourism destinations abandoned without adequate financial support for routine maintenance or for building management capacity.

This political marginalization has fatal consequences for the operational sustainability of destinations at the site level. Without proportional support from the regional revenue and expenditure budget, the technical institutions within the executive branch lose the capacity to revitalize damaged public facilities. This is clearly evident from the downward revenue trend across almost all tourism objects managed by the regency government and partially by village governments. The lack of political will to intervene in the deterioration of these public assets automatically stifles local economic mobility before it can fully develop. The short-term political interests of local elites have confined Barru’s immense ecotourism potential to the boundaries of supportive rhetoric, without translating it into concrete action.

Ultimately, political actors’ reluctance to prioritize the ecotourism sector creates systemic administrative problems. This lack of political commitment manifests as the delayed formulation of a regional legal framework specifically governing natural tourism. The failure of the legislative branch to enact this regional regulation creates an institutional vacuum that paralyzes the executive branch apparatus in the field. The absence of such regulation is the root cause of confusion over authority and bureaucratic fragmentation, as evidenced by the downward trend in tourist visits to public destinations in Barru Regency.

## **B. Institutional Challenges: Regulatory Vacuum and Bureaucratic Fragmentation**

Administrative paralysis at the executive branch level is a logical consequence of the failure of legislative actors to formulate a robust legal foundation. To date, the Barru Regency Government has not enacted a regional regulation as a derivative instrument of Law Number 10 of 2009 and Regulation

of Minister of Internal Affairs Number 33 of 2009. This regulatory vacuum creates legal uncertainty, leading regional government institutions to lose their authority to exercise control over tourism objects. Alignment between central and regional regulations is an absolute prerequisite for policy effectiveness (Muhammad et al., 2022). Without a local legal framework, the decline in performance of regency government-owned tourism objects becomes inevitable due to the absence of clear operational guidelines.

**Table 2. Tourist Visits to Tourism Objects in Barru Regency, 2022-2024**

<b>Tourism Object</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>Managed by the Regency Government</b>			
Ujung Batu Beach	16,000	8,039	4,095
Lappa Laona	20,180	4,109	1,081
<b>Managed by the Village Government</b>			
Laguna Beach	11,239	17,388	13,994
Maddo Hill	3,088	2,877	4,722
Mount Kappire	1,669	509	280
<b>Managed by Private Parties</b>			
Dutungan Island	7,840	6,487	23,089
Diana Waterpark	19,825	25,492	31,917
Nature Islamic Boarding School	1,890	1,119	890
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,731</b>	<b>66,020</b>	<b>80,068</b>

Source: Processed Data from the Barru Regency Tourism Office Document, 2025.

The data in Table 2 uncovers the reality of a visitation crisis at government-owned tourism objects. Lappa Laona experienced a massive decline in tourist arrivals, dropping from 20,180 to 1,081 over three years. This 95 percent decline is tangible evidence of bureaucratic failure in managing flagship destinations. Regional bureaucratic stagnation is frequently the primary cause of the failure to transform natural potential into a driver of welfare (Nurhalimah, 2024). Government institutions merely execute routine tasks without the capacity for progressive intervention because they lack a legal foundation to act, thereby failing to achieve regional government policy effectiveness in driving the economy through ecotourism (Indriani, 2025). This condition of bureaucratic fragmentation is reflected in the statement of a Tourism Office Official, supported by a statement from an Environmental Agency Official, as follows:

*“The policy from the central government is good, but coordination remains lacking. We sometimes encounter difficulties adjusting to regional conditions because there is no technical assistance. Regarding the ecotourism policy itself, there has been no dissemination, but we at the Environmental Agency continue to maintain the cleanliness of tourism sites in Barru.”*

This statement reveals the chronic fragmentation within the Barru Regency bureaucracy. Each institution operates autonomously, based on a limited sectoral understanding, and lacks a chain of command that unifies the ecotourism vision. The Tourism Office feels isolated due to a lack of technical support, while the Environmental Agency reduces ecotourism to the physical cleanliness activities of tourism areas. These structural barriers and the severed communication chain among institutions are primary indicators of the weakness in bureaucratic capacity to oversee a public program with cross-sectoral dimensions (Arafat et al., 2022).

This institutional vacuum also paralyzes the supervisory function within middle-tier bureaucratic structures, such as the sub-district government. An informant from the sub-district explained that the sub-district's role thus far has been limited to an administrative coordinative function without substantive authority. This weak span of supervisory control confirms the regional government's difficulty in implementing policies in areas distant from the center of government when unsupported by hierarchically binding regulatory instruments (Alfiandri & Mayarni, 2023). Consequently, public destinations lose their appeal due to the absence of consistent service standards and environmental oversight by regional authorities.

The accumulation of this regulatory vacuum and bureaucratic fragmentation culminates in suboptimal tourism governance at the site level. Confusion over the division of authority leads to sporadic development interventions that disregard the principle of environmental carrying capacity (Fahlevi & Fahlevi, 2024). In this situation, policy implementation reaches a total deadlock because no government institution dares to take discretionary action without a definitive legal foundation (Rahman & Hidayati, 2023). The state's inability, through its formal institutions, to safeguard public assets creates a power vacuum that forces entities at the lowest level to react to salvage their regional potential.

The threat of environmental degradation and economic decline at public destinations cannot be allowed to persist without intervention. This governance vacuum naturally triggers a structural resistance reaction from actors outside the regency bureaucracy line. When the regional government proves paralyzed in carrying out its functions, village governments and local communities are compelled to step in and assume the state's governance role. This phenomenon of grassroots-level constructive resistance becomes the sole final defense of ecotourism's sustainability in Barru Regency, even though such struggles must confront resource and legal limitations.

### **C. Grassroots Initiatives: Filling the State Governance Vacuum**

The state's failure (state absence) to provide legal certainty and development support triggers the survival rationality of local communities as a form of political

agency. This phenomenon demonstrates that non-governmental actors possess high adaptive capacity in the face of regency bureaucratic paralysis. However, data indicate that community initiatives are currently at a critical juncture. The involvement of grassroots communities is indeed the primary foundation for preventing environmental degradation (Chrismansyah, 2023). Nevertheless, without systemic integration into the broader power structure, this self-reliance begins to exhibit symptoms of resource exhaustion, as observed at the Mount Kappire tourism object managed by the village government.

Mount Kappire recorded an alarming decline in visitor numbers, from 1,669 in 2022 to 280 in 2024. The drastic revenue decline from IDR 12.5 million to IDR 2.1 million reflects the failure of the self-management model left without assistance from the regency government. Although the village government attempts to establish its territory as a buffer destination (Kondo et al., 2025), limitations in capital and access to information make it difficult for this initiative to survive amid intense competition from artificial tourism. This condition proves that village political agency is not a standalone solution without formal collaboration with higher state authorities. A representative from one of the village governments explained the reality of this self-management in the following statement:

*“We at the village level see that the natural tourism potential in our area is immense, but because there are no regulations from the regency yet, we can only manage it up to the limits of the community’s own capabilities.”*

This statement reflects the irony of ecotourism governance in Barru Regency. On one hand, there is communal enthusiasm to protect natural assets, but on the other hand, there is despair due to the absence of a legal framework and technical assistance. Management initiatives driven by local wisdom are currently constrained by a passive regency bureaucracy (Jupir, 2013). Without budget support for promotion and access route improvements, the village community’s spirit of cooperation is reaching a saturation point as it is unable to cover continuously rising operational costs, while the state remains absent in providing legal protection for these initiatives.

The community, through tourism awareness groups, has indeed attempted voluntary collective action to maintain basic facilities. The social impact of this movement is highly positive, as it builds environmental awareness (Putri et al., 2022). However, the fact that visitor numbers continue to decline indicates that traditional values and self-reliance are insufficient to withstand the pressure of more modern, organized, commercialized tourism. The absence of protection and marketing programs from the regency government renders the conservation efforts undertaken by the indigenous population in and around Mount Kappire economically futile, as they lack integration into the regional tourism system.

The stakeholder engagement model at the village level has actually operated organically through inclusive participatory mechanisms (Pham et al., 2025). Indigenous leaders and the youth have agreed upon unwritten rules to maintain forest conservation. Nevertheless, the regency government's lack of legal legitimacy leads visitors from outside the region to frequently ignore these village rules. Stakeholder engagement unbound by a broader legal system weakens the enforcement capacity of local initiatives, resulting in community conservation efforts becoming a cost burden that is not compensated by tourism sector revenue.

Although grassroots initiatives temporarily saved Mount Kappire's potential, this communal self-reliance has very tangible capacity limits. Without resolving budgetary conflicts at the regency level and improving bureaucratic coordination, the resilience of local communities will soon be exhausted. Villages lack the legal instruments to penalize major violations and do not have access to national marketing networks. Therefore, community initiatives cannot be left isolated. All these dynamics demand a governance restructuring through a collaborative approach that integrates the strengths of the village, the private sector, and the regency government into a single shared vision.

#### **D. Synthesis of Collaborative Governance: Reality vs. Ideal Requirements**

The sharp decline in public and village tourism sites shows that resolving ecotourism problems cannot rely on a single group of actors. The deadlock in Barru Regency is an accumulation of intertwined functional failures: the absence of legislative political will, executive branch bureaucratic stagnation, and the isolation of grassroots initiatives. This reality demands a new institutional mechanism to bridge the power fragmentation. The equitable integration of cross-sectoral forces within the concept of collaborative governance is viewed as the most effective instrument to respond to the complexity of tourism development, which is currently experiencing a legitimacy crisis at the local level (McNaught, 2024).

However, a comparison between reality in Barru and the theoretical parameters of collaborative governance reveals a significant gap due to sharp power asymmetry. Based on the framework of Ansell and Gash (2008), collaboration only materializes if there is a formal decision-making forum that facilitates the involvement of non-state actors to achieve consensus. In Barru, interactions remain hierarchical and sectoral. Revenue growth from the private sector (Dutungan Island and Diana Waterpark) shows that the government has not yet created an inclusive, collaborative climate. Instead, it merely allows the private sector to operate independently while leaving the public and community sectors to deteriorate without legal protection.

The absence of a cross-sectoral forum reflects a failure to implement the principles of good governance. Public policy will not achieve sustainability targets if its institutional design fails to provide participatory space for affected parties (Austin, 2023). The policymaking process in Barru remains monopolized by the technocratic perspectives of the bureaucracy and by closed political negotiations, while the voices of village managers and ecotourism communities are ignored. The marginalization of public participation in strategic arenas is a primary barrier to the formation of mutual trust, a fundamental element of collaborative strategies (Agung, 2025). The hope for this policy orientation shift is reaffirmed by a member of the Barru Regency DPRD through the following reflective statement:

*“Moving forward, the DPRD needs to serve as a bridge between the community and the government, not merely as a supervisor, but also as a policy driver that sides with the community.”*

This quote acknowledges the weakness of the representational function thus far and confirms the urgent need to restructure the approach to power relations in Barru Regency. The awareness of political elites to shift from passive supervisory roles to roles as initiators of collaboration is an absolute initial step. Collaborative governance at the local level will not function without multi-stakeholder partnerships that are actively encouraged and secured by the highest political authority holders in the region (Jansen & Kalas, 2020). Political support must be translated immediately into regulatory instruments that provide justice for all tourism managers by ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources.

The formulation of a regional regulation on sustainable ecotourism is a non-negotiable legal prerequisite. This regulation must be designed as a legal framework mandating the establishment of a permanent collaborative ecotourism council to unite representatives from executive branch agencies, the DPRD, village heads, and tourism awareness groups. The institutionalization of this cross-sectoral committee is a rational strategy to mitigate bureaucratic sectoral egos and halt budget politics interventions that are detrimental to the environmental sector (Kuhn, 2016). With a collaborative council in place, private-sector success can be leveraged to help rescue public ecotourism destinations currently on the verge of systemic collapse.

A synthesis of local political dynamics in Barru Regency proves that collaborative governance currently remains an academic utopia. Field realities are dominated by actor fragmentation and institutional weaknesses that threaten the extinction of the region's natural assets. Transformation toward ideal ecotourism governance will not materialize merely through electoral political rhetoric. Such a change absolutely requires a managerial system revolution in which the regional government dares to share authority, dismantle bureaucratic silos, and formally bind itself to local communities within a policy-making consensus system that is transparent, equitable, and oriented toward long-term conservation.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Local political dynamics in Barru Regency serve as the primary determinant paralyzing the effectiveness of ecotourism policy. The marginalization of the environmental conservation sector stems from the pragmatism of budget politics within the legislative branch, which prioritizes visible physical projects for electoral utility over ecological investments. Consequently, an extreme decline in revenue and visitation occurs at government- and village-owned tourism objects, while the private sector grows autonomously, out of sync with regional development missions. The contestation of interests among political elites has marginalized public assets in power negotiations, disregarding sustainability principles in favor of short-term interests.

This failure of political commitment results in a legal vacuum and bureaucratic fragmentation within the executive branch. The absence of a regional regulation as an operational instrument causes technical agencies within the executive branch and sub-district governments to lose coordination direction and supervisory authority. Conversely, this vacuum of authority empowers village governments and local communities to self-manage tourism assets. However, without systemic regulatory and budgetary support from the state, grassroots community initiatives are currently in a state of stagnation and under the threat of operational bankruptcy due to inadequate facilities and promotional access to compete with the private sector.

The clash among these actors indicates that collaborative governance practices in Barru Regency remain illusory and fail to meet ideal prerequisites. Ecotourism governance remains dominated by a sectoral hierarchical approach that marginalizes inclusive participation and ignores power asymmetry among actors. As long as an egalitarian decision-making forum is not institutionalized, Barru's immense ecotourism potential will continue to degrade and solely generate profits for the private sector, without concrete contributions to nature conservation and communal welfare.

The urgent policy implication is the enactment of a regional regulation in Barru Regency on sustainable ecotourism, mandating the establishment of a collaborative ecotourism council. This council must function as an integrative platform to synergize budgets, programs, and supervision among the government, villages, and the private sector. As a concrete follow-up, the regional government must immediately allocate rehabilitation budgets for deteriorating public destinations to balance regional tourism growth. Future research is recommended to explore a more equitable public-private partnership model in supporting the sustainability of community-based ecotourism in rural areas experiencing state absence.

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