

Dominance of the Batu City Tourism Sector by Jatim Park Group

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received: June, 06, 2035 Revised: June 08 2025 Accepted: June, 15, 2025</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Governance Network, tourism, Jatim Park Group, Power relations, Batu City</p>	<p>Tourism development in Batu City has shown rapid growth over the past decade, largely driven by private investment from the Jatim Park Group (JTPG). This study aims to analyze the impact of JTPG's dominance in the tourism sector and the patterns of collaboration within Batu City's tourism governance network, particularly in the context of private corporate dominance. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and analysis of government documents and private publications. The findings reveal that JTPG's dominant role influences not only destination management but also spatial planning policies and the distribution of local economic benefits. Collaboration between the government, communities, and businesses tends to be symbolic and imbalanced, with limited facilitation from the government as a collaborative leader. These findings highlight the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the government and reposition the role of the community to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable tourism development. In conclusion, JTPG's dominance creates a form of structural dependency that threatens actor diversity in tourism governance and undermines regional autonomy.</p>
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A. Introduction

Tourism is one of the sectors that has experienced rapid growth in regional economic development in Indonesia over the past decade. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2020) noted that this sector makes a significant contribution to the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP), especially in areas with strong natural and cultural resource potential. In this context, Batu City is one of the areas that stands out thanks to its geographical attraction, cool mountain climate, and a diversity of tourist destinations, both natural and artificial. Based on the Batu City Bappeda report (2022), the number of tourists visiting Batu City continues to increase throughout 2015 to 2023, with the dominant contribution coming from tourist destinations managed by the private sector, especially the Jatim Park Group (Disparta Batu, 2023).

However, behind these achievements, there are challenges in the aspect of tourism governance, especially related to the concentration of management roles centered on one private business group. Jatim Park Group (JTPG) manages a number of large-scale thematic tourist destinations that directly contribute to regional economic growth. However, studies such as those conducted by Dredge and Jenkins (2011) and Bramwell and Lane (2014) show that the dominance of tourism management by one actor tends to create power imbalances and limited space for participation for other actors, including communities and local governments. In this context, it is important to examine how governance structures and collaboration patterns in the tourism sector are formed, especially in areas dominated by private actors.

A number of previous studies have emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in creating sustainable tourism governance. The theory of *network governance* (Rhodes,

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1997) and *collaborative governance* (Ansell & Gash, 2007) are the cornerstones in explaining the importance of synergy between government, the private sector, and civil society. In addition, research such as those conducted by Wardi and Budhi (2018) and Wahyuni et al. (2020) also highlights the need for a proportionate distribution of roles among actors so that tourism development can take place fairly and sustainably. However, most of the existing studies still focus on areas with the dominance of the role of the government, so there are not many studies that specifically examine the configuration of relations between actors in the context of the dominance of private corporations. This shows that there are relevant research gaps to be studied further.

Batu City was chosen as the study location because it has a distinctive tourism dynamic, where private investment plays a very significant role in the development of this sector, particularly through JTPG. On the other hand, the government and the community remain involved in the tourism management structure, both as regulators, facilitators, and beneficiaries. This context provides an interesting space to examine how the collaboration between the three actors was formed and what impact it has on tourism governance as a whole, both in terms of economy, social, and institutional. Thus, this study aims to examine the impact of the dominance of the Jatim Park Group on the tourism sector in Batu City, especially in terms of power relations and collaboration patterns between the government, business actors, and the community. This research is expected to make an academic contribution to the development of governance studies in the tourism sector, as well as provide strategic input for the formulation of more inclusive and collaboration-based regional policies.

B. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach to deeply understand social phenomena related to the governance of the tourism sector in Batu City, especially in the context of relationships and collaborations between key actors such as local governments, private actors (in this case Jatim Park Group), and local communities. The qualitative approach was chosen because it was considered the most appropriate to explore complex and dynamic socio-political phenomena. According to Sugiyono (2020), the qualitative approach emphasizes a deep understanding of a phenomenon that occurs naturally, where researchers play the role of the main instrument in data collection and analysis.

To obtain relevant and in-depth data, this study uses two main techniques in data collection, namely observation and in-depth interviews. Observations were carried out directly in the field to gain a contextual understanding of the dynamics of management and interaction between actors in the tourism sector in Batu City. The researcher used a non-participatory observation strategy, in which the researcher was present at the research sites as observers without being directly involved in the activities of the observed subjects. The purpose of this observation is to capture the social situation naturally and see the governance practices that occur in daily life, especially in the management of tourist destinations under the auspices of the Jatim Park Group, the Tourism Office, and the village government. The observation location includes leading tourist areas such as Jatim Park 1, 2, and 3, as well as other destinations located in the village area in collaboration with the Jatim Park Group.

In-depth interviews were conducted with various parties who are considered to have direct knowledge and involvement in the tourism sector. The main informants consist of officials of the Batu City Tourism Office who have a role in the formulation of tourism policies. In addition, interviews were also conducted with representatives of the management of the Jatim Park Group as the dominant private actor who has a significant influence on the development of artificial tourism in Batu City. To strengthen understanding of the impact and involvement of local communities, the researcher also interviewed village officials or community leaders from villages that are the location of Jatim Park Group tourist destinations. This interview aims to explore information related to the contribution of the tourism sector to community empowerment, the pattern of cooperation between villages and the private sector, and the level of citizen participation in tourism management.

In addition to primary data, this study also uses secondary data to enrich the analysis. Secondary data is obtained from official documents such as the Batu City Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPDA), the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), the annual report of the Tourism Office, and statistical data on the number of tourist visits. The researcher

also used publications and reports from the private sector, including the Jatim Park Group's corporate social responsibility (CSR) report and other internal documents. Media articles and news related to the dynamics of tourism in Batu City are also used as complementary sources. In addition, the researcher refers to previous studies and academic journals that are relevant to the theme of tourism governance, *governance network theory*, and the role of the private sector in regional development.

In analyzing the data, this study uses interactive analysis techniques from Miles and Huberman which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher screens and classifies the information according to key themes such as the role of actors, forms of collaboration, and barriers in governance. The reduced data is then presented in the form of narrative descriptions or tables to make it easier for researchers to understand the relationship between information. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions, which is carried out through an in-depth interpretation of the data that has been analyzed. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher used a triangulation technique, which is by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents, to obtain more accurate and objective results.

C. Result and Discussion

Collaboration Between JTP Group, Village Government, and Batu City Tourism Office in Tourism Governance

The development of the tourism sector in Batu City over the past decade has experienced a significant acceleration. One of the main indicators of this development is the increasingly prominent role of private actors, especially the Jatim Park Group (JTP Group), in shaping the face of Batu City tourism. JTP Group not only acts as a provider of large-scale tourist attractions, but also transforms into a strategic partner for local and village governments in the collaborative management of tourist areas. The collaboration between JTP Group, the village government, and the Batu City Tourism Office (Dispar) has created a complex but dynamic tourism ecosystem, covering economic, social, and governance dimensions of regional development policies.

1) Strategic Partnership between JTP Group and Village Government

One of the tangible forms of this collaboration can be seen in the land use cooperation scheme between JTP Group and a number of village governments in Batu City. One of the most representative examples occurs in Oro-Oro Ombo Village, which is one of the main buffer villages of the Batu City tourist area. In this village, the village treasury land is used for the construction and operation of Batu Night Spectacular (BNS), one of the leading tourist destinations owned by JTP Group. This cooperation is carried out through a utilization scheme for 15 years based on a formal agreement outlined in the *Memorandum of Understanding* (MoU). This scheme is not in the form of pure rent, but a contribution and profit-sharing model, which is economically more beneficial to the village.

In its implementation, the management of this cooperation is carried out by Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) or through a direct mechanism by the village government. Villages get a fixed contribution per year, as well as the distribution of the proceeds from business profits in accordance with the clauses in the cooperation agreement. Income from this collaboration is one of the main sources of Village Original Income (PADes), which can then be used to fund various development and community empowerment programs. This model reflects a participatory and mutually beneficial governance approach, in which village assets are used productively without losing their ownership status.

Not only does this collaboration provide financial benefits, this collaboration also encourages the transformation of the economic structure of the village community. Most of the residents who previously worked as farmers or breeders began to change their professions to become tourism business actors. They open *homestays*, become culinary traders, or work as service workers in various

rides and tourist facilities. The village government actively ensures the implementation of the local labor quota of 60% as agreed with the JTP Group. Thus, this collaboration opens up new job opportunities, encourages a shift in the village economic orientation to the service sector, and fosters the spirit of local-based entrepreneurship. This transformation also has an impact on social life patterns. Village people are starting to get used to the rhythm of tourism work, interaction with tourists, and demands on service quality. This encourages the growth of local initiatives, including tourism service skills training, the development of village superior products such as handicrafts and special foods, and the increasing role of women and youth in productive economic activities.

2) Symbiotic relationship between JTP Group and the Batu City Tourism Office

In addition to the relationship with the village government, JTP Group also establishes a close partnership with the Batu City Tourism Office. This relationship can be described as a symbiotic relationship of mutualism, where both parties derive strategic benefits from each other. JTP Group, as a manager of large-scale tourist destinations and has high attractions, is one of the main drivers in increasing the number of tourist visits to Batu City. As a result, the contribution of the tourism sector to the Regional Original Revenue (PAD) of Batu City has also increased significantly every year.

As the main partner, JTP Group receives various forms of support from Dispar, including ease in the operational and development licensing process, assistance in the implementation of safety and visitor management standards, and facilitation of promotion through digital media and participation in tourism exhibitions at the national and international levels. The Tourism Office positions JTP Group as the tourism locomotive of Batu City, which is expected to be able to attract the flow of tourists to the surrounding area.

However, the relationship between Dispar and JTP Group also has consequences in the form of structural dependence. This dependence can be seen from the pattern of tourism development which tends to focus on the development of tourist areas owned by large corporations such as JTP Group, while alternative tourist areas, especially tourist villages, have not received balanced attention and support. This has the potential to create inequality in the distribution of tourism benefits and weaken the role of local communities in the big map of regional tourism development.

In terms of policy, the dominance of large private actors can also affect the direction of strategic planning and government budget allocation. For example, infrastructure development priorities such as road access, lighting, and public facilities are often directed more to areas around the main tourist destinations owned by corporations, rather than village areas that have not been optimally developed. This shows that the dynamics of collaboration between actors still require strengthening the principles of spatial justice and sustainability in development planning.

3) Dynamics of the Relationship between the Tourism Office and the Village Government

The relationship between the Tourism Office and the village government also shows dynamics that are not always harmonious. Although normatively Dispar has a responsibility in supporting the development of tourist villages, the reality on the ground shows that not all villages receive the same attention. Some villages that are not geographically adjacent to large tourist areas such as Jatim Park are often overlooked in terms of training, promotion, and development programs of tourism supporting infrastructure.

This inequality is largely influenced by differences in institutional capacity at the village level. Villages that have strong BUMDes, proactive village apparatus, and access to government networks tend to be better able to develop their tourism potential. On the other hand, villages with weak institutions, lack of human resources, and limited access to information often have difficulty accessing

the programs provided by Dispar. Therefore, institutional gaps are one of the main challenges in efforts to equitably distribute community-based tourism development in Batu City. In this case, the role of facilitators from the Tourism Office is crucial. There needs to be an affirmative strategy to assist backward villages in tourism development. For example, through the preparation of tourism village roadmaps, business management training, capital support, and the use of digital technology in promotion. Without this kind of intervention, disparities between villages will widen and will only strengthen the dominance of major actors in the tourism sector.

4) Spillover Effect of JTP Group's Presence

Although the dominance of the JTP Group has consequences for the distribution of development benefits, it is undeniable that their existence also has a significant double effect on the local economy. Many tourists who visit major attractions such as Jatim Park then choose to stay in homestays owned by residents, buy handicraft products, and consume village specialties. This activity creates a new economic chain that directly involves the community. *This spillover effect* also opens up opportunities for village communities to form creative economy communities that are connected to the tourism sector. For example, housewives produce typical village souvenirs, youth establish local tour guide services, and farmer groups use land for agro-tourism. Collaboration with village officials is important in ensuring that these economic benefits are distributed fairly and not only concentrated in local elites or large business actors. However, success in taking advantage of these opportunities is highly dependent on the readiness of the village. Product innovation, attractive packaging, the use of social media for promotion, and strengthening human resource capacity are crucial elements. In this case, the synergy between the village government, the local community, and the support from the Dispar is a determining factor for the sustainability of these local businesses.

Critical Analysis

The development of the tourism sector in Batu City has increased quite rapidly in recent years. One of the main factors of this development is the large role of the Jatim Park Group (JTP Group) as the main player in the management of artificial tourism. JTP Group not only runs a large-scale tourism business, but also becomes a strategic partner in building cooperation with various parties, especially the village government and the Batu City Tourism Office (Dispar). Collaboration between these three actors is an important part of regional tourism management, both in terms of economy, social, and policy-making.

Based on the researchers' findings, cooperation between JTP Group and the village government is usually carried out through the use of village treasury land used for the development of tourist destinations. In its implementation, this form of cooperation management is often carried out by Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), which have the authority to sign cooperation agreements with private parties. The village government only provides administrative approval and conducts general oversight, but is not directly involved in operational decision-making. However, even though this collaboration has a positive economic impact, such as increasing village income, the availability of jobs for residents, and the growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in supporting aspects such as culinary, lodging, and souvenirs. However, the role of the village in determining the direction of tourism development is still limited, because strategic decisions are more determined by the JTP Group as the capital owner and main operator.

Meanwhile, the relationship between JTP Group and the Tourism Office is mutually beneficial. JTP Group is the government's main partner in attracting tourist visits so that it can increase Regional Original Revenue (PAD). In return, Dispar provides various forms of support, such as ease of licensing and promotion of tourist destinations. However, this cooperative relationship also shows a structural dependence, where the direction of regional tourism policy tends to focus more on the development of tourist areas owned by large companies such as JTP, but the development of local

tourism actors receives less support. Thus, even though a cooperative relationship has been formed between the government and JTP in the tourism sector in Batu City, its implementation still shows inequality in role and influence. In order for tourism development to be more equitable and equitable, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of other tourism actors, more support and attention by local governments, and more balanced involvement between local actors and large investors.

In tourism management in Batu City, the principle of *collaborative governance* is applied through cooperation between the JTP Group, the village government, and the Tourism Office (Dispar). JTP Group as a private party, has a major role in managing tourist destinations, while the village government and Dispar also work together to achieve common goals. This collaboration involves economic, social, and policy aspects, with each party having a role and interests. However, in its implementation, there are major challenges related to unequal *power sharing*. The JTP Group, as the dominant actor, has greater influence in decision-making, while village governments and Dispar often do not have balanced control. This causes inequality in tourism management and development.

In this context, the principles of *collaborative governance* as stated by Ansell and Gash (2007) can be a relevant theoretical framework to analyze the dynamics of relationships between actors in Batu City tourism governance. There are five main indicators in the theory, namely *trust building*, *face-to-face dialogue* (direct dialogue between actors), *commitment to process* (commitment to the collaboration process), *shared understanding* (mutual understanding), and *intermediate outcomes* (intermediate outcomes that strengthen the collaborative process).

In the first indicator, namely *trust building*, it was found that trust between actors is still very weak. The relationship between JTPG and the village government is more transactional than collaborative. This can be seen from the pattern of cooperation that is limited to the use of village land for investment purposes without the active involvement of the village government in the planning and strategic development stage of tourist destinations. A statement from the Head of the Oro-Oro Ombo Village Government, Mr. Suliamat, corroborates this finding: village involvement is only limited to administrative and is not given space in substantial decision-making. The lack of informal forums and communication between parties slows down the process of building trust which should be the foundation of cross-sectoral collaboration.

"If it is involved [in development planning], no. [...] So we are limited to the essence of monitoring or maybe supervising the employees" (Suliamat, interview, 2025)

In the second indicator, namely *face-to-face dialogue*, direct interaction between collaborative actors has also not been built intensively and sustainably. The absence of a regular communication forum makes many strategic and operational problems not completely resolved. This situation causes background tensions between actors which in turn increases the distance and reduces the opportunity to develop long-term plans together.

The third indicator, *commitment to process*, also shows weakness. Despite the formal cooperation outlined in the MoU, the commitment to community-based tourism development outside the JTPG area is still very minimal. Village governments, which are supposed to be key actors in building a locally-based tourism ecosystem, often do not receive adequate policy or budget support from local governments. As a result, many village tourism potentials are abandoned or develop sporadically without continuous assistance.

In the aspect of *shared understanding*, the difference in vision between actors is one of the main obstacles in building strategic alignment. The Tourism Office tends to prioritize the achievement of tourist visit targets and increasing PAD, while the village government focuses more on efforts to equalize community welfare and empower the local economy. On the other hand, small business

actors and local communities expect direct participation in management and decision-making, something that is currently still minimally realized. This vision disharmony not only weakens the synergy between actors, but also reduces the effectiveness of the implementation of tourism policies in general.

The last indicator, namely *intermediate outcomes*, shows that although there have been several initial achievements such as increasing PADes and the development of MSMEs around JTPG destinations, these benefits have not been evenly distributed to all tourist villages in Batu City. This inequality in the distribution of benefits has the potential to create social jealousy and reduce participation incentives from other local actors. In Ansell and Gash's perspective, the achievement of inclusive interim outcomes is essential to maintain momentum and commitment in the collaborative process.

In addition, the aspect of inequality in *power sharing* is a very central issue. JTPG as an actor with large capital capacity and infrastructure, has a dominant bargaining position in determining the policy direction and implementation of tourism development. On the contrary, village governments and local communities tend to be only technical implementers who do not have significant space in determining the direction of development. This inequality is contrary to the spirit of *collaborative governance* which emphasizes the importance of a fair division of authority and responsibility between actors. This inequality problem is also exacerbated by the weak institutional capacity of tourism villages in developing and implementing development strategies based on local potential. Without support from local governments and the active involvement of the private sector in the development of village tourism ecosystems, local actors will continue to be in subordinate positions. For this reason, it is necessary to reposition the role of the government, especially Dispar, as facilitators and facilitator leaders who can bridge the interests of inter-actors, build local capacity, and ensure that tourism development runs inclusive and sustainable.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that tourism management in Batu City is currently still facing great challenges in realizing ideal collaborative governance. The collaboration that occurs is more symbolic and transactional than substantive and strategic. Inequality in influence, lack of alignment of vision, weak commitment to collaborative processes, and uneven distribution of benefits are some of the main obstacles that must be overcome immediately.

Thus, the *collaborative governance* theory from Ansell and Gash not only provides a framework for analyzing the configuration of power relations and collaborative dynamics in tourism management in Batu City, but also becomes a practical guideline in designing a democratic, fair, and sustainable tourism governance strategy. The emphasis on the principles of trust, open dialogue, mutual commitment, mutually supportive understanding, and the achievement of equitable results are the keys to building true collaboration for a more inclusive future of tourism in Batu City.

D. Conclusion

This research shows that the collaboration between the East Java Park Group (JTPG), the city government, and the village government in tourism development in Batu City has resulted in a significant impact on local economic growth, increasing Regional Original Income (PAD), and transforming the community's economic structure. JTPG plays an important role as the main driver of the tourism sector as well as an investment catalyst, making Batu City a leading destination in Indonesia. However, the dominance of JTPGs also creates a structural dependence that risks regional economic stability and governance balance. Power inequality in collaboration between actors, especially the lack of involvement of village governments and local communities in the strategic decision-making process, has the potential to hinder the development of equitable and inclusive tourism. In addition, the economic shift from the agricultural sector to tourism has also widened the socio-economic gap, especially for groups that are not integrated in the tourism ecosystem.

Therefore, strengthening local institutional capacity, diversifying tourist destinations based on local potential, and increasing the role of the community in tourism management are crucial to create a more equitable and sustainable governance system. This research opens up space for further studies that can examine the pattern of cross-sectoral collaboration in more depth, including mechanisms for strengthening the role of non-corporate actors in local tourism governance. In addition, it is important to explore forms of policy interventions that are able to balance the relationship between dominant actors and local communities in the long term.

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