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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the application of collaborative governance in sustainable tourism development, focusing on the identification of actors, collaboration processes, and the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence them. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study strategy, through primary data collection in the form of in-depth interviews and field observations, as well as secondary data from policy documents and scientific literature. The results show that collaborative governance in Wasur National Park involves various stakeholders, but is still at the

coordination and consultation stage, with the involvement of indigenous communities not optimal in decision-making. The main supporting factors include commitment to conservation, collaborative networks, and local wisdom, while inhibiting factors include limited human resource capacity, weak institutional coordination, and power imbalances between actors. This study contributes to enriching the study of collaborative governance in the context of conservation areas in eastern Indonesia, and provides practical implications for the development of sustainable tourism policies that are more inclusive and adaptive to local conditions.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Governance; Sustainable Tourism Development; Stakeholder Collaboration; Environmental Conservation; Wasur National Park

### Introduction

Sustainable tourism has become an increasingly important global agenda, striving to maintain a balance between economic growth, environmental preservation, and the social well-being of local communities. In the context of conservation areas, tourism development is oriented not only toward increasing tourist arrivals but also toward ecosystem protection and sustainable empowerment of local communities. Studies show that (Phoek et al., 2021)National park areas such as Wasur National Park in Merauke have great potential as ecotourism destinations, but also face serious challenges related to environmental degradation and limited management capacity.

The main purpose Sustainable Tourism Development The goal of sustainable tourism is to ensure that tourism activities not only provide short-term economic benefits but also maintain long-term environmental and social sustainability. This concept emphasizes the integration of natural resource conservation, local cultural preservation, and improving the well-being of local communities through an inclusive and participatory approach. Studies show that sustainable tourism plays a role in reducing pressure on the environment while improving the quality of life of local communities through a more equitable distribution of benefits (UNWTO, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284421152>). This approach also encourages responsible management practices by considering environmental carrying capacity and the sustainability of tourist destinations.(Tjilen et al., 2022)

From a regional development perspective, sustainable tourism contributes significantly to increasing regional income, creating jobs, and strengthening local cultural identity. Local governments play a crucial role in designing policies that integrate economic and conservation interests through adaptive and collaborative regulations. Research shows that the successful implementation of sustainable tourism depends heavily on the capacity of government institutions to manage resources, build partnerships, and ensure active community participation in decision-making processes.(Nguyen et al., 2024)Thus, synergy between the government, the community, and the private sector is key to promoting sustainable and highly competitive tourism development.

Although the concept of sustainable tourism has been widely adopted in policy, its implementation at the local level often faces various obstacles, particularly related to coordination between stakeholders. Numerous studies have shown a gap between policy and practice, particularly regarding local community participation and synergy between institutions. Furthermore, the conflict of interest between conservation and economic exploitation is often a major obstacle in managing conservation-based tourism areas.(Mihalič, 2000)In the context of Wasur National Park, this situation is exacerbated by the socio-cultural complexities of indigenous communities as well as limited infrastructure and accessibility.

To address these challenges, a collaborative governance approach is relevant as an analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of sustainable tourism management. Collaborative governance emphasizes the importance of engaging actors across government, the private sector, communities, and non-governmental organizations in a participatory, consensus-based decision-making process.(Diaz-Kope & Morris, 2022)This approach can be combined with Sustainable Development Theory which emphasizes the balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects.(Manioudis & Meramveliotakis, 2022), as well as Stakeholder Theory which highlights the importance of accommodating the interests of all parties involved in a system(Shah & Guild, 2022)The integration of these three approaches provides a strong conceptual foundation for analyzing tourism management practices in conservation areas.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze how collaborative governance is implemented in sustainable tourism development in Wasur National Park, Merauke. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the actors involved, understand the collaboration process between stakeholders, and explore the factors that support and hinder the implementation of collaborative governance. Using a qualitative approach through case studies, this research also seeks to answer key questions regarding the effectiveness of collaboration in achieving sustainable development goals in conservation areas.

This research contributes to the scientific literature on collaborative governance in the context of sustainable tourism in conservation areas, particularly in eastern Indonesia, which remains relatively underexplored in academic studies. This research offers an empirical, case-study-based perspective that can enrich our understanding of multi-actor collaboration practices in natural resource management. Therefore, the results are expected to provide theoretical and practical implications for the development of more inclusive and adaptive sustainable tourism policies in the future.

### **Literature Review (Abridged Version)**

Collaborative governance is an approach in public administration that emphasizes collective decision-making through the involvement of various actors across sectors to address complex public problems. This concept developed from the idea that resource management, including sustainable tourism, requires coordination between the government, the private sector, and local communities. In the context of tourism, collaborative governance plays a crucial role in integrating various interests to achieve a balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects. (Ahmad & Esposito, 2025)

Various studies show that collaboration between stakeholders can increase the effectiveness of tourism destination management through clear division of roles, increased institutional capacity, and participation of local communities that contribute to environmental and cultural sustainability. (Tabatabaei et al., 2025) In addition, trust and effective communication factors are key elements in the success of collaborative governance, especially in conservation areas. (Fitriani & Tjilen, 2025)

Several studies have also identified obstacles to the implementation of collaborative governance, particularly related to power imbalances between actors, limited institutional capacity, and weak policy support. These conditions often hinder the creation of inclusive and effective collaboration, particularly in developing countries. In Indonesia, studies on collaborative governance in conservation area management are still limited, particularly in the eastern region, necessitating more contextual research. (Pantiyasa et al., 2024).

This research aims to fill this gap by examining collaborative governance practices in sustainable tourism development in Wasur National Park. Unlike previous studies that focused on more developed destinations, this study highlights areas with distinct socio-cultural characteristics and limited infrastructure, providing a new perspective on understanding the dynamics of collaboration in peripheral areas.

Methodologically, previous studies have predominantly used qualitative approaches with case study strategies to understand interactions between actors, although some studies have also used mixed methods. In this study, the integration of Collaborative Governance Theory, Sustainable Development Theory, and Stakeholder Theory serves as a conceptual foundation for analyzing the dynamics of sustainable tourism management in Wasur National Park.

### **Research methods**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study strategy to deeply understand the dynamics of collaborative governance in sustainable tourism development in Wasur National Park, Merauke. This approach was chosen because it can explore complex phenomena in a real-world context, particularly regarding interactions between actors, collaborative processes, and social and institutional factors that influence tourism management.(Mørch & Litherland, 2025).

The research location was Wasur National Park, Merauke Regency, South Papua, Indonesia, a conservation area with significant ecotourism potential. Data collection was conducted during the [insert month/year of research] period, focusing on collaborative tourism management practices among stakeholders.

The data used consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews and field observations, while secondary data came from policy documents, government reports, and relevant scientific literature. The combination of these two data types aimed to strengthen the validity of the findings through source triangulation.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using guidelines based on a collaborative governance framework to gather in-depth yet focused information. Observations were used to understand empirical conditions in the field, while documentation was used to examine policies and supporting data. In this study, the researcher acted as the primary instrument (human instrument) directly involved in the data collection and interpretation process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research subjects included key stakeholders in tourism management, namely the Wasur National Park management, local government, indigenous communities, tourism business actors, and non-governmental organizations. Informants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) direct involvement in tourism management, (2) understanding collaborative governance practices, and (3) minimal experience in related fields. The number of informants in this study was 11 people representing various stakeholder groups.

**Table of Primary Information Sources**

No	Resources	Data Types	Collection Techniques	Information
1	Wasur National Park Office	Primary	Interview, Documentation	Main manager of the area
2	Merauke Regional Government	Primary	Interview	Tourism policy and support
3	Indigenous Peoples	Primary	Interview, Observation	Local participation and traditional wisdom
4	Tourism Business Actors	Primary	Interview	Tourism economic activities
5	Environmental NGOs	Primary	Interview, Documentation	Conservation and collaboration programs

6	Policy Documents & Reports	Secondary	Documentation	Regulations and supporting data
7	Scientific Articles	Secondary	Literature study	Theoretical and empirical basis

Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation techniques, and member checking was conducted to ensure the data interpretation aligns with the informants' perspectives. Furthermore, this study also considered trustworthiness aspects, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to improve the quality and reliability of the research results. It also considered research ethics by ensuring informants' consent, maintaining data confidentiality, and respecting local social and cultural values throughout the research process.

The data analysis technique used thematic analysis through a coding process that included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between categories. The analysis process was carried out iteratively and simultaneously with data collection, allowing for continuous adjustment and deepening of the analysis. To support the analysis process, researchers used qualitative analysis software such as NVivo to systematically organize the data.

### **Research result**

The results of this study were compiled based on field findings through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, which were then analyzed using a thematic approach. The analysis produced several main themes that describe the dynamics of collaborative governance in sustainable tourism development in Wasur National Park, Merauke, namely: (1) actors and institutional structures, (2) collaboration processes between stakeholders, (3) forms of indigenous community participation, (4) factors supporting collaboration, and (5) factors inhibiting collaboration.

The first theme relates to the actors and institutional structures involved in tourism management. The research findings indicate that several key actors exist: the Wasur National Park Office as the area manager; the Merauke Regency government; the local indigenous community; tourism businesses; and non-governmental organizations engaged in conservation. The institutional structure thus formed is multi-level governance, with management authority vested in the central government through the national park office; however, implementation involves local actors in various operational activities. This finding aligns with studies showing that conservation area management generally involves multiple actors with varying levels of authority. (Riyanti et al., 2025)

The second theme identified collaborative processes among stakeholders in tourism management. These processes included informal communication forums, program coordination, and partnerships in conservation and tourism activities. Interactions between actors tended to be consultative and had not yet fully reached the stage of consensus-based joint decision-making. Several identified collaborative activities included the development of community-based tourism packages, environmental education activities, and habitat conservation programs. This pattern reflects the evolving characteristics of collaborative governance, as identified in previous research on the early stages of collaboration in natural resource management. (MANGER, 2024)

The third theme relates to the forms of indigenous community participation in sustainable tourism management. The research results indicate that indigenous communities play a significant role in maintaining environmental sustainability through local wisdom practices and involvement in culture-based tourism activities. Community participation includes the provision of tourism services, homestay management, and involvement in community-based conservation activities. However, the level of participation remains limited and has not been fully integrated into the decision-making process. This finding is consistent with studies that highlight the importance of local communities in sustainable tourism, but also indicate limited access to decision-making processes.(Turčinović et al., 2025)

The fourth theme identifies supporting factors in the implementation of collaborative governance. The research results indicate that key supporting factors include the commitment of area managers to conservation principles, the existence of government programs supporting sustainable tourism, and collaborative networks with non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, the cultural values and local wisdom of indigenous communities also serve as social capital that strengthens collaborative practices at the local level. These findings align with research showing that successful collaboration is strongly influenced by trust, shared commitment, and institutional support. (Lewicka et al., 2023).

The fifth theme relates to inhibiting factors in the implementation of collaborative governance. The research results indicate that the main obstacles include limited human resource capacity, lack of coordination between institutions, and imbalances in decision-making power. Furthermore, limited infrastructure and regional accessibility also hinder tourism development. Another identified obstacle is the lack of a formal mechanism governing collaboration between actors, resulting in an ad hoc and unstructured collaborative process. These findings align with studies showing that the main challenges in collaborative governance are often related to institutional capacity and imbalances in power among stakeholders.(Yang & Li, 2023).

## Discussion

The research results indicate that collaborative governance in sustainable tourism development in Wasur National Park involves various actors with varying levels of participation and roles, and has not yet fully achieved the ideal form of collaboration. This finding directly addresses the research problem formulation related to actors, collaboration processes, and supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the implementation of collaborative governance. The involvement of multiple actors such as the government, indigenous communities, and non-governmental organizations reflects efforts to integrate interests in area management, although the ongoing collaborative process is still limited to the coordination and consultation stages.

## Summary Table of Collaborative Governance Research Results

Aspect	Key Findings	Field Conditions
Actor	Government, BBTN Wasur, indigenous communities, business actors, NGOs	Multi-actors involved but not yet equal
Collaboration Process	Coordination, consulting, limited partnership	Have not reached a common consensus

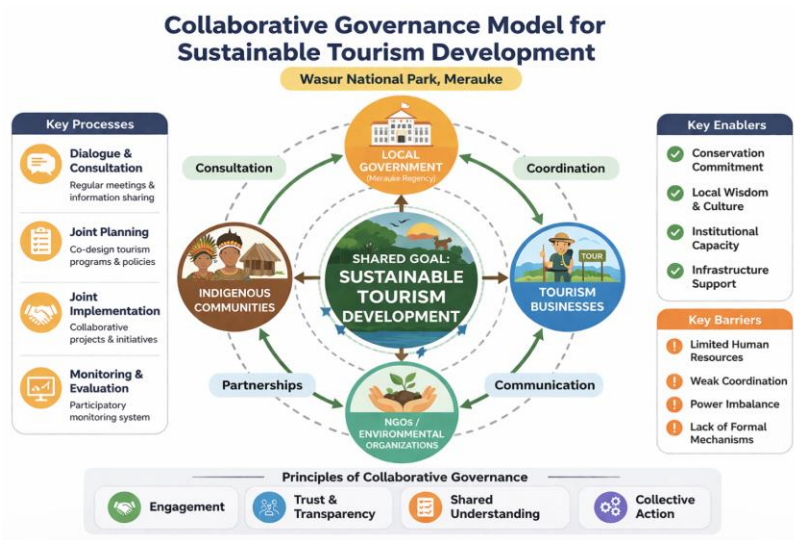
<b>Community Participation</b>	Involved in tourism and conservation	Not yet dominant in decision making
<b>Supporting Factors</b>	Conservation commitment, local wisdom, NGO support	Quite strong at the local level
<b>Inhibiting Factors</b>	Limited human resources, weak coordination, imbalance of power	Become a major obstacle
<b>Institutional</b>	There is no formal collaboration mechanism yet	Still ad hoc

Within the framework of Collaborative Governance Theory, this research's findings indicate that key dimensions such as trust-building, shared understanding, and face-to-face dialogue have not yet developed optimally. This is evident in the limited formal mechanisms for joint decision-making and the existence of power imbalances among actors. The study shows that the success of collaborative governance is greatly influenced by the quality of interactions between actors and the existence of institutions capable of facilitating inclusive deliberative processes.(Ansell et al., 2024)From the perspective of Sustainable Development Theory, these findings indicate that the balance between environmental, economic, and social aspects has not been fully achieved, especially in the aspect of empowering local communities. Stakeholder Theory also explains the differences in interests between actors that influence the dynamics of collaboration.(Shi et al., 2019)

Compared with previous studies, this research's findings align with the finding that local community participation and trust are key factors in collaborative governance. However, unlike more developed destinations, conditions in Wasur National Park indicate that limited capacity and infrastructure remain major barriers to strengthening collaboration. This also aligns with the finding that community participation is often symbolic and has not yet achieved full empowerment.(Newman et al., 2004).

Based on empirical findings and a collaborative governance framework, this study develops a conceptual model that illustrates the interactions between stakeholders in sustainable tourism development in Wasur National Park. This model highlights the roles of actors, the collaborative process, and the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence governance effectiveness, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Collaborative Governance Model for Sustainable Tourism Development in Wasur National Park, Merauke



Source: Researcher's processed results (2026)

The figure illustrates a collaborative governance model in sustainable tourism development at Wasur National Park, centered on a shared goal of achieving sustainable tourism. The model involves four key stakeholders: local government, indigenous communities, tourism businesses, and environmental NGOs, who interact through collaborative processes such as consultation, coordination, communication, and partnerships. These interactions are supported by core activities including dialogue, joint planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

In addition, the model highlights key enablers such as conservation commitment, local wisdom, institutional capacity, and infrastructure support, as well as key barriers including limited human resources, weak coordination, power imbalances, and the absence of formal mechanisms. These processes are grounded in the core principles of collaborative governance, namely engagement, trust and transparency, shared understanding, and collective action, which collectively contribute to achieving effective and sustainable tourism governance.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in providing empirical evidence regarding the practice of *collaborative governance* in conservation areas in eastern Indonesia, which are still understudied. The findings indicate that socio-cultural factors, local wisdom, and geographic conditions play a significant role in shaping collaboration patterns between actors. Practically, this research confirms that strengthening institutional capacity, the role of indigenous communities, and formal collaboration mechanisms are crucial in supporting inclusive and sustainable tourism policies. Furthermore, supporting factors such as conservation commitment and partnership networks need to be strengthened, while barriers such as limited resources, weak coordination, and power imbalances require more strategic policy interventions.

This research also has broad implications for developing collaborative policies, particularly in the tourism and conservation sectors. The resulting model can serve as a reference for other regions with similar characteristics in addressing complex multi-actor and sustainability challenges. Thus, this research

contributes not only academically but also practically, promoting more adaptive, participatory, and sustainable tourism governance.

The limitations of this research include limited generalization due to the case study approach, limited access to informants, and the complexity of social dynamics that continue to develop, which is in line with the characteristics of qualitative research which emphasizes depth of analysis.

The implications of this research emphasize the need to strengthen collaborative governance through increasing actor capacity, improving coordination, and establishing more structured institutions. Furthermore, further research using a comparative or mixed methods approach is needed to broaden understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative governance in different contexts.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that the implementation of collaborative governance in sustainable tourism development in Wasur National Park involves various key actors such as the government, area managers, indigenous communities, business actors, and non-governmental organizations, but has not yet been fully implemented optimally. The collaborative process is still dominated by coordination and consultation patterns, with community involvement not yet fully integrated into strategic decision-making. Key supporting factors include commitment to conservation, the existence of collaborative networks, and local wisdom values, while inhibiting factors include limited human resource capacity, weak institutional coordination, and power imbalances between actors. Thus, the implementation of collaborative governance in this area is still in the developmental stage and requires strengthening in institutional and participatory aspects.

Theoretically, this research contributes to enriching collaborative governance studies by presenting empirical evidence from the context of conservation areas in eastern Indonesia, which have unique social and geographical characteristics. Practically, the findings illustrate the importance of strengthening the capacity of local actors, improving communication between stakeholders, and establishing more formal and inclusive collaboration mechanisms to support sustainable tourism. Furthermore, this research also emphasizes that the integration of environmental, social, and economic aspects requires a collaborative approach that is adaptive to the local context.

The implications of this research point to the need to develop policies that are more responsive to local conditions, including strengthening the role of indigenous communities in tourism management and increasing support for infrastructure and institutional capacity. For future research, it is recommended to conduct comparative studies across conservation areas or use more diverse methodological approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative governance in various contexts of sustainable tourism management.

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