

Reconfiguring Local Power in Tourism Governance. A Multi-Actor Ethnography of the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark, Indonesia

Reconfigurando el poder local en la gobernanza turística. Una etnografía multiactor del Geoparque Mundial de la UNESCO Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu, Indonesia

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Abstract

Power relations in tourism governance often produce unequal outcomes, particularly in multi-actor settings where interests diverge. While collaborative governance is frequently promoted in tourism development, empirical evidence shows that participation does not always translate into equitable influence for local communities. This study examines how power is configured, negotiated, and reproduced among local communities, community organizations, government institutions, and private actors in the governance of the Ciletuh–Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark (CPUGG), Indonesia. Using an ethnographic approach, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with 40 tourism actors, and field documentation



conducted in two phases of fieldwork. The findings reveal that community participation is often symbolic, shaped by dominant development narratives and administrative procedures that structure decision-making arenas. Power operates through multiple mechanisms, including agenda setting in governance forums, spatial control over strategic tourism areas, mobilization of communities through administrative programs, and the promotion of development discourses emphasizing professionalism and spatial order in tourism development. While community organizations create collective spaces for cooperation, they may also generate informal exclusions that limit outsider participation. At the same time, private actors supported by political networks and regulatory frameworks often dominate strategic investments and market access. These findings highlight that tourism governance in CPUGG is shaped not only by formal institutional arrangements but also by everyday negotiations of meaning, legitimacy, and control among competing actors revealing how participation can create spaces for collective agency while simultaneously reproducing unequal relations of power.

Keywords: stateholder relation; community participation; decision-making; destination development; social exclusion

Resumen

Las relaciones de poder en la gobernanza del turismo suelen producir resultados desiguales, particularmente en contextos multiactor donde los intereses divergen. Aunque la gobernanza colaborativa es frecuentemente promovida en el desarrollo turístico, la evidencia empírica muestra que la participación no siempre se traduce en una influencia equitativa para las comunidades locales. Este estudio examina cómo se configura, negocia y reproduce el poder entre comunidades locales, organizaciones comunitarias, instituciones gubernamentales y actores privados en la gobernanza del Geoparque Mundial UNESCO Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu (CPUGG), Indonesia. Mediante un enfoque etnográfico, los datos se recopilaban a través de observación participante, entrevistas en profundidad con 40 actores del turismo y documentación de campo. Los hallazgos revelan que la participación comunitaria es a menudo simbólica, moldeada por narrativas dominantes de desarrollo y procedimientos administrativos que estructuran los espacios de toma de decisiones. El poder opera mediante mecanismos como la definición de agendas, el control espacial de áreas estratégicas, la movilización de comunidades a través de programas administrativos y la promoción de discursos que enfatizan el profesionalismo y el orden en el desarrollo turístico. Si bien las organizaciones comunitarias crean espacios de cooperación, también generan exclusiones informales. Al mismo tiempo, los actores privados, respaldados por redes políticas y marcos regulatorios, suelen dominar las inversiones estratégicas y el acceso al mercado. Estos hallazgos muestran que la gobernanza turística en el

CPUGG se configura no solo a través de estructuras institucionales formales, sino también mediante negociaciones cotidianas de significado, legitimidad y control entre actores, lo que revela cómo la participación puede crear espacios para la acción colectiva de las comunidades y, al mismo tiempo, reproducir relaciones desiguales de poder.

Palabras clave: relaciones entre actores; participación comunitaria; toma de decisiones; desarrollo del destino; exclusión social

1 Introduction

Tourism has developed not only as an economic sector but also as a complex social and political arena. In recent decades, tourism governance has shifted from a top-down model toward a collaborative paradigm emphasizing multi-actor participation, particularly within the framework of sustainable development and Community-Based Tourism (CBT) (Dredge & Jamal, 2015; Bianchi, 2009). Recent studies have also highlighted the increasing complexity of tourism systems, including the interplay of social, institutional, and governance-related factors in shaping tourism development (Lin et al., 2025). However, empirical evidence shows that collaborative models do not automatically ensure fair power distribution or meaningful inclusion of local communities.

Previous research indicates that collaborative practices in tourism often obscure unequal power relations, in which dominant actors—such as governments, the private sector, or donor agencies—monopolize decision-making and access to resources (Chirikure et al., 2022; Teoh et al., 2020). In such contexts, local communities are often only symbolically involved, without equal opportunities to influence development trajectories. This reinforces the argument that tourism governance should be understood as a site of power contestation rather than a neutral deliberative forum (Dangi & Jamal, 2023; Gurung et al., 2022).

In several case studies, such as in Nepal and Thailand, destination planning forums have been used by dominant actors to legitimize their authority through empowerment narratives as a form of discourse control (Gascón & Aramberri, 2021; Saengchai & Usui, 2020). Community representation is often constructed by external actors to meet market expectations or conservation goals that may not align with local needs. A Foucauldian perspective is therefore relevant to analyze how discourse production, the definition of sustainable tourism, and the role of communities are shaped within governance structures (Foucault, 1980; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Wearing & McDonald, 2002).

In developing countries, power relations in CBT and geopark tourism tend to follow a consistent pattern: participation is institutionalized but lacks substantive meaning (Gascón & Aramberri,

2021; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2021). Communities are frequently positioned as passive partners subject to externally formulated policies. Research in Indonesia also shows that local communities in conservation areas face pressures to balance traditional practices with tourism commodification driven by business and government actors (Ayuni et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Lukes (2005) argues that power operates not only through coercion but also by shaping perceptions and preferences—a form of ideological power. In tourism, this is evident when communities internalize development narratives established by dominant actors, even when these undermine their own interests. Empirical studies in ASEAN contexts similarly show that participation is often procedural rather than substantive (Le et al., 2021; Teoh et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, increasing attention to tourism governance has accompanied the development of geoparks and national strategic areas. However, existing studies largely focus on destination development, branding, or institutional strengthening, with limited attention to power dynamics among actors. In particular, limited attention has been given to how formal participation interacts with everyday practices, informal social relations, and competing claims over tourism resources and development (Nugroho et al., 2018; Putra et al., 2020; Subarkah et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2020).

As a regional development framework, geoparks operate within global governance standards. UNESCO Global Geopark status requires compliance with criteria related to conservation, education, and community-based development, and is subject to periodic evaluation (UNESCO, 2021; Zou et al., 2022). This creates pressure for local governments to balance community needs with international expectations.

In practice, community-based tourism does not always result in inclusive empowerment. Internal fragmentation within communities—based on class, gender, or social status—often shapes unequal access to tourism resources. Certain local elites may dominate projects and facilities, while others remain excluded from decision-making processes (Scheyvens, 2003; Cole, 2007; Lapeyre, 2010).

This study examines how power is configured, negotiated, and reproduced across relationships among local communities, community organizations, government actors, and private sector actors in the governance of the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark (CPUGG), Indonesia.

By integrating Foucauldian perspectives on discourse, Lukes' three dimensions of power, and critical approaches to tourism governance, this study develops a relational account of multi-actor tourism governance by showing how power operates simultaneously through formal decision-making, agenda setting, everyday social practices, and the production of development norms. It

further shows how community organizations can function both as spaces of collective agency and as sites where informal boundaries and exclusion are reproduced.

2 Theoretical Framework

Studies of inter-actor relations in tourism governance require a theoretical approach that can explain the structural, discursive, and relational dimensions of power. This article therefore combines three main theoretical perspectives: (1) power theory from a discursive and relational approach (Foucault, 1980), (2) the three dimensions of power from Lukes (2005), and (3) the critical collaborative governance approach in tourism (Reed, 1997; Bramwell, 2011), which is further supported by recent empirical findings.

2.1. Power as Discursive and Productive Relations

Michel Foucault (1980) conceptualizes power as a network of relations embedded in discourse, practices, and social structures—not merely as a direct instrument of domination. In the context of tourism governance, this implies that power operates through the ways actors define development, participation, and local identity. Power is productive—it generates norms, policies, and actor subjectivities through narratives of sustainability, conservation, or empowerment (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Wearing & McDonald, 2002; Saengchai & Usui, 2020).

In practice, this is evident when local communities are “included” in decision-making forums but only within discursive frameworks shaped by dominant actors. For example, recent studies in Southeast Asia and Africa show how conservation and development narratives constructed by states or international donors limit communities' space to define their own development visions (Chirikure et al., 2022; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2021; Ayuni et al., 2022).

In this study, it is important to distinguish between official discourse and community discourse as two interrelated but unequal sources of meaning in tourism governance. Official discourse refers to narratives produced by state institutions, policy frameworks, and development programs that define tourism in terms of professionalism, order, and sustainability. In contrast, community discourse emerges from everyday practices, local experiences, and informal knowledge, reflecting alternative interpretations of tourism development that may resist, adapt to, or reinterpret dominant narratives.

2.2. Three Dimensions of Power: Power as Domination and Exclusion

Stephen Lukes (2005) offers a conceptual framework of “three dimensions of power” that enables a deeper understanding of how power is exercised. The first dimension (open power) refers to direct influence in policy decisions. The second (hidden power) involves control over the

agenda—issues that are permitted or excluded from public forums. The third (ideological power) pertains to the capacity to shape others' perceptions, values, and preferences.

In tourism governance, formal structures such as coordination forums or public consultations often only reflect the first dimension. Studies by Gurung et al. (2022) and Dangi & Jamal (2023) show that local actors rarely have the power to set agendas and are more often included within pre-determined frameworks. In this context, power operates through institutionalized exclusion—not merely the absence of community voices, but their inability to articulate interests beyond dominant discourses.

The third dimension of power becomes evident in how dominant actors shape the values and aspirations of local communities through development narratives and institutional practices. In tourism contexts, this is reflected in the promotion of ideas such as “professionalism,” “order,” and standardized tourism models, which are often introduced through training programs, regulatory frameworks, and official tourism campaigns. These mechanisms influence how communities perceive desirable forms of tourism development, leading them to internalize externally defined standards even when these may not align with local interests or capacities.

2.3. Collaborative Governance and Critique of the Participation Illusion

Tourism governance in this study is understood as the processes through which multiple actors—state institutions, private sector actors, and local communities—interact, negotiate, and exercise authority in shaping tourism development, resource allocation, and decision-making outcomes.

Governance theory in tourism initially emphasized cross-actor collaboration as a response to destination development complexity (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Dredge & Jenkins, 2003). However, this approach has been criticized for failing to capture the power dynamics and inequalities that operate within collaborative structures. Reed (1997) argues that governance is a political arena, not merely technocratic coordination. Contemporary studies support this view. Teoh et al. (2020) and Le et al. (2021) show that in many Asian contexts, collaborative forums tend to be dominated by state and private actors, while communities are confined to symbolic or administrative roles.

Furthermore, critical governance approaches stress the need to understand how “collaboration” can serve as a subtle mechanism for centralizing power. In many cases, participation is institutionalized procedurally—via meetings, consultations, or public forums—without ensuring genuine influence over policy (Gascón & Aramberri, 2021; Gurung et al., 2022).

2.4. Synthesis: Power as a Multidimensional Process

By integrating these three approaches, this article constructs a conceptual framework that views power relations among actors as a process that:

- a. Is shaped within formal institutional structures (planning forums, project regulations)
- b. Is mediated by development and conservation discourses (official narratives of geoparks, CBT, “empowerment”)
- c. Is maintained or challenged through everyday social practices (coalitions, resistance, role repositioning by local actors)

To operationalize this framework, power is analyzed through observable indicators derived from Lukes’ dimensions. Visible power is reflected in who makes decisions, allocates budgets, implements projects, controls permits, sets tariffs, and gains public visibility. Hidden power operates through agenda-setting mechanisms, such as who convenes meetings, selects participants, controls access to programs, manages the distribution of benefits, and establishes informal rules within governance processes.

This approach enables the analysis of how local communities, though formally “included,” may remain in subordinate positions due to control over representation and the meaning-making process. It also opens space to observe how resistance emerges—not only through direct opposition, but also through role renegotiation, adaptive tactics, or counter-narratives produced by local actors.

By applying this framework, the study of the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark can reveal how local actors navigate a hierarchically structured governance system that is packaged in participatory language, and how local forms of power are shaped, negotiated, or even co-opted in the tourism development process.

3 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using an ethnographic framework, which enables the researcher to understand the dynamics of power relations among actors within a complex socio-cultural context. Ethnography was chosen for its capacity to explore the meanings, practices, and social strategies of the actors involved in the governance of the CPUGG in a deep and contextual manner.

The primary research site was located in Ciemas District, Sukabumi Regency, which is one of the core areas of the CPUGG . This area was selected due to its high concentration of tourism activity and its strategic position in the relationship between local government, local businesses, and indigenous communities. However, the study also included several other districts, such as Palabuhanratu, Cisolok, Ciracap, and Waluran.

Primary data collection was conducted in two phases: the first in September 2023 for 30 days, and the second in February 2024 for 14 days, totaling 44 days of fieldwork. The data were collected using in-depth interviews and participant observation.

The participant observation technique allowed the researcher to directly engage in the everyday lives of actors involved in tourism within the CPUGG. This involvement was crucial to uncovering power dynamics that are often unspoken or hidden in daily interactions, rituals, and habits. As Foucault explains, power is not centralized but rather dispersed and operates through social networks. Participant observation enabled the researcher to observe how power manifests in subtle practices, informal negotiations, or through the language and symbols used by local communities, village officials, tourism groups (Pokdarwis), and business actors. The following locations were used for field observation are Palangpang Beach, Darma Highlands, Cimarunjung Waterfall, Sodong Waterfall, Pulau Kunti Waterfall, Cikadal Beach, Cimarunjung Homestay Village, PAPSI Museum, Kampung KB, Tamanjaya Village, Citepus Beach, Gado Bangkong Square and Ciwaru Fish Auction Site (TPI)

The selection of observation sites was based on the following criteria:

- (1) the presence of tourism-related economic, social, and cultural activities;
- (2) the involvement of local communities, local government, and private actors;
- (3) high tourist traffic; and
- (4) potential or ongoing issues related to power relations at the site.

Observations were conducted during morning, afternoon, and evening using Spradley's (1980) social situation triangle, consisting of place, actors, and activities in the tourism context (local community, community organizations, local government, and private sector). The researcher took field notes (jottings) and documented visuals.

In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner through direct dialogue with informants. The criteria for selecting informants included:

- (1) involvement in tourism representing local communities, community organizations, local government, or the private sector; and
- (2) capacity to articulate insights and experiences related to power relations in the tourism sector.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across key actor groups involved in tourism governance. The selection process was guided by the need to capture diverse perspectives from different positions of power, including local residents, community

leaders, government officials, and private sector actors. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached, where no substantially new insights emerged from additional interviews.

Interviews were held multiple times per informant, ranging from 1–3 sessions on different days. Tools used included voice recorders, written notes, and photo documentation. In total, 40 tourism actors participated in the interviews. All informant identities were kept confidential. To maintain anonymity and enhance reader understanding, pseudonyms were used in place of real names.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, with initial coding categories derived from theories of power (Foucault, 1980; Lukes, 2005) and the concept of collaborative governance (Reed, 1997; Bramwell, 2011; Hall, 2011). The analytical process consisted of the following stages:

- a. Transcription of interviews and compilation of field memos
- b. Coding of narratives based on themes: representation, participation, conflict, alliance, marginalization, resistance
- c. Interpretation of data in relation to power structures and the dynamics of actor interactions

To enhance validity, triangulation strategies were applied using both multiple data sources and methods. In addition, interim findings were discussed with selected key informants to clarify and validate preliminary interpretations.

4 Governance Structure of CPUGG

The governance of the CPUGG cannot be understood as a linear administrative system controlled by a single dominant actor. Instead, the area represents a dynamic arena inhabited by multiple actors with diverse backgrounds, interests, and power positions—including local governments, local communities, grassroots organizations, and private/investor actors.

4.1 Local Communities

Local communities play an integral role as both participants and beneficiaries of the tourism sector in the CPUGG area. Their active participation in tourism takes various forms, including providing tourist accommodation, food and beverage services, local guiding and transportation, managing cultural attractions, and engaging in environmental conservation.

Types of accommodations offered by local residents include homestays, guesthouses (losmen), and villas. These tourist lodgings are often situated near key attractions but are generally clustered or scattered within residential neighborhoods. For instance, many homestays near popular sites such as Palangpang Beach and Cimarinjung Waterfall are located in the heart of Cimarinjung village, Ciemas District (see Figure 1). These homestays are integrated into local community life and, in turn, serve as a cultural attraction for visiting guests.

As of 2024, approximately 120 homestays operate in Cimarunjung Village, with prices ranging from IDR 300,000 to IDR 400,000 per night depending on facilities and proximity to tourist attractions. Tourist demand tends to peak during national holidays such as Eid and school vacation periods, when visitor numbers increase significantly and local accommodation becomes highly competitive.

Figure 1. Homestay integrated into residential space, illustrating community-based tourism and household-level participation.



Source: Researcher, 2023

Actually, our lodging here in the Kampung KB area follows the homestay concept. We live together with the guests under the same roof. From meals to their requests to visit certain places, we accompany them. And since the main attraction here is cultural experiences—like making traditional stone mortars (cobek) or bamboo crafts—we also educate and teach these to our guests [Dicky, Artist].

Small-scale accommodation businesses have become a promising source of income for local residents. As a result, many community members invest their primary earnings into developing their homestays.

At first, people were indifferent. But once they saw the benefits—suddenly everyone was painting their homes, fixing their bathrooms. Around here, it became a competition to have the best-looking house. But the goal wasn't for personal comfort—it was to stay competitive with the large hotels and villas out there [Deni, homestay owner and IHC Chairperson].

In addition to offering accommodation, local residents are also involved in tourism by providing food and beverage services to visitors. These services take various forms such as food stalls (warung), small shops, family restaurants, street vendors, and cafes. These businesses are typically located near tourist attractions and homestay areas. Like the homestays, they are small-scale and run by families (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Small-scale food businesses reflecting family-based economic participation and informal tourism economies.



Source: Researcher, 2023

To the left and right of my food stall, those belong to my siblings and relatives. Since I run a food business, sometimes if I need salt or something, I'll just go grab it from my cousin's stall [Kokoy, food stall owner].

Some food business owners have participated in technical assistance programs and culinary training workshops organized by the local government.

There was a time when the Tourism Office and the MSME Office invited us to attend a training. We stayed there for a few days to learn how to be a cook. The trainer taught us how to cook properly [Yani, food vendor in Curug Sodong].

Local community participation in the tourism sector as tour guides and transport providers is also common near tourist attractions (see Figure 3). Equipped with knowledge about tourist sites—gained through generational transfer or self-learning—these guides play a crucial role in enhancing service satisfaction for visitors to CPUGG.

Figure 3. Dual function of fishing boats as tourism assets, demonstrating livelihood diversification and adaptive strategies.



Source: Researcher, 2023

Back then (before the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu area became popular as a tourist destination), I mostly guided researchers to explain the tourism conditions here (CPUGG). At the time, there were only a few tour guides. But once the area became crowded and the local government provided training, more people from the community started working as guides to explain the early conditions or the geological characteristics of Kunti Island [Namsa, tour guide].

Community involvement in the tourism sector is also reflected through local artists. These cultural practitioners participate as performers in cultural events, manage art studios, preserve traditions, collaborate in creative projects, and develop locally inspired creative products (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Traditional dance performance as part of cultural tourism, illustrating the role of local artists in sustaining cultural identity within tourism governance.



Source: Department of Culture, Youth, and Sports, 2024

Actually, tourism here already comes as a package with culture. So for example, during major local events, local artists are regularly invited [Rima, artist].

4.2. Community-Based Practices and Collective Organization

Tourism governance in the CPUGG is not limited to individual business actors; it is also supported by various community groups that emerged from grassroots initiatives. These communities play a critical role in uniting small-scale entrepreneurs, fostering solidarity among residents, and bridging communication between local people, the government, and external actors.

One of the most active tourism communities is the Ikatan Homestay Ciletuh (IHC), a network of homestay owners located around the CPUGG area, particularly in Palangpang Beach, Ciwaru Village. IHC contributes to price standardization, joint promotions, service training, and guest coordination—especially during peak tourist seasons. In several official CPUGG events, IHC has served as a key partner in providing community-based accommodation. As a result of the IHC's

participation, the number of homestays in Cimarunjung Village has grown to 120 units, with diverse prices and facilities.

We (IHC) have routine activities like monitoring market prices for homestays, and even food and beverages. I get angry with those who overcharge. It's not just because it's unfair, but it hurts everyone else too. If prices are too high, tourists won't buy anything here (CPUGG); they'll bring everything from outside [Deni, IHC Chairperson].

Nevertheless, according to informants, overpriced food and beverages are still common in tourist areas, especially at food stalls located near beaches and hot springs.

Actually, the Tourism Office often receives complaints about vendors charging excessive prices. Even bottled water can cost up to 10,000 rupiah. If the experience here was on par with Bali, tourists might not mind. But we're not there yet, and when we try to make it like Bali, locals resist [Helmy, Tourism Office].

In addition to IHC, the Sanggar Perahu (Boat Studio) community in Palangpang Beach manages water-based tourism and boat transport services. This community operates on a rotation and collective pricing system to ensure equitable income and avoid conflict among boat drivers. Informal rules and social supervision serve as key assets in maintaining community solidarity.

When it comes to pricing, it's the same for everyone—about 300,000 to 400,000 rupiah for 10 to 15 passengers. We've all agreed on this beforehand. So we don't compete. If I can't take passengers, I offer them to others. It's all about helping each other [Yuda, Boat Rental Operator].

Another notable group is the Madani Kencana Jaya Family Planning Village (Kampung KB) in Tamanjaya, which promotes family-based tourism through daily life experiences. Homestays in this community involve entire families and allow guests to participate in local activities such as farming, animal care, cooking, and handicrafts. Beyond tourism, the community is also active in social efforts like communal work (gotong royong), sanitation, and traditional events such as earth blessing rituals (sedekah bumi).

Most local artists also form informal communities through art studios (sanggar) that accommodate public interest in traditional arts. Documentation reveals that around 300 art studios operate across Sukabumi Regency, many of which are officially recognized by decrees issued by the Department of Culture, Youth, and Sports (DISBUDPORA). Prominent groups that regularly participate in cultural tourism events include Latina Rasa, Mutiara, Saung Buruan Ajar, and others. These studios facilitate training and performances in traditional dance (e.g., Tari Cepet, Tari Gondang), music (e.g., angklung, dogdog lojor, and kawih), and traditional games (kaulinan) or oral tradition education (sasakala or regional legends). In practice, these art groups serve as

essential talent providers for cultural events such as Fishermen's Day, Seren Taun, and local festivals.

Besides the main festival, Fishermen's Day events—whether in Palabuhanratu, Cisolok, Ujunggenteng, Minajaya, or Palangpang—are really the artists' domain. For us, it's a time to 'test our craft.' Dancers, ceremonial hosts (lengser), singers (sinden), everyone participates [Rima, Artist].

As such, art studios are vital partners for the Tourism Office (DISPAR) and DISBUDPORA in implementing cultural tourism programs. Although a small number of these studios remain unregistered, they actively perform at tourism events hosted by either the government or local communities. Even if not directly involved in policy-making, these artistic communities are vital in preserving CPUGG's cultural identity amid tourism-driven change.

In addition to supplying talent for performances, several local groups such as PAPSI (Paguyuban Alam Pakidulan Sukabumi) and PALAPAH (Paguyuban Lahan Parahyangan) contribute to the development and protection of local culture. Interviews reveal that PALAPAH has spearheaded the revitalization of Seni Gondang, a traditional performance from Waluran District, which had not been performed in nearly 30 years due to a lack of artist regeneration. The group collected information from village elders and adapted the art form through slight modifications. PALAPAH also introduced new dances to CPUGG, including Tari Liliuran and Tari Suligar.

Beyond formal communities, many locals build solidarity based on kinship and family ties. This kinship network is evident in the family-run businesses of Ciwaru Village. Observations and interviews suggest two main business models: some families operate similar businesses (e.g., all run homestays), while others diversify—one family member may run a homestay, another a food stall, and another work as a guide.

If I have guests, my sister helps with the cooking. If she has a tour, I look after her food stall [Mrs Luna, homestay owner].

However, this solidarity is tested by market pressures and external interventions. When outside agents introduced bundling systems and large-scale promotions, some communities had to make adjustments.

We were once offered a partnership, but the system didn't benefit small operators—so we declined [Mr Deni, homestay owner].

Communities rooted in daily practice and kinship offer a form of social resilience amid an increasingly competitive tourism industry. In Palangpang, the Sanggar Perahu community has demonstrated quiet yet firm resistance, maintaining their rotation and pricing system even under

pressure from external tourism agents. In the Kampung KB, the family-based tourism model remains intact.

Promotion strategies among actors, however, reveal unequal access to resources and visibility. Larger businesses and external actors often rely on digital platforms, social media marketing, and online travel agents to attract tourists, enabling broader market reach. In contrast, many local homestay owners depend primarily on word-of-mouth, returning visitors, and informal networks, reflecting both limited access to digital promotion and alternative forms of community-based marketing.

We open our homes, take guests to harvest chilies, feed the sheep—so they can see what our real lives are like. But we lack promotion. Those with more capital can advertise. We just rely on word-of-mouth from our guests [Mrs Tati, Homestay Owner].

4.3. Private Actors and Local Tourism Dynamics

The involvement of private actors in the CPUGG tourism ecosystem has become increasingly apparent in recent years. They participate through various types of businesses that are often beyond the capacity of local communities due to limited capital, technology, and promotional networks.

Private enterprises typically dominate sectors such as: tourist accommodations (starred hotels and resorts), restaurants and permanent food courts, tour services and travel agencies, strategic land acquisition, franchise food businesses, and tourism infrastructure projects executed by outside contractors. These sectors generally require higher capital investment and access to wider promotional networks, which are often beyond the reach of local small-scale actors, reinforcing unequal access to tourism resources and opportunities. In several cases, private actors collaborate with government entities, but local residents often claim they are rarely involved in the early planning stages.

A striking example comes from Juju, a former fisherman who became a legislative member and now owns a large-scale villa business in Ciletuh. Observations show that Villa R was the first major tourist accommodation in the area, aside from Villa B, also owned by a political figure or party affiliate.

The villa is located right next to the beach, separated only by a long wall, giving the impression of private beach access. Currently, the villa consists of 60 rentable units and is still expanding. It is estimated to have a land and building asset value of 25 billion IDR, with peak monthly revenues reaching 150–200 million IDR. Juju employs five to seven local workers, yet his political background continues to raise suspicions.

Aside from being a resident, I'm also part of a political party and a legislative member. Initially, the response from nearby residents wasn't great. They thought I was using state funds to develop the villa because it's so large. But actually, this villa has existed since 2008 and has just gradually expanded. I've been trying to rebuild the communication I used to have with the community, especially since I was a fisherman myself [Juju, Villa Owner].

This narrative of tourism benefits being concentrated among the powerful was echoed by homestay owners during interviews. Some expressed concerns that large-scale accommodations along the beachfront, including Juju's, create unequal access to land and promotion.

Honestly, it's better to stay here in a homestay than in a hotel or villa by the beach (...). But tourists usually only know about the places along the main roads. Rarely does anyone recommend staying in a homestay. So mostly it's just returning guests who stay here [Anita, Homestay Owner].

Another informant added that hotels around Palabuhanratu Beach tend to be more expensive than homestays, even when compared to hotels in cities like Bandung. Prices typically surge during national holidays, especially during Eid. During these peak periods, accommodation prices can increase significantly, further widening the gap between large-scale commercial operators and small community-based businesses.

Don't visit Palabuhanratu during Eid. First, it's packed. Second, everything gets expensive. Hotel prices, food, and parking can all skyrocket [Maria, Local].

Most large hotels near tourist spots are owned by investors from outside the region, especially from Jakarta. These investors dominate the accommodation and food sectors.

A similar experience of exclusion was shared by Adit's father, a migrant from Bandung who tried to open a small stall in Palangpang Beach. He initially faced hostility from locals but was later accepted with the help of relatives in Ciletuh.

I'm originally from Bandung and moved here to Ciwaru Village. When I first started selling clothes, I often received threats from locals. But luckily, I had family and connections here, so I've managed to stay safe until now [Adit, Food Vendor]

Competition occurs not only in physical space and promotion but also in access to decision-making. Several tourism infrastructure projects reportedly involved outside contractors with little or no consultation with residents. In the case of Curug Sodong, a site once managed communally by locals, formal government control and official fees displaced the original community model.

Originally, Curug Sodong was on community-owned land. We (vendors) could sell freely. Then the local government bought the land—saying it's part of the geopark—and moved us outside. The new stalls built inside are rented out. But because we're outside, tourists rarely see us. So it's quieter now compared to before [Yani, Food Vendor].

Still, not all private sector involvement is exploitative. Some businesses do employ locals. However, in most cases, the relationship remains hierarchical and offers little room for fair participation for small-scale actors.

It's unfortunate. Small beach vendors rely on their stalls for income. But because things got messy and there were cases of illegal parking fees, the government tore down their stalls and moved them to designated areas. But people are stubborn—soon after the stalls were destroyed, they rebuilt them again along the beach [Maria, Local Resident].

These narratives reveal the tension behind seemingly polished tourism development projects, marked by a constant push and pull between the state, community, and private actors. Residents are not merely passive victims; they adapt, negotiate, and sometimes resist.

When something goes wrong in tourism, people often blame the government or private sector. But really, the community also plays a role. For example, DISPAR receives many complaints about extortion from thugs. But those people are part of the community too. So often, it's these intermediaries that hinder tourism progress. Even when assistance is given, it rarely reaches the community directly [Maria, Local Resident].

People protect their spaces, build solidarity, and maintain autonomy in ways that are rarely captured in official documents. Power in Ciletuh isn't only about titles or budgets—it's about who tells the story, who endures, and who gets heard.

Before government projects came, Curug Sodong was managed collectively. We had people for cleaning, guarding—everything was shared. Now that contractors are in charge, we're just spectators [Rahmat, Member of Local Tourism Awareness Group].

Residents are often confused by sudden developments.

We're never invited to meetings. One day, machines just show up, lay paving, and put up signs saying Property of the Local Government [Tini, Food Vendor near Curug Sodong].

But it's not just government actors who reshape power dynamics. Outside investors have also begun to shift the landscape.

We build homestays from wood; they build two-story hotels with air conditioning and Instagram ads. Who can compete with that? [Yana, Homestay Owner].

Not all locals surrender. In Palangpang, the Sanggar Perahu boat operator community shows quiet resistance. They maintain their rotation and pricing system, even after external travel agents tried to monopolize boat services.

Another story comes from a group of women food vendors in Palangpang Beach. They used to sell on mats but were later moved to kiosks by the government. However, the kiosk location turned out to be less strategic.

Most visitors didn't know where the kiosks were. So we returned to our mats. Sales are better that way [Etih, smiling].

These stories reaffirm that beneath the polished façade of tourism development, there's a constant negotiation of interests between the state, communities, and private actors. Residents are not merely recipients—they are agents who adapt, resist, and reimagine their spaces. Power in Ciletuh is not only reflected in formal authority, but also in narrative control, everyday practices, and access to representation.

4.4 State Actors and Tourism Governance in CPUGG

Tourism governance in the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark (CPUGG) is deeply entangled with state actors at multiple levels—from national to village level (see Table 1).

Table 1. Government Entities Involved in the Management of CPUGG

Government Level	Entity Name	Main Responsibilities Related to Tourism and Culture in CPUGG
Provincial	West Java Provincial Office of Tourism and Culture	General policy, information dissemination, tourism and cultural promotion
District	Sukabumi District Tourism Office	Direct tourism management, event development, revalidation strategies
District	Sukabumi District Office of Culture, Youth, and Sports	Cultural affairs, heritage preservation
District	CPUGG Management Board	Operational management, coordination, geopark development
National	Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia	National recognition, policy guidelines, strategic support

Source: Researcher, 2025

At the national level, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MoTCE) plays a role in destination promotion and tourism human resource development. The Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR) contributes to basic infrastructure provision, while the Indonesian National Geopark Committee (GNFI) oversees certification and national geopark policy coordination.

At the provincial level, the West Java Government functions as a strategic actor facilitating inter-district development, including the branding of “West Java Geopark Province,” which positions Ciletuh as a flagship destination. The West Java Office of Tourism and Culture (DISPARBUD) plays

an active role in promotion through digital platforms and in managing tourism-related data, contributing to increased visitor numbers and economic optimization.

Meanwhile, the Sukabumi District Government—through its Tourism Office, Office of Culture, Youth, and Sports, PUPR Office, Office of Industry and Trade, and Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda)—acts as the main executor of development programs. At the village level, village governments serve as intermediaries connecting policies with communities, although often constrained by capacity and resources.

Documentation highlights that the Tourism Office of Sukabumi District (DISPAR) plays a central role in CPUGG governance through promotion (including social media and its official YouTube channel), regional branding such as “Gurilapss,” infrastructure coordination, participation in UNESCO geopark revalidation, and capacity-building programs.

Apart from DISPAR, governance in CPUGG also involves the Cultural Division of the Sukabumi District Office of Culture, Youth, and Sports (DISBUDPORA), which manages cultural heritage and collaborates in organizing cultural events such as Fishermen’s Day and Seren Taun.

Alongside DISPAR and DISBUDPORA, the CPUGG Management Board functions as a coordinating body linking government, academia, communities, and the private sector, with roles in conservation, education, local economic empowerment, and promotion. The involvement of high-ranking officials reflects strong governmental oversight in geopark governance.

At the policy level, the state has initiated several programs including spatial planning, infrastructure development, capacity-building, digital promotion, cultural events, and stakeholder collaboration.

1. Spatial planning and revitalization of tourist sites (e.g., Curug Sodong, Palangpang Beach, Ujunggenteng Beach, Karanghawu Beach, Cisolok Hot Springs);
2. Construction of supporting infrastructure (roads, parking areas, public toilets, signage, glamping sites);
3. Facilitation of training for homestay providers, food servers, tour guides, and other tourism-related services;
4. Establishment of tourist information centers and themed parks;
5. Launching of digital promotional media via CPUGG’s official channels;
6. Organization of cultural events such as Fishermen’s Day and Seren Taun;
7. Management of UNESCO revalidation requirements to maintain Global Geopark status;

8. Optimization of local revenue (PAD) potential from tourism; and
9. Collaboration with various stakeholders, including government institutions, SOEs (e.g., BioFarma), universities, and organizations.

These interventions illustrate how visible power operates through decision-making authority, Budget allocation, and project implementation, while hidden power is reflected in the control over planning processes, limited public consultation, and restricted access to information.

Data analysis shows that the theme most frequently mentioned by informants was government power, highlighting the dominant role of the state in shaping tourism governance. This finding also aligns with recent studies that emphasize that political and institutional conditions shape tourism development and governance outcomes, particularly in contexts marked by uncertainty and uneven power relations (Alkhozaim et al., 2025). This dynamic is also reflected in the narratives of local actors, as illustrated below:

It's undeniable—political dynamics are always present in development. They (the government) are the ones who determine the success of projects. The terrain in Palabuhanratu is complicated. You can't just build carelessly. The public should know that coastal development costs more than in other zones. For example, basic materials corrode faster in marine environments. So many factors must be considered. [Maria, Local Resident].

Despite this, several reports indicate that public participation mechanisms in CPUGG remain symbolic rather than deliberative. Locals often feel reduced to technical implementers. Project outreach is limited, and sustained public dialogue is lacking. While communities are actively involved in tourism at the economic level, their participation in governance processes remains limited, revealing a persistent gap between economic participation and political influence. Some informants complained about large-scale projects, such as road paving, being carried out without community involvement.

At the village level, village governments facilitate tourism activities and data collection but remain limited in authority and budget support. In many cases, community initiatives operate without direct support. Interviews suggest that village leaders are sometimes reluctant to support tourism expansion due to concerns over socio-cultural change.

That bridge over the mangrove in Mandra Island was damaged because locals didn't take care of it. The village head was already informed, but nothing changed. From the start, they were skeptical of tourism in their neighborhood—afraid it might change their traditions. (...) Around here, the village head election is unique. It's like a monarchy. Leadership stays in the family [Namsa, Tour Guide]

Figure 5. Neglected mangrove bridge reflecting gaps in infrastructure maintenance and local governance, highlighting tensions between development planning and community engagement.



Source: Researcher, 2023

In addition to holding office, some government officials also benefit from tourism, particularly through ownership of large-scale accommodations. Observations indicate that beachfront villas are often linked to political elites, contributing to unequal distribution of tourism benefits.

Thus, the state—through its various actors—is formally and administratively involved in CPUGG tourism development. However, top-down structures, unequal access to information, and limited deliberative participation produce a hierarchical and technocratic relationship between the state and communities. Citizen participation remains mobilizational rather than substantive, posing a key challenge for inclusive tourism governance.

4.5 Power Dynamic in Multi-Actor Tourism Governance

This section analyzes the complex and often contested relationships among key actors involved in the governance of the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark (CPUGG). It highlights how power circulates and is negotiated across different relational configurations—between local communities and grassroots organizations, community groups and government agencies, and strategic alliances between the government and the private sector. This section demonstrates how solidarity, exclusion, and resistance coexist within collaborative arrangements

These findings confirm that power in tourism governance operates not only through formal institutional arrangements but also through discursive practices and everyday interactions, as emphasized by Foucauldian perspectives. The findings also reflect Lukes' (2005) three dimensions of power, where visible power is exercised through formal decision-making, hidden power through agenda-setting and exclusion, and ideological power through the internalization of dominant development narratives.

These findings also reveal a critical distinction between economic and political participation in tourism governance. Economic participation is evident in the involvement of local actors in activities such as managing homestays, operating food stalls, working as tour guides, and providing transportation services. However, this form of participation does not necessarily translate into influence over governance processes. Political participation—such as involvement in decision-making, planning forums, and tourism policy discussions—remains largely limited and controlled by dominant actors. This gap reveals how inclusion at the economic level may coexist with exclusion at the political level, reinforcing unequal power relations within tourism governance.

Community Organization and Internal Dynamics

The relationship between local residents and tourism-based community organizations—such as the Ciletuh Homestay Association (IHC), Sanggar Perahu, and PAPSI—demonstrates a configuration of power that is both productive and constraining. These communities function as active social spaces that produce shared norms and practices in citizen-led tourism governance. Practices such as turn-based boat systems, standardized homestay pricing, and collaborative promotion illustrate how community structures distribute power and enable relatively equitable access to resources compared to external actor relations.

However, through Lukes' three dimensions of power, this configuration is not always open or deliberative. Communities often develop informal “hidden agendas” that shape inclusion, determining who can join, access training, or remain within the network. In practice, newcomers—especially migrants or those without kinship ties—frequently face subtle exclusion, showing how inclusion is shaped not only by economic capacity but also by social affiliation.

From a critical governance perspective (Reed, 1997), these communities act as intermediary actors with dual roles. They can resist external dominance—for example through collective systems like boat-sharing—but may also consolidate localized power and reproduce exclusion as they evolve into semi-formal institutions.

In this context, resistance emerges not as overt opposition but through everyday micro-practices. Actors excluded from dominant networks adopt adaptive strategies such as word-of-mouth promotion, small-scale entrepreneurship, and reliance on family labor. These practices reflect bottom-up repositioning of agency without direct confrontation.

Thus, local community relations in the CPUGG cannot be understood solely as solidarity-based collaboration. They also involve internal tensions, symbolic boundaries, and subtle exclusions that shape who is included or marginalized. Power operates not only through domination but through the production of norms and expectations that structure everyday socio-economic life.

Community Engagement with Government

The relationship between local communities (such as IHC, Sanggar Perahu, Kampung KB, or arts-based communities) and the government in managing the CPUGG unfolds within a complex and layered power landscape, where community participation is often symbolic rather than substantive. Drawing from critical governance approaches (Reed, 1997; Bramwell, 2011; Hall, 2011), these relations reflect a structure of collaboration that appears inclusive on the surface—through participation in meetings or official events—but does not always allow equal influence over policy direction and resource distribution.

Many communities are invited to attend official forums or government projects, such as large-scale tourism events, UNESCO outreach, or spatial planning initiatives. However, this participation tends to resemble administrative mobilization rather than true deliberation. Communities are positioned as implementer partners to demonstrate the success of participatory programs, rather than as agents involved in strategic formulation. This is clearly reflected in the testimony of an IHC representative:

We're often invited to meetings if there's a tourism event. But the decisions are already made beforehand. At most, we're just asked to provide accommodation or help with promotion.

Seen through Lukes' three dimensions of power, the government exercises the first dimension through formal involvement (meetings, training, consultation), but the second and third dimensions are enacted more subtly—through agenda-setting and the reproduction of official discourse on “empowerment,” “cleanliness,” “professionalism,” and “partnership.” The empowerment narratives in official documents do not always match field realities, which remain top-down. For instance, the government has implemented paving projects, tourist kiosks, or glamping zones without meaningful consultation with communities that have long managed these areas through collective labor. This displaces established local agency, replacing it with a technocratic logic that often favors external investors.

However, community positions are not always passive. Within Foucault's framework of productive power, local communities produce counter-narratives that renegotiate the meaning of participation. They resist full compliance with state-defined notions of “organized,” “modern,” or “efficient” tourism. For example, the Sanggar Perahu community has retained its boat rotation system despite pressure from external travel agents and government pushes to form formal cooperatives.

Another example is the Kampung KB community, which continues to practice household-based homestays without being preoccupied with modern facilities or online ratings. One informant noted: “Those with large capital can advertise endlessly. We rely on guests telling their friends.”, where communities acknowledge state authority but resist full integration into dominant development models. In some cases, they also use formal spaces to assert collective interests—for instance, IHC’s rejection of unequal partnership schemes—repositioning themselves as negotiating actors rather than mere implementers.

Thus, community–government relations in CPUGG reflect an ambivalence of power, between symbolic inclusion and substantive exclusion. Communities occupy a liminal position: recognized but not fully empowered. Power operates through discursive, procedural, and cultural mechanisms that sustain the appearance of collaboration while control remains largely centralized.

Community Responses to Private Sector Involvement

The relationship between local communities and private actors in tourism governance in the CPUGG reveals a dynamic of co-optation alongside collective resistance. Private actors—ranging from investors, villa owners, and travel agents to franchise operators—enter through formal partnerships and capital-intensive ventures, creating asymmetries between large-scale actors and local communities relying on social capital.

According to Lukes’ framework, these relations demonstrate domination across three dimensions of power. Visible power appears in control over land, projects, and marketing; hidden power in the exclusion of communities from decision-making; and ideological power in discourses of “progress,” “modernization,” and “standardization.”

For instance, the construction of Vila Ratu Pantai was criticized for restricting local beach access. From a Foucauldian perspective, such developments are normalized as beneficial for tourism, even as they shift demand toward elite accommodations and marginalize homestay-based economies.

However, communities are not passive. Some demonstrate resistance through cooperative practices and economic solidarity. In Palangpang, Sanggar Perahu maintains a rotation and collective pricing system, while IHC relies on local promotion rather than full dependence on digital platforms.

Communities also produce counter-discourses emphasizing “local wisdom,” “village hospitality,” and “fair pricing,” articulated through social media, local events, and word-of-mouth promotion. These narratives challenge dominant models and reassert community identities.

Nevertheless, resistance is not always successful. Some communities face displacement, relocation, or increased costs. Narratives such as “better to sell on a mat and still make sales” symbolize everyday resistance to dominant economic logics.

In sum, community–private sector relations in the CPUGG are marked by ambivalence—between co-optation and resistance. From a Foucauldian perspective, power not only constrains but also shapes agency, as communities adapt strategies and renegotiate their position within unequal tourism governance structures.

Government and Private Sector Collaboration

The relationship between local government actors (including tourism agencies, village administrations, and geopark forums) and the private sector in the development of the CPUGG reflects a form of strategic partnership marked by asymmetries in access and control. On the surface, this relationship is expressed through the language of collaboration: the government provides regulations and land, while the private sector contributes capital and market networks. However, more deeply, this relationship reproduces the dominance of certain actors over tourism development processes.

From Stephen Lukes’ framework, this relation emphasizes both the first dimension of power (decision-making) and the second dimension (agenda-setting). The government often appoints private actors as partners in infrastructure or site management projects without genuine community involvement. For instance, in the construction of shop lots and paved paths at Curug Sodong, residents were never invited to any meetings and only learned about the project after heavy machinery arrived and official signs were posted.

Ideologically (third dimension of power), these partnerships are framed by discourses of “professionalism,” “service standardization,” and “spatial order.” In practice, however, the benefits primarily go to those with political connections and significant capital. Tourism projects executed by external contractors often disregard local needs and instead displace small-scale economic actors—such as local vendors removed from strategic locations for “aesthetic” reasons.

From a Foucauldian perspective, these relations show how power operates through narratives of development and spatial ordering, not merely through coercion. The government produces a “visual order” of clean, modern tourism areas, framing local vendors selling on mats or in makeshift stalls as disruptions. Within this framework, aesthetics becomes an instrument of power—determining who deserves visibility and who must be removed.

Yet, the relationship is also ambiguous. In some cases, the government appears to engage with the private sector in an effort to maintain Ciletuh's UNESCO Geopark status. This global pressure creates a need to "show rapid progress" through visible, measurable outcomes. Thus, partnerships with the private sector are seen as a shortcut to building infrastructure, organizing events, and attracting tourists. Here, the government becomes a mediating actor—caught between top-down pressures (from UNESCO standards and national tourism agendas) and bottom-up demands (from communities advocating for inclusion and resisting displacement).

However, according to critical governance theory (Reed, 1997; Bramwell, 2011; Hall, 2011), such relationships are vulnerable to the "illusion of collaboration." Coordination forums and formal partnerships often include only village elites, large business owners, or politically connected individuals. Communities appear merely as symbolic accessories—invited to ceremonies or asked to sign off on decisions already made.

In the case of the CPUGG, this reveals how collaborative mechanisms can become arenas for the reproduction of power, rather than its distribution. State power does not weaken through partnerships—it is instead reinforced, as private actors lend legitimacy and a sense of efficiency that the state itself may lack. Yet, this efficiency is rarely inclusive.

The following table illustrates the matrix of relationships among actors involved in the development and management dynamics of CPUGG (Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark). This matrix maps the forms of relationships, dimensions of power as proposed by Steven Lukes, dominant discourses based on Michel Foucault's perspective, and community responses drawing from the ideas of Reed and Foucault. It aims to reveal the complexity of power interactions, meaning-making, and resistance in the local context.

In this article, "society" refers to individual residents engaged in tourism-related activities, while "community" refers to organized groups such as IHC, Sanggar Perahu, and PAPS I that structure collective action and coordination within tourism governance.

Table 2 Matrix of Actor Relations in CPUGG

Actor Relationship	Form of Relationship	Power Dimension (Lukes)	Discourse (Foucault)	Community Response (Reed, Foucault)
Society – Community	Solidarity & informal exclusion	Hidden power (agenda-setting dimension 2)	"We are the worthy ones", "local entrepreneurs"	Informal adaptation, micro-resistance (e.g., small businesses, family-based network, word-of-mouth promotions))
Community – Government	Symbolic participation,	Visible and hidden power	"Empowerment", "citizen participation"	Meaning negotiation, limited and procedural involvement without substantive

	procedural coordination	(Decision-making & agenda power (dimension 1 & 2))		influence, involvement without substance
Community – Private Sector	Subordinative relations, business competition, cooperative resistance	Multi-dimensional domination (all three dimensions of power)	“Economic progress”, “service standardization”	Collective resistance, repositioning of local identity, reinforcement of turn-taking systems and alternative promotional strategies
Government – Private Sector	Formal strategic partnerships and infrastructure contractualization	Visible and ideological power (dimensions 1 & 3)	“Investment”, “area management”, “development acceleration”	Indirect resistance: including distrust, localized protests; informal practices (e.g., informal stalls) and counter-narratives

Source: Researcher, 2025

This study demonstrates that collaborative governance in tourism does not necessarily lead to equitable participation, but may instead reproduce existing power hierarchies. By combining ethnographic insights with a multidimensional analysis of power, this study offers a nuanced understanding of how tourism governance operates beyond formal policy frameworks.

5. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the ethnographic approach, while providing in-depth insights into power relations and everyday practices, is context-specific and limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the CPUGG setting. Second, although multiple actor groups were included, access to certain high-level stakeholders—particularly private investors and senior policymakers—was limited, which may constrain the comprehensiveness of perspectives on decision-making processes. Third, the study primarily relies on qualitative data, which may not fully capture broader structural trends in tourism governance.

Future research could adopt comparative or mixed-method approaches to examine power dynamics across different geopark or tourism governance contexts. Expanding the scope to include longitudinal analysis would also help to better understand how power relations evolve over time in response to policy changes and market dynamics.

6. Conclusions

This study advocates a shift toward redistributive governance in which power, representation, and economic benefits are more equitably shared among all stakeholders in CPUGG's tourism development. It contributes to the literature by providing an ethnographic and multidimensional analysis of power, showing how collaborative governance can simultaneously enable participation

and reproduce inequality. This study shows that tourism governance in the CPUGG cannot be understood solely through formal actor relations but must be analyzed as a complex arena of power shaped by discourse, everyday practice, and uneven institutional structures. While collaborative participation is promoted rhetorically, field realities reveal persistent inequalities in access, representation, and benefit distribution. These findings reinforce the view that power in tourism governance operates through both discursive formations and multidimensional structures of domination, as highlighted by Foucauldian and Lukesian perspectives.

Five key findings are summarized:

1. Power relations are multidimensional and often invisible. Power operates through discourse, agenda setting, and informal exclusion, including within participatory forums.
2. Communities act as ambivalent mediators. Local actors such as IHC and Sanggar Perahu create spaces for cooperation and collective action, but these spaces may also reproduce informal boundaries and limit strategic influence.
3. Government and private actors shape dominant development agendas. Projects, infrastructure, and zoning decisions can reinforce unequal control over tourism resources and development priorities.
4. Local resistance and adaptation emerge through everyday practices. Informal business strategies, kin-based networks, and selective forms of compliance enable communities to negotiate externally driven interventions.
5. Structural inequalities remain embedded in governance processes. Differences in access to licensing, information, and policymaking continue to shape the distribution of opportunities and influence.

Recommendations include strengthening substantive local participation, enhancing community capacity, increasing transparency in infrastructure and licensing processes, regulating private sector dominance, and revitalizing collaborative forums to support more equitable participation in decision-making. For instance, the lack of deliberative participation identified in Section 4.4 underscores the need to strengthen community involvement in decision-making processes.

This study advocates a shift toward redistributive governance in which power, representation, and economic benefits are more equitably shared among stakeholders in CPUGG's tourism development. It contributes to the literature by providing an ethnographic and multidimensional analysis of multi-actor tourism governance, showing how participation can create spaces for collective agency while simultaneously reproducing unequal relations of power.

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