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Local Wisdom Based Collaborative Governance for Sustainable Blackwater Tourism on the Sebangau River

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Abstract: Sustainable tourism in peatland and river ecosystems depends on governance arrangements that connect conservation mandates, local livelihoods, and culturally grounded knowledge. This study analyzes collaborative governance in the management of the Sebangau River blackwater tourism destination in Kereng Bangkirai, Palangka Raya, Indonesia, and develops a contextual model based on local wisdom. A qualitative case study was conducted with 20 informants representing academia, business, tourism awareness groups, local communities, government agencies, the urban village administration, and media. Data were collected through semi structured interviews, field observation, and document analysis, then interpreted using the interactive model of data reduction, display, and conclusion verification supported by NVivo 12 Plus. The findings show that collaboration has emerged but remains transitional and uneven. Starting conditions, especially the history of cooperation, unresolved conflict, incentives, and power asymmetry, strongly shape the process. Regulatory support and community institutions exist, yet sectoral fragmentation, overlapping authority, limited private participation, weak facilitative leadership, and insufficient organizational capacity constrain collective action. Local Dayak values of deliberation, ecological respect, and collective responsibility provide an important cultural foundation, but they are not yet fully institutionalized. The proposed model differs from generic collaboration models by institutionalizing Dayak local wisdom through representation and deliberation rules, seasonal river and peatland based safety standards, cultural interpretation, and shared ecological and social evaluation. It combines these mechanisms with structural clarity, government facilitation, and community centered pentahelix governance.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance, Local Wisdom, Sustainable Tourism, Peatland Ecosystem, Community Participation

INTRODUCTION

Tourism in ecologically sensitive areas creates a governance problem that cannot be resolved through infrastructure development alone. Destinations located in peatlands, river systems, and conservation buffers must simultaneously protect ecological functions, maintain cultural integrity, provide safe and attractive visitor services, and distribute economic benefits to communities. These objectives are administered by organizations with different mandates, resources, and forms of knowledge. Consequently, sustainable destination management increasingly requires public agencies, community groups, businesses, universities, and communication actors to coordinate decisions rather than work through isolated programs. Collaborative governance provides an analytical lens for understanding such coordination because it focuses on the conditions under which public and non public actors engage in collective decision making, build trust, and share responsibility for public outcomes (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson *et al.*, 2012).

The governance challenge is particularly visible in Indonesia, where biodiversity conservation, decentralization, regional development, and community based tourism intersect. Local governments are encouraged to develop tourism as a strategic sector, while conservation authorities retain mandates over protected ecosystems. In practice, the boundaries between destination development, environmental protection, transport, sanitation, local enterprise, and cultural preservation are institutionally fragmented. Cross sector collaboration can address fragmentation, but collaboration does not automatically produce performance. Its outcomes depend on combinations of institutional design, leadership, resources, trust, and prior relationships (Douglas *et al.*, 2020). In tourism settings, these conditions are further influenced by local identity and the capacity of residents to convert cultural and ecological knowledge into rules, services, and shared narratives.

The Sebangau River blackwater tourism area in Kereng Bangkirai, Palangka Raya, illustrates this problem. The destination lies at a strategic entrance to Sebangau National Park, a major tropical peat swamp conservation landscape in Central Kalimantan. Its dark water is formed by dissolved organic material from peat vegetation, while river travel, wetland scenery, Dayak cultural elements, and community operated attractions create a distinctive visitor experience. The site has evolved from a loading dock and rowing venue into a popular domestic destination. Facilities include river boats, pedal boats, gazebos, viewing areas, food stalls, and access to routes toward the national park. Local architecture uses motifs associated with Dayak identity and construction practices adapted to wetland conditions. These features give the site ecological, educational, cultural, and economic importance.

Visitor data nevertheless reveal a sharp imbalance between local popularity and international reach. Domestic visits increased from 27,200 in 2017 to a peak of 114,075 in 2024 before declining to 97,854 in 2025. International visits never exceeded 277 during the observed period and were absent from 2019 through 2021. Demand has therefore grown without a corresponding consolidation of integrated governance. Access roads, sanitation, parking, waste management, safety standards, and supporting amenities remain uneven. Seasonal flooding and low river levels disrupt access and boating, creating income uncertainty for operators and traders. More importantly, destination management is divided among municipal agencies, the urban village administration, the tourism awareness group known as Pokdarwis, community businesses, conservation interests, and occasional external partners.

Prior tourism studies in Indonesia have shown that government dominance, weak coordination, and uneven community involvement frequently limit collaborative arrangements. Research on Kereng Bangkirai identified cooperation among government, private actors, and residents but found that the arrangement had not reached its potential (Setiawan & Saefulloh, 2019). Studies in other destinations similarly report that inclusive tourism development is constrained when authority and participation are distributed unequally (Ismail *et al.*, 2023), while marine and village tourism research stresses the importance of multi stakeholder policy

alignment and local capacity (Suhardono *et al.*, 2024; Nuraini *et al.*, 2025). International studies likewise show that protected area and ecotourism collaboration depends on durable institutional structures, community influence, and balanced stakeholder relationships (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Wondirad *et al.*, 2020). Table 1 synthesizes these findings and clarifies the unresolved gap. The literature establishes the relevance of collaboration, but it does not sufficiently explain how structural governance conditions interact with locally embedded ecological values in a *blackw*ater peatland destination.

Table 1. Synthesis of prior collaborative tourism governance studies

Study	Context and focus	Main finding	Gap relevant to this study
Setiawan & Saefulloh (2019)	Kereng Bangkirai tourism area	Government, private, and community collaboration existed but had not reached its potential.	Predates the current representation dispute and does not integrate Dayak ecological values into formal governance.
Ismail *et al.* (2023)	Inclusive coastal tourism in Gresik	Collaboration supported inclusive tourism, but authority and participation remained uneven.	Does not explain how locally embedded cultural and ecological values shape decision rights.
Suhardono *et al.* (2024)	Marine tourism policy in Indonesia	Multi actor coordination and policy alignment are important for tourism development.	Focuses policy collaboration more than the institutional role of local wisdom.
Nuraini *et al.* (2025)	Sustainable tourism villages in Central Java	Stakeholder cooperation, institutional capacity, community empowerment, and digital inclusion support sustainable development.	A rural village setting differs from a protected peatland gateway with overlapping municipal and conservation authority.
Jamal & Stronza (2009)	Tourism partnerships in protected areas	Long term collaboration must address community involvement, conservation, institutional structuring, and local knowledge.	Provides a broader protected area framework but not a blackwater peatland governance model.
Wondirad *et al.* (2020)	Ecotourism in a developing country context	Weak stakeholder interaction and insufficient community participation undermine ecological and livelihood outcomes.	Highlights collaboration conditions but does not institutionalize a place specific indigenous knowledge system within governance rules.

This gap is both theoretical and practical. The model of Ansell and Gash (2008) explains collaboration through starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and a cyclical collaborative process. However, applying the model in a peatland tourism context requires attention to local wisdom not merely as cultural decoration, but as a governance resource that shapes legitimacy, conservation behavior, deliberation, and community ownership. The case also requires analysis of how an expired community mandate, intergovernmental overlap, and dependence on project based external assistance affect trust and joint action. Without this contextual extension, collaborative governance risks being treated as a generic checklist rather than a mechanism grounded in the social and ecological realities of the destination.

This study therefore examines the dynamics of collaborative governance in the Sebangau River blackwater tourism area, identifies factors that enable or obstruct its implementation, and constructs an adaptive model for effective and sustainable management. The novelty lies in integrating the structural dimensions of collaborative governance with a cultural foundation derived from Dayak ecological respect, deliberation, collective responsibility, and place based identity. Dayak local wisdom is selected on an empirical and site specific basis rather than as a generic cultural label: Dayak motifs, river based livelihoods, wetland adapted practices, community narratives, and ecological knowledge are directly embedded in the identity and everyday management of Kereng Bangkirai, making them the local cultural resources most closely connected to governance decisions in this case. The analysis positions local wisdom as an institutional input that should be translated into operating procedures, representation rules,

conservation standards, and shared evaluation, while also clarifying the facilitative role required from government. This contribution has relevance beyond Palangka Raya because many nature based destinations worldwide are located at the boundaries of conservation authority, local government, and community livelihoods.

METHODS

The study used a qualitative case study design to examine governance as a context dependent process involving institutional arrangements, social relationships, and local ecological meaning. The case was the Sebangau River blackwater tourism destination in Kereng Bangkirai Urban Village, Sebangau District, Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan. The site was selected because it combines a rare blackwater peatland ecosystem, a community tourism economy, municipal development responsibilities, and its role as an entrance to Sebangau National Park. This design enabled close examination of how actors interpreted authority, cooperation, conflict, and sustainability rather than reducing the phenomenon to statistical associations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Data were collected through semi structured interviews, field observation, and document analysis. Twenty informants represented seven actor categories: three academics, two business actors, three Pokdarwis members, five community members, three municipal agency representatives, two urban village representatives, and two media actors. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were recorded using an interview guide. Observation focused on accessibility, attractions, infrastructure, sanitation, feasibility, safety, interactions, and destination operations. Documents included the Pokdarwis appointment decree, tourism strategic area maps, organizational records, visitor statistics, cooperation records, and relevant local planning instruments. These sources allowed comparison between formal arrangements, actor accounts, and observed conditions.

Analysis followed the interactive process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification (Miles *et al.*, 2014). Interview transcripts and documentary material were coded inductively and organized using NVivo 12 Plus (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). The software supported thematic coding, hierarchy charts, word frequency review, clustering, and searches across actor accounts. Emerging themes were then interpreted through the collaborative governance framework of Ansell and Gash (2008), with particular attention to starting conditions, institutional design, collaborative process, and facilitative leadership. Validity was strengthened through source triangulation across actor groups, method triangulation across interviews, observation, and documents, and temporal comparison of observations and records. Participant identities are reported only through actor codes. The source dissertation does not provide an ethics approval number; this information should be completed by the author before journal submission if institutional approval applied.

Table 2. Informant composition and analytical contribution

No.	Actor category	Code	Number	Primary information
1	Academia	A1	3	Scientific analysis and advisory contributions
2	Business	B1	2	Investment potential and tourism services
3	Pokdarwis	C1	3	Destination management and community organization
4	Local community	C2	5	Participation, livelihoods, and benefits
5	Municipal agencies	G1	3	Regulation, procedures, and Pokdarwis appointment
6	Urban village administration	G2	2	Local institutional process and representation
7	Media	M1	2	Public communication and destination image

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Study Context and Visitor Profile

Kereng Bangkirai is positioned within the fourth tourism strategic area established in the regional tourism master plan of Palangka Raya. The blackwater destination is approximately 10 kilometers from the city center and connects urban visitors with the Sebangau wetland landscape. The river is part of a peat swamp system extending across more than half a million hectares, while the destination combines docks, raised wooden structures, boats, food businesses, viewing facilities, and routes toward conservation areas. Local design elements, including Dayak ornamentation and the use of durable local timber in raised structures, demonstrate adaptation to wetland conditions and provide a visible cultural identity.

The annual visitor series in Figure 1 shows that domestic demand expanded substantially after 2019. Domestic visits rose from 26,800 in 2019 to 90,400 in 2020 and exceeded 100,000 in 2022, 2023, and 2024. The 2025 decline did not erase the wider increase relative to 2017. International visitation remained marginal, with no recorded visits from 2019 through 2021 and only 68 visits in 2025. The destination is therefore economically connected primarily to the regional market. This profile increases the importance of reliable basic services and community benefits, while also indicating that international branding has not yet been matched by access, service standards, or coordinated promotion.

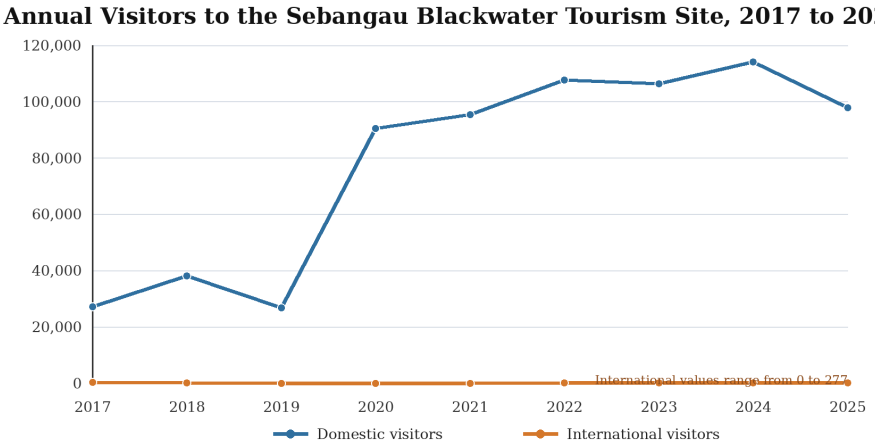

Figure 1. Annual visitor trends at the Sebangau blackwater tourism destination
Source: Palangka Raya Tourism Office data reported in the dissertation, 2026.



Figure 2. River based facilities at the Sebangau blackwater tourism destination
Source: Palangka Raya Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports Office, 2022, as reproduced in the dissertation.

Starting Conditions and Local Wisdom

NVivo coding identified starting conditions as the most prominent dimension in the governance narrative. The history of cooperation was the largest component, followed by conflict, incentives, and power asymmetry. Cooperation had produced tangible improvements. Pokdarwis initiated proposals to external institutions, and one proposal received a substantial

response from Bank Indonesia for dock improvements, canopies, painting, and equipment. Provincial assistance had also supported viewing towers, while universities and other organizations used the site for community engagement. These experiences show that local initiative can mobilize resources beyond the municipal budget and create a foundation for future partnership.

The same history also contained unresolved institutional conflict. The appointment of the Pokdarwis management board under Decision Number 7 of 2023 covered the 2023 to 2025 period and had expired in January 2025. A replacement decision had not been issued when interviews were conducted in October 2025. The former leadership considered itself excluded from a selection process organized within one neighborhood, while the urban village administration argued that it had followed municipal guidance. The municipal tourism agency later indicated that a repeat process might be needed because the result had been contested. This dispute created uncertainty over legitimacy, representation, and the geographical scope of Pokdarwis responsibility.

One community tourism representative described the uncertainty in direct terms, noting that continued reliance on the previous decision was not a personal preference but a consequence of the absence of a replacement.

> *"I do not actually want to remain the Pokdarwis chair indefinitely, but a new decree has not been issued, which means the old arrangement continues. A new selection was discussed, yet those of us outside the selected neighborhood were not involved." (C1 interview, October 6, 2025; translated from Indonesian)*

The C1 account was not the only perspective on the dispute. Urban village representatives (G2) emphasized that Pokdarwis should represent the wider territory of Kereng Bangkirai rather than only the dock and maintained that the selection process followed municipal guidance. Municipal tourism representatives (G1) acknowledged that the result had been contested and indicated that a repeat selection process might be required. These contrasting actor accounts show that the conflict concerned not only leadership succession but also the definition of the affected community, the geographical boundary of destination management, and legitimate representation. Because starting conditions influence later trust and participation, the unresolved mandate weakened the credibility of collaborative forums and encouraged actors to protect sectoral or neighborhood positions.

Local wisdom provided a countervailing source of legitimacy. The physical destination and community narrative reflected values of living with water and peatland conditions, respecting the river ecosystem, deliberating through local meetings, and maintaining collective responsibility. Cultural motifs such as the hornbill and Batang Garing, wetland adapted construction, river based livelihoods, and locally narrated ecological knowledge differentiated the destination from standardized urban recreation. Community actors understood conservation and tourism as linked rather than separate: the river, peatland, boats, food, stories, and social relationships formed a single place based product.

However, these values remained stronger in practice and symbolism than in formal governance. Local knowledge had not been systematically documented in operating procedures, safety protocols, visitor interpretation, or medium term planning. Decisions about routes, activities, and local events often relied on informal deliberation, but the formal system did not consistently guarantee community representation or define how ecological knowledge should influence investment. The result was a governance gap in which local wisdom contributed identity and social acceptance without receiving equivalent institutional authority.

Institutional Design, Collaborative Process, and Facilitative Leadership

Formal support for tourism management was present. Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2017 placed Kereng Bangkirai within the 2017 to 2028 regional tourism development framework (Palangka Raya City Government, 2017), and municipal arrangements assigned

policy, implementation, evaluation, and administrative functions to the tourism office. Pokdarwis provided a community organization through which local actors could operate attractions and engage with government. Nevertheless, institutional design was fragmented across tourism, environment, transport, communication, the urban village, conservation authorities, and community groups. The absence of a single, routinely functioning forum made coordination dependent on individual initiatives and temporary programs.

The collaborative process was therefore active but inconsistent. Face to face interaction, proposal development, municipal support, community operations, and external assistance demonstrated that actors were willing to cooperate. NVivo results grouped the collaborative process with dialogue, trust building, and shared understanding, showing that communication was central to practical progress. Yet dialogue frequently occurred in response to immediate problems or project opportunities rather than through a stable cycle of joint planning, implementation, monitoring, and review. Agreements were not always converted into written responsibilities, timelines, or performance indicators.

Sectoral ego and overlapping authority were repeatedly identified as barriers. Agencies tended to implement programs according to their own mandates, causing infrastructure, environmental management, promotion, and community development to move on separate tracks. This weakened accountability because no actor controlled the whole visitor journey or ecological impact. Private sector participation was also limited. Businesses faced infrastructure risks and lacked a clear partnership scheme, while Pokdarwis had limited managerial, marketing, safety, and digital capacity. The imbalance in resources meant that formal invitations to participate did not always translate into equal influence.

Facilitative leadership was the least developed core dimension. Government remained important as regulator and resource provider, but did not consistently mediate conflict, rebalance participation, or maintain a neutral collaborative forum. The Pokdarwis succession dispute demonstrated the need for a facilitator capable of clarifying procedures, recognizing affected groups, and rebuilding trust. Interview evidence suggested that municipal actors were aware of the dispute, but delayed resolution allowed uncertainty to persist. In this context, facilitative leadership requires more than administrative approval. It requires conflict mediation, transparent agenda setting, capacity support, and protection against domination by any single actor.

Enabling and Constraining Factors

The findings distinguish enabling conditions from constraints, as summarized in Table 3. Enablers include a shared interest in conserving the destination while improving livelihoods, pre existing cooperation, local social capital, regulatory recognition, community operational experience, and networks with universities, media, government, and financial institutions. Constraints arise when these resources are not connected through clear authority, balanced capacity, routine communication, and a fair distribution of benefits. The same factor can therefore function positively or negatively. A prior relationship can build trust or preserve conflict; regulation can provide legitimacy or reproduce overlap; external support can strengthen local capacity or create dependence on isolated projects.

Table 3. Principal enablers and constraints of collaborative governance

Dimension	Enabling evidence	Constraining evidence	Governance implication
Starting conditions	History of cooperation and external assistance	Unresolved leadership conflict and power asymmetry	Restore trust before expanding programs
Institutional design	Regional policy and formal Pokdarwis recognition	Overlapping authority and an expired management mandate	Clarify roles, representation, and decision rights
Collaborative process	Face to face dialogue and community initiative	Reactive coordination and weak follow through	Establish a routine joint planning and review cycle

Dimension	Enabling evidence	Constraining evidence	Governance implication
Leadership	Government access to authority and resources	Limited mediation and facilitation	Shift from dominance to neutral facilitation
Capacity and resources	Community knowledge, cultural identity, and partner networks	Limited management, safety, marketing, and investment capacity	Create shared capacity development and financing
Local wisdom	Deliberation, ecological respect, and collective responsibility	Values not codified in formal procedures	Institutionalize local knowledge in standards and evaluation

Success is most likely when structural and cultural conditions reinforce one another. Clear regulations and organizational roles can protect participation, while trust and local legitimacy encourage actors to use those structures constructively. Conversely, strong regulation without social legitimacy produces administrative compliance rather than collaboration, while cultural solidarity without formal authority cannot reliably secure budgets, safety standards, or interagency action. The evidence therefore rejects a simple assumption that adding more actors will improve governance. What matters is whether actors have a legitimate forum, comparable opportunities to influence decisions, sufficient capability to perform assigned roles, and visible benefits from continued participation.

The destination also faces a generational issue. NVivo coding by age showed the strongest representation among informants aged 30 to 40, followed by those aged 40 to 50 and 50 to 60, while the 20 to 30 group had very limited representation. Middle aged and senior actors provide experience and social legitimacy, but weak youth participation may constrain digital promotion, innovation, and organizational succession. A sustainable arrangement should therefore link experienced community leaders with younger actors through formal mentoring, media work, guiding, and enterprise development rather than treating youth involvement as a separate promotional activity.

Contextual Governance Model

The proposed model integrates the pentahelix actors of government, community, business, academia, and media within two mutually dependent foundations. The structural foundation consists of clear mandates, accountable representation, balanced roles, shared resources, and an enduring collaborative forum. The cultural foundation consists of trust, deliberation, Dayak ecological knowledge, place based identity, and collective responsibility. These foundations meet within a facilitated collaborative process where government mediates rather than dominates, Pokdarwis and local communities hold central operational and representational roles, and external actors contribute knowledge, investment, innovation, and communication.

The model requires a recurring governance cycle. A representative forum should identify ecological, service, and livelihood priorities; agree on responsibilities and financing; implement activities through the most capable actor; disclose progress; and evaluate results using shared indicators. Local wisdom should enter this cycle as a decision standard. Examples include incorporating river and peatland knowledge into route design, adapting services to seasonal water conditions, using community deliberation to define acceptable activities, documenting cultural narratives for interpretation, and protecting local benefit distribution. This approach moves local wisdom from symbolic branding into operational governance.

Government intervention remains necessary because authority and resources are unequal, but its purpose changes. The municipality should convene and protect the process, resolve the Pokdarwis mandate, coordinate agencies, establish transparent partnership rules, and support capacity development. Community actors should retain meaningful influence over destination identity, operations, and benefit sharing. Universities can act as knowledge brokers, businesses

can provide responsible investment and market access, and media can combine promotion with public education and accountability. The expected outcome is an inclusive destination that protects the peatland river system, improves community welfare, adapts to environmental variability, and offers a coherent visitor experience.

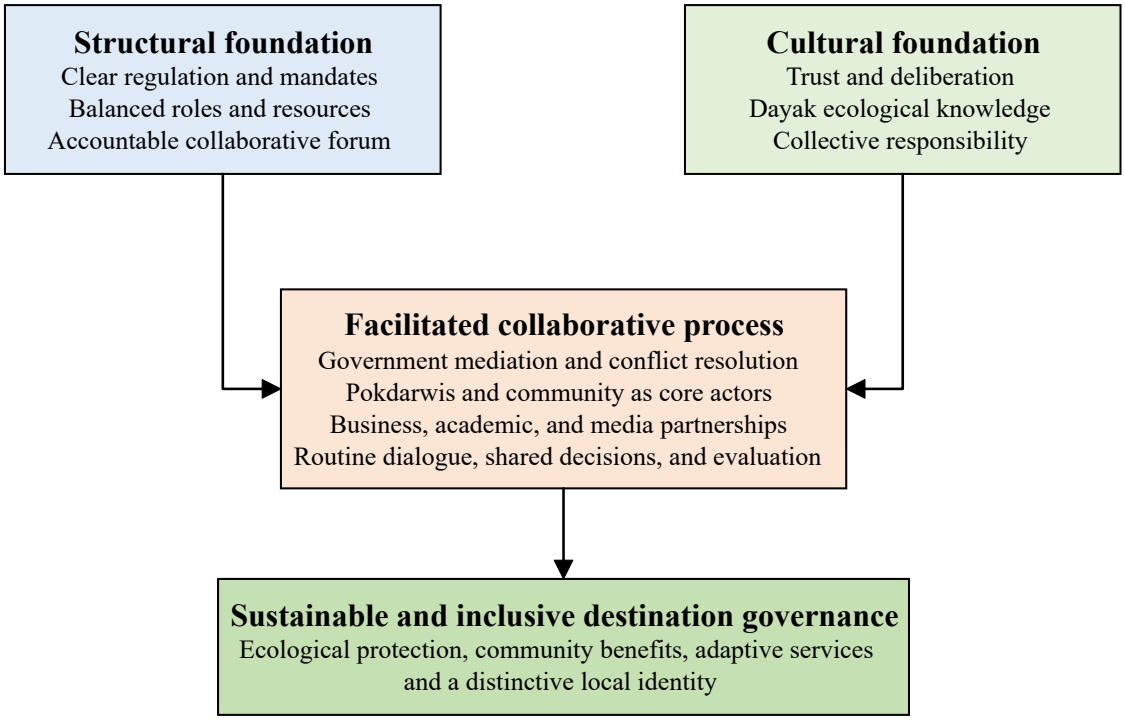

Figure 3. Contextual model of local wisdom based collaborative governance

Source: Developed from the dissertation findings using the Ansell and Gash framework and pentahelix actor configuration, 2026

Discussion

The dominance of starting conditions supports the central argument of Ansell and Gash (2008) that prior conflict, incentives to participate, and power or resource asymmetry influence whether actors can enter collaboration on workable terms. This pattern converges with tourism collaboration studies showing that prior relationships, stakeholder incentives, community influence, and power imbalances shape the quality of joint action (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Wondirad *et al.*, 2020). The Sebangau case adds a more specific pattern: cooperation and conflict coexist within the same governance history. Pokdarwis successfully mobilized external support, yet uncertainty over its mandate weakened representation; government agencies supported facilities, yet worked through separate mandates; community knowledge created destination identity, yet lacked formal authority. This combination also reflects the power problem identified by Saito and Ruhanen (2017), where formal authority and resource control can produce unequal influence even when multiple stakeholders are nominally included.

The findings also refine the idea of institutional design. Rules are necessary, but the presence of regulations and appointment decrees did not guarantee a functioning collaborative arena. Institutional design must specify who is represented, how decisions are made, how disagreement is resolved, what geographical area is governed, and how accountability is shared. Torfing *et al.* (2020) similarly emphasize that institutional design and leadership must be combined to support collaborative innovation. The case demonstrates the opposite condition: formal recognition without timely mandate renewal and mediation allowed an organizational dispute to undermine the very community institution expected to support collaboration.

Facilitative leadership is therefore a substantive governance function rather than a personal leadership style. The municipal government possesses convening authority, access to agencies, and the capacity to issue or recognize community mandates, but these resources need to be converted into procedural mechanisms. In this case, facilitation should include neutral meetings with disclosed agendas, transparent stakeholder mapping and representation criteria, mediation of disputes, written allocation of responsibilities and timelines, and routine follow up using jointly agreed indicators. Government should also reduce participation barriers through targeted capacity and administrative support so that less resourced actors can participate on more equal terms. These mechanisms are consistent with tourism governance research that distinguishes facilitation from simple regulatory control and emphasizes the need to manage partnership processes rather than merely invite stakeholders to them (Hall, 1999; Ruhanen, 2013; Torfing *et al.*, 2020).

Local wisdom extends these frameworks by adding a source of governance legitimacy and ecological judgment. Dayak motifs, wetland architecture, river livelihoods, stories, and collective norms are often presented as tourism assets, but the findings show that their deeper contribution lies in guiding what forms of development are socially acceptable and ecologically appropriate. Institutionalization should therefore occur through concrete governance instruments: representation rules that include holders of local ecological knowledge, operating procedures that use seasonal river and peatland knowledge, route and safety standards adapted to water conditions, community deliberation for approving culturally sensitive activities, documented cultural narratives for visitor interpretation, benefit sharing criteria, and ecological and social indicators in joint evaluation. This approach is consistent with protected area and Indigenous tourism research that links sustainability to community control, local knowledge, and culturally grounded development priorities (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Scheyvens *et al.*, 2021; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). It also distinguishes the proposed model from generic pentahelix arrangements by making local wisdom a decision standard rather than a symbolic branding element.

This argument also addresses a recurring weakness in community based tourism. Participation may be visible in operations while strategic authority remains concentrated in government. In Kereng Bangkirai, local actors operate boats, stalls, attractions, and daily services, yet their influence over formal planning and organizational succession is uncertain. Participation of this kind can become consultative or symbolic when communities carry operational responsibility without corresponding decision rights, a concern consistent with empowerment based assessments of ecotourism (Scheyvens, 1999). A local wisdom based model must therefore connect responsibility, authority, and benefit. Pokdarwis should not merely execute programs; it should participate in defining priorities, evaluating impacts, and negotiating partnerships.

The pentahelix configuration is useful only when actor roles are tied to the governance cycle. Government provides policy coordination and facilitation; communities and Pokdarwis contribute place based knowledge and daily management; academia provides evidence, evaluation, and training; business contributes investment, service innovation, and market connections; and media supports communication, education, and public accountability. The dissertation evidence indicates that each actor type is present to some degree, but their relationships are episodic. The model therefore does not call for creating a new list of actors. It calls for converting existing contacts into a durable arrangement with shared agendas, documented commitments, and transparent review.

The actor configuration also creates potential conflicts of interest that should be managed explicitly. Municipal agencies may prioritize visitor growth and infrastructure targets, conservation actors may prioritize ecological protection, businesses may seek predictable returns and operating flexibility, community groups may emphasize territorial representation and benefit distribution, media may favor visibility and audience reach, and academic partners

may prioritize evidence based safeguards. These objectives are not inherently incompatible, but unequal power can allow one agenda to dominate or reduce participation to a symbolic role (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Saito & Ruhanen, 2017). The collaborative forum should therefore require disclosure of interests, transparent criteria for investment and activity approval, documented decisions, a grievance mechanism, and periodic review of benefit distribution and ecological effects.

Resource asymmetry is particularly important. Community organizations may be invited into planning but remain unable to meet administrative, safety, digital, or investment requirements without support. Capacity development should be linked to actual responsibilities and not delivered as isolated training. For example, route planning should combine ecological observation with mapping and visitor safety; promotion should connect local narratives with digital content and market analysis; financial management should be paired with transparent revenue and benefit reporting; and disaster preparedness should address both flooding and low water conditions. These integrated capabilities would strengthen the capacity for joint action identified by Emerson *et al.* (2012).

The visitor trend provides a practical reason for governance reform. Domestic demand has already reached a scale at which weak sanitation, access, safety, and environmental management can create cumulative impacts. The limited international market should not be interpreted simply as a promotional deficit. Expanding promotion before resolving basic governance and service issues could increase pressure on the destination without improving community benefits. A staged strategy is more appropriate: consolidate institutional coordination and service standards, document the destination identity, strengthen community capacity, and then expand responsible marketing. This sequence aligns destination growth with ecological and institutional readiness.

The study contributes to Indonesian tourism governance literature by explaining why collaboration can remain partial despite policy support and active stakeholders. Previous work found incomplete collaboration at Kereng Bangkirai (Setiawan & Saefulloh, 2019) and unequal authority in other inclusive tourism settings (Ismail *et al.*, 2023). The present findings locate those problems within the interaction of starting conditions, leadership, local legitimacy, and the structure of stakeholder networks. This interpretation is consistent with broader tourism governance research showing that network design and public private relationships can either enable or constrain collective action (Dredge, 2006) and with cross sector evidence showing that successful collaboration depends on configurations of conditions rather than a single universal factor (Douglas *et al.*, 2020). The proposed model responds by balancing structural clarity with cultural grounding.

Internationally, the case is relevant to gateway communities around protected wetlands, forests, islands, and river systems. Such communities often occupy administrative edges where conservation agencies protect core zones while local governments and residents manage access, services, and livelihoods. The Sebangau case suggests that gateway governance deserves explicit institutional attention because visitor impacts and community benefits concentrate there. Local ecological knowledge can improve adaptation and legitimacy, but only when it is recognized in decision procedures. The model may therefore inform comparative studies of community tourism in other conservation buffers, particularly where indigenous or place based knowledge coexists with fragmented public authority.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Collaborative governance at the Sebangau River blackwater tourism destination is developing but remains transitional. Cooperation and external support have generated tangible improvements, yet unresolved representation, overlapping authority, resource asymmetry, and limited facilitative leadership prevent collaboration from operating as a stable cycle of joint

decision making. Dayak ecological knowledge and deliberative values provide strong local legitimacy, but their influence remains greater in practice and symbolism than in formal governance.

The study contributes a contextual governance model that combines structural clarity with cultural institutionalization. Government functions as a neutral convener and mediator, Pokdarwis and local communities hold meaningful operational and representational roles, and business, academia, and media contribute through a recurring process of joint planning, implementation, disclosure, and evaluation. The distinctive feature of the model is that Dayak local wisdom enters representation rules, seasonal route and safety standards, cultural interpretation, activity approval, benefit sharing, and shared ecological and social evaluation rather than remaining a promotional symbol.

Management priorities are to resolve the Pokdarwis mandate transparently, establish a representative collaborative forum, clarify interagency responsibilities, strengthen community capacity, and apply local ecological knowledge in service and conservation standards. Implementation should be staged so that institutional coordination, safety, sanitation, environmental management, and community benefit mechanisms are strengthened before aggressive destination expansion. Future studies should test the model comparatively and longitudinally while connecting governance quality with ecological, social, and economic outcomes.

Research Limitations

This study is limited to a single destination, so the findings are analytically transferable rather than statistically generalizable. The qualitative evidence is cross sectional and cannot measure how collaboration changes over time, while interview based interpretations may reflect informant perceptions and positional interests despite triangulation. The study also does not directly measure governance outcomes such as ecological condition, household income distribution, visitor safety, or social equity. These limitations should be addressed through comparative cases, repeated observation, and integrated outcome indicators in future research.

Author Contributions

Nova Riyanti conducted the conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, analysis, interpretation, manuscript preparation, and final review.

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