

Inter-Regional Cooperation Model for Managing the Tumpak Sewu Waterfall Tourist Attraction in Sidomulyo Village, Lumajang Regency

M. Daimul Abror * , and Imam Fachruddin 

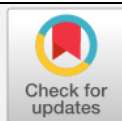
Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Universitas Kadiri, 64115, Kediri, East Java Province, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author: daimabror@unik-kediri.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the model of inter-regional cooperation in managing the Tumpak Sewu Waterfall tourist attraction, using three analytical lenses: legal-administrative, community politics, and inter-organizational politics. The research adopts a qualitative method with a case study design. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. The data analysis follows the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Findings indicate that, from a legal-administrative perspective, a formal cooperation agreement between the Lumajang and Malang Regency Governments is urgently needed. The East Java Provincial Government is expected to facilitate this process to resolve ongoing jurisdictional disputes. From the community politics perspective, local stakeholders have demonstrated collective awareness and commitment to preserving and promoting the area's ecotourism potential. However, social tensions remain, particularly due to the dual ticketing practice, whereby visitors are charged both by the Sidomulyo Village Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) at the main entrance and by Sidorenggo residents at the base of the waterfall. From the perspective of inter-organizational politics, each regency government continues to pursue its institutional interests, preventing consensus on the administrative status of the Tumpak Sewu (also known as Coban Sewu) site. This lack of coordination has strained grassroots relations and hindered the implementation of integrated tourism management between the villages of Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo.

Keywords: Collaborative Tourism Governance; Community Participation; Inter-Regional Cooperation; Sidomulyo Village; Tumpak Sewu Waterfall

1. Introduction

Tourism plays a strategic role in regional economic development, contributing significantly to local government revenue (*Pendapatan Asli Daerah* or PAD), generating employment, and empowering local communities (Putranto, 2021). With increasing attention to sustainable development and inclusive governance, the management of tourism destinations has evolved beyond the exclusive responsibility of central and regional governments. It now requires collaborative engagement among diverse stakeholders, particularly through inter-regional cooperation (Lubis et al., 2024).

Tumpak Sewu Waterfall, located at the administrative boundary between Lumajang and Malang Regencies, is recognized as one of the most prominent natural attractions in East Java Province. Frequently referred to as the "Niagara of Indonesia" due to its semicircular curtain-like cascade, it attracts thousands of domestic and international tourists each year. Administratively, the waterfall lies within Sidomulyo Village, Pronojiwo District, Lumajang Regency. However, primary access routes and several supporting facilities are located within Malang Regency, specifically in Sidorenggo Village, Ampelgading District.

According to data from the Lumajang Regency Department of Tourism and Culture, the site recorded approximately 84,000 visitors in 2023, reflecting a 28 percent increase from the previous year. Despite this growth, the tourism sector's contribution to PAD remains below its potential due to weak cross-regional coordination.

One of the main challenges in managing this transboundary tourist site is the persistent issue of double ticketing. Visitors are charged an entrance fee by the Tourism Awareness Group (Kelompok Sadar Wisata or Pokdarwis) and the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) of Sidomulyo at the main gate. A second fee is collected further along the route by residents of Sidorenggo Village (Liputan6, 2024). Considering the site's high tourism potential, both regency governments must engage in formalized inter-regional cooperation. Such collaboration would foster equitable development, enhance regional tourism competitiveness, and protect the site's ecological integrity. Achieving these goals requires the identification of appropriate strategies and governance frameworks that align with sustainable development principles (Sholeha et al., 2021).

This study is guided by two research questions: What is the current state of inter-regional cooperation in the management of the Tumpak Sewu tourist site, viewed through legal-administrative, community politics, and inter-organizational political perspectives? Moreover, what would constitute an ideal model of inter-regional cooperation based on these dimensions? These questions form the analytical foundation of this research, with particular emphasis on expanding economic development opportunities for the residents of Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo Villages.

The findings of this study are expected to offer valuable insights to regional governments, specifically the administrations of Lumajang and Malang Regencies, in addressing and resolving the ongoing governance conflicts surrounding the management of Tumpak Sewu. In addition, these findings may serve as a relevant reference for future research on recurring conflicts in the management of tourist destinations situated along administrative borders (Abror, 2017; Lubis et al., 2024). By adopting a multidimensional analytical approach, this study

aims to propose a practical and adaptable model for collaborative governance of tourism sites in inter-regional contexts.

2. Literature Review

Inter-regional cooperation in tourism governance has received increasing attention from both academics and policymakers, particularly within the framework of decentralized administration. This concept refers to collaborative arrangements between neighboring jurisdictions aimed at managing shared resources, addressing administrative fragmentation, and promoting equitable regional development. This study adopts three analytical perspectives to examine inter-regional cooperation: the legal-administrative approach, the community politics approach, and the inter-organizational politics approach (Prameswari, 2013; Smith, 2023).

The legal-administrative approach frames cooperation as a formal institutional mechanism, grounded in statutory regulations and binding agreements. This perspective emphasizes the importance of codified instruments, such as memoranda of understanding, regional cooperation agreements, and joint regulations, which serve to delineate authority, responsibilities, and legal boundaries. However, such legal instruments are often inadequate in resolving jurisdictional disputes if they are not supported by strong political commitment and effective enforcement. Patterson and Kuo argue that collaboration across jurisdictions is essential to improving public service delivery and managing conflicts in shared governance areas (Patterson & Kuo, 1995).

The community politics approach highlights the influence of local sociopolitical dynamics in shaping inter-regional cooperation. Village governments, tourism groups, and residents often initiate informal collaboration based on shared economic interests and socio-cultural affinities. According to Puppim de Oliveira, both vertical and horizontal intergovernmental relations are critical for fostering policy innovation and building institutional capacity among subnational entities (Puppim de Oliveira, 2019)s. In the context of community-based tourism, Haidir et al. outline several core principles, including active local participation, equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, and alignment with cultural and ecological values (Haidir et al., 2022). While these grassroots initiatives are often effective in mobilizing communities, they require formal institutional support to ensure sustainability and long-term legitimacy.

The inter-organizational politics approach combines the previous two perspectives by focusing on strategic interactions and power relations across different levels of governance. Cooperation among regional governments is frequently shaped by sectoral competition, overlapping administrative claims, and bureaucratic inertia. Pietersen emphasizes that effective intergovernmental systems must integrate both vertical coordination, between central and local governments, and horizontal collaboration among jurisdictions at the same level (Pietersen, 2017). Previous studies further suggest that institutional innovation and facilitation by higher-level authorities, such as provincial governments, play a crucial role in reconciling fragmented mandates and fostering inter-regional consensus (Albab, 2018; Laurens, 2013).

Empirical evidence also supports the adoption of collaborative governance models in tourism. Studies illustrate successful co-management practices involving local governments, communities, and private actors (Apriliani et al., 2018; Silayar, 2021; Wahyudin et al., 2024). These cases demonstrate that when cooperative arrangements are institutionalized through legal frameworks and organizational structures, they can promote sustainable tourism, minimize inter-jurisdictional disputes, and enhance regional competitiveness.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to describe and analyze the cooperative management model of the Tumpak Sewu tourist site from three key perspectives: the legal-administrative approach, the community politics approach, and the inter-organizational politics approach. The qualitative method was selected for its strength in capturing the depth and complexity of conflict dynamics in tourism governance. A case study design is considered the most appropriate for this research, as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of inter-regional cooperation within cross-boundary tourism contexts.

According to Yin, case study research is particularly valuable for investigating contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts (Yin, 2014). For this reason, the villages of Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo were selected as research sites due to their geographical and administrative relevance. Sidomulyo is located within Lumajang Regency, while Sidorenggo is part of Malang Regency; both villages share jurisdictional proximity to the Tumpak Sewu Waterfall.

3.2. Research Subjects and Sampling Technique

The study focuses on a range of stakeholders involved in the governance of the Tumpak Sewu tourist attraction. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify informants who possess direct relevance to the research objectives. These informants include officials from the Tourism and Culture Offices of Lumajang and Malang Regencies, representatives from the village governments of Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo, members of the local tourism awareness group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata* or *Pokdarwis*), the Village-Owned Enterprise (*Badan Usaha Milik Desa* or *BUMDes*) of Sidomulyo, and residents from both villages. This approach ensured the inclusion of individuals with substantial experience or contextual knowledge of inter-regional tourism cooperation.

3.3. Research Instruments

Four primary research instruments were utilized: in-depth interviews, field observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit informants' perceptions and experiences related to inter-regional cooperation, analyzed through the three main theoretical perspectives. The semi-structured format provided flexibility to adjust questions and probe further based on the flow of each interview. Field observations were used to capture firsthand the interactions, activities, and emerging conflicts or collaborations at the tourism site. FGDs were organized to validate findings with relevant stakeholders and deepen collective insights. Documentation served as supplementary evidence, including official visitor reports, management structures, financial records, and cooperation agreements related to site governance.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began with building rapport and trust with local communities to ensure active participation. Key informant interviews were conducted with consent for audio recording, and scheduled based on participant availability. Observations were carried out over several days to reflect the daily realities of site management and local engagement. Documentary data were gathered from both village and regency government archives in Lumajang and Malang, as well as from credible secondary sources. The use of multiple data

collection methods ensured a comprehensive and triangulated understanding of the research problem.

3.5. Data Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability and validity, several procedures were implemented. Data triangulation was employed to cross-verify information from interviews, observations, FGDs, and documents. For example, statements from tourism officials were compared with field notes and formal records. Member checking was conducted by sharing transcripts and key interpretations with participants to confirm accuracy and intent. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process by documenting potential researcher biases and ensuring transparency in interpretation. A systematic audit trail, including raw data, field notes, and analytical memos, was developed to support the study's credibility and replicability.

3.6. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an interactive model, as proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The process began with data reduction, categorizing information according to the three focal perspectives. This was followed by data display, in which relevant findings were organized thematically and visually, where applicable. The data were then interpreted through the lens of established theoretical frameworks and relevant literature. This interactive method proved effective in uncovering the complex relationships between legal structures, political dynamics, and institutional interactions. It enabled the development of a comprehensive understanding of cooperative tourism governance in the context of inter-regional boundaries. It informed the formulation of an ideal model for the joint management of shared tourist destinations.

4. Results

4.1. Legal and Administrative Approach

From a legal and administrative standpoint, inter-regional cooperation is conceptualized as collaboration among different levels of government, with a strong emphasis on formal legal frameworks (Smith, 2023). In the Indonesian context, such cooperation is governed primarily by Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, further elaborated in Government Regulation No. 28 of 2018 and Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 22 of 2020. A notable example of state-supported inter-regional collaboration is seen in the management of the Bromo Tengger Semeru (BTS) area, where Presidential Regulation No. 80 of 2019 serves as a legal basis for accelerating development through cooperative efforts between provincial and district/city governments.

However, empirical realities indicate that no formal cooperation agreement currently exists between the Lumajang Regency Government and the Malang Regency Government in managing the Tumpak Sewu/Coban Sewu Panorama Tourism Area, despite the site being situated directly along their administrative boundary. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visitors to Tumpak Sewu increased markedly each year, with substantial growth observed among both domestic and international tourists. The following table presents visitor data for the period 2016–2024:

Table 1. Number of Visitors to the Tumpak Sewu Semeru Waterfall Viewpoint in Sidomulyo Village, Pronojiwo District, Lumajang Regency

Year	Domestic Tourists	International Tourists
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Year	Domestic Tourists	International Tourists
2016	1,220	0
2017	8,956	0
2018	43,309	571
2019	33,919	5,900
2020	18,240	1,079
2021	0	0
2022	0	4,611
2023	49,835	26,473
2024	0	74,429

Source: Department of Tourism and Culture, Lumajang Regency (2016–2024)

Given the substantial number of visitors, the economic impact of tourism is clearly significant for local communities in both Sidomulyo Village, Pronojiwo District, Lumajang Regency, and Sidorenggo Village, Ampelgading District, Malang Regency. According to Mr. Abdul Karim, the head of the Tourism Awareness Group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata* or Pokdarwis) in Sidomulyo Village, domestic tourists are charged an entrance fee of IDR10,000 per person. In contrast, international visitors are charged IDR20,000 to access the Tumpak Sewu Waterfall viewpoint. Parking fees are set at IDR5,000 for motorcycles and IDR10,000 for cars. On average, monthly visitor numbers range between 2,000 and 3,000 people, including both domestic and foreign tourists. On weekends, this number may rise to approximately 4,000 visitors. Based on these figures, the gross monthly revenue from tourism is estimated to fall between IDR40 million and IDR50 million (Interview Results, September 13, 2024).

The following table summarizes the gross revenue from parking and ticket sales at the Tumpak Sewu Semeru Waterfall Viewpoint in Sidomulyo Village:

Table 2. Gross Revenue from the Tumpak Sewu Semeru Waterfall Viewpoint, Sidomulyo Village, Pronojiwo District, Lumajang Regency

Year	Gross Revenue (IDR)
2017	80,673,000
2018	240,446,000
2019	442,145,000
2020	203,455,000

Source: Pokdarwis Sidomulyo (2021)

Meanwhile, Mr. Heri, the Head of Sidorenggo Village, explained that the tourism management model in Sidorenggo differs from that in Sidomulyo. In Sidorenggo, the Coban Sewu tourism site was originally managed by Perhutani in collaboration with the Community Forest Management Group (*Lembaga Masyarakat Desa Hutan* or LMDH) and the village government, operating under a local tourism management committee between 2015 and 2017. At that time, domestic tourists were charged IDR10,000 and international tourists IDR20,000 for entry. Parking fees were set at IDR15,000 for motorcycles and IDR20,000 for cars.

However, since 2017, the Coban Sewu tourism site has been officially closed due to the severe deterioration of the bamboo bridge providing access to the waterfall. The decision to close the site was jointly made by the Sidorenggo Village Government, the Subdistrict

Leadership Council (*Musyawarah Pimpinan Kecamatan* or Muspika) of Ampelgading District, and Perhutani. It was noted that Perhutani did not contribute to the maintenance of the supporting infrastructure, which was critical for the site's continued operation (Interview Results, September 14, 2024).

Following the closure, the majority of tourists have accessed the site through Sidomulyo Village. Nonetheless, unauthorized ticket collection has been reported at the base of Coban Sewu Waterfall. Individuals or groups have charged visitors fees identical to those imposed by Pokdarwis in Sidomulyo, claiming that the proceeds are intended for stair maintenance. The Sidorenggo Village Government, however, has never authorized or issued any such tickets. Efforts have been made to mediate with the individuals involved, but these have not yielded a positive response. The matter has also been reported to the local police, but as of this writing, there has been no formal resolution or enforcement action (Interview Results, September 14, 2024).

Conflicts related to the management of Tumpak Sewu have not only occurred at the village level but have also escalated to the regency level. This became apparent in 2017 when the Lumajang Regency Government submitted the Tumpak Sewu tourist destination as a nominee for the Anugerah Pesona Indonesia (API). However, following a formal objection by the Malang Regency Government, filed through its Department of Tourism and Culture, the API evaluation was cancelled. The core issue raised was that the Coban Sewu Waterfall, which was referenced in the submission, is administratively located within Malang Regency.

A similar dispute resurfaced in 2018, when the Lumajang Regency Government was declared the winner in one of the categories of the Anugerah Wisata Jawa Timur (AWJ). In response, the Malang Regency Government again filed a protest with the East Java Provincial Government. Despite this, the provincial government upheld Lumajang's victory, clarifying that the award submission referred specifically to the Tumpak Sewu Waterfall Viewpoint, which is located in Sidomulyo Village, not the waterfall itself, which lies within the territory of Malang Regency.

This position was confirmed by Mr. Arifin, a representative from the Malang Regency Department of Tourism and Culture, who emphasized that the Coban Sewu Waterfall is indeed under Malang's administrative authority. He noted that Mr. Made, the former head of the department, had acted appropriately in submitting a protest to the API committee in 2017. That protest was ultimately accepted, resulting in the cancellation of the evaluation process for the Coban Sewu nomination submitted by the Lumajang side (Interview Results, September 20, 2024).

The 2018 AWJ award, which Lumajang again claimed for the Tumpak Sewu Viewpoint, also drew criticism from Malang. According to Mr. Arifin, officials in Malang were confused by the provincial government's decision to recognize Lumajang as the award recipient, which they considered both questionable and difficult to accept (Interview Results, September 20, 2024).

In response, Mr. Edi from the Lumajang Regency Tourism Office clarified that the Lumajang side had chosen not to dwell on the API cancellation, acknowledging the outcome of the 2017 protest. However, with regard to the AWJ award, he asserted that the submission was legitimate. The Lumajang Regency Government had proposed the Tumpak Sewu Semeru Waterfall Viewpoint as the nominated site, not the Coban Sewu Waterfall itself. This distinction, he added, was affirmed by the Regent of Lumajang and supported by the East Java Provincial Tourism Office, thereby validating Lumajang's eligibility for the award (Interview Results, September 21, 2024).

While the Tumpak Sewu/Coban Sewu tourism site holds strong potential to enhance local welfare in Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo Villages and contribute to regional income for Lumajang and Malang Regencies, it has also become a source of intergovernmental conflict. This reinforces the urgency of developing a formal and equitable management framework.

According to Mr. Abdul Karim, Chair of Pokdarwis in Sidomulyo, informal cooperation has already been initiated at the local level, particularly through agreements with landowners for access roads and visitor parking areas. Nevertheless, he emphasized that this collaboration lacks a solid legal foundation. For these community-level efforts to be sustained and expanded, stronger legal support and formal institutional backing from higher levels of government are required (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

The statement from the Chairman of Pokdarwis was supported by Mr. Paiman, the Head of Sidomulyo Village, who acknowledged that, in practice, tourism management at the grassroots level has generally been harmonious. Nevertheless, he emphasized that the development of the Tumpak Sewu tourism potential should not be the sole responsibility of the Sidomulyo Village Government. Instead, he proposed the need for a collaborative meeting to reach an agreement between the village governments of Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo, which should be further strengthened through formal cooperation between the Lumajang and Malang Regency Governments (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

This view was echoed by Mr. Heri, the Head of Sidorenggo Village, who stressed that, in principle, the village government requires stronger support from the regency-level administration. As a village head, he acknowledged the difficulty of managing cross-boundary tourism issues without structural backing from the regency. He expressed his agreement with Mr. Paiman's proposal to convene a joint meeting involving both regency governments to formalize cooperation in the management of the Tumpak Sewu/Coban Sewu tourism area (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Responding to this, Mr. Ach. Sofi Nur Alam, the Subdistrict Head (Camat) of Ampelgading, confirmed that unauthorized ticketing activities persist at the base of the waterfall, carried out by certain individuals or groups. These activities were previously managed by members of the Community Forest Management Group (LMDH) before the site's official closure (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Similarly, Mr. Abdilah Irsyad, the Subdistrict Head of Pronojiwo, observed that local stakeholders have demonstrated readiness for cooperation. However, he argued that stronger legal and institutional facilitation is necessary and should be provided by the Tourism Offices of Lumajang and Malang Regencies to ensure sustained collaboration in managing the site (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Mr. Yudi Prasetyo, Head of the Tourism Destination Division of the Lumajang Regency Tourism Office, identified the primary issue as the practice of dual ticketing. He stated that there should have been an agreement for a single official entry point. According to him, if stakeholders at the local level have already reached a preliminary consensus, the Lumajang Regency Government is prepared to initiate coordination with its counterpart in Malang to formalize the cooperation (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Mr. Budi Susilo, Head of the Tourism Destination Division at the Malang Regency Office of Tourism and Culture, affirmed this statement. He reiterated that the ultimate objective of tourism governance is to enhance the welfare of local communities. Therefore, his office expressed full support for the establishment of inter-regency cooperation in the management of the tourism site (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

The momentum for cooperation was further supported by Mr. Aris, a representative from the Government Affairs Division of Lumajang Regency, who confirmed that, based on official records, no formal cooperation between the two regencies currently exists. In light of the ongoing joint initiative, his division is ready to facilitate the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a formal Cooperation Agreement between the governments of Lumajang and Malang Regencies (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Mr. Al-Imron also endorsed this initiative from the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) of Lumajang Regency, who stated that once coordination issues at the grassroots level are addressed, Bappeda would be ready to assist in formalizing both the MoU and the cooperation agreement (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Meanwhile, Mrs. Mahira Surya Dini from the Government Affairs Division of Malang Regency recalled that an official communication had already been issued on November 5, 2019, by the East Java Provincial Government to initiate inter-regional cooperation within the Bromo Tengger Semeru (BTS) area. This initiative involved not only the provincial administration but also seven regional governments. However, she expressed concern over the absence of follow-up actions. She conveyed hope that the provincial government would take the lead in reviving and facilitating the formalization of this long-awaited inter-regional collaboration (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Mrs. Mahira's remarks were corroborated by Mr. Chandra, an official in charge of intergovernmental cooperation at the Government Administration Bureau of East Java Province, who confirmed the accuracy of her statement. According to Mr. Chandra, in November 2019, the provincial government had officially notified seven local governments within the Bromo Tengger Semeru (BTS) region, namely, the governments of Pasuruan Regency, Pasuruan City, Probolinggo Regency, Probolinggo City, Lumajang Regency, Malang Regency, and Malang City, about the plan to initiate regional development cooperation through a Joint Agreement. A draft of the agreement had already been prepared at the time. He further expressed appreciation to the research team, noting that the findings of this study could serve as an academic reference to support the implementation of inter-regional cooperation in the BTS area (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

This position was also reaffirmed by Mr. Achmad, a representative from the East Java Provincial Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda). He confirmed that the information shared by Mr. Chandra aligns with the provisions of Presidential Regulation No. 80 of 2019, which provides the legal foundation for the accelerated and collaborative development of the Bromo Tengger Semeru region. He emphasized the importance of promptly following up on the initiative involving the East Java Provincial Government and the seven regional administrations within the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Strategic Area (Kawasan Strategis Nasional Bromo Tengger Semeru – KSN BTS) (FGD Results, November 3, 2024).

Findings from interviews, focus group discussions, and supporting documentation clearly indicate that the management of the Tumpak Sewu tourism area has yet to be formalized through a legal and administrative cooperation mechanism. This observation supports the argument made by Patterson and Kuo (1995), who assert that inter-jurisdictional collaboration is essential for resolving conflicts and enhancing the accessibility and quality of public services.

In light of this, there is an urgent need to establish a formal cooperation framework between the Lumajang Regency Government and the Malang Regency Government, ideally facilitated by the East Java Provincial Government. Such an institutional arrangement would be instrumental in resolving persistent disputes and ensuring more effective and equitable joint management of the tourism site (Albab, 2018; Laurens, 2013).

Although informal collaboration is already underway between the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) in Sidomulyo and local landowners who lease their property for parking and visitor access, this form of cooperation remains limited in scope and lacks legal legitimacy. Nevertheless, it reflects a foundational willingness among community members to engage in shared management practices. This is consistent with previous studies that advocate for collaborative tourism governance models as a means to promote sustainable tourism development at the regional level (Apriliani et al., 2018; Silayar, 2021; Wahyudin et al., 2024).

The formal administrative status of the Coban Sewu/Tumpak Sewu tourism site has been stipulated under Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 86 of 2013, which designates the location as being within the jurisdiction of Malang Regency. Despite this, jurisdictional and operational disputes continue between the Lumajang and Malang regency governments. The need for robust inter-regional coordination in the buffer zones of the Bromo Tengger Semeru region has been reinforced by multiple national legal instruments, including Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, Government Regulation No. 28 of 2018 on Regional Cooperation, Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 22 of 2020, and Presidential Regulation No. 80 of 2019.

4.2. Community Politics Approach

From the perspective of community-based politics, the governance of the Tumpak Sewu/Coban Sewu tourism site reflects positive efforts in local communication and coordination aimed at preserving and developing the area. According to Mr. Abdul Karim, Chair of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) of Sidomulyo, the site began operations in 2014 under a collaborative arrangement between the village government and the local community. Under the direction of the village government, Pokdarwis engaged residents by leasing their land for parking and site access, and by employing them as motorcycle taxi drivers and local guides.

The management model follows a revenue-sharing partnership in which 85% of the gross income is allocated to Pokdarwis and 15% to landowners who lease their property for tourism use. With regard to ticketing, visitors are charged at two locations: at the main entrance managed by Pokdarwis in Sidomulyo, and again near the waterfall by individuals from Sidorenggo Village. A proposal to consolidate ticketing at a single point, accompanied by a revenue-sharing agreement, was communicated to the Sidorenggo group, but the proposal was rejected. The individuals in Sidorenggo preferred to continue collecting ticket fees independently at the waterfall (Interview Result, September 13, 2024).

In an interview, Mr. Aji, a motorcycle driver operating at the site, stated that he charges IDR10,000 per passenger for transportation to the waterfall, with IDR9,000 going to him and IDR1,000 contributed to the Pokdarwis fund. He explained that the presence of the tourism site has empowered local youth to become economically independent and participate in productive activities (Interview Result, September 13, 2024).

Similarly, Mr. Paitu, a local landowner, expressed gratitude for the steady income he earns by leasing land next to Mushola Arrohmah for parking purposes. Pokdarwis has rented the land for the past ten years at a rate of IDR2,500,000 per year. He emphasized how the arrangement enables him to earn passive income with minimal effort, something he described as highly valuable for a rural resident (Interview Result, September 13, 2024).

Meanwhile, Mr. Gunawan, one of the site's tour guides, shared his enthusiasm for accompanying visitors, especially foreign tourists, expressing pride in showcasing the natural beauty of his village. He reported earning IDR10,000 for each tour, with IDR9,000 retained as income and IDR1,000 contributed to the Pokdarwis fund (Interview Result, September 13, 2024).

Findings from multiple interviews and focus group discussions indicate a shared awareness among local stakeholders of the importance of collaboration in maintaining, preserving, and enhancing the site's tourism potential (Aina Rahmayani & Sabam Syahputra Manurung, 2022; Putranto, 2021). This corresponds with Oliveira's argument that intergovernmental relations are crucial for fostering policy innovation and enhancing state capacity in addressing ongoing governance challenges (Puppim de Oliveira, 2019).

In addition, residents have shown strong support for village-led initiatives, largely motivated by the tangible economic benefits they have begun to experience. However, challenges persist. Certain individuals have exploited the limited institutional capacity of the village government, particularly in managing tourism at the community level.

These findings align with previous research, which highlights that tourism practices at Tumpak Sewu adhere to the core principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT). These principles include: active community participation; local ownership and transparent management; partnerships with relevant stakeholders; formal recognition by authorities; the enhancement of community welfare and human dignity; equitable and transparent profit-sharing mechanisms; stimulation of local and regional economies; cultural preservation; conservation of natural resources; meaningful tourist experiences; and pathways to financial self-sufficiency (Haidir et al., 2022).

4.3. Inter-Organizational Politics Approach

From the perspective of inter-organizational politics, the situation on the ground reveals the persistence of sectoral interests among regional governments. This is evident in the ongoing competition over administrative claims, where the governance of tourism is often framed through territorial authority rather than the broader objective of benefiting local communities.

As noted by Mr. Arifin, Head of the Tourism Destination Promotion Division at the Malang Regency Tourism and Culture Office, Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 86 of 2013 clearly designates the Coban Sewu Waterfall as being located within the administrative boundaries of Malang Regency. Based on this legal position, Mr. Made, who served as department head in 2017, filed a protest with the Anugerah Pesona Indonesia (API) committee, which resulted in the cancellation of the evaluation for the Coban Sewu tourist site, submitted under the name "Tumpak Sewu" by the Lumajang Regency Government. Mr. Arifin further recalled that in 2018, when Lumajang was named the winner of the East Java Tourism Award (Anugerah Wisata Jawa Timur - AWJ), Malang filed another protest with the East Java Provincial Government. He expressed confusion and even amusement at the provincial government's decision to uphold Lumajang's submission as valid (Interview, September 20, 2024).

This sentiment was echoed by Mr. Budi Susilo, Head of the Tourism Destination Division at the same office, who emphasized that Malang's objection was based on the fact that both award submissions by Lumajang, under API and AWJ, concerned a tourism site located within Malang's jurisdiction (Interview, September 20, 2024).

On the other hand, Mr. Edy, Head of the Tourism Promotion Division at the Lumajang Regency Tourism Office, acknowledged that while the API evaluation had indeed been canceled following Malang's protest, the Lumajang administration no longer considers the matter contentious. Regarding the AWJ, he clarified that the award submission referred specifically to the Tumpak Sewu Semeru Waterfall Viewpoint, which is located within Lumajang Regency. This claim, he added, was officially endorsed by the Lumajang Regent and

supported by the East Java Provincial Tourism Office, affirming the legitimacy of the submission under the stated criteria (Interview, April 21, 2024).

These interview findings suggest that both the Lumajang and Malang Regency Governments continue to prioritize territorial and sectoral interests in the absence of a coordinated inter-regional framework. This pattern of rivalry has perpetuated administrative tensions and overlapping claims over the governance of the Tumpak Sewu/Coban Sewu tourism site (Faozan, 2007; Laurens, 2013).

Such fragmentation runs counter to Pietersen's conception of intergovernmental relations, which he defines as a universal feature of state governance. According to Pietersen, effective intergovernmental systems must operate through both vertical coordination (between higher and lower levels of government) and horizontal cooperation (among governments at the same administrative level), with the ultimate aim of achieving integrated and collaborative governance (Pietersen, 2017).

The institutional disputes between Lumajang and Malang have also had consequences at the village level, particularly between Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo. Communication and coordination between the two village governments remain limited, further complicating the management of shared tourism assets (Putranto, 2021). A comparable case is presented by Sholeha et al., who studied the territorial conflict over Kakabia/Kawi-kawia Island, which was simultaneously claimed by the provinces of Southeast Sulawesi and South Sulawesi (Sholeha et al., 2021). The study highlights that, under Article 21 of Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 141 of 2017, the resolution of such inter-regional boundary disputes lies within the authority of the Minister of Home Affairs.

5. Conclusion

This study has investigated the complexities of inter-regional cooperation in managing the Tumpak Sewu tourist destination, which spans the administrative boundaries of Lumajang and Malang Regencies in East Java, Indonesia. Drawing on a tripartite analytical framework, legal and administrative approach, community politics approach, and inter-organizational politics approach, the study has provided a multidimensional understanding of governance fragmentation and local collaboration dynamics in a contested ecotourism setting.

From a legal and administrative standpoint, the study finds that no formal cooperation agreement currently exists between the two regency governments, despite the site's growing tourism significance and economic value. Existing efforts at coordination remain informal and are limited to village-level actors, which undermines the potential for systematic and enforceable governance. From the perspective of community politics, the research reveals strong local engagement and economic participation, especially by the Sidomulyo Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), which has initiated community-based management mechanisms such as land leasing and employment generation. Nonetheless, overlapping interests and a lack of coordination with neighboring Sidorenggo Village have led to persistent disputes, including the continuation of dual ticketing practices. Finally, from an inter-organizational political perspective, the research uncovers sectoral competition and institutional inertia at the regency level, which have impeded the formation of a shared governance framework and intensified tensions over administrative claims.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on decentralized tourism governance and inter-regional coordination by demonstrating how governance fragmentation manifests in overlapping authority claims and uncoordinated stakeholder roles, even in contexts where community-level collaboration shows promise. It underscores the critical role of provincial-level

facilitation and legal institutionalization in overcoming inter-regional stalemates in natural resource management.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, it focuses primarily on the perspective of government actors and community organizations, and does not incorporate insights from tourists or private-sector operators. Second, the study is based on a single case and may not capture the full diversity of cross-border tourism governance models in Indonesia or elsewhere. Third, the scope of analysis was largely qualitative, which, while offering depth, limits generalizability.

Future research could expand the analytical lens by incorporating comparative studies of other cross-border ecotourism sites in Indonesia or Southeast Asia. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to assess whether the proposed cooperation model, once implemented, leads to improved governance outcomes and equitable benefit-sharing. Additionally, exploring the integration of digital governance tools in coordinating inter-regional tourism management may offer further innovations for decentralized administration.

6. Policy Recommendations and Proposed Governance Framework

The governance of transboundary tourist destinations such as the Tumpak Sewu Waterfall requires an integrated policy approach that bridges administrative jurisdictions, harmonizes institutional roles, and centers on shared local and regional benefits. Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that fragmented authority, dual ticketing practices, and inter-regional rivalry have hindered the site's potential to serve as a model for sustainable tourism. Therefore, this section outlines policy directions and proposes a governance framework aimed at transforming informal coordination into a legally grounded and structurally coherent cooperation system.

The first and most urgent recommendation is the formalization of cooperation between the Lumajang and Malang Regency Governments through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), followed by a legally binding Cooperation Agreement (*Perjanjian Kerja Sama Daerah*). This process must be facilitated by the East Java Provincial Government, in accordance with its concurrent authority as stipulated in Law No. 23 of 2014. The cooperation framework should define the distribution of authority, institutional responsibilities, operational coordination mechanisms, dispute resolution procedures, and financial cost-sharing schemes. Legal clarity in this context is not merely procedural; it is the foundation upon which mutual trust and accountability can be built between the two regency governments.

Second, governance reform must extend to the community level. The dual ticketing system, currently practiced separately by Sidomulyo and Sidorenggo communities, has not only caused confusion among visitors but also symbolized the broader absence of managerial unity. Both village governments must initiate a redesign of this system by adopting a single-entry ticketing mechanism accompanied by a transparent revenue-sharing agreement. Drawing on the example of Pokdarwis Sidomulyo, which has successfully implemented land leasing and community employment schemes, the revenue-sharing model must reflect equity, recognize community contributions, and be formalized through local regulations or customary agreements (*awig-awig*), where appropriate.

Third, to ensure sustainable implementation, a joint coordinating body or secretariat should be established. This institution should operate under the joint authority of both regency governments, with representation from village administrations, tourism actors, and the provincial government. Its key responsibilities would include operational planning, visitor management, infrastructure coordination, financial monitoring, and facilitation of dispute

resolution. The governing principle of this institution must be “equality in the distribution of powers”, a balance not only in responsibilities but also in the sharing of benefits and burdens.

The proposed governance model is illustrated in the diagram below.

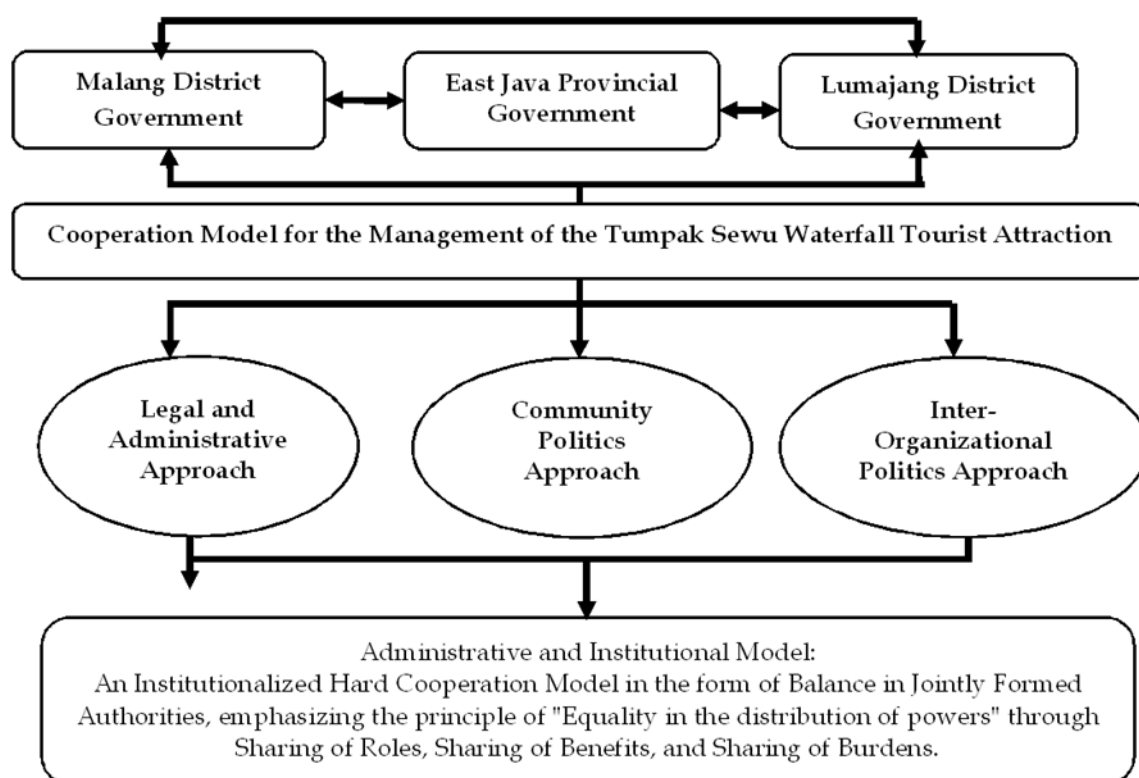


Figure 1. Proposed Cooperation Model for the Management of the Tumpak Sewu Waterfall Tourist Attraction

This model integrates vertical and horizontal dimensions of cooperation. Vertically, it aligns village-level initiatives with regency and provincial oversight. Horizontally, it fosters collaboration between two autonomous regency governments that share common interests and ecological responsibilities. At its core are three interrelated pillars: legal-administrative cooperation, community political engagement, and inter-organizational coordination. Together, these elements create an institutionalized structure that transforms informal arrangements into accountable, transparent, and enforceable collaboration.

To institutionalize this model, the Governor of East Java should issue a Regional Regulation (*Peraturan Daerah*) or a Governor’s Regulation (*Peraturan Gubernur*) that provides legal and administrative grounding for inter-regional cooperation. These regulations should be consistent with Government Regulation No. 28 of 2018 on Regional Cooperation and Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 22 of 2020 on procedures for inter-regional and third-party cooperation. The regulation must clearly articulate the scope of cooperation, performance indicators, governance mechanisms, and financial arrangements, while also incorporating provisions for monitoring, review, and amendment based on future developments.

In conclusion, the successful management of the Tumpak Sewu tourist destination depends on the willingness of all involved stakeholders to move beyond fragmented authority and embrace collaborative, legally grounded governance. Through the institutionalization of this

framework, the region can transition from contestation to cooperation and position itself as a replicable model for cross-border ecotourism governance in Indonesia.

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8. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author has declared no potential conflicts of interest regarding this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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About the Authors

1. **M. Daimul Abror** obtained his Doctoral degree from the University of Brawijaya, Indonesia, in 2017. The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Kediri, Indonesia.
Email: daimabrор@unik-kediri.ac.id
2. **Imam Fachruddin** obtained his Doctoral degree from the University of Brawijaya, Indonesia, in 2020. The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Kediri, Indonesia.
Email: imamfachrudin@unik-kediri.ac.id