



Building A Rural Economic Area Through Cooperation Between Villages: A Case Study of Agrotourism-Based Rural Area Development in Banyumas, Indonesia

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Received : 8 December 2021

Accepted : 1 July 2022

Available Online : 31 August 2022

Abstract: This study aims to evaluate the implementation of cooperation between villages based on agrotourism in the Kendeng Mountains, Somagede District, Banyumas Regency as a model for developing rural areas in Banyumas Regency. The research was conducted in three villages in Somagede District, i.e., Tanggeran, Klinting, and Kemawi, and served as a pilot project for rural area development. Qualitative method is conducted through meetings with informants from all village officials and tourism business actors in the three collaborating villages and members of the Rural Area Development Coordination Team. This study employs qualitative method utilizing in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and focus group discussion (FGD), while the findings were analyzed using an interactive analysis model. The results showed that the cooperation between the villages of Kemawi, Klinting, and Tanggeran in developing agrotourism-based rural areas did not yield the expected results. The failure is due to the absence of cooperation norms among members, the identification of common needs that must be resolved through inter-village collaboration, and the low commitment of the village heads to prioritize and carry out all program plans. The cooperation also fails because of the lack of support from the local government during program implementation and the absence of monitoring and evaluation activities at each stage of the implementation of inter-village cooperation.

Keywords: agrotourism; development cooperation; rural area; village cooperation

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Introduction

During Indonesia's Reformation era, rural area development received relatively less attention compared to the New Order era, in which rural development and the agricultural sector were among important concerns of the government. Villages have become a marginal entity within the framework of state administration and decentralization in terms of politics, finance, and development. Rural development rediscovered its momentum when President Jokowi launched the nine-priority development agenda called "Nawa Cita". The third goal of the initiative is to build Indonesia from the periphery by strengthening regions and villages within the framework of a unitary state.

Technically, the process of developing rural areas is regulated based on the Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration Number 5 of 2016 concerning Rural Area Development. The ministerial regulation is accompanied by the Decree of the Director-General of Rural Area Development Number 14/DPKP/SK/07/2016 concerning the Implementation of Rural Area Development. In the Decree of the Director-General, the process of implementing rural area development includes institutions, proposals, determination of rural areas, rural area development planning, implementation of rural area development, as well as monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Following up on this policy, to improve the welfare of rural communities, the Banyumas Regency Government initiated the development of agrotourism-based rural areas as a pilot project. Through Decree of the Banyumas Regent Number 414/879/2017, Tanggeran, Dewa Kemawi, and Klinting Villages were designated as locations for rural area development based on agrotourism in the Kendeng Mountains, Somagede District, with the objectives of (1) improving villages' economy; (2) utilizing and optimizing villages' assets for their own welfare; (3) increasing villages' community efforts in managing their economic potential; (4) improving the quality of basic village services; and (5) increasing villages' community income and original income.

Article 78 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages states that the purpose of village development is to improve the welfare of rural communities and the quality of human life as well as alleviate poverty through fulfilling basic needs, developing village facilities and infrastructure, developing local economic potential, and utilizing natural resources and the environment sustainably. From the economic aspect, the development of local economic potential carried out at the village level is relatively difficult due to the small geographical scope of a village and the limited economic potential of each village. The development of local economic potential at the rural level can only be effective if it is carried out through a larger area-based approach. This means that to fulfill the economic aspect, the development of local economic potential in rural areas must be carried out collectively and villages with similar economic potential must work together. The problem is that carrying out collaborative activities between villages does not always produce the expected results. Regional partnerships for regional economic development require cooperative norms (Olberding, 2002). Through the norms of cooperation, it is hoped that various parties can act in a collaborative or coordinated manner. If coordinated behavior is created without government intervention to monitor this behavior, then cooperation norms are needed that regulate coordinated behavior between members and regulations to manage conflicts that may occur in cooperation are needed (Axelrod, 1997). Implementing cooperative norms in inter-village cooperation activities is not easy to carry out. Each village may feel that it has similar power and authority in deciding the activities in the cooperation. Without the awareness to collaborate in developing the economic potential of the region, conflicts potentially occur among participating villages.

The success of inter-village cooperation in the development process to improve the regional economy has the same requirements as economic cooperation between regencies/cities. Inter-regional cooperation is needed since each region has administrative boundaries determined formally by legislation, but in reality, various problems and interests

often arise as a result of the functional relationship in the socio-economic field that passes through the boundaries. In this context, the main reason for the need for cooperation between local governments is to ensure that various cross-administrative problems can be resolved together and the combined potential can be realized and utilized for the common good (Keban, 2007). The same idea applies to villages, which have relatively narrow administrative areas compared to regencies/cities. The non-fulfillment of the economic aspect in managing the village's economic potential requires cooperation in developing the potential of its territory.

Cooperation between regions can be established and executed well if it is based on a common need, joint commitment between regional leaders, the principle of mutual benefit, and support from the government (Harsanto, 2013). Given the similarity of the problems, the success of inter-village cooperation can be achieved if the four prerequisites are met. First, cooperation between villages must be based on a common need among members. Mutual need is important to strengthen the initiation and operation of a collaboration between governments (Allers & de Greef, 2018; Sedmihradská, 2018; Subianto et al., 2020). A common need is present if a village faces a problem and the problem cannot be solved if it does not cooperate. Second, there is a shared commitment from each village government to deal with the issues that have been agreed upon. A shared commitment is present when each village prioritizes common interests over the interests of each village. Shared commitment in intergovernmental cooperation is important to ensure that cooperation is indeed needed and desired by each collaborating party (Bačlija-Brajnik, 2018; Eythórsson et al., 2018). Third, the principle of mutual benefit is adopted by all cooperating parties. Mutual benefit suggests that by working together, each member receives positive benefits from collaborative activities. The benefits do not necessarily have to be similar for every cooperating village. Profits are adjusted to the contribution of each member in collaborating in terms of financing, the economic potential of the village, and the strategic location of the area of each village. Cooperation as far as possible is developed for mutual benefit, so that all parties are happy and committed to cooperation in the long term (Baba & Asami, 2020; Kostrubiec, 2021; Roth et al., 2019; Talitha & Hudalah, 2014). Fourth, there is support from the government, both from the sub-district, district/city governments, provinces, and the central government. Support from the higher-level government is important in organizing programs (Berthi et al., 2018) and for matters related to intergovernmental cooperation (Mahardhani et al., 2021; Mahardhani, 2017).

Olberding (2002) stated that regional economic development through inter-regional cooperation could be adopted in the context of inter-village cooperation to develop regional economic potential in two ways, namely (1) each village competes with each other and (2) each village work together with other villages. The first option proposes that each village develops its own economic potential by competing with other villages. As a result, the economy of the village can develop, but the economy of another village may suffer. There is even another possibility that the economic potential in the competing villages will simultaneously collapse because of the competition. The second option offers many benefits and advantages to develop the economic potential in rural areas. Villages can work together to take advantage of the economic potential of each village by creating and promoting branded area-based village products.

The policy for rural area development based on agrotourism in the villages of Tanggeran, Klinting, and Kemawi by the Banyumas Regency Government is the implementation of Olberding's second method. The Banyumas Regency Government wishes to develop agriculture-based tourism in three adjacent villages collectively. The development concept with such approach is a novel concept in Banyumas Regency. The implementation of this policy is important and interesting to study. Studies on inter-village cooperation are still rarely conducted, especially in the field of agrotourism cooperation. Through this study, various weaknesses in the implementation of the policy have been identified, and solutions have been formulated to ensure that the policy can run as

expected. This study aims to investigate the successfulness of rural area development activities based on agrotourism through the cooperation of three villages, i.e., Tanggeran, Kemawi, and Klinting, as well as to further examine the contributing factors of the success or failure of the cooperative activities between these villages.

Research Methods

The research was conducted in Tanggeran, Klinting, and Kemawi Villages, Somagede District, Banyumas Regency. The locations were purposely selected because the three villages were the designated pilot projects for the agrotourism-based rural area development in the Banyumas Regency. Descriptive qualitative research was utilized for this study, in which social phenomena occurring in the community related to agrotourism-based rural area development were described and analyzed. Informants in this study included all village officials and tourism business actors in the three collaborating villages, as well as members of the Rural Area Development Coordination Team (TKPKP) at the district level. The study data were collected using in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) techniques. In accordance with the purpose and type of research, the data analysis process was carried out using an interactive analysis model (Miles et al., 2014). In-depth interviews were conducted with the above-mentioned informants, while Focus Group Discussions were carried out involving the district head, village heads, and Bumdesma activists in the three villages. The documents referred to in this research include documents regarding the profiles of three villages and reports on the activities of Bumdesma (Banyumas in Figures, 2021).

Results and Discussions

Program Implementation

The Rural Area Development Program based on agrotourism in Kendeng Mountains, Somagede District, Banyumas Regency, which takes place in Tanggeran, Kemawi, and Klinting Villages, began in 2017 based on the Joint Regulation of the Kemawi Village Head, Klinting Village Head, and Tanggeran Village Head Number 11 of 2017, Number 05 of 2017 and Number 04 of 2017 concerning Inter-Village Cooperation, which was followed by the formation of Inter-Village Cooperation Agency (BKAD) from the three villages. The purpose of this inter-village collaboration is to realize an integrated Kendeng mountains agrotourism area through three goals: (1) realizing optimal plantation management, (2) realizing optimal management of tourism destinations, and (3) managing plantations and tourism destinations in an integrated area-based manner. The funding for the activities was expected to originate from the national budget (APBN), regional budget (APBD), and village budget (APBDes). In its implementation, the activity management was handed over to the Joint Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDESMA), which was formed by the three villages through a Joint Regulation of the Kemawi Village Head, Klinting Village Head, and Tanggeran Village Head Number 02 of 2017 Concerning the Establishment of a Joint Village-Owned Enterprise "Agro Tri Rahayu".

From the institutional aspect, the implementation of the Rural Area Development (PKP) program in Banyumas Regency received support from the local government, which was manifested in the form of establishing a legal basis for the implementation of the program's activities through the Decree of the Banyumas Regent Number 414/879/2017. The Banyumas Regency Government designated the locations for the development of the Kendeng Mountains agrotourism by appointing Tanggeran Village, Kemawi Village, and Klinting Village in Somagede District as the locations of the rural area development program. This policy was followed up by the formation of a Coordination Team for the

Development of Rural Areas in the Kendeng Mountains Agrotourism Area through the (Decree of the Banyumas Regent Number 410/996/2017. The team members consisted of officials in charge of rural area development from the district to the village level determined by the Head of the Regional Planning, Research, and Development Agency of Banyumas Regency. This team was tasked with creating proposals for rural area development, formulating and implementing rural area development plans, as well as carrying out monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of the rural area development program to the Regent.

The implementation of the three village cooperation activities was carried out by the Joint Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDESMA) "AGRO TRI RAHAYU" which was formed through a joint regulation of the village heads. To execute the program, during the early stages, each cooperating village contributed IDR 20 million fund hence a total budget of IDR 60 million was obtained as the initial capital. However, according to the plan, the funding for the cooperation activities of the three villages would be sourced from the central government budget (APBN), regional budget (APBD), and village budget (APBDes). The Inter-Village Cooperation Agency (BKAD) had prepared a five-year work program plan as a guide for BUMDESMA in carrying out the activities.

The inter-village cooperation for agrotourism-based rural area development in Banyumas Regency received funding support from the government, both at the district and central levels. However, in its implementation, many programs which had been planned were not able to run. From the results of research in the field, it was discovered that there were merely two activities that could be conducted at a very limited scale. First, the construction of a drinking water network was carried out in Kemawi Village using central government budget of IDR 1,5 billion. By utilizing springs in mountainous areas in Kemawi Village, clean water was collected in a holding tank and subsequently distributed to residents in three collaborating villages, namely Kemawi, Klinting, and Tanggeran. At the initial stage, 40 families received clean water distribution in each village. Afterward, the program was stopped due to financial constraints and the lack of clarity on the mechanism for joint clean water management at the village level. Second, avocado is the region's superior product. The avocado tree planting activity could be carried out in Klinting Village using village budget of IDR 123,75 million, covering an area of 3 hectares, in Kemawi Village with village budget of IDR 123,75 million, covering an area of 3 hectares, and in Tanggeran Village with village budget of IDR 62,5 million, covering an area of 1,5 hectares. Within 3 to 4 years, the avocado trees are expected to be able to bear fruits so that they can be harvested and become a regional superior product.

From the institutional aspect, the management of the cooperation between the three villages was handed over to BUMDESMA "Agro Tri Rahayu". In its implementation until 2020, the management of cooperation encountered several problems. The new operational funds were used to rent the BUMDESMA office and to procure furniture and office equipment. During nearly three years of the running of the cooperation activities between villages, none of the other planned programs have been implemented. It is interesting to observe the results of this study that inter-village cooperation based on agrotourism development in Banyumas, which initially received strong support from the regional and central government, could not be implemented as expected.

Contributing Factors of Successful Implementation of Inter-Village Cooperation

There are two main motivations why inter-regional cooperation, both at the district/city level and at the village level, is important. First, the need to avoid the occurrence of externalities in the form of the possible rapid development in one area with a negative impact on other regions. Second, the desire to solve problems collectively and realize common goals in certain areas. The second motivation is usually based on the awareness that each region has limited both natural and human resources. Therefore, by

working together, each region will benefit if they assist each other and develop their potential together.

There are several factors that can encourage the implementation of inter-village cooperation to succeed or fail in its implementation. The first factor is the norms of cooperation built between members. Inter-village cooperation between Kemawi, Klinting, and Tanggeran villages was carried out with the intention of solving problems faced together. However, in order that inter-village cooperation can work as expected, it was necessary to create binding rules between members. The rules that had to be agreed upon included the rights and obligations between members as well as how to build sanctions for members who violate the agreement that had been established together. The results of the research indicated that there were no norms that regulated rights and obligations in writing and no binding agreements between members in cooperation. This was one of the causes of the ineffectiveness of the inter-village cooperation activities. Without norms of cooperation, it was difficult to grow collective action between members to achieve the goals that had been established. Norms of cooperation are very important to shift competitive behaviors to cooperative behaviors. The main determinant of cooperation is the norms of reciprocity or the tendency of individuals to react to positive actions taken by others with a positive response and to negative actions with a negative response. There are two ways to overcome this social dilemma, namely by face-to-face communication between the various collaborating parties and the development of sanctions, rules, and institutions that support and maintain such cooperation (Ostrom, 1998). This condition did not seem to have been built in the collaboration between these villages; hence it did not produce the expected results. Cooperation norms could be created collaboratively between collaborating villages without reducing the authority of each village to establish a policy. The norms could be adjusted according to the customs that apply in each village.

The second factor is the common need felt by the members. In addition to norms, another factor related to the process of regional partnership formation is the need of the region. Cooperation between villages would have been established if there was a shared need felt by each collaborating village. It would be considered a common need if each collaborating village faced a problem, and the problem would not be resolved if each village did not cooperate. Several studies discovered that economic needs and public services are the commonly prevalent needs and are the main factors that encourage the formation of regional partnerships (Aryanti & Setyowati, 2018; Coe, 1992; Huggins, 1992; Husna, 2020; Setyowati & Astriyani, 2017). In the context of cooperation between the villages of Kemawi, Klinting, and Tanggeran, all had the need to increase the economic potential of their respective regions. However, there had never been any identification of whether this need was a common problem whose solution required cooperation between them. The study results showed that each village had been able to develop the economic potential of their respective regions even without having to cooperate. For example, the three collaborating villages had developed agricultural production by cultivating avocados using their respective village budget allocations. Even though these activities were carried out together, the aspects of common needs were not met since they could fulfill them individually. The activities only happened to be carried out simultaneously. The results also showed that each village had never conducted a broader identification of whether there were problems faced by the three villages related to efforts to develop regional economic potential and whether the solutions had to be carried out collectively.

The third factor is the conditions for the inter-village cooperation to run well, namely the commitment between village heads. Cooperation between villages is conceptually an effort to create regionalization. Regionalization can generally be defined as the process of formation of a region consisting of several administrative and spatial regions with geographical linkages (Abdurahman, 2009). There are two paradigms commonly used in conducting the regionalization process, namely the centralized and decentralized paradigms. In the centralized paradigm, regionalization can be described as the process of

forming an area consisting of several administrative regions with relevance to the geographical aspect by command (ex-mandatory) of the authorized hierarchical structure. The result of this centralized regionalization is the formation of ex-residential areas in provinces, cities, and regencies in Java. Meanwhile, regionalization with a decentralized paradigm can be interpreted as a regionalization process marked by a platform of cooperation by regional actors between neighboring autonomous regions (with spatial relevance) based on togetherness and certain development interests and on the basis of their own will (ex mero motu). Cooperation between villages as a form of decentralized regionalization in its implementation requires a commitment from the cooperating village heads. Since the formation of cooperation, starting from the idea of forming, and planning to implementation, originates from local initiatives, the participation of each village government is essential. Since the goal of establishing a decentralized regionalization is to optimize the results of regional development by further optimizing the potential of each local resource, its success is largely determined by the willingness, commitment, and mutual consensus among the involved village leaders. Between them, mutualistic communication must be established through the principle of continuous deliberation. Constraints generally arise when there is a change of village head. Since the new village head is not involved in the process of establishing cooperation from the start, the commitment of the leader to the continuity of the cooperation is usually not as strong as that of the officials being replaced.

The results showed that there was a commitment from village heads in the form of participation in the implementation of cooperation which was realized through a willingness to contribute to funding activities, where each village contributed IDR 20 million as member fees. Although commitments in the form of budget allocations had been acceptable, commitments in other aspects were not observed. In programming activities, the activities were handed over to the consultant team. At the implementation level, the villages were mostly waiting for what each BUMDESMA would do as the executor of the activities and waiting for the financial assistance to be disbursed from the district authorities or the central government. In the implementation aspect, the village authorities were more passive and merely waiting for the results of the work carried out by BUMDESMA and the district authorities.

The role of inter-village cooperation should be largely determined by the leadership's commitment to realizing the established goals. An in-depth study addressing this condition showed that the factors causing the lack of enthusiasm of the village head in realizing the program's goals and dependence on a helping hand from the district government were because the idea of forming the inter-village cooperation to develop rural areas originated from the district government and not from the village government. The initial idea of establishing cooperation between villages was more top-down, responding to the development program launched by the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration of the Republic of Indonesia concerning Rural Area Development (2016). It can therefore be said that in the case of inter-village cooperation, the regionalization was decentralized, but the program planning and implementation followed a top-down approach. This had an impact on reducing the collective actions of each member village. Collective activities potentially become an important instrument to prevent conflict and possible exploitation of one or several parties in cooperation activities (Heckathorn, 1993). If the program plan is determined by external parties, however, the collective actions may potentially provoke conflicts. Hence, the safest step for the involved parties is to wait for other members' initiative.

The fourth factor is that cooperation between villages will work well if the results are mutually beneficial. The cooperation between villages was expected to change the potential for conflicts into a mutually beneficial development potential. The principle of mutual benefit illustrates that, in working together, each member must be able to benefit from the existence of such cooperation. However, this does not mean that every region has

to get a uniform form of profit. Cooperation is not intended to create uniformity between villages, but to carry out village development according to the potential and conditions of each region. If certain regions have limited economic resources and human resources (HR), and they want to develop their regional economy, but do not cooperate (non-cooperatively), such actions will weaken each other (Tarigan, 2012). However, if they are willing to cooperate (cooperative games), then benefits such as cost efficiency in developing the potential of economic resources in each region will be obtained.

The results of the study indicated that cooperation between villages provides mutual benefits. In the case of clean water management, the three villages that worked together enjoyed the benefits. Kemawi Village, as the owner of the managed water source, benefited by obtaining additional village income from the sale of distributed clean water. Meanwhile, two other villages, namely Klinting and Tanggeran villages, benefited from obtaining clean water for their residents. Other benefits did not yet materialize since the output generated from inter-village cooperation was extremely limited.

The fifth factor that encourages inter-village cooperation is the support from the government. In this aspect, the district government's support for cooperation between villages was very high. Various regulations have been enacted as an effort to support the implementation of this inter-village collaboration, such as the Decree of the Banyumas Regent Number 414/879/2017 concerning Determination of Agrotourism-Based Rural Area Development Locations in the Kendeng Mountains, Somagede District, Banyumas Regency and Decree of the Banyumas Regent Number 410/996/2017 concerning Coordinating Team for the Agrotourism-Based Rural Area Development in the Kendeng Mountains, Somagede District, Banyumas Regency. This support demonstrates the strong commitment of the local government to developing rural areas. However, the support from the local government is limited to the legal aspects of the program implementation. Meanwhile, support in the form of financial assistance had not been visible. The results of the study indicated that the various efforts made by the village government to obtain funding assistance for activities from the relevant agencies had not yielded the desired results. In addition, there had not been any effort to monitor and evaluate activities from the district government level as a form of assistance to measure the extent to which activity objectives can be achieved and the extent to which activity plans are feasible to carry out.

Conclusion

In general, inter-village cooperation between Kemawi, Klinting, and Tanggeran villages in agrotourism-based rural area development has not indicated the expected results. This failure is due to the absence of norms of cooperation among members; hence the provision of rewards and punishments is unclear. The failure of cooperative activities is also caused by the lack of identification of shared needs as a driving force for each member to fulfill them through cooperative activities. The low commitment of village heads to carry out all program plans is one of the causes of inter-village cooperation not being able to work as planned. Finally, the lack of support from the local government at the implementation level and the absence of activity monitoring and evaluation at each implementation stage of the inter-village cooperation also cause the inter-village cooperation activities not be able to run as they should.

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