THE EXPLORATION OF POTENTIAL TOURISM ATTRACTIONS IN GUNUNGSARI: A PRELIMINARY PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH OF COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM

(HEKSPLORASI POTENSI ATRAKSI PARIWISATA DI GUNUNGSARI: SEBUAH KAJIAN AWAL RISET AKSI PARTISIPATIF TENTANG EKOWISATA BERBASIS MASYARAKAT)

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Abstract

The aim of this preliminary participatory action research (PAR) is to explore potential tourism attractions in Gunungsari Village, Batu City, East Java. As a PAR, it implements the insight of community-based ecotourism (CBE) by projecting the participatory mapping (PM). As a result, this PM activity reveals the diversification of potential tourism attractions which can be classified into five categories: (1) religious and cultural tourism (RCT), (2) special interest tourism (SIT), (3) agro-tourism (AT), (4) home industry tourism (HIT), and (5) educational tourism (ET). Moreover, this diversification can give significant contributions in developing tourism planning programs based on the CBE perspective aiming to empower local communities.

Keywords: Community-Based Ecotourism, Participatory Action Research, Participatory Mapping

INTRODUCTION

The development of the tourism industry is directed to improve the participation of the local economy in national tourism industries and to increase the diversity and competitiveness of national tourism products and services in every destination (RPJMN, 2015-2020: 6-131).

The cited article is from RPJMN 2015-2019 (National Medium Term Development Plan, Indonesia), which is considered as the guideline of the Indonesian Government in realizing the development programs. In regard to the tourism aspects, nowadays, it can be interpreted that talking about tourism is dealing with a prosperity issue as well as a promising economic sector. Thus, the past perception that believes in the negative impact of tourism on local people (e.g., lifestyles, moral degradations, etc.) as the result of foreign cultures or guest and host cultural encounters is irrelevant, considering that there are stronger effects from the media. Today, most tourism issues deal with the economy. Therefore, it is imperative that the Indonesian Government has to have a strong commitment to drive tourism to be a primary economic sector in order to provide prosperity for Indonesian people, especially for those who live in tourism destinations.

As stated by Pitana and Gayatri (2005: 4), tourism is a promising vehicle for development. They even stated that tourism is the passport to...
development, a new kind of sugar, a tool for regional development, invisible export, and non-polluting industry. However, in reality, the practice of tourism sectors in many areas still relies on the Government as the main actor of the policy and decision-maker. As a consequence, the top-down policy which positioned the state and market as the main power has resulted in some socio-ecology problems (Ardika, 2013; Cemporansih, 2013; Van Niekerk, 2014; Nurmansyah, Kusamandari, and Kahanrudin, 2007; Limbong and Setiono; 2014). Instead of improving people’s socio-economic life quality, in fact, tourism is merely a business tool for government or private sectors. In other words, community participation is still lacking. For instance, in many areas, local people only take small parts in tourism activities – as a food seller, small scale souvenir seller, motorcycle and taxi drivers, or even worst, they can only see how the tourism industry exploits their natural resources without getting any significant returns economically and politically.

Located in East Java, Batu is one of the areas that has been trying to develop its tourism sector. Based on the Urban Land Use Planning (Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah), the northern part of Batu has been developing as a tourism destination by the municipal government, which focuses on the natural and cultural attraction tourism. Gunungsari is one of the villages included in this area (Sukmana, 2009: 45). However, according to Attar, Hakim, and Yanuwiadi’s research on strategic policy in developing ecotourism in Batu (2013), people's participation in Gunungsari has not yet improved. This level is much lower than those of neighboring villages, such as Tulungrejo and Bumiagi.

By implementing a SWOT analysis to examine community-based ecotourism (CBE) project plans in six villages in Batu, including in Gunungsari Village, Attar, Hakim, and Yanuwiadi’s (2013) research assessed two important aspects; 1) tourism potentials and tourist attractions (2) the participation of the community in developing a tourist village. Further, this study shows that although Gunungsari has tourism potentials such as attractiveness, market potential, accessibility, accommodation, infrastructure, and security, community participation in Gunungsari are still hasn't been optimum yet. Indicators used in the assessment of community are (1) participation in planning, (2) participation in decision making and management, (3) participation in the implementation and the process, participation in the distribution of profit shares (Attar, Hakim, and Yanuwiadi, 2013: 76).

We also encounter the same problems related to community participation. However, these problems are not utterly caused by the incapability of the community to develop a tourist village, but they have not been given an opportunity by stakeholders such as the government and business people to express their aspirations. Also, during our observation, we did not find any roadmap or planning regarding the development of tourist attractions, both at the village government and community levels. Besides, few tourism activities or amenities are managed by the village community. In contrast, most tourism activities, such as rose gardens and luxury villas, were monopolized by outsiders. Thus, based on Attar, Hakim, and Yanuwiadi's (2013) research and our preliminary observation, we can formulate that a lack of community participation is caused by limited spaces for local Gunungsari people to convey their aspiration to develop a tourist village.

In fact, Gunungsari, popularly known as the rose plantation village, is pinned for as a promising place for an ecotourism destination. Besides, it is located only 7 km from the most popular tourism spots; Batu Spectacular Night, Jatim Park, and Museum Angkut. Ecotourism village can be an alternative to empower and develop the society in regard to their natural and cultural resources (Figueroa, 2016: 86). Thus, assisting the local people in order to enhance their role by exploring and developing tourism resources in their village is urgently needed.

So far, the tourism development in Batu tends to implement mass tourism services that are aggressively built by investors and recently have impacts on environmental and social problems such as the decrease in water spring number, from 109 in 2009 to 57 in 2011, and the shrinking of agriculture land to 70 %. In fact, the municipal Government of Batu, through Local Government Regulation No. 7 of 2011, allocated 1,252.00 Ha Agricultural Lands, which were supposed to be 2,888.82 Ha.
In other words, that there were 1,636.82 Ha Agricultural lands that had been converted into non-productive land such as housing, hotels/villas for supporting tourism industries (Adifirsta, 2017).

Thus, an alternative way to develop tourism practices is needed to reduce the impact of environmental damages by increasing the role of local communities and their capital, namely the development of community-based ecotourism (Jones, 2003: 303). Community-based ecotourism is a mode of tourism that respects cultural, social, and environmental sustainability (Suansri, 2003: 15). Under this concept, tourism practice should be managed by the community for the community and persuades visitors to increase their awareness for learning the way of life of the host (Goodwin, 2009; Hadiwijoyo, 2012). In this context, the development of community-based ecotourism uses an approach of social empowerment, that emphasizes bottom-up planning so that it can comply with the principles of sustainable tourism. Although it takes small scales of tourism activities, it can provide significant benefits for local communities. In the process, the role and involvement of local people take the central part in order to push the economic growth at the local level (both for job opportunities and entrepreneurial prospects) (Byzek, 2011: 46).

As happened in Bali, some village communities in Nusa Ceningan have built community-based ecotourism networks. It is effective in avoiding land acquisitions by private investors and environmental damages (Byzek, 2011: 90). As a consequence, the participation of the society should be initiated at the early stage of tourism planning, starting from facilitating local people in deciding tourism attractions. In addition, the best practice of community-based ecotourism should optimize local goods and services, respecting and prioritizing local people's rights and traditions as well as their ethnohistory (Murphy, 1988: 88). In other words, tourism planning in local areas should be based on the local perspective and the local environment. Thus, this preliminary participatory action research (PAR) aims to explore tourism resources, which are based on community-based ecotourism (CBE) in Gunungsari Village, Bumiaji, Batu, by projecting the participatory mapping (PM).

**METHOD**

The approach used to explore the potential tourism attractions is CBE through the PM method. PM is a branch of PAR (Saija & Pappalardo, 2018: 1). This method gives freedom and flexibility to local people in conveying their opinions and perceptions about problems that occur around them (Dondo, Bhunu, and Rivett, 2002: 197; Sieber, 2006: 492; Corbett, 2009: 11). Philosophically, PAR aims not only to solve social problems alone, but also to empower community members and to encourage them to make a positive social transformation (Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun, 1993). In this context, the researcher's intervention is very limited; in other words, the researcher's role is as a discussion partner.

In regard to tourism planning, communities are fully involved; they participate in the analysis and development to strengthen their roles as the main stakeholder. Fundamentally, Palmer (2000: 43) argues that the participation of local people is not merely a tool for achieving a project goal, but the most important thing is that it is a shape of community rights. The data collection of this project is divided into two stages:

1. **Forum Group Discussion**
   
   Forum group discussion (FGD) involves village officials and community representatives (owners of potential tourism facilities, village apparatus, hamlet headmen, the youths, and women). In total, 35 participants attended this session. FGD aims to find problems related to various obstacles in developing Gunungsari tourism village and investigates other tourism resources that can be developed by community members.

2. **Participatory Mapping**

   At this stage, the community is involved in the process of inventorying and mapping of potential tourism attractions, based on their experience and knowledge. In total, six participants joined this activity. The Equipments used in this mapping are: (a) Global Positioning System (GPS) to record the location object findings; (b) survey checklist to register of object's identity (toponym, location, land use, owner, etc.); (c) in-depth interview is used to strengthen the historical and
cultural description of objects, inputs, and expectations of local people, and to record some important information that could not be accommodated in the checklist; (d) Arcgis 10.2, mapping software, and Google earth are utilized for field/spatial data processing to visualize potential tourism resource distributions.

DISCUSSION
Digging the Aspirations: Finding Potential Tourism Attractions

Gunungsari village, popularly known as a producer village of the agricultural commodity (vegetables, dairy cattle, rose plantations), is located in Kecamatan (District) Bumiaji, Kota Wisata Batu, only 5 km from the city center of Batu. Geographically, it is laid at ± 1.000 AMSL with ± 5°C temperature (Monografi Desa Gunungsari, 2016). Its landscape has a unique characteristic; a vast rose plantation covers slopes and valleys of the mountain range, attracting tourists to visit this place. Therefore, it is often associated with the icon of Gunungsari. Defined as a rose picking tourism village in accordance with Batu City Regional Regulation No. 7/2011 concerning Spatial Planning for the City of Batu (RTRW) for the City of 2010-2030, Gunungsari Village has the potential and attractiveness in managing ornamental or cut flowers (Donuisang, 2018; Hakim, 2019; Meilyanti, 2014).

Similar to other Javanese village settlements, Gunungsari has hamlet (dusun) enclaves. In detail, there are six hamlets in this area; Brau, Ngebruk, Brumbung, Jantur Kapruk, and Pagergunung. About three or four decades ago, every hamlet was headed by Kamituwo, a wise elderly man who was believed to know about Javanese traditions. Today, each hamlet is led by a hamlet headman (kepala dusun) who has an obligation to assist the village government in dealing with administrative matters. Thus, the roles of Kamituwo today are more concerned with cultural aspects; for instance, they act as the respected villager advisors and the head of ritual ceremonies.

According to the village headman (kepala desa), since the boom of the rose plantation era in 2005, local tourists have started visiting this village to go hiking and to see how farmers nurture the rose plantation. The highest income from the rose plantation activities is coming from flower sales. The rose sales have expanded to other cities outside Java Island, such as Makassar, Medan, and Denpasar. However, based on FGD on April 23, 2017, all participants said that the positive impact of the rose plantation on the household economy is still low and uneven because rose plantations and their economic activities are monopolized by non-local investors by buying, renting, and expanding villager’s farmlands.

Regarding tourism planning and development, many informants stated that both the government and businesses person rarely involved them in planning tourism development. For example, according to Pak Kadiman, as yet the tourism training program...
(pelatihan) always ended up in the class. "Training was only limited to deliver learning materials and motivation, we have never gone to the field, doing practical actions, and how to identify tourism potentials that we have and develop them into tourist attractions," Pak Kadiman said. Another informant, Pak Pono, also said that "in fact, many tourism planning programs had failed, even in the initial stage, for example, the bathing pool which was initially planned to be built on the village treasury land (tanah kas desa), at first, we welcomed the program, but during the negotiation, we noted that the profit-sharing offered by the investors was very small, we were not positioned as an equal partner but merely as the workers."

According to Pak Kisno, there was a plan to build the construction of the East Java Park gondola line that was planned to pass through Gunungsari. Initially, it was a promising one. However, during the planning process, they did not agree with the plan offered by the developer. The community disagreement arose because the developer did not design Gunungsari Village as a transit station. Thus, local people would lose the opportunity to take economic advantage from the tourists who were expected to come by. "It seems that the developers just want to offer the beauty of Gunungsari, especially the rose garden from above, to visitors, not to bring them to our place," Pak Akir added.

Besides, Pak Amat, a fruit farmer, said that Gunungsari has been getting warmer lately. He assumed that the temperature change is a local environmental problem caused by the expansion of rose plantations in which many places have replaced the vegetation. He argued that the increasing temperature makes fruit and vegetable harvest seasons unpredictable. "Fruit and vegetables need the cool temperature to grow," Mr. Amat said. Furthermore, inhabitants who live on the river bank witness a change of river flow behaviors. According to Pak Rudi, lately, in the rainy season, the river is often overspilling and causes severe floods around the banks. He argues that the river flood problem is caused by the massive villa projects in the upstream area.

As mentioned by Walpole & Thouless (2005), tourism is a battleground of people and nature to fight for a living as they share the same space. Excluding local communities from their livelihood space is likely leaving them uprooted from their socio-economic life; it possibly increases resistance and conflict at the grassroots level. In the opposite, inviting local in such collaborating CBE projects will increase a sense of belonging that, we argue, sustain a coexistence of environment and local communities relationship as well as the tourism industry. In the process, the role and involvement of local people take the central part in order to push the economic growth at the local level (both for job opportunities and entrepreneurial prospects).

According to Morais et al., (2016: 4), PAR must be oriented towards improving life and community infrastructure that can be achieved through presenting the formation of community committees and inserting aspirations into the strategic plan. Also, PAR must understand community assets, consolidate local agendas into logical strategic plans, and improve local hospitality and management capacity. Nevertheless, in the case of tourism, these practices often encounter political economy barriers since the industry has greatly been driving tourism activities. Therefore, researchers who are concerned with social inequality issues in tourism are expected to have a responsibility to design a tourism system that provides greater controls to local people by engaging communities in tourism planning. Therefore, PAR tourism studies need to take action steps by offering an alternative scheme of tourism planning by disrupting retail systems to generate income for tourism micro-entrepreneurs (Morais et al., (2016: 4).

Moreover, all FGD participants also agree that rose plantations are not the only commodity that they have. In other words, they strongly believe that there are so many exciting places, both for cultural and natural attractions, but they don't know how to develop those places to be the tourism attractions. For this reason, in collecting people's aspirations, we did not start questioning "what kinds of tourism potentials do you have? Or we did not always
associate tourism potential with rose plantations that have been dominated by big players, but we build a dialogue by asking questions; what kinds of cultural and natural diversities do you have? And what are the significant values embedded in those objects? This dialogue led us to meet the grassroots: elders, youths, folk artists, farmers, and housewives whose aspirations have never been raised in any tourism planning programs.

For example, the elders proposed that archeological relics (petilasan), which are believed to be their ancestor tombs, are the most valuable Gunungsari’s cultural treasure. The elders are also amazed, because lately many ritualists, mostly from cities, have visited these tombs to meditate. Therefore, they argued that the tombs and their myths must be preserved. "While meditating, ritualists can learn about our folklores." Mbah Tjip said. Meanwhile, youths consider that the exciting places of this village are scattered around its landscape. According to Andi, some mountains are very suitable to be used as outing activities and special interest tourism services. They get inspired by the success of the neighboring village youths who became professional paragliding instructors and special interest tourism operators. Furthermore, folk art communities are worried about the sustainability of their performances. The problem is caused by high operating costs, especially when they get a request (tanggapan) from the city. They wish they had a performing art studio in their villages so that they would get fees from the audience and trainees. Meanwhile, housewives are very enthusiastic about introducing their home-made snacks to broader consumers. So far, the consumers are limited to the Gunungsari and neighboring villages. Meantime, farmers also want to develop their agricultural and livestock products into tourism activities. Several years ago, they were visited by community service program (Kuliah Kerja Nyata) university students who learned about the implementation of biogas, milking the cattle, and fruit harvesting activities. Based on that experience, they want that these daily activities to be packaged into participatory experience tourism services.

Thus, previous FGD resulted that mapping project of potential tourism attractions across Gunungsari is an important step which has to be conducted as the earliest stage in implementing the CBE. As mentioned by UNESCO (2009: 11), participatory mapping practices in the context of cultural rights can be used as an action plan in order to protect and to promote cultural and natural diversities, to revitalize tangible and intangible heritages, and to advocate land rights. As reported by Peluso (1995: 384) and Tsing (2005: 229), participatory mapping practices can help communities redefine and reinvent customary rights, as the political and cultural contestations of indigenous people over the state and plantation companies in Kalimantan. In the context of tourism, Arida et al. (2017: 2) state that the participatory mapping can describe and visualize tourism potentials based on local perspectives which are very useful for tourism planning and development in the future. Besides, the closing remark of FGD declares four principles for the future development of Gunungsari tourism: 1). Local people should be involved in every program of tourism development. 2) Tourism development has to protect and sustain the local culture and environment. 3). Tourism economic activities should be based on local products and services. 4). Tourism development should drive and emerge local people’s entrepreneurial skills.

The Mapping Result
On 24-25 September 2017, the social service team of Anthropology Department (four lecturers and ten students) and six kepala dusun, as the representatives of Gunungsari community members, conducted a tourism surveying and mapping project. Practically, the selection of potential tourism attractions is based on dialogue between the team and kepala dusun, which focuses on the significant values (the natural and cultural uniqueness and the market prospect) of the attractions. Here are the results of our survey:

1. Brau
The morphology of this area is hills surrounded by pine forests. People mostly utilize land use for vegetable and horticulture farmland. Generally, Dusun Brau inhabitants are middle-scale
cow breeders and peasants. Based on the PM activities, in Dusun Brau there are three types of potential tourism attractions: home industry tourism (HIT), (1) small scale local snack entrepreneurs based on milk products, special interest tourism (SIT) (2) a natural cave for spelunking and (3) an accessible spot to Paragliding in PERHUTANI zone, (4) educational tourism (ET), livestock and biogas utilization practices which can be developed as educational tourism for school students.

2. Ngebruk
Ngebruk is located near Dusun Brumbung and Pagergunung. Although it is situated near the hilltop, reaching this area is quite easy because the road has been paved and the direction board is informative. The largest land use in this village is flower plantations with some variation of teak and silk trees as well as vegetable farmlands. Here, the rose farm is the major work. Based on the PM findings, it is found that there are three locations that are very potential to be developed into SIT, (1) a campground, (2) an outbound area, and (3) a sunrise view.

3. Brumbung
Brumbung is located next to Dusun Ngebruk and Kapruk. This hamlet is situated in the highland. Mostly, Brumbung inhabitants work as farmers (flowers, the vegetable, and the fruit). This region has two potential tourism attractions: agro-tourism (AT) (1) "fruit-picking activity" and (2) religious and cultural tourism (RCT), umbul, a water spring for meditating place. According to our informant, since kepala dusun renovated this cave, people, mostly from Malang, have visited here to meditate.

4. Jantur
Jantur’s landscape is dominated by hills, and the settlement is located on flat land, interspersed among farmlands. The land use is widely utilized for vegetable and flower plantations. Some of the forest areas are also used for gardening. Meanwhile, for the livestock areas, residents breed them next to their homes. For livelihoods, Dusun Jantur inhabitants rely on vegetable productions, rose plantations, and cow breeding. Based on the survey, there are two potential tourism attractions in this location: SIT (1) two waterfalls Coban Kembar and Coban Patemah, RCT, (2) a local rite, bersih desa in Punden Gentong Agung (an archaeological relic stepping-stone).

5. Kapruk
This hamlet is situated on flat-lying land, and it is close to the Brantas Creek. The team identified that there are four potential tourism attractions: AT, (1) orange gardens and (2) rose plantations, RCT (3) a folk dance tayub, and (4) a pilgrimage-rite of Mbah Gemi sacred tomb which is believed as the ancestor of Gunungsari people.

6. Pagergunung
Pagergunung toponym is derived from its landscape "surrounded by mountains." Based on the PM, the team found three potential RTC tourism attractions in this hamlet: (1) Mbah Demang Lasem tomb, and (2) Shayid Djumaidi Kubro tomb, who are believed as descendants of Mbah Batu, the man who built the first village in Batu, and, (3) a folk performing art, jaran kepang, which is regularly performed once a year in Suroan event.

All in all, based on the PM result in Gunungsari, the team found 17 points of potential tourism attractions which can be classified into five categories: (1) RCT, (2) SIT, (3) AT, (4) HIT, and (5) ET. For detailed information, see the following map (Figure 3) and table (Figure 4).
Using Participatory Mapping (Case study: Mambal Village, Badung Regency, Indonesia).}

To improve the human resource skills of Gunungsari people, by giving them tourism workshops and training. For example, for RCT, further training for local people on how to assess and reinvent their local traditions (e.g., folklore, local arts, etc.) is needed. For the SIT, upgrading the outdoor skill and its management are compulsory. Meanwhile, for AT, we can invite agricultural experts to give some training for local farmers on how to develop and invent a new local variety of agricultural products. As for HIT, in particular, it is necessary to give entrepreneurial workshops for local people in order to improve the quality of their products. Lastly, in terms of ET, local people should be given workshops and assistance to develop appropriate and eco-friendly technology.

Figure 4. List of Findings of Tourism Potential Attractions in Gunungsari

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A local rite, bersih desa in Punden Gentong Agung</td>
<td>Jantur</td>
<td>RCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Two waterfalls Coban Kembar and Coban Patemah</td>
<td>Jantur</td>
<td>SIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Orange gardens and rose plantations</td>
<td>Kapruk</td>
<td>AT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>A folk dance tayub</td>
<td>Kapruk-Punten</td>
<td>RCT</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>A pilgrimage-rite of Mbah Gembi sacred tomb</td>
<td>Kapruk</td>
<td>RCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>A campground</td>
<td>Ngebruk</td>
<td>SIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>An outbound area and Ngebruk</td>
<td>Ngebruk</td>
<td>SIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Sunrise Spot</td>
<td>Ngebruk</td>
<td>SIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Flower picking activities</td>
<td>Brumbung</td>
<td>AT</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Umbul, a meditation place</td>
<td>Brumbung</td>
<td>RCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Mbah Demang Lasem tomb</td>
<td>Pagergunung</td>
<td>RCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Syeikh Djamadi Kubro tomb</td>
<td>Pagergunung</td>
<td>RCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Jaran Kepang Dor performing art</td>
<td>Pagergunung</td>
<td>RCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Small scale local snack</td>
<td>Brau</td>
<td>HIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>An accessible spot to Paragliding</td>
<td>Brau</td>
<td>SIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>A natural cave for spelunking</td>
<td>Brau</td>
<td>SIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Livestock and biogas utilization practices</td>
<td>Brau</td>
<td>ET</td>
</tr>
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CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The insight of community-based tourism development drives us to conduct participatory action research and mapping project in Gunungsari Village. Our concern is to grasp community aspirations that have been marginalized in most tourism planning programs. In other words, previous stakeholders did not place members of the community as the main actor in tourism planning and practice. Thus, the outcome of current research is to reveal the potential tourism attractions that are parts of the daily life of the community as a reflection of the community aspirations. However, these findings are still preliminary. Thus, further study and discussion need to be conducted to obtain a detailed plan of community-based ecotourism developments, especially in the case of the business model and stakeholder involvement.

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Monografi Desa Gunungsari 2016


