



# Policy Implementation Dynamics of Mangrove Ecotourism Governance in Tanjungpinang Coastal Area: A Grindle-Based Analysis

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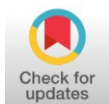
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## Abstract:

Ecotourism has emerged as a key strategy for harmonizing environmental conservation with local economic development, particularly in biodiverse coastal regions. Mangrove forests, as critical ecological buffers and carbon sinks, have gained attention for their potential to support sustainable tourism models. This study investigates the dynamics of policy implementation for mangrove ecotourism in the coastal area of Tanjungpinang, Indonesia, using Grindle's Policy Implementation Framework to analyze both policy content and implementation context. The research aims to evaluate how the local tourism policy specifically Regional Regulation No. 8 of 2021 is translated into action at the grassroots level. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, incorporating in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis involving various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, tourism operators, and community representatives. Findings reveal that while the regulation outlines clear environmental and socio-economic goals, implementation is hindered by inter-agency fragmentation, centralized decision-making, limited infrastructure, and minimal community participation. Power asymmetries and bureaucratic misalignment further complicate the delivery of intended outcomes. Despite these obstacles, some benefits have emerged, such as increased awareness and pilot ecotourism initiatives. The study concludes that for mangrove ecotourism to achieve meaningful ecological and economic outcomes, a participatory governance model is essential. Strengthening institutional coordination, enhancing grassroots involvement, and securing diversified resources are critical to bridging the gap between policy vision and practical impact.

**Keyword:** Mangrove, Ecotourism, Policy, Implementation, Sustainable Tourism



## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, ecotourism has emerged as a pivotal alternative to mass tourism, aligning economic development with environmental conservation and cultural preservation. This paradigm has gained traction in developing countries, especially those with rich biodiversity and unique ecological assets, such as Indonesia. Among the various forms of ecotourism, mangrove ecotourism stands out due to the critical

ecological services provided by mangrove ecosystems and their vulnerability to anthropogenic pressures. Mangroves are vital coastal buffers, supporting biodiversity, mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration, and sustaining the livelihoods of coastal communities. Yet, these ecosystems are under increasing threat from land conversion, pollution, and inadequate governance mechanisms.

Tanjungpinang City, the capital of Kepulauan Riau Province, possesses a substantial mangrove ecosystem along its coastal lines, offering potential for sustainable tourism development. In response, the local government introduced Peraturan Daerah (Regional Regulation) No. 8 of 2021 as a legal instrument to guide the Master Plan for Tourism Development from 2022 to 2032. The regulation explicitly emphasizes mangrove ecotourism as part of the city's strategic tourism zones, aiming to balance ecological preservation with economic growth. However, the implementation of this policy has faced significant challenges ranging from weak stakeholder collaboration to limited community involvement, infrastructure deficiencies, and socio-cultural constraints.

Ecotourism, by its very nature, demands participatory governance and cross-sectoral synergy. Scholars have emphasized that policy implementation is not merely a technocratic endeavor but a politically nuanced process influenced by competing interests, resource allocation, institutional characteristics, and actor strategies. Hence, understanding how ecotourism governance policies unfold in practice requires a multidimensional lens that integrates both administrative and political perspectives. In this regard, the present study utilizes Grindle's Policy Implementation Framework (Grindle, 2017), particularly its two core domains content of policy and context of implementation to analyze the complexities of mangrove ecotourism governance in Tanjungpinang.

Ecotourism has evolved into a strategic vehicle for achieving sustainable development, especially in ecologically sensitive regions. Several recent studies reinforce the growing consensus that ecotourism, when well-managed, can deliver both environmental and socio-economic dividends. Yet, the transition from policy design to effective implementation remains fraught with challenges, particularly in coastal ecosystems such as mangrove forests. Emphasizing the role of decentralized planning in developing locally-based tourism. This insight is critical for understanding how regional governments can formulate responsive ecotourism policies that reflect local socio-environmental characteristics (Musyarri, 2024). Similarly, highlight the entrepreneurial potential of eco-enzyme initiatives within river ecotourism and mangrove conservation. Their study underscores how environmental conservation efforts can be tied to small-scale, community-driven economic activities, providing a replicable model for mangrove ecotourism zones (Wijaya & Laila, 2024).

From a conservation perspective, conducted a riparian health assessment in China's Three Gorges Reservoir, showing that tourism activities can degrade natural systems unless stringent ecological monitoring and community participation are ensured (Arif et al., 2023). These findings resonate with the local challenges faced in Tanjungpinang, where stakeholder disconnection and infrastructural deficits hinder long-term ecological sustainability. In the broader theoretical debate, reflects on the complexity of balancing conservation with tourism development in protected areas (KC, 2022). The author argues that policy frameworks often overlook the nuanced relationships between power, governance, and stakeholder interests, which can derail

the implementation process even in well-funded ecotourism projects. These governance tensions are directly relevant to the dynamics observed in the implementation of Perda No. 8/2021 in Tanjungpinang.

Furthermore, caution against greenwashing practices in ecotourism, where sustainability narratives are used superficially without corresponding environmental outcomes (Abeyratne & Arachchi, 2022). This critique offers an important lens for evaluating the sincerity and depth of policy execution particularly in environments where tourism is promoted aggressively without adequate checks on environmental integrity. Examined ecological-tourism coupling in Kyushu, Japan, illustrating how tourism development must be synchronized with ecological conditions through spatial planning and adaptive governance (Liu et al., 2023).

Their conclusions reinforce the need for localized indicators and implementation pathways that are tailored to ecosystem-specific dynamics an issue at the heart of mangrove tourism governance. In the Southeast Asian context (Mafi-Stephens et al., 2022) opportunities and barriers in developing ecotourism in Fiji, noting the tension between resource conservation and market pressures. Likewise, (Said & Maryono, 2018) provide empirical evidence on tourist motivations and how destination perception influences ecotourism demand, offering practical cues for designing communication and community outreach. Lastly, Reinforces the role of environmental education in sustainable ecotourism, revealing that ecotourism can influence pro-environmental behavior if coupled with structured learning interventions (Huang et al., 2023). This aligns with the recommendations of the present study, which advocates for strengthening the educational dimension of mangrove tourism as a long-term behavioral investment.

Collectively, these works provide a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for analyzing the challenges and innovations in ecotourism governance. However, most of these studies stop short of evaluating how policies are translated into action on the ground particularly in the context of mangrove-based tourism and decentralized Indonesian municipalities. Thus, the present study addresses a critical gap by examining the implementation of a legally binding local tourism policy (Perda No. 8/2021) through the analytical lens of Grindle's framework, focusing on both content and context of policy delivery.

Previous studies have often treated ecotourism policies as static interventions, underestimating the adaptive and contested nature of their implementation. This research advances the theoretical discourse by situating ecotourism governance within the broader political economy of policy-making and execution. The novelty of this study lies in two areas Analytical Framework Application: Unlike most empirical works that remain descriptive, this research systematically applies Grindle's theory, dissecting both policy content (interests affected, degree of change, benefit types, resource mobilization) and implementation context (power distribution, actor strategies, institutional characteristics, and compliance).

Policy Practice Interface in Coastal Governance, The study examines how regional policy instruments like Perda No. 8/2021 translate into practical governance mechanisms, emphasizing the influence of local sociopolitical dynamics on environmental policy outcomes aspect seldom captured in ecotourism literature. These questions aim to deconstruct the implementation process by evaluating how planned

policy objectives align with practical outcomes and to identify systemic obstacles that prevent policy realization.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research approach to investigate the implementation of mangrove ecotourism governance policy in the coastal areas of Tanjungpinang, Riau Islands, Indonesia. The qualitative method enables the researcher to explore the complexity of the policy process by capturing rich, contextual, and interpretive data from multiple stakeholder perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The research is grounded in the framework of Grindle's Policy Implementation Theory, which divides the analysis into two major dimensions: the content of policy and the context of implementation (Grindle, 2017).

The content dimension includes the affected interests, the expected benefits, the degree of policy-induced change, the implementing institutions, and the availability of resources. On the other hand, the context dimension emphasizes the distribution of power, institutional capacity, actor strategies, compliance levels, and the dynamic responses that influence policy realization. The research was situated within ecotourism development zones defined by Regional Regulation No. 8 of 2021, which provides the city's ten-year tourism master plan with a clear emphasis on sustainable mangrove ecotourism as both an environmental and economic agenda. Data collected through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on their relevance to the policy ecosystem. Ten individuals participated, including government officers (Tourism and Environment Departments), NGO members, local tourism business actors, and community leaders.

Observations were conducted on-site across several mangrove ecotourism locations to evaluate the condition of infrastructure, community engagement, and environmental integrity. Additionally, a document review was conducted to analyze policy content and regional planning instruments. The credibility of findings was ensured through triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), allowing for cross-validation of data and interpretation across sources. This approach is particularly valuable in governance studies where formal regulations may differ significantly from practice. Data analysis followed the interactive model which includes three cyclical activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Raw data were transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify themes aligned with the research objectives and Grindle's theoretical framework. Themes were then visually organized into matrices and flowcharts that illustrated actor interactions, resource distribution, and implementation bottlenecks.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. General condition of Mangrove Ecotourism Governance in the Tanjungpinang Coastal Area**

The governance of mangrove ecotourism in Tanjungpinang is formally anchored in Regional Regulation No. 8 of 2021, which outlines the Tourism Development Master Plan for the city from 2022 to 2032. This regulation identifies mangrove-based ecotourism as a priority within the strategic tourism zones (Kawasan Strategis Pariwisata Kota),

particularly focusing on the Sungai Carang mangrove area. According to field mapping conducted by the researcher, several mangrove ecotourism sites have been established, including Panglima Bulang Mangrove Restaurant, the Mangrove Laboratory at SMPN 10 Tanjungpinang, Dang Merdu Mangrove Resto & Café, and Cafe Mangrove. These sites embody both culinary and educational ecotourism models, providing opportunities for nature exploration and environmental learning. The overarching goal is to develop tourism that preserves mangrove ecosystems while simultaneously creating socio-economic benefits for local communities.

However, implementation of the governance framework faces numerous institutional and operational challenges. A critical issue is the fragmentation of responsibilities among different governmental agencies, such as the Environmental Agency, the Department of Tourism, and village-level administrations, which often operate in silos without effective coordination. The study finds that there is no dedicated institution responsible for the integrated management of mangrove ecotourism, leading to overlaps in authority and inefficiencies in program execution. Through Grindle's framework, particularly in the "context of implementation," the research identifies power imbalances between government actors and the community, whereby decision-making is predominantly top-down and fails to adequately incorporate grassroots input. This contributes to suboptimal execution of community empowerment strategies that are essential for long-term sustainability.

In terms of infrastructure, the mangrove ecotourism areas in Tanjungpinang remain significantly underdeveloped. Observations noted a lack of essential facilities such as pedestrian paths, signage, toilets, and clean resting areas, all of which are critical for delivering a positive visitor experience. Accessibility to mangrove locations is constrained by unpaved roads and limited transportation options. Furthermore, budgetary dependence on the municipal government (APBD Tanjungpinang) restricts the scope of development, with minimal engagement from private investors or donors. This limitation hampers the ability to expand ecotourism services and undermines the goals set forth in the city's tourism master plan. Without infrastructure development, the ecotourism sector remains unattractive to high-value visitors, limiting the economic multiplier effect that the policy aims to achieve.

On the socio-cultural front, public awareness and local participation in mangrove conservation remain inconsistent. While certain schools, youth groups, and NGOs have initiated mangrove planting and educational outreach, these efforts are scattered and lack continuity. The research highlights that local communities are often passive participants in the ecotourism agenda, due to limited environmental education, lack of training in ecotourism operations, and absence of structured incentives. Additionally, illegal logging and land conversion persist as major threats to mangrove sustainability, revealing weak enforcement of environmental regulations. These social and environmental risks show that policy implementation is not only a matter of institutional design but also of behavioral change and grassroots engagement areas that require sustained intervention and capacity-building.

Despite these constraints, the research finds significant potential in Tanjungpinang's mangrove ecotourism sector. The ecological richness of mangrove forests, combined with the cultural identity of coastal communities, presents a strong foundation for integrated, sustainable tourism. The policy has already generated some



tangible benefits, such as increased environmental awareness and small-scale economic opportunities. However, for greater social and ecological transformation to occur, a strategic realignment is necessary. This includes enhancing coordination among agencies, institutionalizing community roles in governance, securing diversified funding sources, and strengthening policy monitoring mechanisms. In sum, mangrove ecotourism in Tanjungpinang represents a promising avenue for green development, but it requires a shift toward participatory and adaptive governance to achieve its full impact.

## **2. Policy Implementation of Mangrove Ecotourism in Tanjungpinang Coastal Area**

### **a. Content of Policy**

The policy content of mangrove ecotourism governance in Tanjungpinang reflects a multi-actor dynamic shaped by both conservation priorities and socio-economic expectations. Key stakeholders include the local government, environmental NGOs, tourism entrepreneurs, and coastal communities. The designation of the mangrove area as a protected tourism zone by the local regulation (Perda No. 8/2021) signals a political orientation that favors ecological sustainability over short-term commercial exploitation. As one policymaker explained, “The city government believes preserving the mangrove is more beneficial long-term than just cutting it for instant income.” This aligns with global ecotourism literature, where policy frameworks emphasize the intrinsic ecological value of destination sites (Kiper, 2013; Krüger, 2005).

In terms of policy benefits, the mangrove ecotourism initiative aims to generate ecological, social, and economic advantages. These include ecosystem conservation, community education, and livelihood enhancement. However, the field findings reveal that benefit distribution remains inequitable. One community member noted: “It is the external operators who earn more. Locals like us rarely get hired as guides or staff.” This mirrors the concern raised by (Das & Chatterjee, 2015; Scheyvens, 1999) who stress that local empowerment and economic inclusivity are often the weakest links in ecotourism implementation, particularly in the Global South.

Decision-making processes for mangrove ecotourism projects in Tanjungpinang remain largely centralized within governmental departments such as the Environment Agency and Maritime Affairs. While participatory rhetoric exists, in practice, local stakeholders particularly community members have limited voice. As a neighborhood leader stated, “We were not consulted. Only after the construction began did we hear about it.” Such top-down decision patterns have been criticized in various ecotourism studies (Cater, 2006; Weaver, 2001) for undermining community ownership and long-term sustainability.

Programs implemented include mangrove reforestation, trail construction, and environmental education, yet many of these efforts are reactive and lack long-term evaluation mechanisms. An NGO staff member reflected: “We help with planting, but no one comes to check after. It’s just for ceremonial purpose.” This reflects broader implementation challenges identified (Chai-Arayalert, 2020; Walter, 2013) who argue that without ongoing monitoring and adaptive management, ecotourism initiatives risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

Resource commitment also appears limited, both in terms of funding and human capital. The city's reliance on its regional development budget (APBD) has led to

intermittent program execution, compounded by the scarcity of technical assistance and trained personnel. A tourism officer shared: “We have plans on paper, but no resources to realize them fully.” This finding is consistent with the work oassert that lack of institutional support and resource mobilization remains a common bottleneck in ecotourism success across Southeast Asia (Ayob et al., 2009; Henri et al., 2017).

b. Content of Policy

The implementation of mangrove ecotourism governance in Tanjungpinang is strongly influenced by contextual variables such as power relations among actors, institutional frameworks, and the socio-political environment. One of the most significant issues is the power asymmetry between government agencies and community stakeholders. Although the policy discourse promotes community-based ecotourism, in practice, the decision-making process remains elite-driven. As a local environmental advocate stated: “The planning is always from the top. Communities are only told what to do, not asked what they need.” Such top-down governance models have been criticized in ecotourism literature for limiting local agency and reducing effectiveness in environmental stewardship (Abeyratne & Arachchi, 2022; Scheyvens, 1999).

The interplay of interests and strategies among stakeholders adds further complexity. Government departments often compete over jurisdiction, while private sector actors seek profitability, and local communities expect tangible benefits. A tourism officer noted: “Sometimes, the Department of Environment and Tourism don’t agree on priorities. It delays everything.” These findings are consistent with empirical work (Long & Bui, 2020), which observed similar institutional clashes in Vietnam’s protected areas. The lack of a unified governance body leads to fragmented planning and blurred accountability.

Institutionally, the mangrove ecotourism program suffers from weak inter-agency coordination and regulatory overlap. Policies are often formulated in isolation, without clear implementation guidelines or integrated monitoring frameworks. This governance gap results in confusion at the operational level, where site managers and field officers are unsure of their mandates. One local manager commented: “There are three different SOPs from different offices. We don’t know which one to follow.” This type of institutional fragmentation has also been observed (Henri et al., 2017; Weaver, 2005) who argue that sustainable ecotourism governance requires harmonized policy instruments and institutional synergy.

Compliance and responsiveness remain mixed. While government-led reforestation and clean-up efforts have mobilized some public participation, enforcement against environmental violations (e.g., illegal mangrove clearing) remains weak. A field officer shared: “Even if we report illegal logging, the action takes too long. By then, the damage is done.” This aligns with findings (Sirakaya, 1997), who emphasize that enforcement credibility is critical in shaping environmental behavior and sustaining conservation goals.

The political and cultural context also shapes how policies are interpreted and implemented. In Tanjungpinang, mangrove ecotourism is often framed more as a project than a long-term community-based movement. Public expectations are frequently shaped by temporary program incentives rather than intrinsic environmental values. As

one NGO representative noted: “Many people join planting events for the free lunch or souvenir, not because they care about the mangrove.” This behavioral dynamic echoes the symbolic participation described in ecotourism research (Fennell, 2000; Walker & Moscardo, 2014) where superficial engagement undermines the transformative potential of ecotourism.

### **3. Barriers and Challenges in Policy Implementation**

The implementation of mangrove ecotourism policy in Tanjungpinang faces numerous structural, social, and environmental challenges that hinder its effectiveness. One of the most visible barriers is the lack of basic infrastructure to support ecotourism activities. Field observations indicate that tourist facilities such as access roads, toilets, signage, and interpretation centers are either non-existent or in poor condition. As one site manager explained: “Visitors often complain there are no clean restrooms or maps. Many leave early because they feel the place is not ready.” Inadequate infrastructure has consistently been cited in literature as a core limitation in developing ecotourism destinations (Ayob et al., 2009; Cheung & Jim, 2013; Ross & Wall, 1999).

Another major challenge stems from low public awareness and community participation. While there are occasional reforestation and clean-up events, these are often ceremonial in nature and not rooted in continuous engagement. A local youth leader stated: “We join events when NGOs come, but after that, nothing happens. There’s no follow-up or support for our own ideas.” This reflects a pattern of symbolic participation, a phenomenon documented in multiple ecotourism case studies (Ting & Cheng, 2017; Walter, 2013), where communities are involved only superficially, without long-term capacity-building or shared decision-making.

The third barrier lies in conflicting land use and weak environmental enforcement. In some mangrove zones, illegal logging, dumping, and land conversion continue to occur, largely due to the lack of surveillance and legal consequences. A civil servant from the Environmental Agency remarked: “We lack the personnel to patrol the area. Even when violations are reported, legal procedures take too long.” This implementation gap is not unique to Tanjungpinang; similar challenges have been noted in Indonesian and Southeast Asian ecotourism zones (Fennell, 2000; Ren et al., 2021) where environmental goals often clash with local economic interests and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

In addition, interagency coordination problems further complicate policy implementation. Agencies responsible for tourism, environment, public works, and planning tend to operate independently, leading to misalignment in program targets and timelines. An official from the Tourism Office shared: “We wanted to build an eco-trail, but it was delayed because the Environment Office had a different plan for the area.” This siloed approach contradicts best practices in integrated destination management, as emphasized by (Krüger, 2005; Nogueira & Carvalho, 2024) advocate for institutional synergy in tourism governance.

Lastly, limited financial and human resources serve as a cross-cutting constraint. The mangrove ecotourism initiative heavily depends on local government funding, which is often insufficient for full-scale implementation. Furthermore, there is a shortage of trained personnel who can facilitate ecotourism education, manage visitor services, and conduct environmental monitoring.



## CONCLUSION

The implementation of mangrove ecotourism policy in Tanjungpinang reflects a strategic attempt to balance environmental conservation with local economic development. Anchored by Regional Regulation No. 8 of 2021, the policy has succeeded in establishing several ecotourism sites that blend ecological preservation with education and entrepreneurship. However, this formal progress is not fully matched by institutional capacity or community ownership. While the regulatory framework articulates sustainable objectives, actual policy execution remains constrained by fragmented governance, limited stakeholder engagement, and infrastructural deficiencies that reduce the quality of tourist experiences and local benefits.

From the analytical lens of Grindle's Policy Implementation Framework, the content of policy illustrates the interplay of multiple interests, the potential for inclusive benefits, and the commitment to sustainable tourism principles. Yet, these ideals are frequently undermined by centralized decision-making processes, unequal distribution of gains, and weak follow-through on community-based programs. The context of implementation shaped by bureaucratic competition, power asymmetries, and cultural attitudes further complicates efforts to institutionalize participatory and adaptive ecotourism governance. Without stronger coordination mechanisms, accountability systems, and bottom-up initiatives, the current governance structure may fall short in achieving long-term impact.

Nonetheless, the study finds that mangrove ecotourism in Tanjungpinang holds significant transformative potential. With abundant natural assets and a growing awareness of sustainable practices, the city can become a model for ecotourism-led development in coastal regions. To realize this, local authorities must foster inter-agency collaboration, invest in infrastructure and human capital, and actively involve communities in planning, execution, and monitoring processes. By addressing both content and context deficiencies, the policy can move beyond symbolic gestures and generate meaningful ecological, social, and economic change in the long run.

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