

When local virtues meet national policy: Adaptation communication strategies of the Kasepuhan Citorek community in the Bayah Dome Geopark

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Abstract

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The Kasepuhan Citorek Indigenous Community preserves natural equilibrium through its unique agriculture techniques. The establishment of the Bayah Dome Geopark Program offers hope for sustainable tourism, but it also raises worries about disrupting the previously preserved environmental balance. This research investigates the Citorek community's response to policy and environmental changes using the ideas of development communication, participation, adaptation communication, and populism. The case study technique, which includes in-depth interviews and participant observation, exposes a populist narrative from the government or local elites about the geopark. Collaboration among the government, academics, and local people is critical to sustainable geopark development, with social capital and community engagement playing major roles. The key proposal is to improve the synergy of local-national policy and promote tourism that protects environment and culture.

Introduction

Geoparks are designated areas recognized for their geological heritage of international significance, and they are managed in a way that promotes conservation, education, and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2020; Weaver, 2001). These spaces not only preserve natural formations but also integrate local communities into frameworks for ecotourism and environmental learning. However, geoparks can also trigger conflicts over land, identity, and governance—especially when implemented in Indigenous territories (Kenny, 2009).

The Bayah Dome Geopark in Lebak Regency, Banten, serves as a case in point. This geopark encompasses a unique volcanic structure from the Neogene to Quaternary periods and features more than 28 geodiversity sites, 27 biodiversity zones, and 11 cultural heritage locations (Asdiarman, 2020). It has drawn national and international attention due to its geological features and economic potential, particularly its Cikotok-type gold mineralization and Pongkor-type mineral deposits (Gray, 2013). These attributes position the geopark not only as a conservation area but also as a potential driver of tourism and extractive industries (Bemmelen, 1949; ESDM, 2022).



Figure 1. Bayah Dome Area Descriptions
(Source: 2024, <https://geoparkbayahdome.com/>)

Amid these geological riches lies the indigenous community of Kasepuhan Citorek, whose long-standing tradition of ecological stewardship is deeply embedded in their agricultural and cultural practices (Somantri, 2020). The Citorek people plant rice only once a year as part of their belief in nurturing the land—a philosophy aligned with Indigenous Environmental Ethics (Sufia, et al. 2018; Pierotti, 2011) and agroecological principles (Altieri, 2018). Their local wisdom stands in contrast—and in potential tension—with top-down policies aimed at promoting the geopark as a tourism destination (Kurniawan, et al. 2021).

This study investigates how these two paradigms—national development policy and indigenous sustainability practices—interact and potentially clash. The focus is on community acceptance, participation, and the role of social capital in adapting to the Bayah Dome Geopark development initiative.

While the government promotes sustainable tourism through this geopark, concerns arise from Citorek residents about cultural erosion and ecological disruption. As Duffy (2015) argues, ecotourism—despite its conservation promises—often leads to commodification of nature and marginalization of local voices.

Nevertheless, the Citorek community sees potential benefits. The geopark could serve as a platform for raising public awareness about the importance of environmental conservation. It may also promote sustainable tourism that leverages local knowledge and practices, thus fostering community-based tourism (Situmorang, 2019; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). The active role of local wisdom to document their traditions and promote their culture further exemplifies how indigenous communities can adapt to external influences while retaining control over their narratives (MacRae, 2017).

This research contributes to the study of Development Communications, Environmental Communication, Social Capital, and Adaptation or Populism. Practically, it is also beneficial to the community in the four areas of the population in Lebak which is (culture diversity) as the subject of development, program manager, Department of Education and Culture of Lebak district, as well as the community of tourist perpetrators in the district around the Bayah Dome Geopark.

Development communication defined as the strategic use of communication to promote social change, development communication involves cultural sensitivity, stakeholder collaboration, and media adaptation (Wilkins et al., 2014). This approach emphasizes two-way dialogue between government and community in implementing development projects.

Wilkins et al (2014) also stress several factors critical for successful development communication, including the following factors: (1) cultural sensitivity or understanding and respecting local cultures to ensure the relevance of communication strategies; (2) collaboration or engaging stakeholders such as governments, NGOs, and local communities in the communication process; and (3) technological adaptation, utilizing both traditional and digital media to reach diverse populations effectively. These concepts highlight the role of communication not merely as a tool for disseminating information but as a means for engaging communities in a participatory, inclusive way to drive sustainable development.

Environmental communication refers to the practice of strategically using communication to address and promote understanding of environmental issues and encourage responsible environmental behavior. Environmental communication serves as a bridge between scientific knowledge and community awareness (Cox, 2013). Flor & Cangara (2018) highlight its role in enabling behavior change through culturally relevant and participatory messages.

Flor & Cangara (2018) also emphasize several factors that shape effective environmental communication, including the following factors: (1) cultural context, understanding local cultures and values to ensure that environmental messages resonate with diverse audiences; (2) media engagement, utilizing various media platforms, including traditional media, social media, and digital technologies, to reach different segments of the population. and (3) collaboration with stakeholders, partnering with governments, NGOs, businesses, and local communities to create unified and impactful environmental campaigns. These concepts and factors highlight that environmental communication is not just about transmitting information but about fostering a participatory, action-oriented dialogue to promote sustainability and conservation (Droste, 2018; Field, 2010).

Adaptation Theory, as discussed by Jan Servaes (2020), refers to the process by which individuals, communities, or systems adjust to changes in their environment, particularly in response to external pressures such as climate change, technological shifts, or social transformations. It is defined as the ability to modify behavior, practices, or structures to mitigate risks and take advantage of opportunities arising from these changes (Servaes, 2020: 67).

Adaptation is viewed as an ongoing, dynamic process that ensures resilience and sustainability in the face of evolving challenges (Coleman, 1999). Key factors influencing adaptation include (1) cultural context, the way communities adapt is heavily influenced by their cultural values, traditions, and social structures; (2) access to resources, economic, technological, and human resources determine how effectively a community can adapt to change; (3) communication and knowledge exchange, effective communication plays a critical role in disseminating knowledge about adaptation strategies and engaging stakeholders in collaborative efforts; and (4) policy and governance, the presence of supportive policies and adaptive governance structures enables smoother transitions and resilience-building (Fatahillah & Cadith, 2022). Servaes (2020) emphasizes that adaptation is not a one-size-fits-all solution but a context-specific process that requires participatory approaches to ensure local relevance and effectiveness.

Local wisdom refers to the body of knowledge, practices, and values developed and passed down by communities over generations, which are deeply rooted in cultural and environmental contexts. According to Fukuyama (2000) and Putnam (1995), local wisdom plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, trust, and sustainable development by guiding community behavior and decision-making based on collective experiences and traditions.

There are some key factors shaping local wisdom include: (1) social capital: as described by Putnam (1995), strong social networks and trust within a community are essential for transmitting and sustaining local wisdom. this capital facilitates cooperation and collective problem-solving; (2) cultural identity, local wisdom is closely tied to cultural identity, reflecting the unique experiences, traditions, and values of a community (Fukuyama, 2000). it shapes how communities interact with their environment and respond to change' (3) environmental adaptation: communities develop local wisdom through long-term interaction with their specific environment, enabling them to adapt to ecological changes and manage resources sustainably; and (4) community participation: active involvement of community members in decision-making and knowledge sharing helps preserve and update local wisdom, ensuring its relevance in contemporary challenges (Nugraha, 2018).

Putnam (1995) and Fukuyama (2000) argue that local knowledge systems and trust networks are critical to resilience. In the context of Citorek, these manifest in ritual practices, communal land management, and oral traditions. Meanwhile, Järvelä (2023) highlights cultural sustainability in the adaptation process in local communities, where cultural capabilities and citizen participation become important assets in responding to global changes and challenges such as national policies. Local adaptive capacity is considered as one of the powerful tools to ensure cultural sustainability amidst crises or broader social transformations.

Populism often uses communication strategies designed to strengthen support by using rhetoric that emphasizes the difference between "the people" and "the elite." (El-Ibiary & Calfano, 2022). Populist narratives often emerge when development initiatives overlook local values (Burt, 1992). Media can amplify distrust between elites and communities (Block & Negrine, 2017), especially when participatory communication is absent.

Järvelä's (2023) research also shows that integrating national policies with local cultural values not only improves adaptation but also helps create policies that are more inclusive and appropriate to the local context. This includes the use of traditional knowledge to respond to modern policies in areas such as natural resource management (Bolton, 2005).

According to Charea & Havifi (2023), the Minangkabau community's mamak (MmK) and kamanakan (KmN)-centered communication and local wisdom are still well-maintained and helpful for the educational process and problem-solving that arises because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The top-to-bottom vertical communication pattern, however, positions MMK as the party with the most knowledge of the issue of communication generation gaps; therefore, it needs to be adjusted to reflect the growing technological literacy and increased access to a variety of information sources.

Yasir, et. all (2020) showed that environmental communication is an essential component in the successful development of mangrove ecotourism. Utilizing a variety of communication channels and techniques, environmental communication needs to be integrated and creatively handled. Mangroves, ecotourism, empowerment, communication planning, and environmental communication.

Method

This research received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Center for Research and Community Service, Universitas Mercu Buana, Jakarta. This research applies a constructivist paradigm, emphasizing the relative and evolving nature of social realities. In this framework, power dynamics and political influences are viewed as outcomes of adaptive processes that respond to social, economic, and cultural changes. This perspective

aligns with the study's focus on how Kasepuhan Citorek, a traditional community, navigates the intersection of local customs and national policies (Kriyantono, 2022).

The case study also explores the role of populism in the community's adaptation strategy (Corina, et al. 2023). Collective action, a core value in Kasepuhan Citorek, is mobilized in response to external changes, reinforcing the importance of local leadership in managing natural resources and ensuring agricultural sustainability. The community has implemented new practices, such as cultivating crops more suitable for the changing climate, without compromising their cultural identity (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018; Yin, 2020).

The study focuses on key community figures such as Puun (village elders), Citorek's elders, the sub-district head, and Geopark Bayah Dome Manager. The informants in this research include Kasepuhan Citorek Kidul, Camat Cibeber, Jaro Citorek also Ecowisata 'Negeri di atas Awan' manager. These individuals offer insights into how traditional leadership roles adapt to modern governance structures while maintaining their cultural identity.

In-depth interviews and participant observation are the primary data collection methods. The interviews provide detailed narratives on the local leaders' strategies in aligning traditional practices with national policies, while participant observation allows the researchers to witness the process of *musyawarah* or discussion among local leaders about community's adaptation to environmental and political changes firsthand. These methods are essential for capturing both verbal and non-verbal dynamics in how the community negotiates its identity within the broader national context (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018).

For data analysis, the study employs an inductive qualitative approach, mapping the relationships between local initiatives and national policies, particularly focusing on how social capital within the community supports adaptation. The study highlights how populism plays a role in collective resource management, where community-driven actions are essential to maintaining agricultural productivity amidst environmental shifts (Kriyantono, 2022; Miles & Huberman, 2020).

Results and Discussion

Local Perceptions and Cultural Preservation

The Bayah Dome Geopark Program is a strategic initiative aimed at preserving the geological and cultural wealth and promoting sustainable tourism in the bay area, including the Citorek Kasepuhan community.

In the kasepuhan area itself, the quality of the soil is very much maintained and cared for wholeheartedly by the community so that planting rice in the following year can produce a maximum harvest, so planting vegetables in polybags is one way that is safe to use by the community without violating traditional rules.

The Citorek Kasepuhan area has a unique rainfall pattern. It used to follow a clear cycle of 6 months of rain and 6 months of dry weather. But in the past two years (2018–2019), this pattern started to change. Sukmandi, a village pioneer, observed these changes and updated the local weather map to reflect a new pattern: 8 months of rain and 4 months of mild dry season. He shared,

"Since 2018, I started tracking rainfall and noticed the pattern had changed. The best time for farming is now between April and August. It used to be 6 months of rain and 6 months dry, but now it's more like 8 months of rain. I once tried planting strawberries from Ciwidey, but

they rotted because of too much rain. Now I grow satori, which suits the weather here better, and it's working well."

(Informant #1, Village Pioneer, 2024)

This reflects the community's deep respect for nature, viewing the land as a mother figure that requires care. However, climate changes have introduced new challenges, such as shifting rainfall patterns, which have led to adaptations in local agriculture, such as experimenting with crops better suited to the new conditions, like satori. Engkap, Geopark Manager said,

"Indigenous people's concept of life is more directed towards how humans can synergize with nature, therefore the kasepuhan in Citorek plant rice only once a year. They believe that the land is like a mother, so they really protect the fertility and quality of the land in the citorek kasepuhan area."

(Informan #2, Geopark Manager, 2024)

Conservation of Geological and Cultural Heritage which focuses on the conservation of unique and valuable geological sites as well as preserving the local traditions and wisdom of the community of Kasepuhan Citorek. Engkap, Geopark Manager emphasized,

"Indigenous people's concept of life is more directed towards how humans can synergize with nature, therefore the kasepuhan in Citorek plant rice only once a year. They believe that the land is like a mother, so they really protect the fertility and quality of the land in the citorek kasepuhan area"

(Informan #2, Geopark Manager, 2024)

Community members show cautious optimism toward the geopark project. While they appreciate its educational and economic potential, many express concern about the rapid influx of visitors and the commercialization of sacred sites.

Social Capital and Participation

The Bayah Dome Geopark, located in Banten, Indonesia, is designed to combine geological conservation with local economic empowerment. The program promotes sustainable tourism through eco-lodging, local crafts, and culinary ventures, while also fostering environmental education and community literacy.

Local leaders and youth activists are actively involved in managing the tension between economic benefits and ecological preservation. For example, Sukmandi, a village pioneer emphasized,

"I hope that with the presence of this geopark, that is precisely what we are starting to erode because the concept of this geopark program is about utilizing nature. I see this as more promising. How do we preserve and utilize nature but not destroy it."

(Informan #1, Village Pioneer, 2024)

Education plays a vital role in the program, with environmental education as one of its core components. The goal is to raise public awareness and concern for conservation. As one literacy activist emphasized, education goes beyond formal schooling. It includes community-based efforts like agricultural training, women's empowerment, and helping

local people improve their products — for example, through better packaging and branding of goods like brown rice or forest honey.

Geopark manager Engkap, shared his experience:

“In 2019, I started offering agricultural training and promoting literacy. I collected books and sorted them for children and mothers. A friend gave me a recipe book, and I used it to teach local women how to make ice cream. I also helped them develop products with better packaging and branding, like brown rice. I even made a 1kg vacuum-packed version so it would last longer on the market and be more competitive. Of course, there are still challenges, but it’s a start.”

(Informant #2, Geopark Manager, 2024)

Observations in the Gunung Luhur area confirm increased tourism and infrastructure improvements, aligning with local claims. However, despite these gains, there is limited evidence of a robust adaptive communication model in practice. Dialogue between community members and government officials often lacks structured feedback mechanisms.

Active involvement of the public in the active participation of the society of the citrus. Their involvement in the various program activities will ensure optimal benefits for the community. Recognition of Bayah Dome as a national geopark is a milestone. Sukmandi as youth activist reflected:

“The recognition of the Bayah Dome Geopark as part of the National Geopark is an important milestone in our efforts to preserve the natural and cultural wealth that exists in this region. As a youth and a pokdarwis activist, I strongly support the Geopark program because it has great potential to increase awareness and the importance of environmental conservation while developing sustainable nature-based tourism”.

(Informan #1, Village Pioneer, 2024)

Eva, the manager of the inn in the Kasepuhan Citorek Area, especially in the Gunung Luhur tourist area. Eva gave her opinion regarding the geopark bayah dome program, she said that:

“With the Bayah Dome Geopark program, there is an increase in tourists to visit the area of the noble mountain tourist attraction, this has a direct impact on the hotel occupancy rate that I manage. In addition, this program also encourages us to improve the quality of services and facilities to meet higher tourist expectations.”

(Informan #3, Inn Manager, 2024)

The Geopark program aims to boost the local economy through tourism-related businesses like eco-lodging, handicrafts, and culinary services, while simultaneously emphasizing environmental education and conservation. A critical challenge involves balancing tourism growth with environmental preservation, a task actively managed by local stakeholders, including youth and indigenous leaders. Informants highlight the program’s potential for sustainable utilization of nature without destruction, the importance of public environmental education and literacy, and the positive impact on local businesses, as evidenced by increased tourism and improved service quality.

Communication Gaps and Populist Risks

The Bayah Dome Geopark initiative has been generally well-received by the Citorek community, whose strong cultural values align with the program's goals. However, a notable communication gap exists regarding the term "Geopark" and the geographical misalignment between the program's name (Bayah) and the actual site of development (Citorek). This disconnect reduces community identification with the program, weakening its grassroots legitimacy.

The acceptance of the Bayah Dome Geopark development program by the Citorek community was well received, as it is in line with the values and implementation of development in Citorek. The thing that's been uncovered is the program's name Geopark.

While the Bayah Dome Geopark is formally named after the Bayah geological formation, many residents of Citorek—where much of the depression lies—feel a disconnection due to the branding of the program. This misalignment between naming and actual location can create early communication gaps and reduce the community's sense of ownership.

"We also realize that the development of this program has challenges, therefore, it is important for us to work together with the government, academics, and local communities in designing and implementing this program wisely. I hope that all parties can collaborate to ensure that the geopark develops in a sustainable way and brings real benefits to the community and the environment."

(Informan #2, Geopark Manager, 2024)

Increased infrastructure means investment in tourism infrastructure, such as access roads, tourist facilities, and information centres, will improve comfort and accessibility for tourists as well as the well-being of local communities. Residents, including local leaders and entrepreneurs, express optimism that the initiative will bring tangible economic and environmental benefits. As Eva, an inn manager in Citorek, stated,

"However, implementing a large program also has its own challenges. One of the main challenges is how to maintain a balance between tourism development and environmental conservation. We must ensure that the increase in tourism does not destroy the beauty and authenticity of the tourist attraction. In addition, we also need to continue working with the government and local communities to develop adequate infrastructure."

(Informan #3, Inn Manager, 2024)

Informants consistently expressed hopes for sustainable development that preserves local nature and traditions. Eva, a local inn manager, emphasized the program's potential to boost tourism while maintaining environmental integrity. Others, Sukmandi, echoed similar optimism, though tempered with concern over infrastructure adequacy and environmental risks.

"I hope this can be an example of how sustainable tourism development can be done, preserving nature while improving local economic welfare. And of course, I also hope that more tourists will be attracted to come and enjoy the beauty and uniqueness offered in the kasepuhan citorek area."

(Informan #3, Inn Manager, 2024)

"I hope that with the presence of this geopark, that is precisely what we are starting to erode because the concept of this geopark program is about utilizing nature. I see this as more

promising. How do we preserve and utilize nature but not destroy it.”

(Informan #1, Village Pioneer, 2024)

Strong communal bonds in Citorek—anchored in ritual leadership and customary institutions—support a bottom-up approach to adaptation. However, the lack of alignment with top-down governance systems remains a significant obstacle. Informants advocate for improved coordination between government agencies, academic researchers, and local actors to foster a truly adaptive, co-managed geopark development model.

Despite the program’s strong community endorsement, there is a latent risk of populist co-optation. Some local actors express concern that government involvement is more symbolic than participatory, focusing on surface-level visibility (e.g., road inaugurations or ceremonial events) rather than long-term, adaptive governance. A deeper integration of adaptive communication—characterized by iterative, two-way dialogue among government, scientists, and customary leaders—is still lacking, risking tokenistic participation over meaningful co-creation.

Overall, the Citorek community’s reception of the Bayah Dome Geopark program has been positive, although there is still a need for better communication and collaboration between the community, government, and academic institutions to ensure sustainable development. Local leaders and residents express hope that this program will bring long-term benefits to both the environment and the community, ensuring that tourism development remains sustainable and respectful of local traditions.

The table 1. highlights different aspects of traditional and modern agricultural practices in the context of climate change adaptation, weather mapping, and the influence of policy and populism.

Traditionally, the community plants rice only once a year, adhering to practices aimed at preserving soil fertility. This reflects a deep-rooted commitment to sustainability, ensuring long-term agricultural productivity. However, climate change has prompted shifts in agricultural methods, as farmers must adapt to unpredictable weather patterns. New approaches, such as weather mapping, help inform decisions about crop selection, allowing farmers to choose resilient crops based on current climate data.

Table 1. Key Finding on Local Wisdoms

Aspects	Traditional Agricultural Practices	Agricultural Adaptation to Climate Change	Weather Mapping and Agricultural Adaptation
Policy and Program	The community plants rice only once a year to preserve soil fertility, reflecting local sustainability practices.	Shift in agricultural practices due to changing climate patterns.	New weather patterns influence crop choices.

Aspects	Traditional Agricultural Practices	Agricultural Adaptation to Climate Change	Weather Mapping and Agricultural Adaptation
Initiative and Social Capital	This practice is rooted in collective knowledge of nature conservation.	Local knowledge guides adaptation and innovation.	Community adapts with suitable crops like satori.
Populism	Emphasizes collective responsibility in resource management.	Community-driven efforts to maintain agricultural productivity.	Collective action in response to environmental changes.

(Source: 2024, Data Processing)

The traditional method of rice farming is grounded in collective knowledge, emphasizing nature conservation. This shared wisdom continues to play a crucial role in guiding adaptation strategies. Local communities are at the forefront of innovation, adjusting their practices to include climate-resistant crops like satori. These efforts showcase the community's ability to maintain agricultural productivity despite environmental challenges.

Resource management in traditional agricultural practices emphasizes collective responsibility. This idea extends to modern climate adaptation strategies, where communities collectively work to preserve agricultural productivity. In response to changing environmental conditions, local farmers engage in cooperative efforts, ensuring the continued sustainability of their practices.

Figure 2 illustrates the disconnect between government policies and community initiatives. Policies often emphasize geology and tourism, while communities prioritize cultural identity and ecological stability. This communication gap could trigger populist resistance if not addressed with sensitivity.



Figure 2. Problem Identification

Based on figure 2. illustrates the key challenges in connecting government policies with local community efforts, specifically in Kasepuhan Citorek. It highlights two main aspects: governmental sides and policy, covering geological preservation, economic opportunities, environmental education, and community participation; and community and cultural aspects, including cultural preservation, tourism impact, community action,

and local initiatives. Each aspect is marked with an “X,” indicating barriers that hinder the alignment between national policies and local initiatives. These challenges underscore the need for adaptive approaches and effective communication to bridge the gap between national agendas and local virtues, preventing the rise of populism.

The program’s strength lies in the community’s cohesive social structure, which facilitates local coordination. Ritual leaders and customary councils hold significant influence in decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the lack of effective engagement with formal government structures signals a deeper governance issue. While informants call for collaboration, actual mechanisms for adaptive communication—such as participatory planning forums or feedback-integrated policy design—are still limited.

Furthermore, risks of populist intervention remain. There is a tendency for government involvement to manifest in symbolic gestures rather than substantive support, which could jeopardize long-term sustainability. For example, infrastructure projects are often prioritized for visibility rather than strategic need, reflecting a top-down approach that may overlook local context.

Evolving climate conditions have prompted changes in traditional agricultural practices. While farmers historically adhered to once-a-year rice planting to maintain soil health, new tools like weather mapping now inform adaptive crop selection. This illustrates both the resilience of local knowledge and the growing necessity for scientific and policy integration in community-based environmental governance.

Adaptive Communication Model: A Missed Opportunity

The Bayah Dome Geopark initiative presents a promising framework for integrating environmental conservation with sustainable tourism development. Policies emphasize the preservation and utilization of nature, and efforts at the local level include education, entrepreneurship, and youth participation. However, despite these strengths, the Geopark’s communication model lacks the essential features of adaptive communication.

Adaptive communication—defined by Servaes (2020) as a participatory process involving feedback, negotiation, and co-decision making—has not been fully realized in this context. Most interactions between local communities and the government remain top-down and instrumental. While communities are expected to implement and support policies, their insights and cultural perspectives are rarely incorporated into policy design or evaluation. Informants often cite the importance of collaboration with government and academia, but this remains largely normative rather than operational.

This communication gap is further complicated by populist tendencies. Government representatives often emphasize rapid infrastructure development and visibility over long-term environmental planning, signaling a populist shift toward short-term deliverables rather than sustained dialogue. As shown in Table 3, while the community is committed to maintaining environmental integrity, the top-level focus on tourism-related infrastructure risks undermining both ecological and cultural sustainability.

The missed opportunity lies in the failure to establish an adaptive co-management system. Such a system would require iterative communication mechanisms—such as joint planning forums, participatory monitoring tools, and decentralized governance structures—that integrate local narratives and traditional knowledge into development processes. As Wilkins et al (2014) suggest, communication for development should not merely transmit information but transform relationships between actors.

Further, the Bayah Dome Geopark initiative showcases a nuanced example of

Environmental Communication (Flor & Cangara, 2018), where there is a need to balance conservation efforts with tourism development. This reflects the community’s struggle to protect natural resources while still participating in economic development—an important theme in environmental communications, which stresses the interplay between human activity and nature. The Adaptation Theory proposed by Servaes (2020) is also relevant, as it frames how traditional societies, like Citorek, evolve their practices in response to both environmental and policy-driven changes. This theory helps explain how communities adapt without losing their cultural identity, integrating external influences in ways that maintain their local wisdom.

Table 2. Key Finding Geopark Policies

Dimension	Community Initiatives	Government/Academic Role	Missed Opportunities
Policy & Program	Strong support for nature-based tourism rooted in local values	Emphasis on preservation through formal policy frameworks	Lack of local integration into formal policy planning
Communication Practice	Informal networks, literacy efforts, youth involvement	One-way policy dissemination, limited participatory planning	Absence of iterative dialogue & adaptive feedback loops
Populist Tendencies	Optimism toward sustainable tourism and environmental pride	Focus on visible development (infrastructure) over co-management	Risk of symbolic inclusion without structural participation

(Source: 2024, Data Processing)

Table 2 demonstrates the potential for synergistic collaboration between government, academic institutions, and the community. Yet, without a communication model that supports mutual learning and adaptive feedback, these relationships remain transactional rather than transformational. Social capital in Citorek, rooted in customary law and collective practices, offers a foundation for adaptive governance—but it has yet to be activated through formal policy channels.

There is a strong sense of collective optimism among the community regarding the benefits of sustainable tourism. The community collectively believes that tourism can enhance their livelihoods without compromising the integrity of their natural resources. The collective approach seen in the collaboration with government and academic bodies reinforces this optimism. At the grassroots level, there is a strong focus on empowering the local community through collaborative and innovative initiatives, ensuring that they remain at the heart of the Geopark’s sustainable development.

This narrative highlights the multi-faceted approach of Bayah Dome Geopark, where community-driven initiatives, collaboration with external stakeholders, and a collective focus on sustainability work together to achieve long-term conservation and economic growth.

Despite references to participatory development, the government’s communication model remains largely instrumental and top-down. There is no clear evidence of a sustained adaptive communication process that integrates local narratives into planning. The model of adaptive co-management—involving iterative dialogue and joint decision-making—is

notably absent.

The emphasis on sustainable tourism and local empowerment remains strong, supported by literacy programs and innovative product development. However, these bottom-up efforts are not sufficiently matched by top-down responsiveness. Adaptive communication is not just desirable—it is essential to ensure that national policy frameworks resonate with local virtues, rather than override them. Without this, the Geopark risks becoming an example of well-intentioned development that fails to adapt to the socio-cultural realities it seeks to support.

At the community level, there is a strong commitment to environmental conservation. Local initiatives often lead the way in preserving natural habitats and promoting sustainable practices, such as eco-tourism and environmentally friendly farming. These efforts are fueled by social capital—shared values, trust, and collaboration—that enable the community to protect its environment while still benefiting from tourism. Community-driven actions, such as clean-up programs or conservation education, play a vital role in this process.

Last, populist sentiments within the community emphasize the importance of maintaining the authenticity and natural beauty of their environment. There is a collective effort to ensure that tourism growth does not compromise the area's unique cultural and natural identity. By focusing on these collective values, local populations aim to align tourism development with their long-term vision of sustainability, safeguarding both their cultural heritage and the environment for future generations.

Local wisdom, as theorized by Fukuyama (2000) and Putnam (1995), is a key pillar of the Citorek community's resilience. Their reliance on traditional knowledge and collective action mirrors the argument that social capital—the networks of relationships and trust within communities—is crucial for effective adaptation and sustainable development. The research underscores that Citorek's agricultural practices are not only a response to climate pressures but also a reflection of their cultural heritage, ensuring that local virtues remain at the forefront of adaptation efforts.

The research on "When Local Virtues Meet National Policy: Adaptation Communication and Populism of Kasepuhan Adat Citorek" highlights the intersection of traditional practices, environmental adaptation, and sustainable development within the Citorek community. The community's agricultural practices, influenced by climate change, demonstrate a strong reliance on collective knowledge and social capital. The Bayah Dome Geopark initiative presents both opportunities and challenges, requiring a delicate balance between conservation and tourism development.

Conclusion

The case of Kasepuhan Citorek highlights the need to align national policies with local wisdom and community-based initiatives. Rooted in sustainability and collective welfare, Citorek's grassroots populism provides a resilient model for inclusive development—especially relevant to the Bayah Dome Geopark's goals of integrating conservation and economic opportunity.

While the Geopark offers promise, its success hinges on genuine community involvement and adaptive governance. Citorek has shown strong local capacity through traditional agriculture, youth initiatives, and environmental stewardship, yet these efforts require structural support and co-management.

Key strategies include, first formalizing multi-stakeholder partnerships for shared

planning and accountability, second advancing sustainable tourism grounded in culture and ecology, third empowering youth through digital and cultural programs, fourth, promoting climate-resilient agriculture through participatory innovation, and finally supporting local economies through better product development and market access.

Ultimately, sustainable progress in Citorek depends on bridging local values with responsive policy. The success of Bayah Dome Geopark will rest on building inclusive, culturally respectful development frameworks.

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