Political Elites And Society : Development Efforts and Increasing Community Participation in Sekapuk Village Tourism Development during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Ozi Setiadi, Melina Nurul Khofifah

Abstract
Political elites have a role in exploring the potential and improving the community's economy. This study aims to discuss the role of village political elites in increasing development and community participation, especially Selo Tirto Giri (Setigi) tourism. As well as knowing the impact of Setigi tourism for the community during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research method in this research is qualitative with descriptive analysis. Data obtained through direct observation and literature study. This study proves that the village political elite, through democratic principles, invites the community to participate in the development of Setigi tourism. Efforts to increase community participation are carried out by inviting them to become Taplus Invest investors in the form of saving Rp. 8,000 per day until Rp. 2,400,000 is collected, which is converted into one share certificate. The Sekapuk Village Government also invites the community directly in dredging garbage in the limestone hills for 1 year. The existence of Setigi tourism is an alternative source of income for the community in addition to their main livelihood. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Setigi tourism also experienced a decline in visitors, but was still able to survive.

Keyword: Political Elite, Society, Sekapuk Village, Tourism Development, Covid-19

Introduction

Good relations between the political elite and the community are important in efforts to build and increase community participation in the development of Sekapuk Village tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic. Sekapuk Village is a village that has a unique and different background from most. One of the unique features of Sekapuk Village is its geographical location. This village is located in Ujungpangkah District, Gresik Regency, an area that has limestone mountains in which there is a high economic value. The wealth of natural resources owned by Sekapuk Village is strongly supported by government resources where the village political elite is able to direct and empower the community to be actively involved in tourism development in Sekapuk Village, especially Selo Tirto Giri (Setigi) tourism.
The local political elite (village) holds the highest position in the political sphere in the village (Haryanto, 2009). They have the advantage of being able to influence and influence individuals or groups of people in certain fields. Moreover, in the context of Sekapuk Village, the village head has personal affinity with various sources, such as the media, thus contributing to a wider influence (Asmo & Aziz, 2020). Thanks to the advantages possessed by the elite, the village political elite is able to manage the social dynamics that exist in the community. The management of Setigi tourism in Sekapuk Village is a manifestation of the ability of the village political elite in managing these dynamics (Bobsuni & Ma'ruf, 2021). Where the ruling elite (governing elite) occupies the top position with the fewest numbers. Followed by the non-governing elite. While the number of people (non-elite) has a very large number (Haryanto, 2017).

Although the number of political elites at the Sekapuk Village government level is not large, these elites have a significant contribution in influencing the community to develop Setigi tourism. In democratic life, the relationship between the village political elite and the community is very strong. This relationship can be seen in the desire to realize and develop Setigi tourism through a joint effort, although not all communities support it, there is also resistance (Bobsuni & Ma'ruf, 2021). The agreement between the elite and the community can produce a balance between elite authority and the community's opportunity to express consensus (Haryanto, 2017). This can then encourage people-based tourism that is able to help regions overcome development challenges, including poverty alleviation, natural resource management and a sustainable environment, to community economic development (Pratiwi, Sutjipta, & AP, 2017). This can contribute to villages, local political elites, and communities even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the above background, it is important to conduct research on the relationship between political elites and society. From the existing studies, not many have discussed the relationship between the village political elite and the community, especially in the context of development efforts and increasing community participation in the development of Sekapuk Village tourism during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Therefore, this study aims to fill in the gaps in existing studies that discuss the role of village political elites in increasing development and community participation in Selo Tirto Giri (Setigi) tourism development. As well as knowing the impact of Setigi
tourism for the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study shows the relationship between the village political elite and a democratic society.

This discussion proves that the village political elite, through democratic principles, is able to invite the community to participate in the development of natural tourism in the limestone hills of Setigi. The development and improvement of community participation is carried out by establishing Taplus Invest in the form of saving. This step can have its own impact on the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Literature Review**

Political elites play an important role in building society. Political elites are defined as individuals or groups of people who have advantages, so that they are able to exert influence on other groups of individuals. This understanding refers to the opinion expressed by Pareto. Elites are people or groups of people who have advantages in certain areas of life so that they can influence other groups of people in that field. Pareto revealed that every field of life has an elite (Haryanto, 2009).

Elites are able to mobilize their abilities to influence people to do or not do something, and are able to manage their social dynamics. Elites occupy top positions in the social structure in certain fields in society such as politics, economics, military, or professions. The number of elites that are less than the general public can be described in a layered pyramid consisting of three elements, namely the governing elite occupying the top position with the least number. Followed by the non-governing elite. Meanwhile, the number of people (non-elite) has a very large number (Haryanto, 2017).

Graph 1. Pyramid of community and elite groups
Government elites are referred to as formal elites, namely elites who are legitimized according to law, so they have the authority to make decisions (Al Kalaby, 2015). Meanwhile, non-government elites are those who have influence in society outside of the government, such as businessmen or community leaders outside the government. Non-elite is the general public who receives influence from the elite.

Similar to elites, politics can also be divided into three based on their level; first, global politics that exist in the international arena which is divided between countries or between regions, such as ASEAN, the European Union, and the United Nations. Global politics talk about broader and more diverse issues about war, conflict, peace, food, human rights, and the world food crisis. Global politics also talks about extremism and terrorism networks. Second, national politics is politics at the state level which is limited to a sovereign area and discusses both domestic and foreign issues such as international relations and agreements. The scope of national politics starts from military, security, economy, democracy, decentralization and autonomy, to energy. No less important is the issue of power, both legislative and executive. Third, local politics, namely issues relating to political issues in the region, from the province, district/city, sub-district, to village. Issues that can be raised in local politics are democracy, bureaucracy, regional autonomy, citizen participation, local government accountability, post-conflict local elections, central and regional relations/conflicts, regional violence to disintegration issues. Elites play an important role in local politics, especially in villages where the community will continue to be in direct contact with the village head (Chalik, 2017).

The community interacts and participates in their social life. They experience organizational and developmental bitterness because of the strife between economically divided groups (Karl Marx). Although this is different from the opinion of Emile Durkheim (Soleman B. Taneko, 1984) which says that society is an objective reality that is impartial, free from the individuals who make it, people who live together, temporarily mix, realize. They are a single and living system (Emil Durkheim). They live together in a social order. According to Ralph Linton (Sorzono Socanto, 2006), people have long worked together to be able to organize themselves and think of themselves as a social unit with certain boundaries. They live together, produce culture, and are generally associated with the same territory, identity and practices, traditions, attitudes, and sense of unity. This terminology was put forward by Sello Somardjan
From this it can be understood that the community will always be in touch with the elite in the context of interacting with each other in a social relationship (Prasetyo & Irwansyah, 2020).

Elite relations with society can then be divided into two, namely conflict and integration. In diverse and developing societies, conflicts are more likely to occur due to different interests. However, it is not impossible to integrate the two. Awareness for democracy and improving sectors of life is one of the keys to achieving unity between the elite and the masses. Actually, realizing unity is not easy. However, if the elite and the community have agreed to balance the elite's authority and the community's opportunity to express their consensus, unity/integration can be realized (Haryanto, 2017).

In relation to the authoritarian elite, the protests that are created regarding the public's request to take part in decision-making signify the creation of a new space for the community to participate. People who have high awareness and a good level of education, this kind of space is important to create. Claimed spaces are a new way to organize citizen participation in contributing, correcting and evaluating power. This role can be carried out by institutions or community groups organized in NGOs, Ormas, OKP or formal institutions (Chalik, 2017).

**Research Method**

The development of Sekapuk Village tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic has not experienced an easy journey. The implementation of restrictions on community activities (PPKM) has had its own impact. The community has difficulty in running and developing Setigi tourism because the government has closed tourist attractions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. As a result, Setigi tourism experienced a decline in income. However, this community-based tourism is not the only source of income for local residents, so the temporary closure of tourist sites does not make the community lose their source of income. The democratic role of the political elite in increasing development and community participation in the development of Selo Tirto Giri (Setigi) tourism also strengthens the community in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic situation.
This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The primary data used comes from direct observation, while the secondary data is obtained through the literature (library). Information was obtained through presentations delivered by the Sekapuk Village Head, residents around Setigi, and online literature. The data collection process starts from desk-review, then continues with direct observation. The data analysis technique uses the analytical technique proposed by Milles and Huberman (2016) which consists of data reduction, data display, and data verification. Data reduction is done by categorizing the data thematically with reference to research questions.

**Research Result**

Sekapuk Village is part of the Ujungpangkah Subdistrict, Gresik Regency, which is to the north of the Gresik Regency capital. The area of Sekapuk Village in 2020 is 2.97 km² or 3.13% of the total area in Ujungpangkah District. This village is the only village without rice fields and pond land. The types of land use are divided into 3, namely dry land covering an area of 167.70 ha, yards of 9.63 ha, and others 120.00 ha. The border of Sekapuk Village in the north is Gosari Village, Ujungpangkah District, in the south it borders Daudo Village, Panceng District, in the east with Bolo Village, Ujungpangkah District and Wadeng Village, Sidayu District, while in the west it is bordered by Wotan Village, Panceng District.

The religion adopted by the majority residents of Ujungpangkah District is Islam. In Sekapuk Village, the entire population is Muslim, or 5,079 people. The population of Sekapuk Village, referring to the 2020 population census, is 4,817 people. The population growth rate per year 2010-2020 reached 0.88 with the highest population density level in the district, namely 1,621.89 people per km².

The people of Sekapuk Village are already familiar with the democratic system. They took an active part in the presidential and vice presidential election processes in 2014, and also participated in the regional head election or post-conflict local election process, either to elect governors, regents to the election of the Sekapuk Village Head. Now, Sekapuk Village is led by Abdul Halim as the village head for the 2017-2023 period. Halim carries the branding “Bersama” which stands for brave, alert, and trustworthy.
Halim's success in winning the Sekapuk Village head election prompted the birth of the vision "to create a civilized, just, and prosperous society". This vision is supported by 7 missions which include infrastructure development, development of economic resources, optimization of services, education, preserving religion, to guaranteeing and protecting community rights (Sekapuk Village Government, n.d.).

Halim also took real action. In the first three months, he fixed the existing data in the village. The data contains the number of unemployed productive age, unemployed unproductive age, and working productive age. From the population data, the Sekapuk Village government finally determined the way for community empowerment through sustainable development. In order to achieve this, Halim is assisted by various parties in the village government which is illustrated in the structure below:

Graph 2. Sekapuk Village Government Structure

In the structure above, it can be seen that the village head is supported by complete organs. The synergy of elements of village government is able to produce strength in community empowerment and natural resource management. The limestone hills owned by Sekapuk Village are one of the potential natural resources used by the community as a source of livelihood. Limestone is taken and processed to make white stone. Unfortunately, the limestone area that has been taken and used by residents since 2003 has actually been used as a garbage dump by local residents, households, markets, hospitals, Islamic boarding schools, and industry (Abdul Halim, 2021). On the basis of this fact, when Halim served as village head, the limestone hill was turned into a tourist destination.

Halim made a breakthrough by removing waste from a 1.5-hectare limestone hill with a height of more than 14 meters at that time. Halim also raised funds for the
development of the tour, which was named Setigi. Garbage piled up in the Setigi area is cleaned for 1 year by involving the community. Halim as the village head is also directly involved in cleaning up the garbage. Right after serving at 15.00 WIB, Halim took part in picking up trash. He did this for one year, from January 2018 to January 2019. After successfully cleaning up the mountain of garbage, finally on January 3, 2019, the village government and the community started the construction of Setigi tourism. The process of developing Setigi tourism takes several months (Abdul Halim, 2021).

The Setigi natural tourism object was completed and inaugurated on January 1, 2020. In the period of almost 1 year, the village government and the community were able to build complete natural tourism and the facilities in it, such as traditional houses, to the civilization bridge that had gone viral. The construction of this artificial nature tourism costs 3.5 billion. However, the results are very good. Before the Setigi tourist area was officially opened, this area had the arrival of many visitors, both domestic and foreign. The name Selo tirto giri (Setigi) was chosen because it describes the natural conditions of the limestone hill tourism which has elements of rock, water, and hills. (Abdul Halim, 2021).

On September 2, 2020, Sekapuk Village declared itself a billionaire village. As a result, Setigi tourism is able to bring prosperity to the community. Job opportunities are open to more than 700 jobs (Permana, 2020). The recruitment of workers involves young indigenous villagers as workers in Setigi. They are dozens of productive young people. In addition to being employed as staff, residents also have the opportunity to become owners of the food court located in tourist sites.

The Sekapuk Village Head, Abdul Halim, also made Village Regulation (Perdes) Number 6 of 2018 concerning the Sekapuk Village Tourism Development Plan (Sholihah & Kusbandrijo, 2020). The village regulation continues the legal umbrella for funding programs that involve the community. Development funds with community participation through the Taplus Invest program (savings plus investment) which directly involves residents. Taplus Invest is based on Perdes Number 4 of 2018 concerning BUMDes which explains that there are 7 BUMDes Sekapuk business units, one of which is a tourism unit. The implementation of Taplus Invest was reaffirmed through Village Head Regulation Number 6 of 2018 concerning Taplus Invest (Sekapuk, 2018).
Taplus invest is carried out through a systematic saving of IDR 8,000 per day by the community until IDR 2,400,000 is collected which is deposited into BUMDes. when the nominal has reached the community is entitled to have one share slot. Each family head (KK) is limited to only having a maximum of 2 share slots. Funds collected by the public as shareholders will be returned in full from Setigi's profits. So that it can become a sustainable economic source for the community (Fidihama, Wibowo, & Yalina, 2020).

Taplus invest began to be intensified in 2018. Launching from the official website of Sekapuk Village, the public's invitation to save was persuasive through interesting sentences, such as "saving without deductions, saving for sure profit, with Rp. 8,000 you can join #setigi, Save Rp. 8,000/day for 25 days a month or Rp. 200,000/month. During the year collected Rp 2,400,000. These funds can also be withdrawn after two years and the shares have become the property of the shareholders."

How to save and register as a participant is also mentioned persuasively, including "just register with each RT to be able to save Taplus Invest, only for residents of Sekapuk Village, Taplus Invest is exchanged for share certificates which can be treated like land certificates, as long as they have the certificate, shareholders get SHU from #setigi, the number of share certificates is only for 25 people per RT or 725 share certificates, but 789 share certificates are provided with details of 64 additional share certificates for residents who want more than 1 share certificate." The taplus invest cycle can be seen in the image below:

![Figure](image_url)

If analyzed in a simple way, how Taplus Invest works as an innovation from the Sekapuk Village Head, Abdul Halim, can be described in the following figure:
The existence of Setigi nature tourism as tourism developed by the people of Sekapuk Village has characteristics as in general, such as small-scale businesses built so that the middle and lower classes are able to participate in the business. Meanwhile, business actors are dominated by local people (Agus Wiguna, Adhika, & Sukma Arida, 2018). The presence of this tour, one of which is to empower the community and make them able to play a direct role in village development (Digital Desa, 2020).

Success in advancing community welfare is not only based on its predicate as a billionaire village. But also through the Village Building Index (IDM). Based on data from the Directorate General of Village and Rural Development, in 2016 before Setigi tourism was built, Sekapuk Village had an IDM of 0.7534. Even though it has an advanced predicate, IDM's ranking is still at 1,896. Meanwhile, in 2021 Sekapuk Village is in position 634 with an IDM of 0.8854 with an independent predicate (Directorate General of Village and Rural Development, 2021). Abdul Halim is a figure who is considered to have a strong contribution in the development of the Setigi tourist area, Sekapuk Village. For his services, Abdul Halim was also known by the nickname Ki Begawan Setigi.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many tourism sectors went out of business. But not with Setigi Tourism. The managers are able to change the mainset and make the pandemic not a challenge but an opportunity. Setigi management has given birth to innovations in implementing a new normal, namely by implementing health protocols.
for Setigi tourism managers and visitors. Health facilities and infrastructure are prepared, so that ambulances are also alerted (http://www.dpmd.jatimprov.go.id article 90-news). Halim himself has given his guarantee for the protection of tourists traveling in Setigi. Implementation of strict health protocols, so that, according to him, tourists do not need to worry (Permama, 2020).

Visitors are required to check body temperature, wear masks, and wash hands with soap. Halim added that the management team always reminded tourists who attended to adhere to health protocols. For his efforts, Halim claims to have managed to rise from adversity. Although there was a decline in Setigi's tourism income in 2020 which reached 5 billion, then it decreased in the first semester of 2021 to only get 20 billion (Fakhruddin, 2021).

This village with the nickname Billionaire and income of billions of rupiah per year has survived the Covid-19 pandemic (Permama, 2020). In order to encourage economic recovery due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the manager of Setigi invites the residents of Sekapuk to make traditional snacks with attractive packaging to be sold at the Setigi tourist location. Mbok Inggih Kitchen is the place for the production of the food which is managed by the PKK of Sekapuk Village. Turnover from the sale of food produced is quite large. This is because every tourist who attends is required to buy an authentic product produced by the residents of Sekapuk (Maulana, 2020). In addition, the head of Sekapuk Village, Abdul Halim, also distributed the remaining business proceeds (SHU) to residents for the profit sharing obtained from Setigi tourism. The value of the dividends distributed is Rp. 503,000, - for the first year (Supriyatno, 2021).

**Analysis of local political elites and society**

The Sekapuk Village Head is the governing elite or elite who governs at the smallest local political level, namely the Village. When compared with other local political elites such as regents and governors, the power of village political elites is of course smaller. However, due to the small area coverage, the village head as the local political elite has more opportunities to have direct contact with the community. Issues around autonomy, village potential development, and citizen participation are very possible in the stage of village political elites in accordance with democratic values.
Abdul Halim as the village head has legal authority. The existence of this power legitimizes Abdul Halim as a local political elite with visible power. This type of power also means that the local political elite is open to providing opportunities for all elements of society to be actively involved in development efforts. Procurement of musrenbang to the issuance of village regulations with the consideration of the Village Representative Body (BPD) and Village Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) is one of the ways he does this. Meanwhile, taplus invest is a work product produced by Halim and the community. With taplus invest, all communities have a stake in regional development through capital distributed in BUMDes. Meanwhile, if the community does not understand and rejects the program, the local political elite will take steps to advocate and provide understanding. Efforts to understand the community were carried out, one of which was by issuing a flyer explaining the Perdes from taplus invest (https://desasekapuk.com/2018/12/05/dasar-Hukum-adanya-taplus-invest-di-desasekapuk/).

The head of Sekapuk Village, Abdul Halim, also allowed for a room for deliberation and community involvement (invited space). This is marked by the existence of Musrenbang and BUMDes which manage the village-level macro economy to design tourism structures with the community. The existence of the main capital held by BUMDes implies that the village head has an active role in the tourism development effort to discuss together. Invited space itself is defined as a new opportunity for community involvement and open consultation, or often referred to as participatory governance. Apart from managing BUMDes, the pure workforce from Sekapuk Village itself has shown that the village head as a local political elite provides a forum and a place for the community to participate.

During the covid-19 pandemic, Setigi tourism was able to survive with various kinds of innovations that were born. Of course, the involvement of tourists is very important in supporting the defense of Setigi tourism from the pandemic. Strict implementation of health protocols by carrying out #memorable5M is carried out for the sake of the sustainability of Setigi tourism. Even though there was a decrease in income, it did not mean Setigi went out of business and closed completely. A smart move by requiring every visitor to buy snacks produced by the Setigi manager, making this tour still generate income even though it is declining. Finally, the Covid-19
pandemic is not only a challenge, but is also seen as an opportunity by the elite and the Sekapuk Village community who are members of Setigi management.

**Conclusion**

It turned out that the village political elite, through democratic principles, were able to invite the community to participate in the development of natural tourism, especially in the limestone hills of Setigi. Efforts to increase community participation are carried out by inviting them to become Taplus Invest investors in the form of saving IDR 8,000 per day until IDR 2,400,000 is collected. That way the public can share certificates. The Sekapuk Village Government also invites the community directly in dredging garbage in the limestone hills for 1 year. This sustainable development has succeeded in increasing the Village Index built from 1,896 in 2016 to 634 in 2021. The existence of Setigi tourism is an alternative source of community income besides their main livelihood. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, Setigi tourism also experienced a decline in visitors along with the implementation of community activity restrictions (PPKM).

This study confirms previous research that examines the Sekapuk village of Setigi tourism. Setigi has a very important contribution in supporting the economy of the surrounding community. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Setigi Tourism was still able to contribute to the community.

This research has limitations in terms of method and time. Therefore, further researchers can conduct research with the same theme but with different methods, and with sufficient time.

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