

## Conference Paper

# Sustainable Development Ecotourism in West Papua: Learning from The Scottish Experience

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## 1. Introduction

Over the last three decades the ecotourism industry has experienced significant socio-economic changes in many countries. The notion of tourist destination has moved from traditional concept that focuses on a time of leisure and enjoyment to one more friendly to the environment. The new forms of tourism are promoted as environmentally safe way for rural communities to generate income from natural resources (Kline, 2001). In other word, nowadays tourists are concerned with “green” (ecotourism) that prioritize sustainable development in the management of the tourism industry.

Scotland has advanced in managing ecotourism industry worldwide. Every year, visitors from around the world come and see the wonder of interesting features of Scotland, such as the landscapes, forest, conservation areas, historical old buildings, cultural events and culinary delights. The role of the stakeholder (local communities, business, governments and NGOs) is significant in the promotion of ecotourism in Scotland. It should be noted that the stakeholder in Scottish ecotourism industry has succeeded in maintaining sustainable development in the “green” tourist industry and become a good example for other countries to learn from.

Indonesia has also struggled to promote ecotourism industry. In West Papua, there are several interesting places as tourist destination. One of the most wonderful tourist destinations is the Raja Ampat Islands (Four Kings Islands). The Raja Ampat Islands are a group of islands located in the Indonesian province of West Papua. Like other tourist destinations, the Raja Ampat Islands provide beaches, extensively coral reefs and fishes, food, friendly local communities and cultural activities.

Sustainable development ecotourism in West Papua has emerged as an alternative means of attracting tourists to come to West Papua. This essay highlights some critical issues of the sustainable development of ecotourism by examining Scottish experience of managing the tourist industry. Some theories of ecotourism are discussed, and an overview of Scottish ecotourism is provided. Sustainable development and best practice ecotourism in the context of the Raja Ampat Island are explored.

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## 2. What is Ecotourism?

What is ecotourism? According to Honey (1999) ecotourism can be defined as;

*“a way to fund conservation and scientific research, protect fragile and pristine ecosystems, benefit rural communities, promote development in poor countries, enhance ecological and cultural sensitivity, instill environment awareness, and social conscience in the travel industry, satisfy and educate the discriminating tourist, and, some claim, build world peace” (p.4).*

Kiper (2013) stressed that ecotourism, involves visiting natural areas in order to learn, to study, or to carry out environmentally friendly activities which enables the economic and social development of local communities. Meanwhile, Weaver (2001) point out that ecotourism is a form of tourism that fosters learning experiences and appreciation of the natural environment, or some component thereof, within its associated cultural context. Honey’s definition refers to sustainable development both of the environment and of human beings.

Ecotourism has made a big contribution to economic growth in many countries for a number of reasons. Firstly, it raises people’s awareness about the environment. Ecotourism help raise fund for environmental protection (Honey 1999), which involves the local community in the conservation of the ecology and biodiversity. Secondly, ecotourism provides job for local communities’ and enables a shift away from unsustainable practices such as logging and mining which can destroy the environment. Thirdly, ecotourism teaches people to respect their local cultural heritage. Tourists are often amazed at the local culture, and so ecotourism can lead tourist visitors to respect the local culture. Finally, the role of NGOs in promoting ecotourism is also important. Local communities often have limited resources for managing ecotourism. NGOs can help providing technical assistance.

## 3. Scottish Ecotourism: Conservation and Sustainability

Tourist has been increased in Scotland. Regularly, about a million tourists come to Scotland and Scotland is becoming one of world’s tourist destination because it offers “green” ecotourism. Promotion of conservation as part of ecotourism is crucial for protecting the environment (Roxana, 2012).

The successful development of the ecotourism industry in Scotland is partly due to the role of local communities, NGOs, government and business. Conservation is also an important support of the ecotourism industry because it develops sustainable management of their environment. Conservation involves protecting the nature and animals in, for example conservation parks where the local communities participate in the conservation activities. NGOs also have the important role of giving technical assistance to local communities and tourists about how to avoid extinction of wild animal such as in the Caerlaverock Wetland Centre where the staff explanation how important it is to save birds from extinction. Finally, the ecotourism industry brings



**Figure 1:** Snapshot of Raja Ampat Ecotourism (Source: [https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=raja+ampat&biw=1093&bih=534&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwjo8Yrd2dnNAhVLPPhQKHV1gD7gQ\\_AUIBygC#imgrc=XCnbWX2CjS523M{%}3A](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=raja+ampat&biw=1093&bih=534&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwjo8Yrd2dnNAhVLPPhQKHV1gD7gQ_AUIBygC#imgrc=XCnbWX2CjS523M{%}3A)).

economy benefits to the local people. For example, in Whithorn and New Lanark World Heritage Site, local people are able to sell their souvenirs and run coffee shops.

Connectivity is becoming an important factor in promoting the ecotourism industry. As pointed by Cater and Cater (2007), connectivity is vital consideration for sea, air and land interface. Scotland has good connectivity with its tourist destination. As a result, tourists are able to travel around Scotland, even in remote and isolated areas. The Scottish government has a strong commitment to build infrastructures not only for the local communities but also for tourist in order to facilitate their travel around the countryside.

#### 4. Raja Ampat Ecotourism Development

The Raja Ampat Islands are located in West Papua (Eastern of Indonesia). Raja Ampat has very exotic underwater life and panorama. About 75 percent of the world's fish and coral species are located in the islands. Raja Ampat is a natural spectacular ecosystem that is still very well preserved which is the reason that Raja Ampat is called as the Amazon of World Oceans. Diving and snorkeling are the most famous tourist activities in Raja Ampat. The islands also have dense forests, a cluster of colorful limestone, various species of rare plants, as well as sea turtle nests on the beach. The famous Papuan birds of paradise (Burung Cenderawasih) also can be seen in Raja Ampat.

## 5. Best Practice: Learn from Scotland

Every year, thousands of tourists come to Raja Ampat to enjoy the beauty of the exotic underwater life, forest and wild animals. Raja Ampat maintains a sustainable ecotourism industry, because of the way of life of indigenous people. They believe that forest is a like “*mother*”, providing everything for our life. Therefore, they have to respect to the environment.

The way of life of the indigenous people in Raja Ampat, which protects nature has been practiced from ancient times. In other words, the concept of conservation has been understood and practiced in the local communities. However, it seems that the increase of tourists to Raja Ampat could pressure changing on function of the landscape and affect the environment, where businesses build hotel around conservation areas.

The ecotourism industry in Raja Ampat is organized by the private sector (French companies) and provides little economy benefit to local communities. In the Scottish experience in managing the tourist industry, the local communities have been dominant in its foundation. Therefore, it is necessary for indigenous people in Raja Ampat to be involved in the foundation and management of the ecotourism industry in order to benefit from.

Scottish also involves NGOs to help local communities as volunteers to promote the tourism industry. For example, in the Caerlaverock Wetland Centre, the NGO (WWT) provides information about how to protect wildlife such as ducks and birds. In Raja Ampat, the NGOs, Conservation International and WWF, help the local communities to promote conservation. NGOs, in the short term, is to help the local communities protect their environment. However, in the long term, it is necessary to empower the local communities about conservation in order to protect their environment.

Scotland has experience providing good infrastructure to improve accessibility of tourist destination. In Raja Ampat, however, some tourist destination cannot be reached by due to the lack of infrastructure. It is crucial for Raja Ampat to provide adequate infrastructure such as roads and bridges in order for tourists to be able visiting interesting places in the remoted areas. Therefore, the role of government is essential in providing funding for upgrading the infrastructure (roads and bridges).

## 6. Conclusion

The Scottish experienced of ecotourism management has been become best practice that could be applied for improving ecotourism in Raja Ampat. Indigenous people benefit from ecotourism industry. However, there are several issues that Raja Ampat should consider for promoting ecotourism industry. These issues are related to protecting the environment by promoting conservation. The roles of stakeholders are important in order to ensure the sustainable development of ecotourism. Another important factor in boosting ecotourism is to provide adequate infrastructure such as roads and bridges.

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