
Strategic Stakeholders in Pluralist and Elitist Models of Sustainable Tourism Policy Formulation

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
This study aims to analyze the role of pluralist and elitist models in the formulation of sustainable tourism policies and explore the potential for integrating the two models to create inclusive and sustainable policies. The research approach uses descriptive qualitative methods with document analysis and framework synthesis. Data were collected from a literature review related to tourism policy, pluralism, and elitism. The analysis focused on identifying themes, patterns, and comparing the characteristics of the two models in the context of policy formulation. The results indicate that the pluralist model emphasizes the participation of diverse stakeholders, enhancing equity and sustainability, but tends to be slow in implementation. The elitist model excels in efficiency and consistency, but risks dominating certain groups and marginalizing communities. Integrating the two models allows for the creation of more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable policies. This study provides guidance for policymakers to optimize the role of government as a broker between communities and elites, thus achieving a balance between effectiveness and public participation. This study offers a new analytical framework that combines pluralism and elitism, enriching the literature on sustainable tourism policies and providing practical recommendations for decision-makers. KEYWORDS: Pluralist, Elitist, Formulation Of Sustainable Tourism Policy.	Published On: 19 January 2026 Available on: https://ijiissh.com/

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism development is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone for economic growth and job creation, particularly in nations rich in natural resources and cultural heritage, such as Indonesia. The sector significantly contributes to national income while also fostering job creation and economic opportunities for local communities across various related sectors, including hospitality, transportation, and the creative industries (Suroyo & Putra, 2022; Kawuryan et al., 2022; Rasethuntsa, 2021). The integration of tourism into local economies has proven effective in not only boosting employment but also enhancing the quality of life for many individuals in diverse regions (Warouw et al., 2023; Ismail, 2023). However, this growth trajectory is not without its challenges. The lack of cohesive and integrated policy frameworks often leads to implementation gaps and discrepancies between expected outcomes and actual results. Effective policy formulation is crucial, as it aligns tourism initiatives with broader socio-economic goals and ensures that the benefits of tourism development are shared equitably among all stakeholders (Purnomo & Khairunnisa, 2024; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2022).

Furthermore, the commitment to sustainable tourism practices is essential for maintaining the benefits derived from this sector while minimizing environmental impacts. Scholars advocate for a comprehensive and integrated approach to tourism policy that incorporates sustainability principles (Khair et al., 2022; Lemy et al., 2022), underscoring the need for collaboration among various governmental and private entities to optimize the socio-economic benefits of tourism. For Indonesia, embracing sustainable tourism policy is not only vital for economic development but also imperative for combating challenges such as unemployment and inequality that, if left unaddressed, could stymie the sector's potential to contribute positively to societal welfare (Song et al., 2012; Absah & Yuliaty, 2024). The careful consideration and integration of diverse perspectives in tourism policy could therefore pave the way for a more resilient and inclusive economic framework tailored to the unique characteristics of each region (Affandi et al., 2024).

The complexities inherent in tourism policy formulation in Indonesia often arise from the multifaceted interests of various stakeholders, including political actors, the private sector, and local communities. This complexity is a common issue across many

Tourism policy plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable development, yet its formulation often reflects contrasting governance models pluralist and elitist. The pluralist model emphasizes inclusivity and participatory decision-making but tends to suffer from inefficiency and slow consensus-building (Fischer-Smith, 2018). In contrast, the elitist model allows for faster implementation but risks marginalizing local voices and overlooking diverse stakeholder interests that are essential for long-term sustainability (Jamal & Camargo, 2013). These differences highlight the need for a more integrative framework that leverages the strengths of both models to ensure balanced, equitable, and sustainable tourism governance.

This study contributes to the tourism policy literature by proposing an integrative analytical framework that combines pluralist and elitist perspectives. By aligning the participatory inclusiveness of pluralism with the decisional efficiency of elitism, the study seeks to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how sustainable tourism policies can be formulated and implemented. The proposed framework emphasizes collaborative governance, cultural sensitivity, and environmental stewardship as critical pillars of sustainable tourism (Bakker et al., 2020; Yanes et al., 2019; Pandey & Rogerson, 2021). This integration is expected to generate novel insights into how power, participation, and sustainability can coexist within the policy process, thereby advancing both theoretical and practical dimensions of sustainable tourism governance.



Figure 1 shows the relationship between keywords that appear in publications related to the research topic. Each circle represents a keyword, while the size of the circle illustrates the frequency of the keyword's appearance. Different colors indicate the clustering of interrelated research themes.

First, the keyword “sustainable tourism” occupies a central position and has a large green node. This shows that sustainable tourism is a dominant topic and the center of discourse in the literature. This keyword has many connections with other issues such as sustainability, sustainable development, tourism management, cultural heritage, economic growth, environmental impact, and policy implementation. This central position indicates that sustainable tourism is an arena where various environmental, economic, and social approaches meet within the framework of sustainable development policies.

Second, although the keyword “elitism” does not appear explicitly in the map, it can be understood through nodes related to policy analysis, government, innovation, policy implementation, and economic impact. This reflects an elitist approach to sustainable tourism governance, where agendas, regulations, and policies are largely controlled by elite actors such as the government, technocrats, or capital owners. Thus, this map shows that the issue of sustainable tourism cannot be separated from the dimensions of power and the dominance of certain actors who determine the direction of policy in a top-down manner.

Third, the dimension of “pluralism” can be seen from the interconnectedness of nodes such as community participation, local participation, participatory approach, and public attitude. These nodes describe a more inclusive and participatory approach to realizing sustainable tourism. Unlike the elitist pattern, pluralism emphasizes the importance of involving local communities and diverse stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of tourism. When compared, this map confirms the tension between elitism and pluralism in sustainable tourism development practices, with one emphasizing the dominance of elite actors and the other encouraging the participation of many parties.

2. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach, which is specifically designed to explore a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. This qualitative research focuses on analyzing data obtained from various sources, including texts, documents, and current academic literature. In selecting sources of information, researchers apply strict criteria that include academic validity, reliability, and relevance to the topic under review. This analytical approach involves not only data collection, but also interpretation of the broader context to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues faced in current tourism policy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick, 2018).

By prioritizing diversity of perspectives, researchers strive to create an inclusive analytical framework that considers contributions from various disciplines. Document analysis is used as a technique to gain deeper insights into the context and implications of the policies under study, as explained by Bowen (2009). By organizing data into related themes and categories, researchers are expected to draw conclusions that support the development of more applicable theories and practices in the tourism sector (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this way, this study not only seeks to present valid data but also makes an important contribution to policymakers and practitioners in the field of tourism.

The analysis technique used in this study is framework synthesis, which is an effective method for organizing and synthesizing findings from various literature into a structured framework. This process begins with the identification of themes or main concepts that emerge from the collected literature review. Next, researchers classify information based on relevance and thematic similarities. This process utilizes an analytical approach that is not only deductive, based on pre-existing themes, but also inductive in developing new themes from the data found (Brunton et al., 2020). This method allows researchers to produce a more in-depth and structured synthesis of the topic being studied, as well as contribute to the development of theory and practice in the field.

In this analysis, researchers focus on the relationships between existing findings, comparing similarities and differences between studies, and identifying trends or patterns that emerge from various perspectives in the literature. Through the application of framework synthesis, researchers can present a comprehensive mapping, thereby facilitating a better understanding of complex and interrelated issues in research. This approach also strengthens the validity and relevance of the analysis by maintaining a clear structure and systematic philosophy of thinking, which ultimately benefits stakeholders in decision-making.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pluralist Model in the Process of Formulating Sustainable Tourism Policy

There are several models of policy formulation, one of which is pluralistic. The pluralistic view or model assumes that in a democratic country or system, everyone has the right to express their opinion. The pluralistic policy formulation model is open, with several parties or groups providing their views in the policy-making process. Access to the policy-making process is usually obtained if one has politicians or bureaucrats who can convey the interests of the group in the policy-making process (Moskowitz, 1987). Thus, the groups that influence the policy-making process are not centered on one group but are spread out. Ultimately, the groups that succeed in influencing the policy-making process are those that are strong, have reasonable arguments, and can be understood. The policy-making process in the pluralist model allows the public to participate in various policy-making processes in a country because of its open nature. Thus, the public of the country is a free society that can and may influence the policy-making

process. However, with an open pluralist policy-making process, it will result in a highly decentralized decision-making process. This means that many interest groups will be involved in the policy-making process. Therefore, the government acts as a mediator to accommodate the voices of the people in a fair, responsive, and proportional manner (Wibawa, 2011).

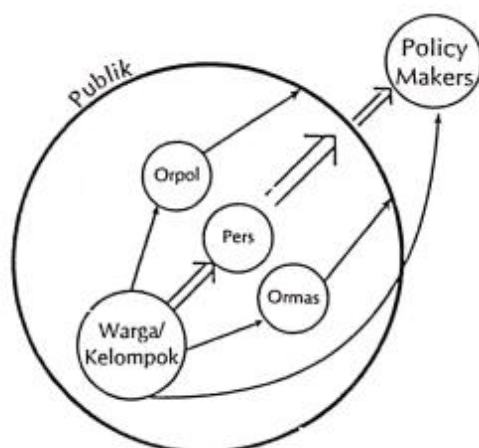


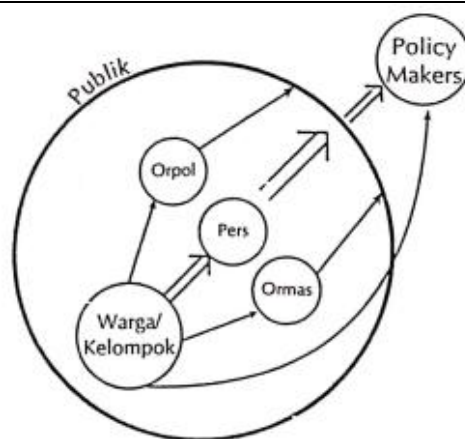
Figure 2. Basic Policy-Making Process According to the Pluralist Approach
Source: (Wibawa, 2011)

This image shows that influence on policy makers does not come from a single dominant actor, but from various groups within society. Within the public sphere, there are actors such as political parties, community organizations, the press, and citizens or social groups. The arrows illustrate the dynamic interactions between these actors and show that they have access and channels of communication to influence policymakers. Thus, public policy is seen as the result of competition, negotiation, and compromise between various interests.

This model emphasizes openness and participation, but it also has potential weaknesses. Although all groups have the opportunity to influence policy, in reality not all actors have equal resources, political access, or power. This can lead to distortions, where groups with greater resources (e.g., large political parties or dominant media) tend to have more influence than ordinary citizens or small groups. In other words, although this pluralistic model describes the democratization of policy, practices in the field often continue to show inequality of access and the dominance of certain groups in influencing public decisions. With this model of policy-making, the question remains: how can fairness and proportionality be measured in the policy-making process? How can all voices or interests be properly accommodated? How can the government become an appropriate broker so that it can mediate between interest groups effectively? These questions are criticisms of the pluralist model. The characteristics or features of the pluralist model can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Characteristics of the pluralist model

Characteristics	Pluralism
Actors influencing the policy-making process	Interest Group
Key processes in policy development	Competition between interest groups
Origin of groups in policy making	From various levels such as organizations, government, socio-economic, individuals, and so on.
Distribution of power	Spread across all competing interest groups.
Limits and stability of group's power	It is unstable, limited by democratic values.
Role of the state or government	Thus, no single group is always strong and wins in the competition in the policy-making process.
Actors influencing the policy-making process	The state acts as a broker, capable of balancing or mediating between various groups competing in the policy-making process.



Source: adaptasi dari J. Allen Whitt, 1982

The process of formulating pluralistic policies is synonymous with the extent to which interest groups have access to influence the policy-making process. Factors that influence the access of each interest group in the policy-making process include (Lundberg, 2014):

1. The existence or absence of access to internal policy makers. Organizations or groups that have access to internal policy makers will have greater influence or access in the competition in the policy-making process.
The origin of the interest group, which in this case refers to the basis or foundation that brings people together.
2. Interest group and voices their interests in the policy-making process. Interest groups that originate from politicians and have members who are directly involved in policy-making will have greater access. Interest groups originating from communities tend to have less access to influence the policy-making process. Interest groups that aim to support social movements, which usually influence policy-making by staging demonstrations, tend to have less access to influence the policy-making process.

Elite Models in the Formulation Process of Sustainable Tourism Policy

Elite theory states that people are apathetic and poorly informed about public policy, that elites actually shape mass opinion on policy issues more than the masses shape elite opinion. Thus, public policy is really the choice of the elite. Public officials and the administrative apparatus merely carry out the policies decided by the elite. Policy flows down from the elite to the masses and does not arise from the demands of the masses (Dye, 2017). This can be seen as follows:

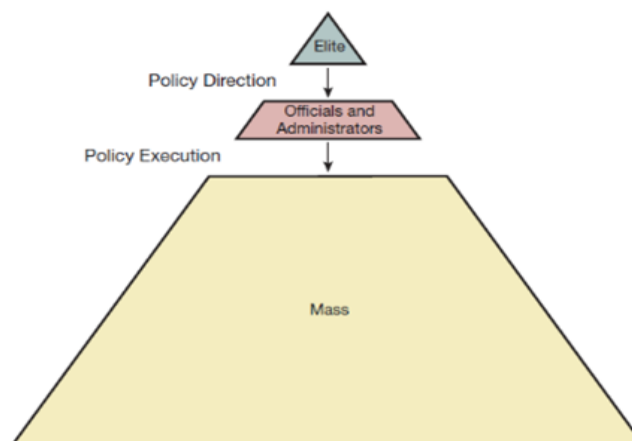


Figure 3. Elitist model in policy formulation

Source: Dye (2017)

This image represents an elitist model in the public policy process, where political decisions and policy directions are determined by a small group at the top of the pyramid, namely the elite. The elite has dominant power in determining policy direction without the direct involvement of the wider community. After that, the policy direction is passed down to officials and administrators who are tasked with formulating technical policies and ensuring that these policies can be implemented operationally. Thus, officials and administrators act as intermediaries between the will of the elite and the needs of the community, but remain in a subordinate position, carrying out what has been determined by the elite group.

However, this model shows limitations in terms of democratization and public participation. The masses are placed at the bottom, merely as objects of policy execution, not subjects involved in policy formulation. This illustrates the imbalance in the distribution of power, where public participation is minimal and the space for public deliberation tends to be neglected. Critically, this model can result in elitist, top-down policies that are often unresponsive to the real needs of the community, as decisions reflect the interests of the elite rather than the broader public aspirations. The public policy political system is created by a handful of people or elites who reflect only their own interests, without any public aspirations. The community is not involved in the policy-making process. The elite model is closely related to the power of actors in leadership, or what can be called oligarchic power. According to Haryanto (2017), the theory of elites can be defined as follows:

1. Political power, as a social commodity that is distributed unevenly
2. Only grouped into two groups, namely those who have “important” political power and those who do not.
3. Internally, the elite are homogeneous and united; the elite do not consist of separate individuals. However, individuals within the elite group work well together, sharing the same background and interests.
4. The elite come from a limited (exclusive) segment of society.

In particular, the elite come from higher socioeconomic levels. Elite control consists of leaders, their families, businesspeople close to the family, and military leaders. Intellectuals and students fall into the elite category but do not actively approach leaders unless asked to do so. Meanwhile, the bureaucracy acts as an obedient executor of all government policies. (Samdora, 2011). The characteristics of elite model policy formulation can be seen as follows:

Table 2. Characteristics of the elite model

Characteristics	Elitism
Actors influencing the policy-making process	Institutional Elitism
Important processes in policy-making	Hierarchical domination by the elite
Origin of groups in policy-making	Institutional position, social background, convergent interests
Distribution of power	Concentrated among a relatively homogeneous elite
Limits and stability of group power	Stable, no identifiable limits to elite domination
Role of the state or government	Little role for the state, if any autonomy for elite interests

Source: adaptation of J. Allen Whitt, 1982

The Elite Theory model assumes that there are elite and mass groups in society. This theory acknowledges that no matter how good and democratic a society is, there will always be bias in public policy formulation, because it is recognized that basically the policies that are created are the political preferences of the elite (Nugroho in Handoyo, 2012). Laswell's view of the elite relates to the values that influence their power. These values can take the form of power, wealth, honor, and knowledge. However, on the other hand, C. Wright Mills in his book “The Power Elite” explains that the relationship between the elite and power stems from institutions or structures. Mills considers individuals to occupy the top command positions of the main structures that exist in society (Haryanto, 2017).

There are two views in the Elite approach. First, the positive view, that an elite occupies the pinnacle of power because they have succeeded in winning over the idea of bringing the country to a better condition than their competitors. Second, the negative view, which states that ultimately in a political system, it is those who hold political power who will exercise power according to their preferences, and the people are considered a group that is deliberately manipulated so that they do not participate in policy formulation (Handoyo, 2012). In the article *The Pluralist, Elitist, and Dialectical Models* (1982), Mills states that the factors that influence power are the existence of common political interests and personal similarities among political, economic, and military elites. Institutions place elites in the same social and political groups. People from higher circles can also be understood as people from the upper social strata, as a group whose members know each other, see each other socially and in business, and consider each other when making decisions.

Elitist policy formulation has both negative and positive impacts, leading to beneficial and detrimental outcomes. In order to maintain their power, elites will limit competition in society. This automatically limits political participation, allowing elites to monitor the activities of community members and even threaten or sanction those who attempt to participate (Haryanto, 2017). On the other hand, elitist policies accommodate the wishes of certain parties but also have a positive impact on society. This is reflected in the government's firm and stubborn stance in building the Kedungombo reservoir in Central Java, which was met with opposition from the surrounding community because their village would be submerged by the reservoir. The project was indeed profitable for the entrepreneurs who built the reservoir, but on the other hand, the reservoir could also indirectly benefit other areas (Wibawa, 2011). The elitist model tends to want to maintain power (the status quo), so the interests and welfare of the community are often neglected. The elitist model states that only a few individuals hold power. However, this model does not take into account the

influence of the masses on the elite. This model ignores the role of leaders of social groups in society. It turns out that the masses can displace those in elite positions, and the role played by social group leaders is quite prominent (Haryanto, 2017).

Elitism implies that public policy does not reflect the demands of the people, but rather the interests, values, and preferences of the elite. Therefore, changes and innovations in public policy emerge as a result of the elite's redefinition of their own values. This is due to the conservatism of the elite in preserving the system they have. Political system change occurs when events threaten the system, and the elite, acting on the basis of enlightened self-interest, institutionalize reforms to preserve the system and their place in it. Elite values may become very "public-oriented." Obligations may penetrate elite values, and the welfare of the masses may be an important element in elite decision-making. Elitism for the welfare of the masses rests on the shoulders of the elite, not the masses (Dye, 2017).

A concrete example of the process of elitist policy formulation occurred in Indonesia during the New Order era under President Suharto. The roles of members of the DPR and MPR, as well as supervisory institutions and law enforcement agencies, were under the control of the government. Even the recruitment process for filling these positions extended to MPR membership. Positions such as chair and member of the Supreme Advisory Council, chair of the Supreme Court, supreme court judges, and chair and deputy chair of the Audit Board were also appointed by the president. Mobilization of support was formed within this circle of power, which determined loyalty to the president. According to Suparno (2012), this implicitly gives rise to a recruitment mechanism that can create a strong, cohesive, and solid government, thereby avoiding conflicts between institutions of the same level.

Efforts to maintain power (the status quo), a centralist government, and so on. All of these things ultimately emerged as a means of communication used to distort the source of legitimacy of power and the New Order government in a massive movement called the Reform Movement. In the New Order government, there was a tendency for various elite policies to lead to abuse of power by President Soeharto, resulting in soaring national debt and corrupt practices. A case study of elite and mass conflict in immigration policy in South America marks the emergence of an elitist model (Dye, 2017). In the case of illegal immigration in America, powerful industrial groups benefited from the availability of immigrant labor and weakened illegal immigration laws. Approximately 10-15 million illegal immigrants live in the United States. The relevance to the elite model describes public policy as a reflection of the interests and values of the elite. This model does not always require the elite and the masses to be locked in conflict, assuming that the elite will inevitably win at the expense of the masses. Instead, the model envisions the elite determining the direction of public policy, with the masses largely apathetic and uninformed and/or heavily influenced by the views of the elite. This model acknowledges that elites may choose to pursue "public" policies that benefit the masses. Nevertheless, critics of the elite model often demand evidence of elite-mass conflict over public policy and subsequent policy formation to reflect elite preferences over the welfare of the masses. Critics often demand evidence that elites consciously pursue policies that benefit themselves while harming the majority of Americans. In describing immigration and international trade policy, the elite model can be relied upon through US policy, particularly in international trade, serving the interests of the largest multinational corporations in the country at the expense of the average American worker. Global trade policy has increased inequality in America. We would also argue that the masses and the elite have very different policy preferences regarding immigration policy.

Hybrid Model in the Formulation Process of Sustainable Tourism Policy

Sustainable tourism is a highly complex sector because it involves various interests that often conflict with one another. On the one hand, there is a need to maintain environmental carrying capacity so that tourist destinations remain sustainable, but on the other hand, there are economic demands to increase regional income and investor profits. In addition, sustainable tourism also requires the protection of local culture and the improvement of community welfare, while maintaining the satisfaction of visiting tourists. This complexity places sustainable tourism policy in a dilemma: it is difficult to satisfy all interests simultaneously without an adequate governance model.

A pluralistic model that emphasizes openness and community participation does provide ample space for various interest groups to be involved in the policy formulation process. However, in reality, excessive openness can lead to fragmentation, prolonged debates, and potential conflicts of interest that slow down decision-making. Meanwhile, top-down elitist models offer efficiency and clear strategic direction, but often ignore the aspirations of the community, thereby weakening the legitimacy of the policies. This explains why there is no single model that is entirely adequate to address the complexity of sustainable tourism (Wibawa, 2011).

In developing a hybrid model of limited pluralism with accountable elite guidance. In this model, the elite continues to play an important role in determining the strategic direction of policy while taking into account environmental carrying capacity constraints and long-term development goals. However, the pluralistic participation process is maintained through inclusive mechanisms that allow the community, business actors, and civil society organizations to provide input and exercise control. Thus, sustainable tourism policies not only have strategic coherence but also social legitimacy, because the direction of policy is determined by accountable elites, while implementation and oversight are carried out participatively (Moskowitz, 1987; Dye, 2017).

The formulation of sustainable tourism policies requires a balance between coherent strategic direction and broad public participation. In practice, such policies cannot rely on just one approach; the elitist model offers speed and certainty through centralized strategic direction, while the pluralistic model ensures social legitimacy through the involvement of various interest

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groups. Thus, the integration of both models—or what is called the hybrid elitist-pluralist model—is important to bridge the goals of sustainable development with the aspirations of local communities, while minimizing the risk of elite domination or fragmentation of interests.

To visualize this integration, the concept of two governance arenas is used: the strategic (apex) arena controlled by the elite and the participatory arena involving various community groups. The strategic arena sets the long-term vision, investment priorities, and ecological and land use boundaries, while the participatory arena contributes local intelligence, policy alternatives, and social legitimacy. The dynamic interaction between these two arenas allows policies to remain coherent, adaptive, and responsive to community needs, while maintaining the principles of sustainability that underpin tourism development:

Table 3. Two Governance Arena Design in Sustainable Tourism Policy Formulation

Dimensions	Strategic Arena (Elite)	Participatory Arena (Pluralist)	Relationships & Dynamic Flow
Actors	- Elected officials (executive, legislative) - Senior bureaucrats - Destination management organizations (DMOs) - Scientific and cultural preservation authorities	- Local communities - MSMEs & tourism associations - Environmental NGOs - Cultural/traditional guardians - Transportation providers - Media & journalists	Elite actors set the strategic framework; pluralist actors provide input, alternatives, and criticism.
Power & Resources	- Political power and formal legitimacy - Fiscal and technical access - Expert knowledge and institutional legitimacy	- Local and cultural knowledge - Social support and community networks - Public pressure through media & collective action	Elite resources are structural and formal; pluralist resources are social and cultural.
Interaction Mechanisms	- Formulation of vision & basic rules - Formal consultation with pluralists	- Public discussion forum - Community consultation - Multi-stakeholder negotiations	Cyclical interaction: the agenda is set by the elite and options are offered by pluralists; decisions are made by the elite and then legitimacy is tested by pluralists.
The Role of the State	Strategic broker & policy guarantor	Community participation mediator and facilitator	The state functions as a bridge Connecting the two arenas.

Source: Analysis Results, 2025

The table shows the structure of two governance arenas that form a hybrid framework between elitism and pluralism in the formulation of sustainable tourism policies. The strategic (elite) arena emphasizes the role of actors with formal power, institutional legitimacy, and access to technical and fiscal resources, such as elected officials, senior bureaucrats, and destination management agencies. They are responsible for setting long-term visions, ecological limits, investment priorities, and strategic macro policies. Conversely, the participatory (pluralist) arena emphasizes the involvement of local actors and communities, such as local communities, MSMEs, environmental NGOs, cultural guardians, transportation providers, and the media. These actors contribute local knowledge, social networks, public pressure, and policy alternatives that enrich the deliberative process and provide social legitimacy. The differences in the characteristics of resources, access, and functions of these two arenas emphasize that the success of policy formulation depends on the synergy between the strategic direction of the elite and the pluralistic input of the community. Pluralistic processes are often dominated by actors with greater resources. Therefore, this hybrid model establishes rules for fairer representation and access. For example, there are seat quotas for marginalized groups and indigenous peoples, transportation subsidies and technical assistance for small groups, lobby transparency lists, and special access based on criteria (e.g., expertise or direct impact) to the strategic arena, rather than simply political proximity (Moskowitz, 1987; Lundberg, 2014). In this way, competition between interests continues, but the bias of large actor dominance can be reduced.

The interaction between the two arenas is dynamic and cyclical. This mechanism allows the strategic agenda to be set by the elite, then policy options to be developed and tested by pluralist forums through consultation, public discussion, and multi-stakeholder negotiations. The final decision remains in the hands of the elite, but the legitimacy and acceptability of the policy is tested through pluralist input, thereby reducing the risk of unilateral domination or policies that are unresponsive to the community. The state acts as a bridge and broker, ensuring effective communication between the two arenas and maintaining a balance between strategic coherence and public participation. This model theoretically demonstrates how combining elitism and pluralism can improve policy implementability, maintain sustainability, and preserve inclusiveness and social justice in tourism development.

4. CONCLUSION

The formulation of sustainable tourism policies is influenced by two main models, namely pluralistic and elitist. The pluralistic model emphasizes inclusiveness by involving various stakeholders so that the resulting policies are more equitable and sustainability-oriented, although the process tends to be slow and fragmented. Conversely, the elitist model excels in terms of efficiency and consistency, but risks creating dominance by certain groups and neglecting the interests of the wider community. The findings also show that the sole application of either model has the potential to cause imbalances, such as marginalization of communities, unfair distribution of benefits, and vulnerability to environmental damage. Therefore, integration between the strengths of the pluralist and elitist models is needed to create more inclusive, efficient, and sustainable tourism policies.

The implication of this research is the importance of the government acting as a balancing force, while still providing space for community participation without neglecting the strategic role of the elite in accelerating decision-making. Thus, the collaboration of the two models can produce policies that not only support economic growth but also pay attention to social and environmental aspects. The main contribution of this research lies in offering an analytical framework that integrates pluralist and elitist approaches in the formulation of sustainable tourism policies. This approach is expected to enrich academic literature while providing practical guidance for policymakers in designing tourism policies that are more equitable, participatory, and oriented towards long-term sustainability.

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