

Green Tourism and Spatial Planning Conflict: A Comparative Study of Ecotourism Regulations in Indonesia and New Zealand

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Ecotourism, Green Zoning, Spatial Conflict

Received : 12 February

Revised : 23 March

Accepted: 20 April

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ABSTRACT

The land conversion in the Sentul-Puncak area for tourism development by a regional state-owned enterprise (BUMD) illustrates a systemic failure in Indonesia's spatial and environmental governance. Fragmented regulations across spatial planning, environmental protection, and tourism law have weakened monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, making them vulnerable to political and short-term investment interests. This article aims to analyze the legal conflict in spatial planning within tourism development and propose an integrative regulatory model based on green zoning grounded in ecological sustainability. Using a normative legal approach with qualitative methods, this study applies four approaches: statutory, conceptual, case-based, and comparative. The Indonesian legal system is compared with New Zealand's effective ecotourism framework, as reflected in the Resource Management Act 1991, Conservation Act 1987, the application of ecological carrying capacity, and mandatory sustainability certification through Qualmark. The study finds that Indonesia urgently requires regulatory reform, including the implementation of ecological zoning, mandatory sustainability certification for tourism businesses, and substantive community participation in land-use oversight. The legal novelty proposed in this study lies in the integration of spatial, environmental, and tourism law through a unified permit system and the establishment of community-based oversight forums. This model is expected to prevent spatial conflicts and strengthen the foundation of green tourism that responds to both ecological challenges and spatial justice in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the world has faced major challenges in the form of climate crises, declining environmental quality, and the degradation of natural resources. One of the global strategic responses to these issues is the emergence of the concept of *green tourism* or sustainable tourism. This concept does not merely reorganize tourism activities but transforms them into instruments for environmental protection and the empowerment of local communities. Green tourism promotes a balance between three main pillars: environmental sustainability, active community participation, and economic sustainability. In both developed and developing countries, this principle has begun to serve as a global standard in tourism planning and operations, including through certification, ecological zoning, and community involvement. In the context of sustainable development, green tourism positions nature not merely as a backdrop for tourism activities, but as a subject that must be protected through legal, institutional, and public policy approaches. Thus, non-exploitative tourism practices become an indicator of a country's progress in integrating economic and ecological interests.

Although Indonesia possesses extraordinary natural potential, the practice of green tourism in many regions presents a paradox. One clear example can be seen in the Sentul–Puncak area of Bogor Regency, which is a conservation region and a national strategic zone for water catchment and food security. In recent years, this area has experienced massive land-use conversion into elite tourism zones such as villas, resorts, and glamping sites, many of which have been developed without compliance with spatial planning regulations and environmental permits. A prominent case is the sealing of the “Hibisc Fantasy Puncak” tourist site by the Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP), as it was developed by PT Jaswita Jabar (a regional-owned enterprise) in a conservation zone without official permits. Although claimed to be nature-based and environmentally friendly tourism, this project has become a symbol of *greenwashing*—where sustainability concepts are merely used as marketing gimmicks to conceal legal violations. This phenomenon highlights the disparity between the narrative of sustainable tourism and the reality on the ground, where ecological damage continues due to weak supervision and limited legal integration. Instead of serving as a model of green tourism, the Puncak area has become a spotlight for the failure of regulations to protect critical ecological regions from the pressure of massive tourism business expansion.

One of the main causes of conflicts and violations in the development of nature-based tourism in Indonesia is the weak integration of regulations between environmental law, spatial planning law, and tourism law. Each of these legal domains has its own legislation, namely Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning (updated through the Job Creation Law and Government Regulation No. 21 of 2021), and Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism. However, in practice, these three legal instruments operate in a sectoral manner without adequate coordination. Sanctions imposed are often administrative in nature and lack sufficient coercive power to halt illegal activities. When protected areas can easily be converted into

tourism zones under the pretext of investment, it indicates structural weaknesses in the spatial and environmental legal systems. Therefore, the urgency for a more integrative legal approach based on sustainability principles becomes increasingly critical.

New Zealand is one of the countries that has successfully implemented green tourism principles consistently through an integrated legal and institutional framework. Its environmental legal system is built upon key instruments such as the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Conservation Act 1987, which emphasize environmental protection as the foundation of all development permits, including in the tourism sector. In contrast to Indonesia's sectoral approach, regulations in New Zealand enable strict zoning based on environmental carrying capacity and require all tourism businesses to obtain sustainability certification through systems such as Qualmark. Furthermore, the indigenous Māori people hold strong legal standing and are actively involved in consultation processes and the supervision of tourism projects in their territories. Such a model ensures that the growth of the tourism sector does not compromise ecological and social values but instead strengthens them. This comparative study is important to demonstrate that an integrative, participatory, and ecological legal approach can produce genuinely sustainable tourism development, rather than merely empty rhetoric.

Through lessons learned from New Zealand, it becomes evident that Indonesia requires legal reform in the tourism and spatial planning sectors to prevent the recurrence of cases such as land-use conversion in the Sentul-Puncak area. Such reforms include the need to integrate spatial planning, environmental, and tourism laws into a unified sustainable regulatory framework. In addition, mandatory certification mechanisms are needed for tourism business operators, based on environmental audits and sustainability principles, rather than mere administrative formalities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a normative legal method with a qualitative approach to analyze legal norms governing spatial planning, environmental protection, and tourism, particularly in the context of green tourism development in Indonesia. The analysis is conducted through four main approaches: a statutory approach to examine relevant regulations in Indonesia and New Zealand; a conceptual approach to understand theories of green tourism, environmental justice, and ecological carrying capacity; a case approach focusing on land-use conflicts in the Sentul-Puncak conservation area involving PT Jaswita Jabar; and a comparative legal approach to identify differences and best practices between the legal systems of both countries.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal Framework of Green Tourism and Spatial Planning in Indonesia in the Context of the Sentul-Puncak Case

The legal regulation of sustainable tourism or green tourism in Indonesia is essentially dispersed across several laws and regulations that are interrelated but not yet fully integrated functionally. Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism serves as the primary normative foundation for national tourism development. Although the law does not explicitly use the term *green tourism*, it incorporates principles aligned with sustainability, such as environmental preservation, community participation, and local economic empowerment.

In practice, tourism development should be implemented in conjunction with Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management. This law requires every business activity, including tourism, to obtain an environmental permit as a prerequisite before a business license is issued. In addition, the precautionary principle, environmental carrying capacity, and damage prevention are essential aspects of managing natural tourism areas. However, in many cases, including in the Sentul-Puncak area, these mechanisms are often ignored or implemented merely as formalities.

Each region has a Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) and a Detailed Spatial Plan (RDTR), which determine whether an area may be used for tourism activities. The Sentul-Puncak area is a national strategic zone designated for water catchment and food security, which should be protected from massive development. In reality, however, a number of luxury tourism projects such as villas, resorts, and glamping sites have been established in the area, indicating weak control over spatial utilization. One notable case is the development of the "Hibisc Fantasy Puncak" tourist area by the regional-owned enterprise PT Jaswita Jabar. The project was built on conservation land without environmental permits and without conformity to spatial planning regulations. This fact demonstrates that although Indonesian law normatively incorporates sustainability and spatial planning principles, their implementation remains weak, particularly when violations are committed by state actors themselves.

The Tourism Law tends to emphasize promotion and economic development, while environmental and spatial planning laws do not hold a dominant position in assessing tourism projects from a sustainability perspective. This creates a gray area that enables *greenwashing* practices, where tourism projects are labeled as environmentally friendly despite violating spatial planning and ecological protection principles. Therefore, a more integrative regulatory approach and stronger supervision mechanisms are necessary to ensure that green tourism becomes a concrete legal practice rather than merely a slogan.

Ecotourism and Spatial Planning Regulatory System in New Zealand

New Zealand is globally recognized for its successful implementation of green tourism and environmentally based spatial planning policies. Two main legal instruments serve as pillars of regulation: the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 and the Conservation Act 1987. These laws not only establish legal norms for natural resource management but also define strict development

permitting procedures based on sustainability principles and public participation.

The Resource Management Act 1991 is a comprehensive regulation governing the use and protection of natural resources across land, water, and coastal areas in New Zealand. Its core principle is that any form of development, including tourism, must obtain approval based on an environmental impact assessment. This system is known as a “one-stop integrated consent” approach, a single-entry system for all development permits that integrates spatial planning, environmental protection, and land management into one legal framework.

To ensure consistent green tourism practices, the government of New Zealand implements a sustainability certification system known as Qualmark. This system functions as a national standard for evaluating and accrediting tourism operators. To obtain Qualmark certification, businesses must meet various indicators, including energy efficiency, waste management, local community involvement, and the protection of cultural values. This certification is mandatory for businesses that wish to partner with the government or market their services through official national tourism channels. As a result, tourism in New Zealand is sustainable not only ecologically but also socially and culturally.

Law enforcement within this system is effective across administrative, civil, and criminal mechanisms. Violations of environmental permits may result in substantial fines, license revocation, or legal prosecution. Successful examples of this system can be observed in tourist destinations such as Rotorua and Tongariro National Park, where ecotourism development is carefully controlled through continuous monitoring, active certification, and the involvement of local communities in daily operations. Overall, the ecotourism and spatial planning legal system in New Zealand reflects an integrated, participatory, and sustainability-oriented regulatory model. It demonstrates that environmental protection and tourism development do not have to be contradictory, as long as there is strong legal commitment and firm implementation mechanisms.

Comparison of Ecotourism Legal Systems in Indonesia and New Zealand and Its Implications for Regulatory Reform in Indonesia

A comparison between the ecotourism legal systems of Indonesia and New Zealand reveals fundamental differences not only in regulatory structure but also in the paradigm of tourism development itself. On one hand, Indonesia tends to adopt a fragmented, sectoral approach. Regulations concerning tourism, environmental protection, and spatial planning are governed by separate laws without adequate integration mechanisms. On the other hand, New Zealand applies a more holistic system through the Resource Management Act 1991, which integrates spatial planning and environmental protection principles into a single, coherent legal framework.

One of the most striking differences lies in tourism zoning. In Indonesia, tourism development is often driven by investment interests. Changes in land use— which should adhere to RTRW or RDTR—can be carried out through policy revisions that are often political and susceptible to manipulation. The

conversion of green areas into luxury tourism zones in the Sentul–Puncak region is a concrete example of the weak binding force of spatial planning regulations. In contrast, in New Zealand, the principles of carrying capacity and green zoning serve as absolute foundations in tourism area planning.

In terms of sustainability certification, Indonesia still lags behind. There is no national system requiring tourism businesses to obtain environmental certification as a legal prerequisite. Meanwhile, in New Zealand, the Qualmark system functions as a mandatory national standard that must be fulfilled by all tourism operators.

The aspect of community participation also shows significant contrast. In Indonesia, public participation is often symbolic and merely serves as a formal requirement in Environmental Impact Assessment (AMDAL) documents or public consultations that do not influence final decisions. Conversely, in New Zealand, the indigenous Māori people have constitutionally recognized legal standing. They are not only involved in consultation processes but also possess veto rights over developments affecting their customary and spiritual territories.

The comparison further shows that law enforcement in Indonesia remains reactive and relatively weak. Even in cases involving state-owned enterprises such as PT Jaswita Jabar, there is often no clear legal accountability. In contrast, in New Zealand, violations of the Resource Management Act can result in administrative sanctions, substantial fines, or even criminal prosecution, regardless of the offender.

From this analysis, it can be concluded that the main weakness of the legal system in Indonesia lies in the absence of a unified regulatory framework that integrates environmental, spatial, and tourism management. Additionally, weak community involvement, the lack of sustainability standards, and the politicization of spatial planning remain major obstacles to achieving genuinely sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the legal system in managing sustainable tourism in Indonesia still faces serious challenges due to a fragmented regulatory approach that tends to prioritize investment interests. The case of land-use conversion in the Sentul–Puncak area reflects the weak integration between spatial planning law, environmental law, and tourism law.

In contrast, New Zealand has successfully developed a strong, integrative, and sustainability-based ecotourism legal framework through the Resource Management Act 1991, the Conservation Act 1987, and the implementation of ecological zoning systems. The principles of green zoning, mandatory certification through Qualmark, and the substantive participation of the indigenous Māori people serve as the main pillars in achieving sustainable tourism aligned with environmental carrying capacity.

Based on this comparative analysis, this study proposes an integrative green zoning regulatory model that combines tourism licensing, spatial planning, and environmental sustainability within a coordinated legal system. The legal novelty of this research includes the proposal of zoning based on ecological carrying capacity, mandatory sustainability certification, strengthening community monitoring forums, and reforming integrated licensing systems. This model is considered relevant for implementation in Indonesia as a concrete effort to prevent spatial conflicts and to strengthen the legal foundation of ecotourism in the future.

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