

Effects of Decentralization Policy on Island Destination in Indonesia

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Abstract: Decentralization has emerged as one of the most important topics in development policy and theory debates and many developing countries have experimented with the approach to varying degrees of success. Much of the analysis of decentralization policy focuses on the appropriate mix as not all state functions can be decentralized. In the context of tourism in many developing countries, decentralization has been viewed as an alternative local or regional development strategy to effectively manage tourism. This paper attempts to discuss how decentralization affects tourism development in a large country like Indonesia by examining the changes occurred during pre and post-decentralization periods in Lombok Island. Interviews were conducted among key respondents at the local level and this was further supported by secondary data. Preliminary findings argue that decentralization appears to change the legal frameworks, increase equity of development activities and also promote local participation, destination image and tourist arrival.

Key words: Decentralization policy • Tourism development • Lombok Island • Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, decentralization was designed to bring a measure of autonomy to the country's diverse regions. Decentralization is believed to offer improvements in the efficiency of service delivery and to bring decision making closer to the population. Decentralization has been described as a transfer of authority to perform some services to the public from an individual or an agency in central government to some other individual or agency in local government which is closer to the public [1]. The delegation of power from central government to democratically elected local government can facilitate responsiveness because local representatives are well placed to provide what people demand. Such delegation may also be supported on the grounds that it encourages participation in policy making and makes local political representatives more accessible to the public. Both of these characteristics have the potential to increase political accountability [2].

Indonesia's political climate has become more receptive to the principle of decentralizing some public administrations although practical success has been limited. From the national perspective, a more decentralized approach is seen to be more self-sufficient, both financially and administratively, with intentions that the provinces, municipalities and villages would be

reformed. Some central responsibilities were also to be transferred to the provinces and local governments [3]. In the last three decades, Indonesia's system of government became increasingly centralized and autocratic. Indeed, these two features of government reinforced each other and tended to ignore the needs of regions and people. Since President Suharto stepped down in May 1998, Indonesia has experienced a dramatic push towards democracy [3-5]. After the financial crisis in 1997, Indonesia was buffeted by a series of crises that had notable impact on one of its leading economic assets, namely tourism. Political and economic crisis in Indonesia not only led to the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, but also thrust Indonesia into political milestone, undermined foreign investment and created the image through the international media of a country out of control, both unstable and unsafe for tourists [6]. As mentioned earlier, this paper attempts to discuss how decentralization affects tourism development in a large country like Indonesia by examining the changes occurred during pre and post-decentralization era in Lombok Island. Discussion on different types of decentralization and the related issues in Indonesia will precede research findings.

Decentralization and Transfer of Authority: Decentralization is normally understood as the transfer of authority and responsibility from higher to lower levels of

government. Decentralization can also be defined as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations or even the private sector and community associations [7]. However, a distinction is often made between deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Deconcentration means the transfer of responsibilities to lower levels within central government. Delegation means the change of mandate and authority to other government units, while devolution is normally understood as the shifting away of decision-making power to lower and independent public organizations [8, 9].

Decentralization may also be combined with or turned into privatization if responsibility and resources are transferred from the public to the private sector. Decentralization is commonly regarded as fundamental to the development of democracy. It normally functions as a means for increased interest in political matters and may result in enhanced participation by ordinary citizens [10]. From a different point of view, decentralization means bringing bureaucrats closer to the people whom they serve and this should ideally increase their efficiency and the chances for popular monitoring and control [11].

There is a tendency that decentralization of authority without a clear assignment of separate responsibilities reduces the quality and efficiency of public services [10]. There are potential risks of decentralization, for example, if decentralized institutional structures are captured by corporatist alliances between industry and government that use them to suit their own interests rather than those of all citizens. In addition, local government might defend narrow local interests rather than consider national priorities. When decisions are made by numerous local units, then more resources may be needed for administration and coordination [2]. Problems of unclear

responsibilities among government institutions, sectors and layers are generally created by conflicts of interest between groups of bureaucrats and politicians.

One of the issues is whether decentralization leads to authority shifting away from the central government. This can involve two types of transfer. One is territorial, with power passed to a lower level in the territorial hierarchy that is geographically closer to public service providers and community. The second is functional, that is, movement to an agency that is functionally specialized but not based at a geographically lower level. Authority can also be transferred within or between different types of institutions, such as from the state to the private sector and within public administration. These features of authority transfer developed by [1,2], in terms of nature of transfer, territorial and functional, are shown in Table 1.

There are five types of transfers of authority, with each distinguished by its territorial or functional basis. *First*, authority is delegated within formal political structures. Central government gives additional responsibilities to local authorities; this is called devolution. *Second*, authority shifts within the public administration. Most developing countries have administrative structures where some functions are delegated to public officials at a more local geographical scale. *Third*, government institution surrenders some authority to a private sector organization, either at a lower geographical level or at the national scale [12]. *Fourth*, delegation from the government to a non-governmental organization, that is to an agency bringing together individuals sharing a common purpose within the society. *Lastly*, the transfer can be from a government institution to a partnership involving various organizations, which may or may not include the public sector [1]. Partnership organizations are increasingly common in tourism. In practice there are often multiple combinations of balance of authority within public policy networks.

Table 1: Forms of Decentralization

Nature of Transfer of Authority	Basis for Transfer of Authority	
	Territorial	Functional
Within Formal Political Structures representation	Devolution	Interest group
Within Public Administrative Structures	De-concentration	Establishment of a public administrative
From State Sector to Private Sector	Privatization of geographically transferred functions	Privatization of national
From State Sector to NGO Sector	Geographical transfer of functions	Transfer of national functions
From State Sector to Public, Private and NGO Sector Partnership	Geographical transfer of functions	Transfer of national functions

Source: Extended from ideas developed by [1,2]

Decentralization Issues in Indonesia: In Indonesia, corruption and nepotism was common under the new order regime. The general lack of transparency in state affairs and the limited accountability of influential institutions contributed to shady economic affairs. The economy was totally dominated by large-scale business conglomerates with ethnic Chinese and Suharto family members and associates in central positions. The state government was authoritarian and highly centralized. The regional hierarchy was strictly ordered, with the heads of province and district administrations selected by the president. The central elite with its regional operational network for collecting and redistributing money accumulated wealth in the capital of Indonesia, Jakarta, but also managed to spread enough economic incentives to curtail opposition, as long as the economy grew steadily [10]. After the implementation of local autonomy laws in 1999, the central government did not have the mandate to audit local governments and district authorities were not obliged to report accounts to the central government. Decentralization has reduced the vertical accountability mechanisms [5].

The New Order regime of Indonesia under Suharto presidency lost its bargaining power against outspoken university students and resilient local elites in 1997. The students fought for democracy and local elites contested for local autonomy. The Indonesian government took the initiative for reforms in 1999, with two new laws were passed in the newly democratically elected national parliament. The two laws represent the initiation of the decentralization reform, aiming for expenditure reduction for the central government and increased responsibility and contributions from the local government [13].

The territory of Indonesia is divided into autonomous provinces, districts (*kabupaten*) and municipalities (*kota*). Districts and municipalities are technically the same level of government. This distinction is based on whether the government administration is located in a rural area (district) or an urban area (municipality). Within districts and municipalities there are sub-districts (*kecamatan*) which are smaller administrative government units. Each sub-district is further divided into villages. Villages in rural areas are called *desa*, while in urban areas they are referred to as *kelurahan* [3].

In January 2001, Indonesia implemented two legislative acts in 1999 (Law 22/99 and Law 25/99) which greatly expanded the power and responsibilities of districts (*kabupaten*) and municipalities (*kota*) government. Law 22/99 consolidated central government offices with their local counterparts, including tourism

department. The regional heads at both provincial and district levels were elected by regional legislative bodies and held accountable to these, rather than to higher levels of government. The districts and municipalities, which represented the third level in the administrative system, became responsible for the implementation of activities in sectors including health, culture, public works, environment, tourism and education. A main condition of Law 25/1999 is to delegate the financial responsibility to the district level [3, 4, 10]. Law 22/1999 transfers functions, personnel and assets from the central government to provincial as well as to district and municipal governments. This also indicates that additional authorities are being devolved to district and municipal governments, establishing a far more decentralized system compared to the centralized systems of the past (see Figure 1).

Decentralization has placed new responsibilities on local government to manage the tourism sector. The logical response for local government would be to lodge responsibility for tourism in either the tourism office (Dinas Pariwisata) or within the Local Planning and Development Agencies (BAPPEDA). A more effective mechanism would be to establish independent urban tourism corporation with revenue generating capabilities and with leadership drawn from the key local stakeholders (government, the business community, labor groups and the transportation sectors) [4]. The funding allocation from central government decreased, while increasingly local government expenses are based on tax revenues from natural resources and business activities. There are six sources of funding for the public sector at the district level [10]: (i) The General Allocation Fund (DAU/Dana Alokasi Umum) from central government is designed to partially equalize the fiscal capacity among districts; (ii) The Special Allocation Fund (DAK/Dana Alokasi Khusus) from central government is allocated for specific purposes in the districts or provinces; (iii) Natural resource and tax revenue from the central government. Between 15% and 80% of natural resource revenues are now distributed to district governments; (iv) Local government incomes from own sources, for instance local taxes and profits from properties; (v) Contributions by companies and communities; (vi) Individual households.

Tourism Development in Lombok Island: Geographically, Lombok Island which is part of West Nusa Tenggara Province (NTB) is located between Java Sea and Flores Sea. The east faces the Alas Strait, to the south lies the Indian Ocean and the west faced the Lombok Strait.

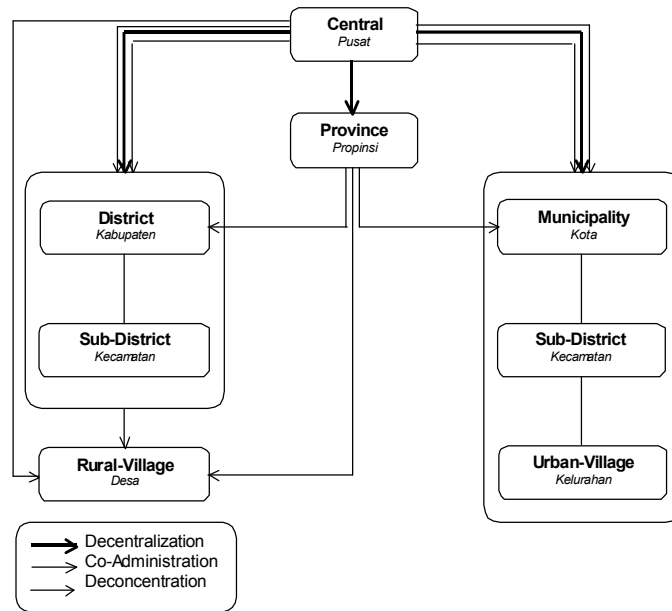


Fig. 1: Government's structure and administration of Indonesia according to Autonomy Law 22/1999
 Source: Adapted from [3]

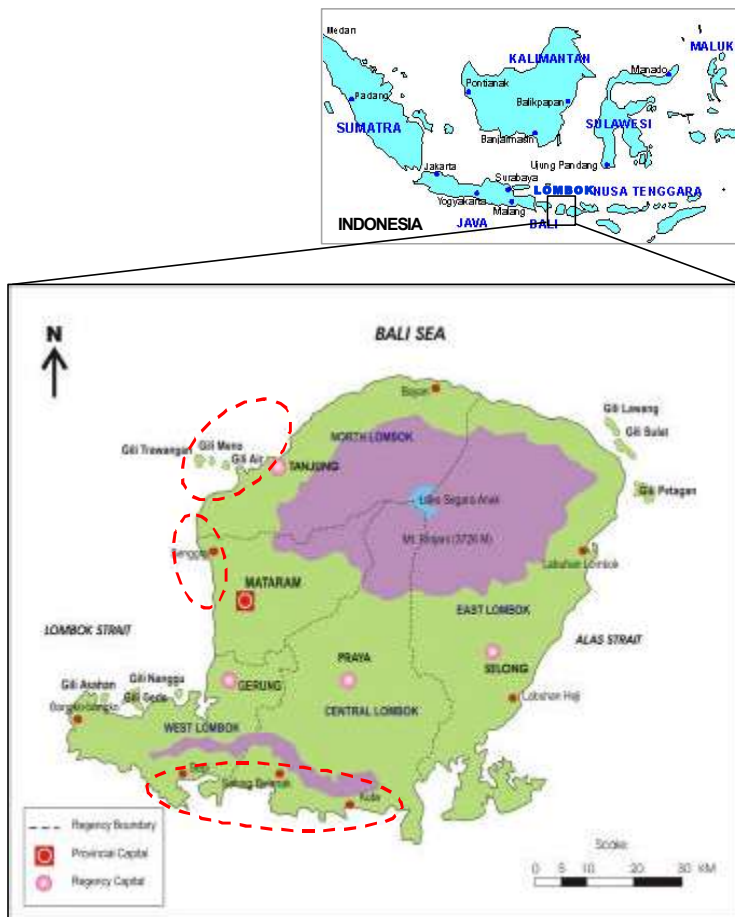


Fig. 2: Location Map of Lombok Island
 Source: Adapted from NTB Provincial Planning Agency [14]

Lombok Island has an area of 5,435 km². In Lombok there are four districts (*kabupaten*) and one municipality (*kota*) [14, 15]. District of North Lombok is the newest district, separated from West Lombok in 2008. Lombok Island lies at the central part of the Indonesia as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 depicts Lombok regencies and tourism zones. The population of Lombok is composed largely of Sasaks of Malay origin, although there are Chinese in the urban area around Mataram, some Balinese in the west and some Sumbawanese in the east. The Sasaks are Muslims, though there is a strong animist element to their religion. Agriculture is by far the dominant occupation, with paddy, soybeans, tubers, peanuts (groundnuts), tobacco, coconuts and vegetables, the chief crops. The central lowland strip of the island, between the two elevated coastal areas, is the centre of settlement and rice cultivation. Mataram, the provincial capital, is the largest city. The main port is Lembar, on the western coast [16]. At its widest points, the island is roughly 80 kilometres west to east and 70 kilometres north to south. Lombok is crossed by a volcanic mountain range, dominated by the imposing Mountain Rinjani, at 3775 meters high [17].

Tourism industry has become increasingly important for the island of Lombok, although it is less than a tenth the size of that in Bali. A significant step for the formal development of tourism in Lombok was the classification of nine areas in Lombok as tourist zones. The most significant of these areas are: the tourist areas of Senggigi (West Lombok District), three Gili Islands -Trawangan, Meno, Air (North Lombok District) and Kuta (Central Lombok District) that cater for a mix of domestic and foreign visitors, many of whom come via Bali. Mataram focuses principally on the domestic market. Limited development of tourism infrastructures outside of these areas exists, but the local government is promoting the development of other areas as hinterland destinations [14, 17].

Nevertheless, there is interest amongst Lombok based travel agents to promote ecotourism and Lombok's Sasak culture, which to date has not been a main part of Lombok's tourism image. This may help promote the development of tourism in Lombok and the sharing of benefits with local communities, although the constraints are mostly on the transportation network and infrastructure development in the island [18]. Lombok promotes an image of "Bali twenty years ago", which has helped it attract visitors to Bali who are looking for something different. In general, there has been significant investment from the private sector in the Senggigi area

(West Lombok) and, to a lesser extent, Kuta (Central Lombok), where the local government is looking for local and foreign investment. The experience of Kuta, where the community has been involved in a long running land dispute, illustrates the risks of putting tourism development in the hands of the private sector without any strategic plan, resulting in the loss of local community voice in the process of land acquisition and development [17].

Research Methodology: This study explores tourism within the context of decentralization policy in a large developing country like Indonesia. Essentially this study discusses tourism development in Lombok Island during pre and post decentralization periods and examines changes that take place as a result of decentralization policy. Interviews were conducted among key respondents at the local level and this was further supported by secondary data from the district and provincial governments, wherever feasible, to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The qualitative approach of the interview technique was utilized to allow for rich and in-depth data to be collected and interviews were able to identify multiple realities of the phenomenon being investigated. Informant samples were relatively small and non-random and the selection of interview informants was driven by objectives other than generalizability. This paper presents only preliminary findings from interviews as discussed below.

Research Findings: Interviews with local government authorities and key informants reveal that decentralization has spurred tourism growth in the island. This is in tandem with literature discussion that decentralization has placed new responsibilities on local government to manage tourism more effectively. Tourism is seen as an industry that can generate income to local economy, stimulate other sectors such as agriculture-related, fishery and cottage industry and create employment among local people. As explained by one interview respondent, "tourism created a new pace of development at both provincial and district levels".

The findings also indicate that there have been many major changes since the implementation of regional autonomy as a result of decentralization policy. Tourism sector is now the second priority of development program, after agriculture as indicated by the district head of North Lombok. Tourism image in the island is also getting more visible. As expressed

by a district tourism officer in West Lombok, “building a good destination image is our main concern for local tourism development”. The image building is important for a newly established local administrative district that is rich in natural resources and has high potential for tourism development.

Provincial government funds are used to support tourism development in the island. This supports decentralization policy that districts are responsible for financial management and implementation of tourism activities. The Chairman of Provincial Planning and Development Agency (BAPPEDA) pointed out that the government has allocated 2 billion rupiah (222,000 USD) per district per year from the Special Allocation Fund (DAK/Dana Alokasi Khusus) of the Central government for tourism infrastructure development in all districts. He further argued that the development approach in the era of decentralization is spatial rather than sectoral planning. Spatial planning is defined as a way to solve the development problem of coordination or integration of the spatial dimension of sectoral policies through a territorially-based strategy [19].

As mentioned earlier, secondary data from district and provincial governments were used to examine the changes in tourism development that occurred during pre and post decentralization periods in Lombok Island, as discussed below.

Pre Decentralization era: Since the second Five-Year Development Plan (1974-1979) of the Soeharto government, tourism has been advocated as a vehicle for economic development [4]. As a politically stable authoritarian government for over 30 years, Soeharto’s government could dominate opposition and fast-track tourism development through regional and local planning systems. In addition to Soeharto’s immediate family, other relatives and cronies became extensively involved in tourism development on Lombok, as they had on Bali [20, 21]. As Lombok became more popular as a tourist destination, speculators, who often included government officials, police and soldiers, especially from West Lombok, Bali and Java, bought large parcels of land in anticipated resort development areas [22]. In 1980s, land in the main tourism area of Senggigi Beach on Lombok was bought by speculators at low prices and on-sold for ten times higher [20].

Lombok Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) is a joint venture between a private company, PT Rajawali which holds 65% and the regional government of NTB

that holds the remaining stake. The former President Soeharto’s families have had interests in PT Rajawali. PT Rajawali owns the Sheraton Resort Lombok at Senggigi [22]. PT Rajawali has also been a major shareholder of many hotels and accommodations and even has been a major shareholder with the NTB provincial government in PT. Pengembangan Pariwisata Lombok (Lombok’s Tourism Expansion) or so-called PT PPL was set up to develop infrastructure in the Kuta area and held almost nine million square metres of land in central Lombok [23], the site of a proposed international airport [24].

The Southeast Asian economic crisis contributed to increasing political instability and the overthrow of Soeharto in May 1998. Since then, further tourism development on Lombok has been ‘on hold’, partly because of legal problems in relation to land acquisition issues and partly because of capital flee. Indonesia was still beset by great economic and political instability until April 2001, across the archipelago, which continued to impact significantly on tourism, both in terms of development and tourist numbers [25].

Tourist arrivals across Indonesia declined from a high of nearly 5.2 million international arrivals in 1997 to 4.6 million in 1998 [26]. Whilst national tourist arrivals climbed back to 5 million in 2000 [27], arrivals to Lombok showed a fluctuating trend and negative growth especially after the financial crisis in 1998 (Table 2). Although these numbers cannot be validated with 100% accuracy due to conflicting methodologies for collecting tourism data, a task shared by three government agencies indicates a similar arrival trend [20, 24].

Post Decentralization era: Decentralization is highly considered as a better alternative to manage tourism. After Reform Era, local government has gained wider authorities to manage tourism due to the enactment of UU 22/1999 (the Local Autonomy Law). During the post-decentralization period, arrivals to Lombok showed a positive growth except in 2003 when the growth was negative due to Bali bombing and political instability in Maluku that spread to Mataram (Table 3). The figures of domestic and foreign tourists, in general, steadily increased although the percentage change was not consistent. This trend was in tandem with foreign tourist arrivals to Indonesia that climbed to 6 million in 2008 [28] and the country was able to attract more international visitors from Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, India, Japan and Republic of China in 2007.

Table 2: Number of Tourists in NTB (1990-2000)

Year	International Tourists	Local Tourists	Total	Percentage Change
1990	107,210	76,817	184,027	
1991	117,988	99,011	216,999	17.9
1992	129,997	102,040	232,037	6.9
1993	140,442	106,907	247,349	6.6
1994	158,813	120,279	279,092	12.8
1995	167,267	140,940	308,207	10.4
1996	227,453	164,907	392,360	27.3
1997	245,049	158,894	403,943	2.9
1998	211,812	168,727	380,539	-12.1
1999	189,659	144,953	145,143	-5.8
2000	107,286	126,364	233,650	-30.2

Source: Dinas Pariwisata NTB [17].

Table 3: Number of Tourists in NTB (2002-2009)

Year	International Tourists	Local Tourists	Total	Percentage Change (%)
2001	129,356	189,672	319,026	36.5
2002	120,644	226,635	347,272	8.9
2003	80,023	246,701	326,74	-5.92
2004	148,167	240,570	388,737	18,98
2005	177,727	235,211	412,938	6,23
2006	179,666	246,911	426,577	3,30
2007	200,170	257,209	457,379	3,4
2008	213,926	330,575	544,501	19,04
2009	232,525	386,845	619,370	13,75

Source: Dinas Pariwisata NTB [29].

Income from tourism contributed directly to the local economies and local authorities were able to use the income for regional development. Despite less intervention from the central government, they still allocate funding for improved road network, a new international airport and ferry terminal, adequate electricity supply, which further promotes tourist arrivals to the island.

CONCLUSION

To make decentralization of tourism development in Indonesia more effective, several improvements should be taken into account at various levels; central government, local government and community level. At the central government level, the most important agenda is the improvement in legal framework such as how to further spell out Local Autonomy Law and how to legitimize local institutions [30]. At the local government level, the decentralization of tourism development implies dividing tourism players into manageable units. At the community level, revitalization of local institution becomes very important, which is about empowerment and revival of local institutions [31]. Revitalization of local community also requires political understanding and technical adjustment.

After Reform Era, devolution form of decentralization was implemented as a result of the enactment of Local Autonomy Law. Although its implementation encountered many problems, this form of decentralization is considered appropriate for a remote destination such as in Lombok. The decentralization process appears to mitigate the negative shortcomings of centralization policy in Indonesia. The assumption is true in Lombok, where tourism industry grew under the stewardship of local government, which further proves that decentralization is a dominant factor in strengthening tourism development in a large country like Indonesia.

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