



# Cap Go Meh Festival as a multicultural event in tourism policy at Singkawang City, Indonesia

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## Abstract

Research in this study was conducted in Singkawang city, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia which embraces a harmonious multicultural society with three major ethnicities, namely TIDAYU (Chinese, Dayak and Malay). The rich cultural diversities give positive advantages for tourism development and bode well for significant local economic growth. Among others, the Cap Go Meh (Chinese religious tradition) is considered to the biggest event in the region that involves the TIDAYU. Even though the Cap Go Meh is annually celebrated in many different parts of the world, the Singkawang Cap Go Meh Festival has unique features that attract Chinese diasporas from other regions in Indonesia and neighboring countries. For that reason, the actors involved in this event constitute various social, economic, and political backgrounds. This research focused on how Singkawang local government can develop a distinctive tourism strategy to address the specific multi stakeholder interactions using a qualitative approach. The research found that in the context of tourism policy development, the interaction and dynamic patterns among policy actors are developed through linear individual cooperation. Within this pattern, the interaction amongst policy actors tend to involve certain individuals who have authority in controlling resources regardless of their origin or organizations. In fact, this pattern is very strongly based on family relationships or friendships found in both public and private domains. The research has shown that the strategies used in developing tourism policy in Singkawang city should be developed based on network management and good stakeholder engagement.

**Keywords:** Tourism policy, Singkawang City, Cap Go Meh Festival, multicultural society, tourism strategy

## Introduction

Setting the discussion in this research is the development of tourism policy in Singkawang City based on several considerations. Singkawang is the capital of West Kalimantan and the second largest city in the province that borders the State of Sarawak, Malaysia. Firstly, this sector has special characteristics that can describe the networks and dynamics between actors (stakeholders), also government domains, private domains and community domains. These show very high interdependence in terms of tourism development efforts. Secondly, the problem of tourism is also related to other public problems such as infrastructure, quality service, ethical trading, services, transportation, employment and others (Nicolaidis, 2015a). Thirdly, Singkawang has a multicultural population consisting of three ethnic groups, TIDAYU (Tionghoa, Dayaknese and Malay). Singkawang City can encourage and build the tourism sector because of the visitors that are likely to come (Kalbar, 2010) and the network phenomenon also manifests itself there. Secondly, there is great potential and uniqueness in Singkawang City's tourism sector based upon its natural relief and from ethnic pluralism which is thick with cultural preservation ideas. Thirdly,



the inseparability of national tourism development with the development of regional tourism is clear. Under such conditions, it is clear that there is a certain interdependence of resources between the Department of Tourism and related actors such as knowledge, information, financing, expertise or support, the use of network tourism agencies with such actors should be optimized not only in the level of participation in the implementation of certain programs or activities, but also, and mainly be related to the planning of development activities in unison with others (Nicolaidis & de Witt, 2015b).

One of the tourism policy development aspects focused on events like Cap Go Meh. The case of the development of tourism objects both religious and cultural, and symbols of ethnicity slightly show high intention and attention, where the interaction of various actors gives birth to the complexity and dynamics, wherein the development of these attractions there are differences in perceptions and interests that are quite pronounced between the actors involved. This is specifically between government and local communities and private businesses and communities. The government is interested in developing and increasing the income of older regions and also wants to introduce the tourism object, the society and religious institutions and at times religious culture or even certain symbols, whereas the private party (hotel entrepreneurs) only prioritize profit maximization. Thus they follow a policy of providing nightlife facilities to allow tourists or guests to stay longer in their hotels without involving other network actors who also have an important role in the network of tourism development actors, i.e. local communities. With good networking, stakeholder involvement and gains can be realised for all.

Singkawang has a diverse oriental atmosphere with hundreds of Chinese temples. The majority of Singkawang's population is of Chinese descent, principally people emanating from the Hakka tribe with some Teochew as well. The remainder of the population comprises Malays, Dayaks and supplementary Indonesian ethnic groups. There are many pagodas and some are very old such as Tri Dharma Bumi Raya temple that was established in 1878 and which is dedicated to the God of the forest, or Tua Peh Kong. Singkawang is very busy during the Chinese New Year. The area is also famous for its old style Chinese ceramics. From a culinary tourism perspective, the large variety of food, including its famous porridge, nasi lemak, Rujak Ju Hie (hot fruit salad with dried squid) are all favourite specialties. The Pasir Panjang Beach in close proximity offers beach events including boat rental, water biking, go-karting, souvenir shops and a large variety of food stalls (Wonderful Indonesia, 2019).

Indonesians have been celebrating the end of Chinese New Year. It's one of the largest festivals in the country. Hundreds of thousands gather to watch the parade that blends Indonesian and Chinese cultures. CGTN's Silkina Ahluwalia has more Indonesia. This is one of Indonesia's most vibrant festivals. Hundreds of thousands of people gather each year in Singkawang, West Kalimantan to welcome the 15th day of the Chinese New Year. Globally, the celebration is known as Cap Go Meh. And in Singkawang, they do it bigger and better than anywhere else in Indonesia. The ritual begins the day before the festival. Participants of the parade become a part of an important ceremony of clearing the streets. (CGTN, 2018).

Clearly such an event must target specific groups of stakeholders so more tourists can come so as to encourage supplementary business opportunities and revenue for the local population, but networking is a vital issue that needs management. The above argument is very simple to describe, and is at least enough reason for the author to emphasize that network management is important. Network management should be the spirit as well as strategy of the parties or stakeholders involved - in this case as a manifest of the application of a network approach, where theoretically the basic principle in problem solving or certain public affairs, involves cooperative efforts of many actors or



stakeholders, who have the capability to act and have the necessary resources (Nicolaidis, 2015a). Without a network management, the similarities of actors perceptions, interests, and actions are far from reality, which in itself may lead to the development of the tourism sector failing or, unfortunately the common goal to be achieved from development becomes far from being aspired to and finally fails.

## **Literature Review**

Strategies in network management were packaged by Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1999) and intended to influence and facilitate the process of interaction between actors in policy settings. Broadly speaking, these figures divide the strategy into two broad groups. First, strategies that lead or aim to manage perceptions so that a common view or intent between actors is created towards the problem at hand. Second, a strategy aimed at managing interactions between actors to build a joint action (1999:170). The choice of strategy depends on the specific needs to manage the situation at hand or solve the obstacles faced.

### **Strategy leads to create same perception**

Kenneth Boulding (in Jones, 1995: 15-35), states that when someone acts in the world in some way, someone else actually reacts to the image of the world. The real world and perceptions about the world are perhaps very different. Or in other words a person or individual acts based on what they know. One's response to the situation depends on how he defines it. Perception will be created when there is contact or interaction between facts and values which then gives birth to a decision or action. Thus, it can be said that every individual action (read: actor) is affected or determined by the value he or she professes. In the joint decision-making process, the similarity of perception is a very important starting point in the network approach if it is to succeed. Or, the barrier to this difference in perception must be solved first before any success can be expected. Different perceptions are very likely to occur in a network approach, and the actors involved must see that different perceptions are not obstacles in the policy network but rather they should be seen as dynamics in the policy process, which allows for changes as expressed by Kickert et al (1999:84). He stated that when actors communicate only with actors who have the same perception there is no reason for change and sadly, then only a confrontation can be seen as the driving force for change.

There are a number of things that need to be considered so that confrontation can produce certain changes: first, the actors who interact must recognize and acknowledge differences in perceptions between them; secondly, actors must experience that differences as problematic; Third, actors must have the desire to reflect and adapt to their own perceptions with other actors. With an awareness of some of these things, it can at least help the actors to be able to do as little as possible to adjust perceptions to build a consensus or agreement for joint action. Termer and Koppenjan (Kickert, et al, 1999: 87) stated that the effort to build the perception of equality was termed 'the management of perceptions'. Nicolaidis (2015a) explained that it is always very useful to manage perceptions, but always ethically, without embellishing anything.

### **Strategy leads to managing interactions between actors**

In addition to the strategies that lead to the creation of perceptions as above, in the network management approach there are also strategies that lead to managing interactions between actors which, according to Termer and Koppenjan (Kickert, 1999: 89) are also called strategies that indirectly aim to manage a common perception. These strategies when understood in depth have a tendency to resemble a coordinating activity between actors involved in the policy network. The coordination used here has a broad meaning compared to the concept of coordination put forward by experts such as Levingstone (1949), White (1957), Mooney (1970), Herbert Hicks (1967), and



others. Coordination in managing this network is related to managing interactions between different actors (stakeholders) in the policy network to solve a problem or obstacle in order to achieve certain goals together. The intended coordination is more external or horizontal coordination. Rogers and Whetten (1982) in Kickert, 1999:44) suggested categorization in strategic coordination in networks, namely: 1. Cooperation strategies (corporate strategies) that see coordination realized in the form of formal rules, centralized authority and collective goals; 2. Alliances that see coordination as the application of negotiations to get mutual agreement in solving problems; 3. Mutual adjustment, which is coordination where the emphasis is on mutually adjusting the goals of each actor so that the center of mutual attention is created.

From the opinions above, several things can be drawn from the coordination function. The strategies or activities to facilitate interaction between stakeholders was as follows:

1. A selective de-activation strategy was used to identify and selectively select relevant actors, or stakeholders, whose resources were needed, to be involved in solving the problem at hand. Or conversely, this can deactivate actors that are deemed unimportant or unnecessary in the network to solve the problems faced. The success of this strategy is very dependent on the willingness of the actors involved, to provide the time and resources they have, and the possible later willingness of the actors who are not involved to be more supportive at some point.
2. Arranging interaction strategy. Creating organizational elements in supporting effective interaction between actors. Such support can be shared, cooperation agreements, consultation procedures, rules, loose organizational structures, collaboration in efforts to drive sustainability etc. (Grobler & Nicolaidis, 2016; Teisman, 1992).
3. A strategy for entering third parties leads to managing interactions between actors far better.

## **Research Methodology**

This research used a descriptive qualitative-research method with the application of stakeholders analysis which according to Burgoyne (in Casell and Symon 1994, 187) is described as an approach in qualitative research based on a discussion of various phenomena of interest which are psychologically grown within the organization as a result of their experience and their conceptualization of particular phenomena.

This analysis was preceded by a review of several stakeholders while collecting data on their actions, their interests, perceptions, experience behavior, thoughts in relation to a particular phenomenon, namely in the development of tourism. Analyses conducted related to the collection of writings and texts or observations directly from a behavior or event that occurred, or through in-depth interviews with these stakeholders. In such a context the qualitative method refers to data collecting including in- depth interviews, observations and documentation gathering.

The use of the three techniques by Nachmias (1987: 208), Cassel and Symon (1994:110) is called the technique / method of triangulation by cross-checking the three methods of data collection, with the aim of improving validity and reliability (trust) of the qualitative data. This was so as to avoid wrong information collection. Data resources and informants of the research, needed to comprehend the relevancy and know the purpose of the research. These parties were key informants in the relevant agencies such as Head of Tourism and Culture, Youth and Sports, Head of Industry, Cooperatives and UMKM, Head of Education Office, Head of Bappeda, DPRD Members, Private Sector Chairman PHRI Singkawang, Chairman Dekranasda, travel agency owners, restaurant / culinary owners, UMKM, professional groups or organizations in the tourism sector, religious parties, intellectuals and community leaders who understand the development of this sector and what is required. Besides, the data and the direct observation of the situation and condition of this sector through media such as seminars, dialogue between agencies and so forth,



was very useful. Other data was also be obtained from papers, seminars, research reports, books, and other documents related to the purpose of this study.

Researchers in this case must go directly to the field. The questions in the form of interview guides prepared by researchers only served as a way to start a dialogue with researchers describing the subject. Through reciprocal dialogue it was possible to exchange ideas and words relatively freely so that researchers asked for clarification and confirmation of the subject's answers at the same time thereby reducing misunderstandings or differences in perceptions and also getting some documents and reading these and then observing issues in the situation on the field.

## **Results**

One of the objectives of establishing and managing the policy network is to market tourism packages owned by the region by involving all tourism stakeholders which is a critical aspect as stated by Nicolaides, (2015a) and Nicolaides and de Witt (2015b). Network management is after all intended to produce solid outputs, which in this context comprise of more tourist visits. Input is in the form of all components forming a network that includes tour packages and network cooperation. Between inputs and outputs, these must be at least balanced so that the government is not faced with the conditions and criticisms that complicate the government's role in developing tourism and tourism growth sector in general. Efficiency and effectiveness of management into benchmarks in determining whether or not networks are successfully built is very important.

Networks basically do not need financing or large budgeting because each party needs to finance and have the same resources and interests, that is, to market tourism products and play a role in determining policies to jointly obtain tourist visits and tourism sector to grow. The actors or parties are government supported by ODTW owners and managers, owners and management of hotels, travel agents, airlines, agro-tourism communities, art communities, tourism event donors and others.

The perception or view or pattern of thinking in this network is also the same: the arrival of tourists will bring in profits in the form of income distribution so that they are united by the same interest which is to attract as many visits as possible with various great benefits gained, including income enhancement, community empowerment (Zigiariadis & Nicolaides, 2014) making new friends, and having new business opportunities and experiences.

## **Discussion**

This city deserves to be a good example in multicultural harmony as it has three ethnic groups, namely the Dayak, Chinese and Malay. One of the symbols of cultural harmony, can be seen in the holding of the Go Go Meh Festival. Singkawang is one place where we can see the Cap Go Meh Festival with the Tatung Parade. Singkawang is thus an area that has a good mix of ethnicity and diverse cultures. Several years ago, Singkawang won the Real Wonder Indonesia award, as well as the Heritage City award. It also received an award as a creative city based on arts and culture and it has natural and cultural attractions, such as a pagoda and ceramics production. Both cultures are from a Chinese cultural heritage base. In addition, harmonious inter-ethnic community life is one of the unique advantages for this city.

The moment of this new year's celebration can also be used to revive the city of Singkawang, so that tourists are increasingly interested in coming to visit other places during the Cap Go Meh celebration. The potential for tourism visits is extraordinary. Last year there were 8.8 million foreign tourists visiting Indonesia with a 10% growth when compared to the previous year, and there were around 250 million trips made by foreign tourists. Meanwhile, the potential for developing the



attraction of Singkawang City is extraordinary, which is the task of all of us. The important thing is to create good memories for tourists. So, it's good if the locals behave well and very politely towards tourists who come to spend their foreign currency.

Based on data, the Cap Go Meh Festival of the City of Singkawang to date has been the largest contributor to tourist visits to West Kalimantan's tourist destinations. The economic impact can be felt by the wider community, especially businesses related to tourism. In contrast to the holding of the Cap Go Meh Festival last year, this time it was witnessed by fifty Regents and Mayors who were members of the Indonesian Heritage City Network who deliberately attend the National Working Meeting. This event is considered to be wonderful around the world and it promotes Indonesia. Cap Go Meh is a forum in which the three ethnic groups can cooperate, coordinate their efforts and work as a team on tourism policy development.

## Conclusion

The tourism management system is a very complex one. The production of its components is obviously handled by a variety of institutions, both private and governmental. The phenomenon that appears in Singkawang City is the involvement of stakeholders outside the government of Singkawang City itself, including the actors or parties in question which is the government supported by the owner and manager of ODTW, the owners and management of hotels, travel agencies, airlines, agro tourism communities, the art community, tourism event donors and others.

It is recommended that there be an implementation of a regulated and intensive network strategy by managing the tourism policy network among others. First, there must be a strategy that aims to manage the perception so that the creation of similar views or intentions between actors to the problems encountered is not repeated. Second, a strategy that aims at managing the interaction between actors / parties to build joint action is needed, because this strategy delivers resources for the parties or actors to be independent and become part of the system which then affects the network widening and resource capacity growth. If there is an excess of funds or financing obtained from the remaining funds of the network, these can be used for community empowerment in tourist destinations and for sustainability, as they are vital stakeholders (Nicolaidis, 2015a; 2014a).

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