

Green Politics in the Political Agenda and Village Development Policies in Batu City

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Abstract

Village head elections (Pilkades) and village development policies are visual windows to see how green politics is implemented. Examining the implementation of Pilkades in three villages in Batu City and 2 years of leadership of the elected village head, this research aims to see the perspective of green politics, whether it is one of the main political agendas for candidates who are competing and policies by elected candidates during their leadership. The three villages were chosen because they have severe environmental damage problems. The research method applied in this study is qualitative and focused on content analysis of text data, both primary data, including observation data, interviews, and Forum Group Discussions (FGD), and secondary data, including candidates' Vision-Mission, reports, news, and village government policies related to environmental protection. The results showed that only in Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas did the village head candidates specifically have a vision of environmental conservation, followed by concrete policies during their two years at the helm. Meanwhile, in Pandanrejo, despite facing the impact of environmental damage, the policies implemented are more focused on short-term economic development and have not systematically integrated nature conservation. Furthermore, the results of this study also show that the need for more awareness of the importance of sustainable conservation policies in Pandanrejo is closely related to the community's view that prioritizes economic and infrastructure issues.

Keywords: *Green Politics, Village Head Election, Village Policy, Economy, Infrastructure.*

Introduction

Batu City is one of the cities in East Java that has experienced significant economic development in recent years. However, the acceleration of development is similar to that of many other big cities facing serious environmental damage problems. This indicates the absence of sustainable development in Batu City's policy-making paradigm. (Suprpto et al., 2022; Widi Lestari et al., 2023)..

This fact is clearly seen in several villages, namely Pandanrejo Village, Bulukerto Village, and Sumber Brantas Village, which experienced severe flash floods in 2021. The floods occurred due to long-standing environmental damage that tends to be left unchecked. Village governments that are more focused on economic growth have a weak commitment to the principle of sustainability. This phenomenon emphasizes the difficulty of integrating green politics into village policies because it only provides short-term benefits for village development.

Green Politics refers to political and policy approaches that aim to protect and preserve the natural environment and reduce the negative human impact on ecosystems. Green politics includes initiatives such as environmental regulation, environmentally friendly regional planning, and awareness of environmental issues in political decision-making. (Bloomfield & Steward, 2020; DuPuis & Greenberg, 2019; Herbert, 2024; Magnusdottir, 2023; Pellizzoni, 2021; Rana, 2023; Waldman, 2022). Thus, it is important to see whether, in these three regions, the spirit of *green politics* has been adopted in implementing Pilkades and the policies of the elected village heads. Pilkades was chosen because it contains an overview of the candidate's vision and mission in seeing environmental issues as a priority or not. Similarly, the policies of the elected village heads have included environmental sustainability in economic development and village welfare.

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This research was conducted to answer the problem of the extent of integration of the *green politics* agenda in implementing village head elections in three villages in Batu City and the policies of the elected village heads. As the area was emphasized at the beginning, it is categorized as disaster-prone, so it is interesting to see from the political and governmental dimensions. This research will also delve deeper into how village communities understand and support applying green politics principles and the obstacles faced in its implementation. This is important considering that many village governments, village communities, and local governments need to be made aware of the importance of sustainable development in their area, especially in Batu City. Therefore, the integration of this model also aims to realize a green economy - an implementation of sustainable village economic development that maintains environmental balance and improves social welfare.

This research is important because it can be used to evaluate the village's treatment of the policy development paradigm. Analyzing these three disaster-prone areas can be an input for other villages in Batu City and Indonesia with the same disaster vulnerability to integrate green politics as a priority agenda in village development. In addition, this research is expected to provide relevant policy recommendations for village and city governments in implementing a sustainable development approach concerned with economic growth, maintaining ecosystem balance, and reducing the risk of environmental disasters. Without serious efforts to integrate green politics into village policies, environmental damage will continue, worsening natural conditions and threatening the resources that support the lives of rural communities. This research plays an important role in providing concrete recommendations for policymakers to adopt more environmentally friendly policies to ensure the sustainability of development balanced between economic and ecological aspects.

Environmental issues have not become a priority in any election in Indonesia, nor have the policies of elected leaders. This argument is supported by several studies that have the same conclusion that candidates have not taken environmental issues seriously (Ahmady et al., 2022; Erdiansyah, 2024; Erman, 2017; Hasanah Bolqiah & Raffiudin, 2020; Lestari, 2022; Luhtakallio et al., 2022; Najia & Triyatno, 2022; Nathanael, 2021; Scarpello, 2020; Utami & Cramer, 2020), and also policies after being elected (Ahmady et al., 2022; Erdiansyah, 2024; Hasanah Bolqiah & Raffiudin, 2020; Low & Gelson, 2019; Najia & Triyatno, 2022; Scarpello, 2020). Environmental issues are considered not to provide significant electoral benefits compared to economic issues, corruption, and poverty. In the context of Pilkades, the author has yet to find studies that specifically look at the relationship between Pilkades and environmental issues. There is no study that specifically looks at the implementation of green politics in village head elections and village policies. In the Scopus database, by entering the keywords "village green politics," 35 documents were found, but no one has specifically researched as the researchers did.

Therefore, this research was conducted to fill the void of previous research that has not comprehensively explained green politics in village head elections and leadership. This research seeks to explain and provide new insights into how environmental issues, especially green politics, can be integrated into implementing village head elections and policies so that they become a priority in sustainable village development.

Method

This research applies a qualitative approach that aims to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth description of the implementation of green politics in Pilkades in Pandanrejo Village, Bulukerto Village, and Sumber Brantas Village, as well as the 2-year leadership of the elected village head. Data were collected using four activities: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, and documentation. The subjects in this study were determined using a purposive sampling technique based on the relationship between research problems and parties directly related to the implementation of green politics, namely the village government, community leaders, environmental activists, the community, and academics. FGDs were conducted twice involving the same subjects as the in-depth interviews: the village government, environmental NGOs, community leaders, the community, and academics. The observation was conducted by observing several portraits of environmental conservation policies in the three villages. Data for

documentation is in the form of Vision-Mission documents of Village Head Candidates, Village R MJDES, and Village Government Work Plans (RKP).

After the data is collected, the next process is data reduction, selecting the relevant data. After this stage, the main data is displayed and analyzed in depth. Data analysis uses a qualitative descriptive method, namely explaining all selected data to answer research questions. The last step is the provision of conclusions. This serves to integrate all findings from data analysis, explain the implications of the research results, and lead to suggestions for further research or practical actions that can be taken.

Results and Discussion

In a political context, the election of village heads in three villages- Sumber Brantas, Bulukerto, and Pandanrejo in 2022- reflected significant differences in environmental policy priorities. Of the three villages, only two candidates, in Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas, had a clear environmental vision. In Bulukerto, the candidate, Suswanto, who also became the elected village head, placed environmental issues as one of the main focuses of his vision and work program. The same applies to the Sumber Brantas village head candidate, Saniman. This is very relevant considering the direct impact felt by the community in the two villages due to the flash flood disaster in 2021. Communities in Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas feel the urgency of policies prioritizing nature conservation, such as normalizing rivers, improving drainage systems, and increasing awareness of environmental hygiene. This policy fully supports residents who feel threatened by environmental degradation, which has exacerbated the threat of natural disasters in their villages.

Meanwhile, in Pandanrejo village, although both villages have also experienced environmental damage, attention to environmental conservation issues needs to be made clearer. In Pandanrejo, although the village was affected by flooding in 2021, the government and many residents see flooding as something other than an issue that requires long-term policies. They assume that the floods are sporadic and do not have an annual impact, so the proposed policies are more focused on short-term problems and do not prioritize systematic environmental protection. This shows that despite the relevance of environmental issues, Pandanrejo Village needs to pay more attention to the need for more holistic and sustainable conservation policies.

The village head candidates there focused more attention on hygiene issues, especially waste management, with no clear environmental conservation/protection policy, especially due to flooding in 2021. The four village head candidates felt that the floods were caused by external factors, such as water deliveries from neighboring villages, so they did not see the need for internal policies focusing on environmental management. This shows that Pandanrejo has yet to fully recognize the importance of a holistic approach to environmental issues, including waste management and protecting their village's natural resources and ecosystems. Thus, although all three villages experience similar environmental challenges, the political approach to environmental management in each village depends largely on the awareness and vision of the village head candidates towards the importance of nature conservation.

Once elected, the policies of the three villages are different. Suwanto, the elected village head candidate in Bulukerto and Saniman in Sumber Brantas, has a vision focusing on environmental awareness and sustainable development. This vision includes realizing a just, prosperous, and prosperous village community and increasing the potential of a tourism village with dignity and transparency in village budget management. In this context, Bulukerto focuses on developing a village with high environmental awareness as part of its village development strategy. This is clearly stated in the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDES) document and specifically derived in the Village Government Work Plans for 2023 and 2024.

Bulukerto village has shown seriousness in responding to environmental disasters with more structured policies. One of the main steps taken by Suwanto is river normalization to reduce siltation and facilitate water flow. This is a crucial step, as clogged or shallow rivers can exacerbate the potential for flooding, as in the 2021 flash flood disaster. In addition, Bulukerto also implemented improvements to the village's irrigation and drainage systems that aim to drain water better, reducing inundation that could damage farms

and settlements. This policy also shows that Bulukerto is not only focusing on post-disaster recovery but also on preventive measures to prevent similar disasters in the future.

In addition, Bulukerto also conducts counseling to the community to raise awareness about the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness, especially in preventing waste disposal into the river. The community is expected not to litter, as garbage accumulating in the river can worsen the water quality and disrupt the river's flow. This extension program aims to actively involve the community in maintaining environmental cleanliness. By raising this awareness, Bulukerto hopes to reduce the impact of environmental pollution that can worsen the destruction of nature, as seen in many areas that do not manage waste properly.

These policies prioritize environmental awareness and are strongly based on Suwanto's vision to make Bulukerto a competitive, independent, safe, peaceful, and environmentally conscious village. This vision reflects an effort to balance economic development, nature management, and community welfare. This vision is particularly relevant given the increasingly evident impacts of natural degradation, including floods that threaten the safety and welfare of residents. By systematically planning environmental policies and involving the community, Bulukerto can be better prepared to face increasingly complex environmental challenges.

In the Sumber Brantas area, the elected Village Head, Saniman, is taking concrete steps to address the increasingly alarming environmental damage caused by land conversion. One of his main initiatives is a conservation program in the form of tree planting in the Arjuno Welirang area. The tree planting aims to restore the function of the disturbed forest ecosystem, improve groundwater absorption, and prevent erosion that can adversely affect the sustainability of water resources.

In addition, Saniman also provides intensive counseling to the community on good waste management and the importance of preserving the upstream river. In this counseling, residents understand how waste that is not managed properly can pollute river water, damage habitats, and trigger flood disasters. This education is carried out continuously through various village forums, community service, and other environmental activities to ensure that the community understands and is actively involved in preserving nature.

This policy mitigates environmental damage and reflects Saniman's vision to make Sumber Brantas a village in harmony with nature. This program is expected to significantly change residents' mindsets and behaviors toward the surrounding environment by promoting synergy between the village government and the community. This effort shows a real commitment to maintaining the sustainability of natural resources that are very important for the lives of future generations. This is also contained in the Village RPJMDES and the Village RKP for 2023 and 2024.

This contrasts Pandanrejo village, which, although facing environmental problems, needs more specific environmental conservation policies in the RPJMD (Village Medium-Term Development Plan) and RKPDes (Village Government Work Plan) documents. Sumber Brantas Village, for example, does not consider flooding an issue that needs to be specifically addressed. The village government and community assume that flooding is sporadic and does not occur yearly, so they do not see the urgency to develop disaster mitigation or nature conservation policies. This understanding, while relevant in the short term, is risky in the face of climate change and the increasingly evident destruction of nature. If environmental issues remain unaddressed, potential ecosystem damage could become a greater threat to village communities regarding economic, social, and environmental health.

Pandanrejo Village, despite having felt the impact of flooding in 2021, the dominant view is that the disaster was caused more by shipments from other villages than by negligence in the village's internal environmental management. As a result, the village did not consider it necessary to formulate specific policies for environmental conservation that could protect them from similar natural disasters in the future. The main focus of the prospective village head in Pandanrejo is the waste issue, which is important but limited to the hygiene aspect without seeing its connection to greater environmental damage. While waste is an urgent

issue that must be addressed, overall environmental management involving upstream rivers and green land degradation is also very important to prioritize.

Pandanrejo Village needs to re-evaluate its approach to environmental issues. Although flooding does not occur every year, it is important to realize that environmental issues do not just arise seasonally but can develop into major threats if not managed properly. Developing a structured and sustainable conservation policy should be a priority to prevent further damage in the future. Infrastructure development such as good drainage systems, reforestation, and community education on preserving nature should be part of strategic steps to reduce disaster risk.

Pandanrejo also needs to pay more attention to environmental degradation as a whole, not just focusing on waste. While waste is a very important issue that must be addressed immediately, the village should also start paying attention to the condition of the upstream river, green land degradation, and better water management. With a more complete conservation policy, Pandanrejo can strengthen its environmental resilience, reduce potential disasters, and improve the community's quality of life. In addition, it is important to integrate environmental issues with the village's social and economic development to create mutually supportive solutions.

The policies of Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas can serve as examples for other villages facing similar challenges. Through a structured and community-involved approach, Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas have demonstrated that good environmental management reduces disaster risk and improves the community's quality of life. Preventive measures such as forest and river normalization, drainage improvements, and raising awareness about environmental hygiene should be adopted by other villages as part of a sustainable development strategy. Communities with high environmental awareness will be better prepared to deal with the impacts of natural disasters and can contribute to preserving nature.

The village government must also actively educate the community about the importance of protecting the environment. Continuous and comprehensive environmental education will shape the mindset of people who care about nature conservation. This is important not only for reducing disaster risk but also for creating healthier and more sustainable communities. The outreach programs conducted in Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas show that involving communities in every conservation policy can produce positive impacts in the long run.

Community involvement in environmental management is essential for conservation policies to be effective. Therefore, there needs to be synergy between the village government, the community, and other related parties, such as environmental organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector, to create a more holistic and impactful policy. In this regard, Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas have shown the proper steps by actively involving the community in cleanliness and natural resource management programs. As such, these villages have the potential to become the best examples of sustainable environmental management.

Ultimately, Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas' concern and success in addressing environmental issues should be evaluated by other villages, especially Pandanrejo. Environmental conservation cannot be delayed but should be a top priority in every village policy. Through a more serious and proactive approach, these villages can better face environmental challenges, reduce the risk of natural disasters, and create a more prosperous future for the community. The success of Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas in designing environmentally friendly policies impacts the sustainability of nature and improves the quality of life and the village economy. Villages committed to nature conservation will be better prepared to face future challenges while maintaining the community's welfare in the long term.

Discussion

Environmental protection has become one of the important issues increasingly recognized in development discourse at the local level, including in villages. (Day & Schneider, 2018; Jahid, 2019; Milne & Mahanty, 2019; Ruud, 2022; Ryser, 2019; Toledo, 2020).. Amid growing awareness of the impacts of climate change

and environmental degradation, policymakers at various levels have begun to emphasize the importance of integrating environmental policies in development planning (Cowan, 2018; Day & Schneider, 2018; Devine, 2018; Franco & Jr, 2019; Jahid, 2019; Ronaldo & Suryanto, 2022; Swainson & Mahanty, 2018; Woods, 2019; Zunariyah, 2024). At the village level, this policy is usually outlined in planning documents such as the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) (Annisa & Mohammad Ridwan, 2024; Aziz & Nasution, 2024; Clareza et al., 2023). The Village Government Work Plan (RKPDDes) is expected to be the foundation for the implementation of programs that support environmental conservation. However, many villages still face challenges in formulating and implementing concrete and sustainable environmental policies (Narendra et al., 2021; Riggs et al., 2021; Takahashi, 2008; Wiati et al., 2022), a challenge that was also identified in this study.

At the village level, environmental policies are usually outlined in planning documents such as the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) and the Village Government Work Plan (RKPDDes), which are expected to be the basis for implementing various programs that support nature conservation and the sustainability of local ecosystems. The RPJMDes and RKPDDes serve as guidelines in planning and implementing policies related to environmental stewardship. In practice, while these documents often list environmental protection as one of the priorities, effective policy implementation is often constrained by a lack of understanding, limited budget allocations, and a lack of human resource capacity at the village level.

Pandanrejo Village, the object of this research, although aware of the threat of environmental degradation, still needs help formulating concrete and sustainable environmental policies. This is reflected in the policies formulated by the village, which tend to focus more on economic and infrastructure development. In contrast, more comprehensive and systematic conservation policies have not received sufficient attention. As found in this study, the village pays more attention to immediate and visible problems, such as waste management or sporadic natural disasters, without recognizing the importance of a long-term approach to broader environmental issues. This indicates that there is still a gap between the theoretical understanding of the importance of environmental protection and the implementation of real and sustainable policies at the village level.

Environmental protection policies not well integrated into village development planning can hurt the sustainability of local ecosystems and village resilience to natural disasters. When environmental policies are only considered side issues or only seen as reactive measures after a disaster, the environmental threat will be even greater. Increasingly evident climate changes, such as extreme weather and natural disasters, demonstrate the importance of more proactive and sustainable natural resource management. Therefore, village governments need to develop conservation policies that cover post-disaster repairs and preventive measures that integrate environmental protection aspects in every line of village development.

This reality further shows that villages in Indonesia, although they have begun to recognize the importance of environmental protection, still need much improvement in implementing more holistic and sustainable policies. Villages need to adapt to increasingly complex environmental challenges, such as ecosystem damage, climate change, and the threat of natural disasters. Therefore, it is important to improve the capacity of village governments to design and implement more comprehensive environmental policies. In addition, village communities must also be involved in every stage of planning and implementing environmental policies to be more aware of the importance of preserving nature. Thus, villages can develop policies that are not only oriented towards economic and social development but also maintain environmental sustainability that will provide long-term benefits for future generations.

This research highlights that the three villages must harmonize economic and environmental development better. Pandanrejo village must realize that sustainable economic development can only be achieved if the environment is well maintained. By integrating environmental policies in village development planning, Pandanrejo will reduce the risk of natural disasters and increase their ecological resilience in the future. The village community must be further empowered with knowledge and understanding of the importance of preserving nature and invited to participate actively in every step of the implemented conservation policies. Through collaboration between village governments, communities, and other stakeholders, these two

villages can develop a balanced policy between economic development and environmental protection, ultimately providing long-term benefits for future generations.

The contribution of the research findings is crucial in providing new insights into environmental protection policies at the village level, particularly in the context of villages facing environmental challenges such as flooding and ecosystem damage. The research reveals that although Pandanrejo village understands it is disaster-prone, it still needs to prioritize it. By comparing three villages- Sumber Brantas, Pandanrejo, and Bulukerto-, this study shows significant differences in the commitment and seriousness of village head candidates towards environmental issues. Bulukerto and Sumber Brantas villages, which had village head candidates with a clear vision of nature conservation, were more successful in formulating concrete and sustainable policies than Pandanrejo village, which focused more on short-term economic issues. These findings provide a clear picture of the importance of leadership vision in promoting more integrated and adequate environmental protection policies.

In addition, this research also contributes to the understanding of how local challenges, such as limited community understanding of the importance of environmental protection, can affect policy implementation. In Pandanrejo village, although environmental issues such as flooding and natural destruction are quite evident, conservation policies have yet to be a top priority in village planning. This finding highlights the importance of community education and awareness in strengthening commitment to nature conservation. These villages can create more sustainable and comprehensive solutions by involving the community in policy planning and implementation. This research provides recommendations for other villages to be more serious in integrating environmental issues into their development planning and the importance of approaches involving communities to achieve more effective environmental policy success.

Conclusion

This research shows that although green politics has formally entered the discourse of village development in Batu City, its implementation is highly dependent on the vision of village leadership and community awareness. Sumber Brantas and Bulukerto villages, which implemented various conservation programs, achieved this thanks to village heads who had a vision of environmental conservation from the beginning of their candidacy and continued to implement it after taking office. These programs include reforestation of forests around mountains, river normalization, reforestation, and improvement of drainage systems, all of which aim to improve the village's environmental resilience and reduce the potential for natural disasters.

On the other hand, Pandanrejo Village, although also affected by environmental degradation, has shown a different commitment to environmental conservation. The village head in Pandanrejo focuses more on cleanliness and waste management issues without regard to broader conservation policy needs. This indicates that awareness of the importance of environmental protection in the village still needs to improve, and a more comprehensive approach is needed to deal with increasingly complex environmental challenges. Thus, the successful implementation of green politics in these villages depends on a combination of pro-environment leadership vision and active community participation in supporting existing conservation programs.

This research has several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, this research was conducted in three villages, which may need to be more representative in order to describe conditions in Batu City or other areas in Indonesia. Secondly, the method used in this research is qualitative, so generalization of the research results to be applied in other areas requires additional quantitative approaches. In addition, other factors, such as the involvement of non-government actors, the private sector, and local communities in implementing environmental policies, have yet to be explored in more depth. For future research, it is recommended that the scope of the research area be expanded and more villages with different environmental characteristics be involved to get a more comprehensive picture. Quantitative research is also needed to measure the extent to which the implementation of green politics contributes to sustainable development at the village level. In addition, there needs to be a more in-depth study of the influence of social, economic, and political factors on the acceptance of environment-based policies in village

communities. Future research could also explore more effective strategies for integrating green politics in village policies, including economic incentives that support sustainable development and community participation in decision-making related to environmental issues.

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