

Building Sustainability Policies Relevant to Local Cultural Values

Rahayu Mardikaningsih, Didit Darmawan

Sunan Giri University of Surabaya, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 October 2022

Revised 18 November 2022

Accepted 21 December 2022

Key words:

Sustainability,
Policies,
Cultural values,
Local communities,
Inclusiveness,
Resource management,
Collaboration.

ABSTRACT

Sustainability is not only related to the environment, but also to social and cultural factors. In order to achieve effective sustainability goals, it is crucial to integrate local cultural values into the policies designed. Communities often have traditional ways that have been proven to support the sustainable management of natural resources. Sustainability policies that do not consider local cultural aspects may encounter obstacles in implementation. This research examines how sustainability policies can be designed to accommodate the cultural values of local communities to make them more relevant and acceptable. Through an inclusive approach that prioritizes local culture, it is expected that sustainability policies can be more effective, equitable and sustainable in the long-term. Collaboration between stakeholders is key to achieving mutually supportive solutions. Cultural awareness in sustainability policies not only increases the success of implementation but also ensures that the policies provide real benefits to community and the environment.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become one of the major issues facing modern communities around the world. Many countries and communities strive to design policies and programs that support sustainability, but implementation is often hampered by social, economic and cultural factors. A community's cultural values have a major influence on the way it approaches and manages sustainability issues, whether in terms of natural resource utilization, waste management, or environmental protection (Harrison, 2019). Examining the relationship between culture and sustainability is important to understand how cultural change can accelerate or slow down the process towards sustainability.

In some areas, sustainability is seen as a new concept, which sometimes conflicts with existing traditions and cultural values. In indigenous communities, for example, approaches to nature and the environment are strongly influenced by spiritual beliefs and long-established traditions (Ostrom, 1990). This suggests an inequality between the globally accepted idea of sustainability and the practices applied in the daily lives of local communities. For example, values that prioritize short-term gains or overuse of natural resources often clash with sustainability principles that emphasize conservation and wise use.

As the understanding of the importance of sustainability grows, there is a growing awareness to integrate local cultural values into broader sustainability policies. People are increasingly aware that sustainability is not only the responsibility of the government or the private sector, but also involves the active participation of existing cultures and customs (Berkes, 2015). Communities that are able to combine their traditions with modern innovations in an effort to achieve sustainability have the potential to create solutions that are more effective and relevant to their local context.

A key challenge in integrating sustainability into local culture is the limited understanding of how cultural values support sustainability goals. Many policies implemented by governments or international organizations do not take into account the depth and complexity of value systems that exist within local communities. Ostrom (1990) stated that as a result, the policies are often not well received or even contradict the daily practices of the communities, as is the case in some indigenous communities that still rely on nature exploitation practices that have been carried out for generations.

The integration of sustainability and culture also faces challenges related to the attitudes and behaviors of the communities themselves. Well-

* Corresponding author, email address: dr.diditdarmawan@gmail.com

structured cultures are often resistant to change, even if the change is for the common good. For example, in some cultures, the existence of social norms that promote overconsumption or less environmentally friendly lifestyles is difficult to change. This inability to adapt to more modern sustainability practices is a significant barrier to inclusive sustainability (Harrison, 2019).

In many cases, the imbalance between economic needs and sustainability is also an issue. Communities with cultures that rely heavily on natural resources for livelihoods are often caught in a difficult situation. They must maintain their economic viability, but on the other hand they must also preserve the environment for the future. This conflict is often not adequately addressed, as existing policies focus more on the technical aspects of sustainability and less on the cultural and social context on the ground (Berkes, 2015).

Examining the relationship between sustainability and culture is important because cultural awareness can be key to creating lasting change. Every community has a unique worldview and mindset, which influences how they interact with their surroundings. Understanding the cultural context in designing sustainability policies allows us to create solutions that better suit the needs and values of that community. Without a culturally sensitive approach, efforts to achieve sustainability can be hindered by strong social resistance and failure to adapt policies to local realities.

The purpose of this research is to analyze how cultural values can be integrated into sustainability policies to create solutions that meet the needs of local communities. The research aims to explore the challenges faced in this process and identify strategies that can increase the acceptance of sustainability policies in diverse cultural contexts. By understanding the role of culture in sustainability, it is hoped that a more holistic and inclusive approach to designing sustainable policies in various communities can be achieved.

RESEARCH METHOD

The literature review approach is an effective method for understanding the relationship between sustainability and culture because it allows researchers to examine the diverse perspectives that exist in different fields of researchers without being hindered by the methodological limitations associated with field research. In this context, a desk-based approach can provide a comprehensive picture of how cultural values influence sustainability policies and practices, and how people from different cultures respond to these policies. This could include scholarly articles,

books, policies reports and case studies that focus on the integration of culture in sustainability (Moser, 2016). Through this approach, it can be seen whether there are certain patterns in the way culture interacts with sustainability initiatives in different regions, as well as the challenges that arise when local cultural values collide with global or modern policies.

This approach also allows researchers to explore the inequality between existing theory and practice in the field of sustainability, especially in a cultural context. Existing literature can provide insights into how sustainability policies designed with local cultural values in mind can be more easily accepted by communities. Previous research shows that policies that do not consider cultural aspects often fail to be implemented or can even generate significant resistance from local communities (Schwartz, 2018). By examining the results in the literature, we can understand why sustainability policies are sometimes ineffective, and how they can be improved by better understanding the needs and cultural values of the community.

The literature research also allows researchers to evaluate the various theories underlying sustainability policies and their relationship with cultural values. Various theories on sustainability and natural resource management, such as sustainable development theory or social-ecological systems theory, can be examined in the context of how they are accepted or changed by communities based on their culture. Through an understanding of the existing literature, a deeper understanding of how various aspects of sustainability policies can be integrated with cultural values can be achieved without neglecting the importance of natural resource conservation and environmental protection (Harris, 2020). As such, this approach is a useful tool in designing policies that are more inclusive and sensitive to cultural values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sustainability is a global issue that is gaining increasing attention across all sectors of life, and one of the keys to achieving effective sustainability is through understanding and respecting local cultural values. Every community has traditions, beliefs and practices deeply rooted in their culture, which often include proven sustainable ways of managing nature. To capitalize on this potential, policies are needed that combine these two elements in an inclusive way, not only based on uniform international norms, but also respecting the uniqueness of local cultures. Sustainability policies that ignore the cultural values of local community risk failing in implementation, as they will not gain the support of the parties involved.

Building sustainability policies that are relevant to local cultural values is an important step in achieving sustainable development goals. Rieckmann (2018) emphasizes that education for sustainability should include the development of key competencies that enable individuals to transform and contribute positively to the environment and community. It is important to integrate local cultural values into sustainability policies, so that people can feel connected and have a sense of ownership of the initiative.

Tengberg et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of cultural ecosystem services provided by landscapes, which include heritage values and identity. By considering these values, sustainability policies can be designed to preserve and value local cultural heritage, while supporting environmental sustainability. This is in line with the views of Soini and Birkeland (2014), who state that cultural sustainability should be an integral part of scientific discourse and policy practices so as to create synergies between cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Sustainability policies that integrate local cultural values will not only strengthen community identity, but will also increase the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives by actively involving communities in the planning and implementation process.

The importance of integrating cultural values in sustainability policies lies not only in recognizing existing traditional practices, but also in creating policies that are relevant and accepted by communities (Hentaller et al., 2012). Sustainability policies that are implemented in a top-down manner, without considering local cultural values, often face resistance from the communities to which the policies are directed. When policies are not aligned with existing traditions, norms and practices within the community, people tend to feel alienated and uninvolved in the decision-making process. This can lead to dissatisfaction and rejection of policies that are considered irrelevant or even harmful. This resistance arises because local communities have deep knowledge and experience of their environment, as well as proven effective ways of managing natural resources.

When sustainability policies do not value or integrate this local knowledge, there is a risk that proposed solutions will fail in the local context. For example, agricultural practices introduced from outside may not suit local soil conditions, climate, or agricultural culture, resulting in failure to achieve the desired sustainability goals. In addition, policies that do not consider local cultural values may result in the loss of community identity and cultural heritage.

When communities feel that the policy threatens their way of life, they will be more likely to resist and fight the implementation of the policy. This not only hinders the success of the policy, but can also create social tensions and conflicts between the government and communities (Jeannotte & Duxbury, 2015). Policies that accommodate traditions, local knowledge and community needs are much more effective in ensuring sustainable and equitable sustainability. This approach creates a mutually beneficial relationship between culture, community and nature, and ensures greater social justice, as local people feel included in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Communities that feel that their culture and traditional values are respected tend to be more committed to the policies they receive. Integrating cultural values in sustainability policies is not only about the environment, but also creating greater awareness of the importance of togetherness in maintaining and preserving existing resources (Parker, 2013).

Integrating cultural values in sustainability policy is an increasingly relevant challenge in the quest to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Communities around the world have diverse value systems, traditions and deep-seated practices, which can influence how they interact with their environment and understand the importance of sustainability. Sustainability policies that are designed without considering the local cultural context risk failing in implementation. Cultural values, such as respect for nature, shared resource management systems, and local wisdom, need to be considered for sustainability policies to be accepted and practiced by communities effectively (Berkes, 2015). Sustainability is not only about preserving natural resources, but also how the policy can function in the social and cultural context of the community concerned.

It is important to understand that cultural values are not static, but dynamic and constantly evolving. A more inclusive approach to policy design should involve communities from the start. A participatory approach to sustainability policy planning will allow communities to identify cultural values that they consider important and that can support sustainability goals. In many traditional cultures, for example, there are principles of sustainable natural resource management that have existed for centuries, such as community-based forest management in some parts of the world (Gadgil et al., 1993). These values can be used as a basis for designing policies that are aligned with desired sustainability principles.

One way to integrate cultural values in sustainability policies is to promote policies based on cultural ecosystems. This involves recognizing traditional practices that have been shown to contribute to sustainability and environmental management. For example, in many indigenous communities, there are nature management practices based on local knowledge that are often more environmentally friendly than modern industrial practices. Governments and international agencies can learn from these systems and collaborate with local communities to adapt policies that support both aspects. Local knowledge and culture can offer invaluable solutions to sustainability issues faced by community today (Davis & Slaymaker, 2004).

Integrating cultural values in sustainability policies is not as simple as simply matching traditional principles with global goals. In many cases, there is a tension between policies implemented from the outside and existing local cultural practices. Often, policies designed at the international or national level ignore local uniqueness and needs, which can lead to resistance or implementation failure. For example, development policies that focus on the exploitation of natural resources may conflict with conservation principles that are deep in local cultures (Agarwal, 2003). It is important to build bridges between formal policies and local cultural practices in a way that is sensitive to cultural values.

It is important to involve communities in the process of sustainability policy design and implementation. Inclusive policy development allows communities to express their values and contribute to more relevant and effective solutions. By involving communities in planning, deeper insights into how sustainability policies can be more easily accepted and implemented can be gained. Policies that are based on community participation are more likely to succeed in the long term because they have the support of the people involved in their implementation (Pretty, 1995).

In order to integrate cultural values in sustainability policies, the government must recognize and acknowledge the importance of existing local wisdom. For example, agroecology-based farming practices that prioritize biodiversity and wise use of natural resources have been proven to be more environmentally friendly and sustainable than conventional farming methods. Agroecology integrates ecological principles into agricultural systems, focusing on the interactions between plants, animals, soil and people. One of the key aspects of agroecology is biodiversity, which includes the variety of plant and animal species within an agricultural ecosystem. This diversity increases the resilience of farming systems to pests and diseases,

while also improving soil quality and increasing long-term productivity. By utilizing a variety of species, farmers can reduce reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, which are often detrimental to the environment and human health. In addition, agroecological practices encourage the wise use of natural resources, such as water and soil. Techniques such as crop rotation, intercropping and the use of organic compost help maintain soil fertility and reduce erosion. By managing resources sustainably, agroecology supports the production of sufficient food, and protects life-sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity. As such, agroecology offers solutions to the challenges of modern agriculture, and contributes to broader sustainability goals, including climate change mitigation, environmental conservation, and improved community well-being. The practice demonstrates that agriculture can be practiced in a way that is harmonious with nature, providing sustainable economic and social benefits for future generations (Vargas et al., 2013). By incorporating these elements of local wisdom in national and global policies, a more inclusive and effective sustainability model will be created (Altieri, 2002). It will also reduce reliance on technical approaches that often lack cultural aspects.

The policies developed are adequate from a technical and environmental perspective and are responsive to the social and cultural values of the community. A holistic approach that incorporates cultural values, social rights and economic needs of the community will enable sustainability policies to be accepted and implemented more effectively. Many sustainability policies fail because they do not take into account social inequalities or cultural differences in community (Ostrom, 1990). Sustainability policies that take culture into account are key to creating more equitable and effective solutions.

Integrating culture in sustainability policy also involves a paradigm shift in the way policies are created and implemented. Traditional sustainability policies tend to focus on technical and scientific issues, but to achieve success, there needs to be a greater focus on social and cultural aspects. Collaboration between policy makers, environmental experts and local communities will ensure that policies are more holistic and understandable to all parties involved. This is an indispensable step to ensure that sustainability policies are ecologically relevant, and rooted in local cultural values.

In some cases, recognizing cultural values can be challenging, especially when they conflict with dominant global policies or norms. For example, many global policies emphasize efficiency and profitability,

sometimes ignoring the social or cultural impacts of certain practices. More careful planning and cross-sector collaboration is needed for cultural values to be properly accommodated in sustainability policies without compromising social and environmental goals (Shiva, 2005).

As part of the effort to integrate cultural values in sustainability policies, the development of more decentralized and community-based sustainability models should also be considered. Policies based on these models are more likely to respond to the specific needs of local communities, as they are designed with direct input from them. These models can include community-based approaches that recognize cultural and social rights while still addressing the ecological and economic aspects of sustainability (Chambers, 1997). By integrating cultural rights, this model ensures that local values, traditions and knowledge are recognized and preserved. This strengthens community identity, and increases the sense of ownership and responsibility for the sustainability initiatives implemented. When communities feel that their voices are heard and valued, they are more likely to commit to participating in practices that support sustainability. The ecological aspect of the model requires that natural resources are managed in a sustainable manner, maintaining ecosystem balance and protecting biodiversity. This includes implementing environmentally friendly practices, such as sustainable agriculture, efficient water management and protection of natural habitats. As such, the model focuses on short-term economic outcomes, and on the long-term environmental health that supports people's lives. Economic aspects are also integral to this community-based approach. The model encourages the development of sustainable local economies, which can create jobs and improve community welfare without harming the environment. By utilizing local resources and promoting sustainably produced products, communities can build better economic resilience (Weber, 2021). Overall, a community-based sustainability model that recognizes cultural and social rights, and takes into account ecological and economic aspects, creates strong synergies between community, the environment and the economy. This approach contributes to long-term sustainability, and empowers communities to become agents of change in the pursuit of broader sustainability goals.

It is important that communities and institutions continue to educate each other on the importance of culturally-based sustainability. Community education and empowerment can play an important role in building awareness about cultural values and the ways in which they can support sustainability.

These efforts increase the acceptance of sustainability policies, and encourage more sustainable long-term behavior change (Fien, 2001). By doing so, sustainability policies that consider cultural values can be more accepted and practiced by local communities.

Ultimately, to create solutions that are relevant and acceptable to local communities, it is important to involve communities in the decision-making process and provide space for them to actively participate in policy planning and implementation. By involving communities in this process, more holistic and inclusive sustainability policies can be created, which better reflect true local values and needs (Narayan, 2002). Effective sustainability policies must take into account the social and cultural context, rather than simply adopting a top-down approach.

In many cases, local cultural practices related to natural resource management have proven to be sustainable and provide long-term benefits to communities. Policies that integrate both aspects, namely environmental sustainability and local cultural values, allow the creation of solutions that are more targeted and acceptable to the community. Sustainability will not only be realized on a technical and economic level, but also on a broader social level.

Recognizing local culture in sustainability policies must go hand in hand with an awareness of the challenges that exist, such as the differences between international policies and local values that sometimes conflict. Collaborative efforts between governments, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders are needed to achieve equitable and effective policies. Governments and international agencies need to establish close partnerships with local communities, so that these cultural values are recognized, and reinforced through supportive policies.

With a commitment to recognize and integrate cultural values in every sustainability policy, we not only ensure the preservation of nature, but also create more empowered communities that are able to manage natural resources sustainably. In the long-term, sustainability is no longer just a global concept, but a part of everyday life that is carried out responsibly by every individual and community.

CONCLUSION

The whole description of the incorporation of cultural values in sustainability policies shows that the successful implementation of such policies depends heavily on understanding and respecting local traditions and cultures. Policies that ignore these values are likely to fail because local communities do not feel valued or involved in decision-making that affects them. Policies that are

effective in achieving sustainability goals are not only based on environmental objectives, but must also deeply consider the social and cultural context. When communities feel that sustainability policies are aligned with their values, they will be more committed to actively supporting and implementing such policies.

Based on this analysis, it is important to encourage dialog between policymakers, local communities and other relevant parties to ensure that the resulting sustainability policies are relevant and widely accepted. The main suggestion is to increase collaboration between stakeholders by considering the existing cultural context, as well as prioritizing the principle of inclusivity in every policy designed. Sustainability policies can accommodate cultural diversity and create solutions that are fair, sustainable and acceptable to all levels of community.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, A. (2003). *Environment and Development: A Grassroots Approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Altieri, M. A. (2002). *Agroecology: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture*. CRC Press.
- Berkes, F. (2015). *Coast to Coast: A Social-Ecological Systems Approach to Sustainability*. Routledge.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*. Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Davis, M., & Slaymaker, T. (2004). The Role of Local Knowledge in Sustainable Resource Management. *Human Ecology*, 32(1), 65-80.
- Fien, J. (2001). *Education for Sustainability: Reorienting Australian Schools for a Sustainable Future*. Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Gadgil, M., Berkes, F., & Folke, C. (1993). Indigenous Knowledge for Biodiversity Conservation. *Ambio*, 22(2), 151-156.
- Harris, M. (2020). Environmental Management and Cultural Values: Bridging the Gap. *Environmental Policy Review*, 32(1), 12-29.
- Harrison, C. M. (2019). Cultural Values and Environmental Policy: Exploring the Intersection of Cultural Practices and Sustainable Development. *Journal of Environmental Policy*, 45(2), 112-130.
- Hentaller, U. F. V., Fayl, G., Kaiser, H., Schopflin, G., Stein, J. A., & Vale, P. (2012). *Sustainability of Culture*. Social Science Research Network.
- Jeannotte, M. S., & Duxbury, N. (2015). Advancing Knowledge through Grassroots Experiments: Connecting Culture and Sustainability. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 45(2), 84-99.
- Moser, S. C. (2016). Reflections on Sustainable Development and Culture: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Environmental Sustainability*, 14(3), 213-231.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Parker, J. S. (2013). Integrating Culture and Community into Environmental Policy: Community Tradition and Farm Size in Conservation Decision Making. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 30, 159-178.
- Rieckmann, M. (2018). Learning to Transform the World: Key Competencies in Education for Sustainable Development. *Issues and Trends in Education for Sustainable Development*, 39(1), 39-59.
- Schwartz, S. H. (2018). The Cultural Dimensions of Sustainability: The Role of Values and Practices in Environmental Conservation. *Sustainability Science*, 25(4), 45-60.
- Shiva, V. (2005). *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. South End Press.
- Soini, K., & Birkeland, I. (2014). Exploring the Scientific Discourse on Cultural Sustainability. *Geoforum*, 51, 213-223.
- Tengberg, A., Fredholm, S., Eliasson, I., Knez, I., Saltzman, K., & Wetterberg, O. (2012). Cultural Ecosystem Services Provided by Landscapes: Assessment of Heritage Values and Identity. *Ecosystem Services*, 2, 14-26.
- Vargas, D. L., Fontoura, A. F., & Wizniewsky, J. G. (2013). Agroecologia: Base da Sustentabilidade dos Agroecossistemas. *Geografia Ensino & Pesquisa*, 17(1), 173-179.
- Weber, E. (2012). Towards Local Cultures of Sustainability: Facilitating Community Created Environment Education Centres through Design. *Theses*, Queensland University of Technology.