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## THE AEROTROPOLIS DISCONNECT: AIRPORT-LED DEVELOPMENT AND COASTAL TOURISM STAGNATION IN YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

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### Abstract

The coastal region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, exemplifies a critical paradox: the rapid development of the Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) megaproject has not produced integrated growth within the established Congot–Glagah–Trisik Regional Tourism Strategic Area. This research adopts a descriptive qualitative design to investigate this phenomenon, conceptualised as an “aerotropolis disconnect.” Methodological rigour is maintained through triangulation. Primary data were obtained via purposive sampling of 13 multi-scalar key informants from airport authorities, government, and local operators, and systematically cross-referenced with extensive field observations of physical infrastructure gaps and a longitudinal analysis of local revenue (PAD) data from 2019 to 2024. The interactive analysis model was employed to identify structural governance barriers. The findings reveal a condition of “infrastructure-induced stagnation,” wherein the capital-intensive gateway functions as a “transit bubble” that bypasses local ecosystems. This disconnect results from a structural “governance void,” characterised by fragmented planning and the absence of collaborative networks between the state-owned airport authority and the regency government. Consequently, the airport operates as a self-contained commercial entity rather than as a regional anchor. Theoretically, this research provides a novel extension to Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model by conceptualising a phase of ‘Infrastructure-Induced Stagnation.’ This identifies a developmental stage in which stagnation is precipitated not by traditional market saturation but by structural velocity gaps and ‘enclave’ dynamics created by adjacent megaprojects.

**Keywords:** Aerotropolis Disconnect, Infrastructure-Induced Stagnation, Governance Void, TALC Model Extension, Coastal Tourism, Yogyakarta International Airport

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Aerotropolis development is pitched as a way to boost the economy through airport connectivity by turning it into real economic growth for the region (Kasarda, 2008). However, the truth is, those benefits do not just magically materialise, and they are definitely not shared equally across the board. The aerotropolis model, which is centred on making the most of airport-driven commercial and housing development, has

really taken off in the twenty-first century as a way to supercharge national economic growth - especially in the Asia-Pacific region (Banai, 2017; Bejrananda, 2024). The idea is that these massive projects are a key part of driving globalisation and making regions more competitive. The aetropolis projects have been achieved by basically putting in place key pieces like infrastructure, logistics, and significant business investment, and have been a recipe for widespread prosperity (Addie, 2014). However, scratch beneath the surface of all that and you find a more complicated reality. The truth is that vast, top-down projects like this can actually cause a problem, what has been called the 'aerotropolis disconnect', where the fast-rolling out and very expensive airport developments do not really connect to the existing local economy of areas right nearby (Charles et al., 2007; Ferreira & Abreu e Silva, 2021). The disconnect is fundamental because the aerotropolis becomes a gated community for the modern age. At the same time, the local economies around it keep stagnating and being pushed further and further to the edges (Rogerson, 2018). That trickle-down effect everyone was so keen on seems never to materialise in the end. Partly because there are significant differences in the way local economies work, partly because there is a mismatch between the skills on offer and what the new projects really need, and partly because the policies are skewed towards supporting the brand new developments over the existing communities (Appold & Kasarda, 2013; Kasioumi, 2015; Robbins, 2015).

The arrival of Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) in 2019 has changed the southern coast of Yogyakarta. Located in Kulon Progo Regency, YIA is managed by InJourney Airports, the operating company responsible for 37 airports spread across western, central, and eastern Indonesia. YIA was promoted as a new economic driver for the coastal area, meant to boost local development and change land use from the start (Rahajeng et al., 2023; Utami & Sugiyanto, 2025). But if you look at the nearby Congot–Glagah–Trisik Regional Tourism Strategic Area (CGT-RTSA), the promised benefits have not really appeared. Even though it is officially called a “Culinary and Traditional Coastal Tourism Area” under Yogyakarta Special Region Regulation No. 1 of 2019, the region still faces many challenges. The area has not been properly included in the airport’s development plans. It struggles with poor infrastructure and weak connections, which prevent it from attracting visitor spending. As a result, the local tourism economy, which is mostly made up of small, community-based businesses, has to compete with a large, corporate-focused airport development without enough support. Although this is happening in Yogyakarta, it reflects a wider pattern where big transport projects often push local communities aside instead of helping them.

While previous studies have focused on the economic benefits of aerotropolises, few have investigated the mechanisms through which these megaprojects actively induce stagnation in adjacent traditional tourism clusters. This study addresses this gap by conceptualising the 'aerotropolis disconnect' not merely as a lack of synergy, but as a structural byproduct of gateway development. This concept looks at how weak physical connections, uneven infrastructure investment, and uncoordinated governance among stakeholders can limit the expected benefits. By studying the experiences of stakeholders and the real infrastructure of the CGT-RTSA in Kulon Progo, this research aims to create a framework for diversification that brings these elements together. The main goal is to prevent these areas from being left behind and to help coastal tourism not just survive, but grow alongside airport-centered development.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Understanding The Dynamics of Destination Development**

Several conceptual frameworks help explain the challenges facing coastal tourism in Kulon Progo, especially the need to diversify tourism products. These theories shed light on both the current situation and possible future directions for the region, particularly as the Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) aerotropolis develops. Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model outlines six stages of destination development: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and either decline or rejuvenation. In this study, the TALC model is used to analyse the current situation, not to predict a fixed sequence of stages. The Kulon Progo coast is experiencing slow growth and increased vulnerability, especially when factors like access, wayfinding, and visitor management do not match the area's potential. Using the TALC model helps address the main research question: how the presence of a major infrastructure project might speed up uneven development and cause stagnation from outside pressures, unless governance and infrastructure are improved.

Destination competitiveness is about how well a place can create value and attract tourists (Enright & Newton, 2004). This includes not just main attractions like cultural and natural sites, but also supporting resources, good management, and planning (Crouch & Ritchie, 2011). Kulon Progo has many natural and cultural attractions, but it struggles with poor infrastructure, such as bad roads and limited waste management (Iban et al., 2025; Subarsono et al., 2025). The proposed diversification strategy plans to solve these problems by adding new cultural experiences and improving infrastructure, including transportation, parking, and shuttle services. These steps aim to make Kulon Progo more competitive in the tourism market.

Stakeholder Theory posits that a destination's success depends on managing and balancing the interests of different groups, such as local communities, government agencies, business investors, and tourists (Freeman, 2010; Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Tourism development moves forward through negotiation among stakeholders with different goals, not through a set or simple process. The slow growth in Kulon Progo points to disagreements among key stakeholders or a lack of community involvement. This study uses several local perspectives and historical backgrounds to show this complexity. For diversification strategies to work, all stakeholders need to work together so that new tourism products create economic value, keep cultural authenticity, and protect the environment.

### **2.2 The Aerotropolis Effect**

YIA is more than just building runways. It lays the groundwork for a full aerotropolis, where the airport drives economic activity and shapes land use and jobs (Kasarda & Lindsay, 2011). The aerotropolis includes areas for retail, meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions (MICE), and cargo operations, aiming to become a self-sustaining economic hub. Ideally, this growth starts locally and then spreads to the wider region. In practice, however, the outcomes of such large-scale projects often diverge from initial expectations. While some proponents argue that aerotropolises stimulate economic growth, these developments frequently result in an "enclave effect." In the absence of effective coordination, the aerotropolis may become isolated, retaining visitors and their expenditures within its boundaries and disadvantaging adjacent tourism areas (Kasarda & Appold, 2014; Charles et al., 2007). For instance, at Dube TradePort in South Africa, a limited group of influential stakeholders excluded local communities from

decision-making processes. This exclusion produced an enclave disconnected from the broader region, marginalised local businesses, and exacerbated rather than alleviated inequality (Robbins, 2015; Ferreira & Abreu e Silva, 2021). Some aerotropolises, like Amsterdam Schiphol, show how strong transport links can help spread visitors throughout the region (van Wijk, 2007). But this kind of integration is rare in the Global South. Instead, these projects often create disconnected "non-places" that concentrate wealth but are separated from their social surroundings (Freestone, 2009; Franciscone et al., 2024). While problems with governance and social exclusion are known, research has not fully explained why existing tourism economies are often left out. This paper aims to fill that gap by defining the "aerotropolis disconnect" and suggesting that weak competitiveness, poor governance, and slow infrastructure development together lead to the exclusion of established tourism economies.

### **2.3 Enclave Tourism and Spatial Mismatch in Gateway Developments**

The "aerotropolis disconnect" observed in Yogyakarta exemplifies enclave tourism, where large-scale gateway infrastructure functions as "transit bubbles" (Franciscone et al., 2024). Projects such as Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) establish economic systems prioritising the efficient movement of international capital and travellers, often at the expense of local integration (Listikarini & Harlan, 2024). Martins et al. (2026) examine that the challenges associated with airport-driven development stem not only from coordination issues but also from the substantial capital investment these projects require. The study further contends that although airports can drive regional development, they frequently exacerbate spatial inequality and land-use conflicts, preventing nearby destinations from fully benefiting from airport-driven growth due to insufficient connectivity and governance challenges.

Iban et al. (2025) report that despite the proximity of the coastal areas of Congot, Glagah, and Trisik to YIA, these communities have not experienced significant economic benefits from the airport's development and remain marginalised amid regional transformation. This research underscores the spatial gap between major infrastructure projects and local communities' capacity to participate in or benefit from such growth. While the aerotropolis is designed for rapid, global connectivity, adjacent coastal tourism areas rely on slower, community-based livelihoods. Subarsono et al. (2025) argue that this persistent gap excludes local coastal communities from the airport's value chain, resulting in stagnation.

The structural disconnect identified in Yogyakarta reflects broader trends observed throughout the Asia-Pacific region. For example, the Kertajati Aerocity in West Java demonstrates a similar investment weakness, as limited connectivity and public amenities have hindered its ability to stimulate the local economy (Pandora & Rarasati, 2025). Similarly, research in China utilises Spatial Mismatch Theory to demonstrate that while major transit hubs, such as high-speed rail stations, can transform the economic structure of urban areas, the anticipated benefits for local tourism and communities may not materialise if there is a disconnect between advanced infrastructure and the surrounding area's offerings (Guo et al., 2025). This mismatch often results in economic gains being concentrated within the infrastructure system rather than extending to nearby community-based areas. Taken together, these cases illustrate how enclave tourism and spatial mismatch persist as structural challenges in gateway developments, underscoring the need for more inclusive and integrated planning approaches.

## 2.4 Identifying The Research Gap

Extensive research exists on both tourism product diversification and aerotropolis development; however, these subjects are seldom examined in conjunction. Most studies on aerotropolises emphasise new master plans and anticipated economic benefits, frequently overlooking impacts on adjacent regions. Conversely, research on tourism diversification typically addresses market saturation or sustainability, often neglecting the transformative effects associated with the construction of major airports. This paper addresses this gap by investigating the constrained options available to established coastal tourism industries that are marginalised by the emergence of a new aerotropolis in a developing country. This study does not advocate diversification as an end in itself. Rather, it proposes a context-specific framework, informed by local stakeholder input, to demonstrate how existing tourism economies can adapt and persist. The research employs a triangulation approach, integrating direct field observations with 13 semi-structured interviews conducted in the Congot–Glagah–Trisik Regional Tourism Strategic Area (CGT-RTSA). This area was selected due to its strategic location, its significance as an emerging tourism destination, and the recent economic impacts of aerotropolis development, making it an exemplary case for analysis. Additionally, the study examines three years of provincial tourism revenue (Pendapatan Asli Daerah/PAD) data to determine whether stakeholder-identified challenges correspond with broader trends in local value capture.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the challenges and opportunities of diversifying tourism in Kulon Progo's coastal area. This approach helped capture local stakeholder views and the region's social and economic dynamics. The research was conducted from May to July 2025 at the CGT-RTSA. This area was chosen because it is close to Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA), making it easier to observe direct impacts, spillover effects, and differences in development between the airport area and the local tourism economy. Other reasons for selecting the CGT-RTSA included its mix of natural and cultural attractions, its growth as a tourism destination, and its similarity to other coastal regions in Indonesia facing development challenges. Its official status as a tourism zone also made it a relevant focus for the study. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and direct non-participant observation in the CGT-RTSA coastal corridors of Congot, Glagah, and Trisik. Observations examined factors that affect the visitor experience and connectivity, including access roads, signage, vendor layout, cleanliness, and transport between sites. These observations helped confirm and add context to the interview findings. Thirteen key informants were selected through purposive sampling, representing government officials, airport stakeholders, community leaders, tourism operators, micro-businesses, cultural figures, livelihoods, youth leaders, and environmental advocates (Table 1). Informants were selected for their direct involvement in or impact on the local tourism industry, their ability to offer different perspectives, and their work in addressing development challenges. This approach aimed to include a broad range of stakeholders to strengthen the study's validity and depth.

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile and Selection Rationale of Research Informants

No.	Code	Age	Role / Background	Rationale for Selection (Specific Criteria)
1	GOV-1	54	Local Government Tourism Officer	To provide the official perspective on government plans, tourism policies, and strategic challenges in the region.
2	YIA-1	40	Airport Official (InJourney Airports)	To gain a direct, official perspective on the YIA aerotropolis master plan and community engagement strategies.
3	COM-1	58	Former Village Head	To provide historical context, insights into long-term community dynamics, and an overview of the evolution of local development efforts.
4	POK-1	52	Chairperson, Pokdarwis Glagah Beach (Kelompok Sadar Wisata/Tourism Awareness Group)	To capture the on-the-ground operational perspective from the most established community-managed tourism site.
5	POK-2	38	Secretary, Pokdarwis Congot Beach	To gain insights from a developing tourism area, providing a comparative view on the challenges faced by newer community enterprises.
6	BIZ-1	45	Tourism Business Operator (Glagah)	To represent established private sector interests and the operational challenges faced by businesses in the main tourist area.
7	BIZ-2	33	Food Stall Owner (Glagah)	To provide a micro-business perspective on daily economic realities, customer flow, and visitor spending trends.
8	BIZ-3	37	Homestay Owner	To offer insights into the accommodation sector, which is a critical component of the tourism value chain.
9	BIZ-4	40	Handicraft Entrepreneur	To represent the creative economy and assess the potential for developing unique cultural products.
10	CUL-1	50	Traditional Artist	To provide deep knowledge of local culture, heritage, and intangible artistic assets that could be leveraged for tourism.
11	LIV-1	42	Fisherman	To represent traditional livelihoods and provide a perspective on the coastal environment and sustainability.
12	YTH-1	29	Youth Community Leader	To articulate the perspective of the younger generation regarding future development, innovation, and employment.
13	ENV-1	31	Environmental Activist	To provide a critical perspective on sustainability and the potential environmental impacts of tourism development.

Note: Roles and Affiliations Are Provided to Show Relevance. Anonymity of Informants is Ensured  
Source: Researchers (2025)

We continued conducting interviews until we reached thematic saturation, which means no new concepts or themes appeared in the data (Guest et al., 2006). After analysing 13 in-depth interviews, we found consistent themes, indicating that our sample size was sufficient to capture the main aspects of the research problem. This study acknowledges the limitations in sample size regarding high-level institutional perspectives. To address this and ensure rigour, interview data were systematically triangulated with extensive field observations of physical infrastructure (road connectivity, signage, and site conditions) and secondary data. We used the interactive model from Miles et al. (2014) for data analysis, which involves condensing data,

displaying it, and drawing and checking conclusions. After each interview and observation, we used open coding on transcripts and field notes to find first-order themes. We created initial codes by reviewing the data and then refined them through repeated comparison and discussion. Several coders worked together to provide a broad perspective, and we checked for inter-coder reliability to ensure our findings were consistent and credible. We condensed the data to highlight key findings and organised them into tables and matrices to compare responses and spot patterns. We drew preliminary conclusions from these displays and checked them by comparing with informant perspectives, existing data, and the theoretical framework.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents findings from observations and interviews regarding the current conditions and recent potential for tourism product diversification within the CGT-RTSA.

##### **4.1 Regional Context and Development Plans**

The Kulon Progo South Coastal Tourism Development (KSPD) zone sits along the Indian Ocean in Glagah village. The area has become more attractive since the Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) opened in 2019. YIA is planned to be the centre of an 83-hectare aerotropolis, with facilities for meetings, conferences, exhibitions, retail, cargo, and a theme park. The latest government spatial plan (RTRW 2023-2043) supports this idea by designating the area as a "Strategic Growth Area" for major industrial and commercial development. Still, there are big challenges. Research shows a clear gap between the airport city masterplan and the actual coastal tourism plan for KSPD. Official documents mention developing the southern coastal area, but the plans are unclear and poorly connected. Most investment goes to the new aerotropolis, which leaves KSPD communities on the sidelines. Interviews with stakeholders back this up, highlighting worries about uneven investment priorities.

This inequality is clear in the area's appearance. The YIA complex has modern infrastructure built to international standards. In contrast, Glagah Beach, less than four kilometres away, has worn-out paving, standing water from poor drainage, and a crowded entrance with informal vendors. There is no modern signage at the airport to guide passengers to the coast. There are also no transport hubs, shuttle services, or information centres to help people get from the airport to the beach. To fix this, a shuttle service could connect the airport to coastal attractions, clear signage could be added at the airport, and local stakeholders could be included in planning to make the planning process more inclusive. The gap between the airport and the coast highlights the main problem: the coast has attractions, but poor connections keep airport visitors away. Local interviews confirm this. Many community members say the airport feels like a spaceship that landed nearby, but is not part of their lives. While they see potential benefits, many worry that the aerotropolis will remain out of reach. Local business owners and leaders are unsure and concerned about being left out as modernisation continues. Table 2 below summarises these views.

**Table 2.** Data Matrix of Informant Interview Results

No.	Informant	Key Themes	Representative Quote
1	GOV-1	Official plans for integration exist but lack a budget and concrete action. Focus is on aerotropolis core rather than its periphery.	"Officially, the integration of the KSPD with YIA is a priority... However, candidly, the primary focus and budget on the commercial zones of airport city itself. The 'linkage' to the coast is still conceptual".
2	POK-1 and POK-2	Frustration that the high volume of airport passengers is not being channelled to the local tourism area. A need for both physical and promotional "bridges".	"We see thousands of people landing at YIA every day, but only a small fraction of them 'turn left' to visit us". "We hoped the airport would be a blessing, but right now it feels like a very close, yet very far away neighbor".
3	BIZ-3	Lack of positive economic spillover from the airport. Concern that the self-contained aerotropolis will capture all tourist spending.	"Business has not improved. We worry the new hotels in the airport city will take the few guests we might have gotten. We need a reason for people to leave the airport complex and stay here".
4	BIZ-2	Direct observation that airport operations have not increased sales. Fear of being made obsolete by modern facilities within the airport city.	"My sales have not increased... Will tourists even bother coming out here to eat traditional seafood if they can get everything inside the airport city? We feel we are being left behind".
5	COM-1	Concern that development is occurring adjacent to the community rather than with it. Fear that the area's unique cultural and natural identity is being ignored in favour of modern commercialism.	"The development is happening next to us, not with us. The true value of this land is its culture and nature, not just its proximity to a runway. Our fear is that this identity will be lost".

Source: Researchers (2025)

#### 4.2 The Economic Reality: Stagnation in The Shadow of The Aerotropolis

Since Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) began full operations in 2019, the southern coastal area of Kulon Progo has been seen as a main driver of regional economic growth. However, there is a clear gap between the development of the aerotropolis and the local tourism economy. This gap is shown by Kulon Progo's small share of tourism revenue in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and by a three-year review of PAD from tourism. Table 3 shows the difference between Kulon Progo and the other four regencies or cities in the province.

**Table 3.** Realisation of Regional Original Revenue (PAD) from The Tourism Sector in The Special Region of Yogyakarta (2022–2024)

No.	Regency/City	2022 (IDR)	2023 (IDR)	2024 (IDR)
1	Kulon Progo	6,100,000,000	9,300,000,000	7,370,000,000
2	Bantul	27,100,000,000	26,280,000,000	30,600,000,000
3	Gunung Kidul	18,500,000,000	27,600,000,000	28,100,000,000
4	Sleman <sup>1</sup>	302,921,000,000	373,351,000,000	283,530,000,000 <sup>1</sup>
5	Yogyakarta City <sup>2</sup>	211,800,000,000	299,600,000,000	352,000,000,000 <sup>2</sup>
	Total	566,421,000,000	736,131,000,000	701,600,000,000

<sup>1</sup>Data for Sleman Regency is as of September 2024

<sup>2</sup>Data for Yogyakarta City is as of September 2024

Source: Processed from BPS and Various Official Government Publications (2025)

Table 3 shows the revenue gap between Kulon Progo and more developed areas like Sleman, as well as differences in growth after major infrastructure projects. Even though Kulon Progo is home to the province's main airport (YIA), its tourism revenue has stayed the same since 2019, while other regencies have started to recover. This suggests the peripheral airport areas mainly serve as a 'transit bubble' for passengers rather than encouraging them to stay longer, so it has not made a big impact on the local economy. Kulon Progo remains the lowest contributor to the province's tourism revenue (PAD) from 2022 to 2024. It is important to note some limitations: Sleman's data only covers up to September 2024, and Yogyakarta City's numbers are targets for 2024. Because of this, the figures should be seen as general trends rather than exact rankings for 2024. Even with these limitations, the data support what stakeholders have observed: the coastal area is mainly a transit bubble, not a place where visitors spend much money. Interviews with key stakeholders support these findings. An airport official (YIA-1) said, "YIA is a double-edged sword - we can have the world come to us at the airport, but the tourist seems to step over our doorstep and head straight to the city or existing attractions. We are not yet realizing significant numbers of visitor traffic." A local tourism business owner (BIZ-1) pointed out that visitor numbers are unpredictable and visits are short, so spending is focused in a few places while many coastal micro-businesses see little benefit. This pattern shows that the coast acts more as a transit area than a main destination. A local youth leader (YTH-1) also noted that the coast is mostly a stopover rather than a primary destination, which shortens visits and limits local business income. Together, these views show that most people see the southern coastal area as a transit zone rather than a tourist destination. Because of this, tourism in the area remains on the economic margins.

### **4.3 Existing Tourism Assets and Diversification Potential**

Recent government plans, such as the Kulon Progo Regency Regional Spatial Plan (2023-2043) and the 2024 tourism roadmap, indicate that officials are now focusing on diversification. The main focus is on the southern coastline, with hopes that mangrove ecotourism and the creative economy will become key drivers for the KSPD. Still, what 'diversification' means can vary a lot depending on who you ask. Policy documents offer a broad vision, but the local community's actual abilities and views often differ. As mentioned earlier, many local business owners and community leaders feel left out and worry that these big plans are moving forward without their real input.

#### **4.3.1 Natural Tourism Products**

Seeing the area firsthand makes it clear that nature is both the region's biggest strength and its most delicate resource. The mangrove forest at Congot is beautiful, with simple wooden walkways, yet it still feels incomplete. The boardwalk is only about 150 meters long, and on busy days, up to 250 people visit without any real entry controls. There are no signs to explain the area's story, and no managed entry points to guide visitors. Congot Beach is still a busy fishing spot, but its appeal for tourists is limited by a lack of facilities and a serious waste problem, with over 300 kilograms of trash piling up each week. Trisik Beach is great for bird life, but it lacks basic infrastructure, such as viewing platforms or walking trails, that would make it a good spot for birdwatching. The stakeholders we interviewed were quick to point out the gap between the "eco" label and reality. One environmental activist (ENV-1) didn't mince words. The people we spoke with quickly highlighted the difference between calling something 'eco' and actually

making it environmentally friendly. One environmental activist (ENV-1) was clear about the risks of shallow development: "Our coast is a critical habitat... All development must be 'green' development. Eco-tourism is a great idea, but it must include stringent rules. Building a path and calling it 'eco' does not mean anything if we do not manage the waste and the capacity of visitors." For the local fishing community, protecting access and cleanliness is a matter of livelihood, not just leisure. The takeaway here is that nature-based products can bridge the 'aerotropolis disconnect,' but only if they move beyond branding. Success requires strict governance paired with 'light-touch' infrastructure—signage, trails, and waste systems—that allows visitors to experience the coast without trampling the very resources they came to see.

**Table 4.** Findings on Natural Tourism Products

No	Existing Assets	Observed Issues / Challenges	Proposed Diversification Strategies (from informants and observation)
1	Pasir Mendit Mangrove Forest	Lack of educational/interpretive signage, unmanaged visitor flow, and potential for ecological damage.	Establish formal mangrove ecotourism trails with educational tours and community-led conservation activities.
2	Congot Beach Estuary and Fishing	Disorganised, lack of visitor amenities, and waste accumulation from fishing activities.	Establish designated fishing and river-exploration zones with appropriate facilities and waste-disposal systems.
3	Trisik Beach (Migratory Birds)	No infrastructure for observation, potential disturbance to wildlife from uncontrolled access.	Build birdwatching platforms and coastal nature trails with interpretive signage about local biodiversity.
4	Coastal Wetlands and Lagoons	Underutilised, risk of pollution from nearby settlements and tourism.	Offer guided, eco-friendly kayaking and canoeing tours in lagoons and estuaries.
5	Turtle Nesting Sites (seasonal)	Lack of formal protection, risk of disturbance.	Develop ethical nighttime turtle-conservation tours in collaboration with conservation groups.
6	Agrarian Landscapes	Not formally integrated into tourism offerings.	Initiate agro-ecotourism in coastal villages (sustainable farming, aquaculture, culinary experiences).

Source: Researchers (2025)

#### 4.3.2 Cultural Tourism Products

The region possesses a substantial reservoir of cultural knowledge, yet these assets remain largely underutilised. For example, the Pesanggrahan Glagah is a heritage site of considerable significance, but in the absence of interpretive storytelling or visitor information, it remains inaccessible to outsiders. Similarly, the annual Hajad Dalem Labuhan ceremony holds deep sacred value, but as a singular annual event, it provides only a limited opportunity for engagement. Most tourists are unable to appreciate its significance unless they visit on the specific day it occurs. A comparable disconnect is evident in local arts and crafts; although there is considerable talent, these products are neither systematically organised nor actively promoted in high-traffic areas such as the beach. From what we have seen, the region has a lot of cultural knowledge, but it is mostly unused. For example, Pesanggrahan Glagah is an important heritage site, but without storytelling or visitor information, visitors do not learn about it. The Hajad Dalem Labuhan ceremony is very special, but since it only happens once a year, most tourists do not get to experience it. The same problem exists with local arts and crafts. There is talent,

but the products are not organised or promoted in busy areas like the beach. A traditional artist (CUL-1) articulated this missed opportunity: "We have stories, we have dances, we have batik. However, the tourists come to the beach and then leave. This Labuhan ceremony is sacred, but we can share an explanation of its meaning. We can hold smaller workshops or performances at any time. We need a stage, a place to show tourists more than the waves and seafood." A handicraft entrepreneur (BIZ-4) shared a similar view, saying the community cannot rely on occasional sales. The entrepreneur suggested holding regular cultural events to show local work, which would help create steady demand and support business growth. Solving the cultural disconnect does not mean creating new traditions. Instead, it means offering clear storytelling and setting up regular workshops and performances, rather than relying on a single annual ceremony.

**Table 5.** Findings on Cultural Tourism Products

No.	Existing Assets	Observed Issues / Challenges	Proposed Diversification Strategies (from informants and observation)
1	Pesanggrahan Glagah (Heritage)	Without interpretation or storytelling, the building is underutilised as a passive landmark.	Develop heritage village tours centred on the Pesanggrahan, featuring narratives of the Pakualaman era.
2	Hajad Dalem Labuhan Ceremony	A single annual event makes it inaccessible to outsiders and risks over-commercialisation.	Develop a cultural calendar and offer educational programs on the ceremony's philosophy to promote respectful viewing.
3	Local Performing Arts (e.g., jathilan)	Sporadic, not integrated into the regular tourism schedule, and a lack of a dedicated venue.	Host traditional performing arts festivals on the beachfront or at a new cultural plaza.
4	Local Handicrafts and Cuisine	Dispersed, inconsistent quality, not centrally marketed.	Offer handicraft workshops (batik, weaving) and create coastal culinary tours and seafood cooking classes.
5	Fisherfolk Livelihoods	Not accessible to tourists, it is viewed as separate from the tourism economy.	Develop immersive "Day in the Life of a Fisherman" experiences (e.g., boat building, traditional fishing).

#### 4.3.3 Artificial Tourism Products and Infrastructure

Field observations indicate significant deterioration at the Glagah Beach tourist area. Although the lagoon and adjacent agrotourism sites remain relatively pristine, the main beachfront is experiencing severe negative impacts from unmanaged mass tourism. The area is characterised by unpleasant odours, widespread litter, and access roads that have degraded into muddy, impassable conditions. This environmental decline not only diminishes the site's visual appeal but also adversely affects the economic performance of local businesses. A food trader (BIZ-2) described the current challenges: "How can I sell good food when the area smells bad, and the road is muddy? On weekends, it is so crowded and dirty. We need a proper arrangement. A clean, organized place like the new Plaza Kuliner would help us all." This view matches the government's recent plan to build

a "Plaza Souvenir" and "Plaza Kuliner," which are meant to organise vendors and improve the area. The new plazas should give vendors cleaner, better spaces, attract more visitors, and create a more welcoming atmosphere. Visitors will enjoy the improved look and easier access, which should make their experience better. These changes are expected to help vendors increase sales and support ongoing or growing economic activity in the area. Another major problem is the lack of connection between attractions. Right now, each site operates on its own. A homestay owner (BIZ-3) shared frustration about losing business because guests cannot easily get around: "My guests ask what else they can do. I tell them about the mangroves or Trisik, but it is difficult for them to get there. A shuttle would change everything. They could stay here and easily visit three or four places in one day." The main recommendation is to focus on building infrastructure to solve the connectivity problem. Instead of adding more attractions, efforts should go into things like organised vendor areas, shuttle services, parking, and better roads. These steps would help link Congot, Glagah, and Trisik, making it easier for visitors to see all three as part of one trip instead of separate stops.

**Table 6.** Findings on Artificial Tourism Products and Infrastructure

No	Existing Assets	Observed Issues / Challenges	Proposed Diversification Strategies (from informants & observation)
1	Glagah Beach (Jetty, Stalls)	Severe environmental degradation (odor, litter), poor infrastructure (roads), overcrowding, and negative visitor experience.	Revitalize the area as the "Glagah Culinary Plaza" and a souvenir center, with a focus on hygiene and vendor organisation.
2	Kusumo Wanadri Agrotourism	Operates in isolation, not well-connected to other coastal attractions.	Integrate into a larger tourism circuit via new transportation links.
3	Trisik Beach Potential	Lacks any accommodation or formal facilities.	Develop eco-friendly homestays that support the area's birdwatching and nature tourism potential.
4	(Cross-Cutting Infrastructure)	No connectivity between sites. Visitors are confined to one location. Travel between beaches is difficult and unmanaged.	Establish centralised parking facilities and a tourist shuttle system to serve the entire CGT-RTSA corridor.

The results show a clear problem: YIA's modern, well-planned setting has not led to increased visitor numbers or spending along the coast. This is mainly because key supports, such as clear directions, good transport, and visitor management, are missing. While the airport runs smoothly, the coastal areas still face old infrastructure and organisational problems. Stakeholders highlight this gap, saying the airport is close by but does not help their daily work. Tourism revenue data also shows that Kulon Progo is not capturing much value. Together, these findings support the idea of an 'aerotropolis disconnect,' in which uneven development is driven by weak competitiveness and governance, not by a lack of attractions.

#### 4.4 The Competitiveness Gap: An 'Economic Shadow' Cast by The Aerotropolis

The clearest sign of this disconnect is a strong 'competitiveness gap,' which can be explained using destination competitiveness theory (Crouch & Ritchie, 2011). This theory says success relies on both attractions and support systems, like infrastructure and access. As shown in Tables 2, 4, and 6, Kulon Progo's coast has many attractions, but the support systems are almost entirely lacking. This supports the theory: even with good

attractions, missing support creates a major obstacle. The study clearly shows what Enright & Newton (2004) described: world-class attractions can go unnoticed when serious infrastructure problems arise.

This idea goes further. Kasarda and Lindsay's (2011) aerotropolis model assumes the surrounding area is ready to connect with the new economic center. Supporters believe building an airport boosts the local economy by making it more accessible and connected globally. However, this research offers a different view. In areas already facing development problems, the aerotropolis does not automatically help nearby areas. Instead, it creates an 'economic shadow' that highlights existing weaknesses even more. For example, a confusing road sign that used to be a small problem is now, as one business owner said, "a deterrent for any independent traveler" (BIZ-1), especially compared to the smooth experience at the airport. The lack of public transport is more than just an inconvenience. According to an airport official (YIA-1), YIA has turned from a gateway into a barrier, keeping tourists away from the coast. While the aerotropolis did not create these existing problems, its large scale has made them worse. This challenges the idea that big projects always bring growth to unprepared areas. The stagnation seen in the Congot–Glagah–Trisik Regional Tourism Strategic Area (CGT-RTSA) shows what this study calls 'infrastructure-induced stagnation' within the TALC model. Instead of slowing down because of market saturation, the coastal clusters are facing a serious spatial mismatch. Franciscone et al. (2024) describe YIA as a 'transit bubble.' Our fieldwork shows that the airport's economic activity does not benefit the nearby coastal areas. This supports the findings of Iban et al. (2025) and Subarsono et al. (2025). Even though these villages are close to the aerotropolis, the fast pace of international transit does not fit with the slower, community-based style of local tourism. As a result, local people are left out of the new value chain and remain on the margins.

#### **4.5 The Governance Void: A Failure of Networked Collaboration**

The concept of a 'governance void' underscores power imbalances within the Multi-Scalar Governance framework. InJourney Airports' national mandate emphasises airport efficiency, whereas the Kulon Progo Regency Government's local mandate prioritises regional welfare. In the absence of institutional linkages, the airport remains a 'state-space' and fails to integrate with the local 'place-based' economy.

Without collaboration, existing economic and social gaps are likely to continue. Failing to create inclusive systems and partnerships can lead to long-term stagnation and missed chances for sustainable growth. If the infrastructure gap is the symptom, the 'governance void' is the root cause. This is not just about missing paperwork or policies; it shows a deeper failure to build the teamwork needed for sustainable tourism (Banai, 2017). The aerotropolis was built efficiently from the top down, but it ignored the complex communication needed to bring local groups together (Rogerson, 2018; Sautter & Leisen, 1999). The findings show that this government-led approach did not create a mechanism for shared planning, as earlier research suggests is needed for success.

This outcome aligns with the perspective of one community leader, who described it as "a development for us, but without us." Local stakeholders perceive themselves as disenfranchised bystanders of the big development" (COM-1). This feeling is real and stems from a lack of ways to get involved, such as planning meetings or forming joint marketing groups. The coast's potential for eco-tours and cultural heritage trails is still untapped because those who care for these resources have been left out. This study adds to the aerotropolis research by pointing out a key problem: the model focuses on

efficiency but ignores the social and political teamwork needed for success. By overlooking the value of local networks, the project has created a political disconnect.

The 'governance void' is more than a lack of meetings; it signals a deeper issue rooted in the master planning stage. Analysis shows that no integrated Destination Management Organisation (DMO) has the authority to coordinate the airport authority (a state-owned enterprise) and the local regency government, exemplifying friction within multi-scalar governance structures. The development of YIA by InJourney Airports, which manages 37 airports nationwide, prioritises the efficient movement of international capital over regional integration (Listikarini & Harlan, 2024). Consequently, the Kulon Progo Regency Government struggles to bridge the gap between the airport's corporate ecosystem and local livelihoods. This power imbalance reflects the dynamic described by Martins et al. (2026), where large capital requirements and top-down mandates in airport-driven development intensify spatial inequalities. The observed 'disconnect' is thus a structural conflict between national infrastructure objectives and local governance capacities. As a result, there are no binding agreements or shared KPIs to incentivise the airport to direct traffic to local coastal areas, keeping operations separate and ensuring the airport acts as a stand-alone business, disconnected from the regional tourism plan.

#### **4.6 The Stagnation Anomaly: Infrastructure-Induced Disruption of The Tourism Life Cycle**

The economic development of the Kulon Progo coast challenges the usual expectations of the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model (Butler, 1980). Normally, TALC sees stagnation as a sign of 'old age' driven by internal factors such as market saturation, declining appeal, or maturity. However, in Kulon Progo, the evidence shows a different story: early stagnation caused entirely by outside factors. The revenue data (Table 3) supports what stakeholders have reported: even with a major new gateway nearby, coastal visits and spending have not increased. We describe this as 'infrastructure-induced stagnation.' The destination has not lost its appeal; instead, poor access, unclear directions, and a lack of organised transport are limiting the economic benefits to the surrounding area.

What sets this situation apart is how it happened. The YIA project did more than change policies; it shifted the region's focus and resources toward the center. This shift is similar to the core-periphery concept in regional economics, in which a central hub draws resources away from nearby areas. The core-periphery model explains how economic disparities emerge and persist across regions, with the 'core' a dominant area that attracts investment, talent, and economic activity, often at the expense of the 'periphery,' which is left underdeveloped and resource-deprived. This structural change works in two main ways. First, it causes a shift in capital and policy. The megaproject attracts government attention and investment to the main area, which takes resources away from nearby tourism spots and leaves them without the support they need to recover. Findings from Yogyakarta show that the aerotropolis disconnect is not just a planning mistake, but a result of enclave-style gateway development. YIA's failure to boost the CGT-RTSA economy is similar to the investment and connectivity problems seen at Kertajati Aerocity in West Java (Pandora & Rarasati, 2025). In both cases, simply being close to a megaproject has not led to local wealth. Without clear institutional steps to encourage integration, major transit hubs will keep most economic benefits inside, while nearby destinations remain underdeveloped.

Second, it causes what a government planner (GOV-1) called a 'leapfrogging effect.' The size of the airport makes existing small-scale development plans outdated overnight, leading to 'speculative paralysis' as local landowners wait for big investors who may never come. Unlike a natural disaster, which eventually ends, this is a lasting structural change. It acts as a harsh form of 'creative destruction,' with immediate negative effects but positive outcomes out of reach for local people. This situation suggests an important update to the TALC model: with large state-led projects, the main risk for a destination may not be market decline, but the disruptive impact of a nearby, disconnected project. To address this, the government could introduce zoning incentives. By establishing special development zones with tax breaks or lower land costs, local investment can be encouraged without relying on large investors, helping overcome stagnation and support more balanced, sustainable growth.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study identifies a major development gap in southern Kulon Progo, called the 'aerotropolis disconnect.' While Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA) was expected to boost economic growth, tourism development has stalled. Coastal destinations now face uncertainty and risk of being left behind. Interviews and case studies show that poor infrastructure, unclear planning, and ongoing stakeholder conflicts are to blame. To tackle these issues, the study proposes a strategic framework that promotes tourism diversification across nature, culture, and special-interest areas, offering a clear path to revitalisation.

First, this research offers a testable critique of the standard aerotropolis model (Kasarda & Lindsay, 2011). While the theory suggests that airports naturally drive growth and connectivity, our hypothesis—'Peripheral exclusion predicts economic shadow effects'—argues that, without careful planning and the inclusion of outlying areas, large projects can cause problems rather than create economic benefits. Peripheral exclusion means neglecting the areas intended to benefit, limiting their involvement and access to resources. Economic shadow effects are the negative impacts these areas face, such as less investment and fewer opportunities. This hypothesis invites further studies of other airport megaprojects to see if they also overlook the communities they aim to help.

Second, this study provides a new perspective on Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). Stagnation in Kulon Progo is not a result of market decline or maturity but rather a disruption caused by a major external infrastructure project. This demonstrates that developing destinations remain vulnerable when large-scale projects alter accessibility and investment patterns. To clarify the distinction between TALC stagnation driven by traditional factors such as market saturation and our identified 'external-shock' mechanism, a brief comparison table can be introduced. This table will highlight how infrastructure-triggered stagnation can warrant its own sub-category. Furthermore, by connecting these findings to destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 2011) and stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), the analysis highlights that core resources, such as beaches, are insufficient if effective human collaboration is lacking. The disconnect arises when stakeholder engagement fails, thereby undermining the supporting factors necessary for destination competitiveness. By extending the TALC model, this study challenges existing theories by introducing the concept of external infrastructure shocks as pivotal disruptors. This extension suggests that regions experiencing such shocks may follow trajectories outside of traditional TALC patterns,

thereby requiring unique adaptive strategies in stakeholder management and resource allocation.

This research adds to the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) discussion by introducing a new phase called 'Infrastructure-Induced Stagnation.' Unlike 'enclave tourism,' which keeps tourists inside resorts on purpose, the aerotropolis disconnect creates an unplanned 'transit bubble' because of differences in speed and connectivity. In developing regions, this can cause 'premature stagnation,' where transport infrastructure grows faster than the local area's social and economic development, skipping the 'Development' stage in Butler's model.

To address the 'aerotropolis disconnect,' this study moves beyond general calls for collaboration and proposes two specific institutional interventions. First, establishing a Joint Management Body (JMB) is essential. This entity should hold a formal mandate to synchronise InJourney Airports' strategic planning with the spatial planning of the Kulon Progo Regency. Second, the provincial government should implement a Local Content and Linkage Requirement. This policy would mandate that airport-based retail and transit services (such as those within the YIA terminal) maintain a minimum threshold of integration with local coastal tourism products and operators, ensuring that the airport functions as a 'pump' for the local economy rather than a closed circuit.

While this study presents a detailed qualitative analysis of the 'aerotropolis disconnect,' it has certain constraints. The research examines the first five years of YIA's operation (2019–2024); thus, the long-term development of the TALC model in this region remains unknown. Although the qualitative approach reveals the intricacies of power relations, it does not quantify the precise 'leakage' of potential revenue. Future studies should use longitudinal quantitative modelling to assess the impact of the proposed Joint Management Body on Local Revenue (PAD) growth. Comparative analyses with other Asian aerotropolises could further clarify the theory of Infrastructure-Induced Stagnation developed here.

For local stakeholders, these findings offer a practical guide. For Kulon Progo Regency, the study provides a clear, evidence-based plan to focus investment on key areas such as infrastructure, marketing, and building community skills. The main advice is to break down barriers between groups and use a collaborative approach that includes local communities in decisions. This could mean creating a regional tourism council comprising government officials, community leaders, and business representatives to ensure everyone is involved. Holding regular workshops and focus groups will help gather feedback and shape development plans. By working together, the government can use resources more efficiently and support regional growth. For the community, this approach means more economic opportunities and a better quality of life. For investors, a united strategy creates a more stable and predictable environment, which can lead to higher returns. For local operators, the suggested diversification framework encourages moving beyond the usual 'sand and sea' tourism to find new sources of income. The study also warns other regions planning similar projects to have a clear integration plan from the start. While this research gives a detailed look at Kulon Progo, future studies should use quantitative methods to measure effects on revenue and jobs, and track how the airport and coastal areas interact over the next three to five years.

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