

# The Impact of Economic Activities on Environmental Quality in the Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas Palace Area

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of economic activities on the physical and aesthetic conditions of the Keraton Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas area. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with data collection techniques including field observations, in-depth interviews with economic actors and local government officials, and enriched with literature reviews. The findings reveal that economic activities, which were initially limited and well-managed such as the sale of beverages outside the keraton area from 2019 to 2022 were still able to maintain the cleanliness of the area. However, following the relocation of vendors into the keraton area due to the stalled Sambas Waterfront project, there has been an increase in spatial disorder, rule violations, and a decline in environmental quality. Scattered plastic waste, chaotic vendor arrangements, and weak supervision have made the area, which should be a cultural icon, appear dilapidated and lose its aesthetic appeal. The research findings recommend the need for zoning planning, strengthened regulations, and community participation to ensure the sustainability of the cultural area.

**Keywords:** *Economic Activities, Environmental Quality, Alwatzikhoebillah Palace*



## INTRODUCTION

Regional economic development is an important aspect of improving community welfare. In various regions of Indonesia, the local economy grows through trade, services, and tourism that rely on local wisdom and cultural wealth

(Kemenparekraf, 2020). One of the regions with important historical and cultural heritage is Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan, with the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace as a symbol of civilization and the center of cultural identity for the Sambas community.

The Alwatzikhoebillah Palace is not only a cultural and historical site but also an educational and religious tourist destination that attracts both local and out-of-town visitors. The presence of the palace has driven economic activities in the surrounding community, including small-scale trade, traditional cuisine, and various children's games. This phenomenon generally reflects the interconnection between cultural heritage and the strengthening of the local economy (Trisnawati & Nurchalis, 2020).

However, in recent years, economic activity growing around the palace area has begun to cause serious environmental problems. The emergence of street vendors and increased human traffic around the palace have led to an increase in the volume of waste, a decline in the aesthetics of the area, and the emergence of a slum-like appearance in an area that should be preserved for its sanctity and cleanliness. This situation has been exacerbated by a stalled construction project directly in front of the palace, leaving behind construction materials and abandoned items that mar the beauty and historical value of the palace environment.

The Sambas Waterfront Project was initially conceived to beautify the Sambas Palace area and attract tourists. However, the project was halted after allegations of budget irregularities emerged, leading to legal investigations of those involved. To date, there are no signs of the project being resumed, making the palace area a symbol of failed urban planning in West Kalimantan (*Kalbar Editorial*, 2024).

The unfinished project not only disrupts the landscape but also degrades the physical and psychological quality of the environment. Materials such as iron, cement, and wood left exposed pose a risk of soil and water contamination, as well as endangering public safety. Additionally, the absence of spatial planning and oversight of economic activities has led to conflicts of interest between cultural preservation and livelihood pursuits. The area, which should serve as an educational, spiritual, and conservative space, has instead transformed into an unregulated commercial zone.

This issue reflects the lack of coordination between local governments, cultural site managers, and local economic actors in balancing economic interests and environmental conservation. Unmanaged economic activities have led to environmental degradation and reduced the strategic value of the area. If this situation persists, there is a concern that the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace will no longer be able to fulfill its dual role as a cultural center and a driver of history-based economic development.

Based on these conditions, it is important to conduct an in-depth study of the impact of economic activities on the environmental quality of the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace area. This study aims not only to identify the forms of economic activities and their impact on the environment but also to explore the root causes of the problem,

such as poor area management and weak environmental conservation policies for cultural heritage sites. Additionally, this study seeks to formulate strategic recommendations to foster synergy between economic development and the preservation of historical areas.

This research is designed to address several related issues, including the forms and intensity of economic activities taking place around the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace in the Sambas district of West Kalimantan, the negative impacts of these economic activities on the environmental quality and aesthetic value of the palace area, factors contributing to the lack of organization in economic activities within the cultural heritage site, and strategies to reorganize economic activities to align with environmental preservation and the historical value of the palace. Thus, the objectives of this study are: 1) To describe and analyze the types and patterns of economic activities occurring in the Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas Palace area; 2) To identify the direct and indirect impacts of economic activities on the environmental quality of the palace area; 3) To explore the factors causing the unorganized nature of economic activities, including abandoned development projects; 4) To provide strategic recommendations for the planning of the palace area to ensure that economic activities continue without compromising the historical value and environmental quality of the area.

Through this research approach, it is hoped that the findings will provide input for stakeholders, including local governments, communities, and cultural managers, to collectively create a productive economic environment without sacrificing cultural preservation and environmental cleanliness. The preservation of cultural heritage such as the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace must be integrated into a sustainable development framework where economy, environment, and culture can coexist harmoniously and mutually reinforce one another.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of economic activities on environmental quality around the Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas Palace area. According to Sugiyono (2019), a descriptive qualitative approach is a research method that aims to describe and interpret a phenomenon in depth based on the perspective of the subject being studied, emphasizing meaning, process, and context. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture social reality in its entirety, including interactions between economic actors, area managers, and the community around the palace. Furthermore, data collection techniques were conducted through field observations and in-depth interviews with economic actors and local government officials.

In addition, this study also uses literature review to enrich the discussion by comparing the results of previous studies with the findings of the field research conducted.

According to Creswell (2014), literature review is an important step in research that serves to examine relevant theories and findings from previous studies, thereby strengthening the conceptual framework and validity of the data obtained. Overall, 20 documents were used, consisting of scientific articles from Google Scholar and other supporting data sourced from BPS and the government.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic activities developing in various regions, including cultural heritage areas, have two contrasting impacts: improved community welfare and potential environmental degradation. Previous studies have shown that economic growth without proper environmental management tends to cause ecological problems such as increased waste, pollution, and deterioration of spatial planning. For example, Astuti (2020) in Semarang concluded that informal economic activities worsened urban aesthetics and reduced air quality. Other studies also show the same, that economic activities can have a negative impact on the environment (Ulfa, 2020), while Rahamdhan (2024) states that the industrial sector contributes most to negative environmental impacts.

In the context of historical areas, as studied by Syamsudin (2019) in Makassar and Lestari (2022) in Yogyakarta, economic activities around cultural tourist sites have visual, noise, and pollution impacts that damage the sacred value of these areas. In general, the impacts of economic activities on environmental quality, as presented by previous studies, can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Previous Studies on the Impact of Economic Activities on Environmental Quality.

No.	Author	Year	Location	Research Topic	Results
1.	Andria Ulfa	2022	Indonesia	The Influence of Economic Growth, Human Development Index, and Housing on Environmental Quality	Economic Growth, Population Density, and Land Transportation Have a Negative and Significant Impact on Environmental Quality
2.	Jericko Gustinov and Doni Satria	2024	Indonesia	The Impact of the Manufacturing Sector, Household Consumption, Transportation, Population Density, Population Size, and Sanitation on	The manufacturing and transportation sectors have a positive and significant impact on environmental quality, while household consumption has a negative but insignificant impact.

				Environmental Quality.	
3.	Enni Sari Siregar and Marliana Wahyuni Nasution	2020	Kotanopan, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra	The Impact of Economic Activities on Environmental Pollution	Economic activities such as vehicle exhaust, industrial waste from tofu production, household waste, and pesticide use cause environmental pollution in , which impacts public health.
4	Akbar Maulana Ramadhan	2022	Provinces on the island of Sumatra	The Impact of Economic Growth on Environmental Quality	Economic growth does not have a significant impact on environmental quality, but the industrial sector shows a significant impact.
5.	Syamsudin	2019	Makassar	The impact of economic activities on historical areas	Tourism activities boost the economy but lead to environmental degradation, including increased waste, traffic congestion, and the disruption of the historical value of colonial buildings.
6.	Lestari	2022	Yogyakarta	Economic activities and their impact on environmental cleanliness in the Keraton area	The increase in tourist visits and the proliferation of commercial businesses have led to waste accumulation, noise pollution, and spatial changes that are inconsistent with the concept of preserving the historical area.
7.	Astuti	2020	Semarang	The impact of economic activities on air quality	Economic activities that are not accompanied by environmental control policies worsen air quality and public health in cities.
8.	Haikal Ghifary, Faza Duta Pramudyawardani, Sarah Rania Annisa, & Marina Ery Setiyawati	2	Indonesia	Economic Development and Environmental Quality	Economic activities such as extraction, manufacturing, and consumption affect the natural environment's ability to provide resources. This indicates that economic development often conflicts with environmental quality.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. The Types and Patterns of Economic Activities Occurring in the Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas Palace Area

The Keraton Alwatzikhoebillah area in Sambas District not only serves as a cultural and historical site but has also developed into a public space facilitating economic activities for the community, including the sale of snacks, beverages, and entertainment for children such as renting toy electric cars and motorcycles, as well as coloring activities. These activities indicate the presence of an informal economy that has grown from the bottom *up*, leveraging crowds as an economic opportunity.

Economic activity reaches its peak during major events such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. This year saw a significant increase compared to previous years, with more than 13,000 visitors coming to the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace. Thousands of visitors from various regions flooded the area, leading to an increase in the number of seasonal vendors and children's entertainment services. This situation created a multiplier effect on a local scale, particularly for small and micro businesses.

However, the increase in economic activity has not been accompanied by an increase in awareness of environmental cleanliness. Litter scattered around the palace area has made the environment increasingly untidy, becoming an annual problem that remains unresolved. This phenomenon aligns with Astuti's (2020) research, which states that the comfort and quality of a tourist area's environment are significantly influenced by the intensity of unregulated economic activities, particularly those that are informal and seasonal. This lack of order negatively impacts visitors' perceptions and reduces the area's long-term tourist appeal.

Additionally, research by Sari and Wibowo (2021) on religious tourism in Central Java found that informal economic activities in cultural tourism areas often contribute to the decline in physical environmental quality, especially if not regulated by policies that prioritize the preservation of public spaces.

In an effort to maintain a balance between economic activities and the preservation of the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace, the palace management implemented a ban on food sales from 2019 to 2022, allowing only beverage sales to minimize food waste and litter. However, due to profitability concerns, many vendors began selling food under an unwritten agreement that they must maintain cleanliness. Unfortunately, this agreement proved to be nothing more than empty words. In reality, the palace environment became increasingly unkempt due to the accumulation of trash at several points.

Research by Nurhayati (2022) also emphasizes that tourism area management policies must consider the role of informal economic actors as part of the socio-economic ecosystem, while still prioritizing sustainability principles. Redeveloping the area, educating business operators, and collaborating between managers and

vendors are key to ensuring economic activities do not damage the cultural and environmental values of the area.

Thus, economic activity in the Alwatzikhoebillah Palace area is daily and unstructured. Economic activity takes place every day, especially in the afternoon until evening. Activity increases on weekends, religious holidays, or local celebrations. At these times, the number of visitors and traders can increase two to three times compared to normal days. The majority of businesses around the palace are informal traders without permanent business licenses. This makes it difficult for local authorities to monitor and regulate activities. As a result, vendors are not properly organized, leading to disruptions in the cultural landscape and aesthetic appeal of the area. If not managed in a balanced manner, these activities have the potential to cause environmental degradation and diminish the historical value of the keraton itself.

## **2. Impact of Economic Activities on The Environmental Quality of the Palace Area**

Economic activities in the Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas Palace area have undergone significant changes from 2019 to 2022. Initially, vendors were only allowed to sell outside the palace grounds and were limited to selling beverages. This policy was implemented by the palace management as an effort to maintain the cleanliness and sanctity of the cultural area. At that time, the keraton's environment was relatively clean, tidy, and still reflected the high aesthetic values of the culture.

However, changes began to occur when the local government planned the construction of the Sambas *Waterfront*, located directly in front of the palace. To support the project, vendors who were previously outside the palace were relocated into the palace area. Unfortunately, the construction project stalled, leading to visual degradation of the area, both in terms of spatial planning and visitor comfort.

Furthermore, vendors began selling food, despite the management's prohibition on such activities to maintain the cleanliness of the palace environment. Vendors were permitted to sell goods only on the condition of maintaining cleanliness, but in practice, this rule was not consistently enforced. Both vendors and visitors frequently littered indiscriminately. Despite the provision of trash bins by the Department of Public Housing, Settlements, and Environmental Affairs (PERKIMLH) at various corners of the palace.

The PERKIMLH department has also assigned sanitation workers who come twice a week. However, these efforts have not yielded significant results due to the lack of awareness among visitors and vendors in maintaining the palace environment. The beauty of the area is deteriorating, particularly evident from the scattered trash and the disorganized arrangement of vendors, which has made the palace area chaotic and unpleasant to look at. The absence of penalties or warnings from the management regarding these violations has further exacerbated the condition of the area.

The transformation of an area from an aesthetically pleasing cultural space into a slum-like area is certainly a matter of concern not only for the local government but also for all parties, including traders and visitors. Economic activities should be in harmony with the preservation of the cultural environment. Collective awareness and strengthened supervision are needed to create a clean, well-organized historical tourist area that retains its aesthetic appeal.

This situation aligns with the findings of Lestari's (2022) research, which highlights that poorly managed economic activities in cultural tourism areas can lead to environmental degradation, a decline in the area's aesthetic appeal, and reduced visitor comfort. Meanwhile, Astuti (2020) also emphasizes that informal economic activities in tourist areas must be accompanied by management that is oriented towards cleanliness and sustainability, because if not, economic activities will become an ecological burden on the area.

Additionally, research by Nugroho and Prasetyo (2019) on the management of heritage tourism areas in Surakarta shows that without regulations and active participation from local economic actors, economic activities tend to create conflicts between economic interests and cultural preservation. Rahmawati (2021) also emphasizes the importance of an ecotourism approach in managing cultural areas to ensure that economic and environmental values are balanced.

Thus, the main challenge in managing the Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas Palace area is to create harmony between local economic development and the preservation of cultural and environmental values. There needs to be integration between public education, supervision, and sustainable policies so that this area does not lose its cultural identity and remains a clean and aesthetic historical tourist attraction.

### **3. Factors Contributing to the Lack of Organization in Economic Activities**

The Keraton Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas area is one of the important cultural sites in West Kalimantan, possessing historical value, local identity symbols, and cultural tourism potential. However, in its development, this area faces serious challenges related to environmental management, particularly due to the increasing density of informal economic activities and irresponsible visitor behavior. The main factors causing the disorganized environment of the keraton will be outlined as follows:

#### **a. Irregular Economic Activities**

The entry of traders into the inner palace area without a zoning system or clear division of space has caused spatial chaos. Vendors occupy any available space for selling, including areas that should be free from commercial activity. This worsens the visual appeal and disrupts the palace's function as a sacred cultural space. Lestari (2022) notes that the absence of commercial zoning regulations in the cultural tourism area has led to conflicts over space and a decline in aesthetic quality.

#### **b. Lack of Supervision and Enforcement of Rules**

Weak supervision by palace administrators and local government has resulted in many violations going unpunished. The absence of warnings or sanctions for

vendors who violate the rules (such as selling food when prohibited) has led to repeated indiscipline and a habit that is difficult to stop. Astuti (2020) states that weak institutional capacity in managing cultural tourism areas exacerbates control over unregulated economic activities.

c. Lack of Awareness Among Visitors and Vendors

Despite the provision of trash bins by the PERKIMLH Department, many visitors and vendors dispose of trash indiscriminately. The lack of awareness about the importance of maintaining cleanliness reflects low environmental education and a lack of ownership of the cultural area. Rahmawati (2021) emphasizes that community behavior in tourist areas is greatly influenced by collective awareness and active involvement in environmental preservation.

d. Stalled Development Projects

The failure of the Sambas *Waterfront* development project has caused the relocation of vendors into the palace area to be poorly planned. Without the continuation of the project, the area has lost its green open space and experienced a decline in aesthetic value and functionality. Nugroho & Prasetyo (2019) show that unsustainable infrastructure projects in cultural areas tend to create disorder and trigger spatial conflicts.

The disorganized environment of the Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas palace area is not only caused by increasing economic activities but also by weak supervision, lack of awareness among stakeholders, and failed development planning. The reorganization of the palace area will succeed if there is synergy between managers, the government, vendors, and the community in the form of clear regulations, environmental education, and consistent supervision.

#### **4. Strategic recommendations for the development of the palace area**

Based on the dynamics occurring in the Keraton Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas area, particularly after the relocation of traders into the palace area due to the stalled Sambas *Waterfront* project, as well as increasing issues of cleanliness and disorder in the area, strategic, collaborative, and sustainable efforts are needed. The following recommendations have been formulated to address the issues that have arisen:

a. Redesign of Vendor Locations

To preserve the aesthetic and sacred value of the Alwatzikhoebillah Royal Palace, a new mapping and zoning plan for vendors is needed. Food and beverage vendors can be positioned along specific routes outside the core palace area.

b. Revitalization and Completion of the *Waterfront* Project

The local government must expedite the evaluation and re-planning of the stalled Sambas *Waterfront* project. If the project cannot be continued, the site should

be repurposed as an economic *buffer* zone to ensure the core area of the palace remains free from commercial activity.

c. Enforcement of Rules and Cleanliness

The palace management must begin enforcing written regulations, such as prohibiting certain types of goods (heavy food) and requiring vendors to keep their sales areas clean. Administrative sanctions such as written warnings or revocation of permits must be enforced for violations. Data shows that vendors and visitors often ignore the trash bins provided, and no concrete action has been taken by the management.

d. Involvement of the PERKIMLH Department in Spatial Planning & Supervision

In addition to merely sending weekly sanitation workers, the PERKIMLH Department needs to be more actively involved in designing the area's spatial planning system and waste management. The inadequate placement of trash bins and low cleaning frequency contribute to the area's unsanitary conditions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Economic activities in the Keraton Alwatzikhoebillah Sambas area have undergone significant changes from 2019 to 2022. Initially, restrictions on the types of goods sold and the locations of economic activities outside the Keraton area helped maintain the cleanliness and aesthetic appeal of the area. However, after vendors were relocated into the Keraton area due to the stalled *Waterfront* project, irregularities emerged, leading to a decline in the environmental quality and aesthetic appeal of the Keraton area. Litter scattered everywhere, unorganized vendor stalls, and weak supervision indicate that economic activities without proper management are damaging the cultural and visual value of the area. Low awareness among visitors and vendors regarding cleanliness further exacerbates this situation. Therefore, the planning of the palace area requires strengthened regulations, strategic planning, and active participation from all parties to ensure that the cultural value and appeal of the area are preserved.

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