



The Relevance of Bourdieu's Theory in Examining The Dynamics of Social Practices in Malang Thematic Villages : *Sapa Sing Duwe Modal, Sapa Sing Bisa Urip*

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Abstract

This article examines how Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, focusing on habitus, capital, and field, can be applied to analyze the dynamics of success and failure in the development of thematic villages in Malang City. The study uses Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih as case studies to understand how community social practices are shaped and constrained by the distribution of social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital within the tourism development field. It also examines how habitus, formed through past life experiences, influences the community's capacity to respond to thematic village initiatives. Using a qualitative approach through literature review and field observation, the study finds that top-down development interventions do not automatically lead to sustainable change when there is no balanced exchange of capital between external actors and residents. In both cases, the communities lacked sufficient social and cultural capital to manage tourism independently, and the development field failed to provide a reflective space for building a new habitus aligned with their roles as tourism actors. A reflection on Bourdieu's theory suggests that the failure of social transformation in thematic villages is not merely due to weak policy structures, but also because social practices lack adequate capital to compete in a new field. This study emphasizes the need to consider power relations and capital distribution in community-based tourism development so that initiated programs are symbolic and rooted in sustainable social practice.

Keywords : thematic village; social practices; transformation; Pierre Bourdieu; tourism development

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, thematic villages have become a community-based development model spreading across various urban areas in Indonesia (Triyono 2020). This phenomenon did not arise by chance but is rooted in President Jokowi Widodo's initiative during his tenure as Governor of DKI Jakarta, which led to the construction of 100 thematic villages in 2013 (Herawati, N. R. 2023). In 2017, Malang City began a path of non-natural tourism development through the establishment of thematic villages, which, at the time, became tourist attractions. In line with the objectives of thematic villages, as cited in the Sukowati (2022) study, to improve the quality of residential areas and make them more livable, thematic villages are also expected to encourage community participation and involvement, particularly in socio-economic aspects, in line with each village's potential. This idea is then closely related to other settlement revitalization programs, such as KOTAKU (City Without Slums), which have a similar orientation (Ngastawa 2020).

In practice, KOTAKU provides space for visual changes in residential areas through painting, repairing drainage systems, and building green open spaces (Elisabet, 2019). However, criticism of this program highlights that most of its interventions only focus on physical improvements, without being accompanied by strengthening community capacity, which, within the framework of Bourdieu's theory of social practice, can be understood through the concepts of social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital (Dini et al. 2022). When development interventions focus on surface appearances and ignore the capital structures that underpin social practices, thematic villages not only miss out on long-term transformative potential but also get stuck in symbolic practices that cannot change the community's position in the arena of community-based tourism development. In this arena, the dominant logic that prioritizes aesthetics and commodification often clashes with the community's real conditions, habitus, and capital capacity, resulting in passive, unsustainable community participation.

This condition is reflected in the rapid development of thematic villages in Malang City, especially in areas geographically close to one another. These villages grew through a similar development approach, namely emphasizing the visual arrangement of settlements as a community-based tourist attraction. However, an approach that is overly focused on esthetics without accompanying strengthening of social and institutional capacity in the community

yields varied results. Not all villages can survive or achieve social and economic sustainability for their communities, as evidenced by their varying success in managing thematic programs sustainably. One example of this success is Kampung Tridi and Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan, which have become new tourism icons for Malang City by attracting tourists and boosting the local economy. This success then became a model replicated by other villages, including Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih. However, these two villages exhibit different dynamics despite being geographically close and within the same watershed. This difference reflects inadequate structural support, weak resource ownership, and the failure to develop new mindsets and practices that support sustainable social transformation. In other words, the success of thematic villages is not only determined by their location and physical appearance, but also depends on the extent to which the community has the capacity to shape, manage, and sustain its new role in community-based tourism management.

Based on this reality, this article aims to examine how Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice can be used to understand the dynamics of success and failure in the development of thematic villages in Malang City. This approach views social practices as shaped by the relationships among habitus, capital, and the arena, the space where they unfold (Rahmawati 2020). In the context of thematic villages, the community's habitus is shaped by historical experiences and daily life structures, while social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital determine the extent to which the community can actively participate in tourism management.

The cases of Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih show that without adequate capital ownership, strong institutional support, and the formation of a new, appropriate habitus, sustainable social transformation efforts become challenging to achieve. To better understand this phenomenon, this article offers a new perspective on the development of thematic villages. The novelty of this research lies in applying Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice to understand thematic villages as social spaces shaped by long-term processes rather than solely by physical and aesthetic arrangements. This aligns with the findings of (Oka et al. 2019, in Listyorini et al. 2021), which show that the success of developing a tourist village is highly influenced by the sustainability of management and the active participation of the community.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach to discuss and answer the issues raised in the article, specifically regarding the social dynamics in the development of thematic villages in Malang City. The qualitative method was chosen because it is capable of providing an in-depth understanding of the meaning of a social phenomenon within its natural context. In qualitative research, the data used is non-numerical, such as text, images, or recordings, and is analyzed using an inductive approach to understand social reality contextually (Niam et al. 2024). In other words, the focus of this approach is not on testing hypotheses, but rather on exploring the meaning and social dynamics that emerge from people's interactions within their living spaces.

In this study, a literature review approach was used as the primary data collection technique. A literature review allows researchers to trace and examine various sources of literature relevant to the research focus. According to Sugiyono, a literature study is a method aimed at exploring theories and references related to values, norms, and culture in a specific social situation (Sugiyono in Sari et al. 2023). To that end, the researcher collected data from various written sources such as books, scientific articles, and theses relevant to the topic being discussed. This literature study procedure is carried out systematically, starting with formulating research questions, establishing literature criteria, selecting relevant library sources, evaluating data quality, analyzing the literature, and finally compiling the findings (Elkins in Saputra & Sunarya 2024).

All collected data were analyzed to answer the research questions posed in the study. The analysis in this study uses the framework of social practice theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu. This theory was chosen because it can explain how social practices are formed through the relationship between habitus, capital, and the social arena, and how power structures and capital exchange influence the success or failure of a development initiative. The researcher also conducted direct observations at the research locations, namely Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih in Malang City, to complete the library data. In addition, comparative observations were also made at Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan and Kampung Tridi, which are geographically close. This observation aims to understand the current situation, compare field conditions, and strengthen the analysis presented in this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formation of Thematic Village Habitus Before External Intervention

Before becoming tourist destinations, the lives of people in thematic villages in Malang City, such as Jodipan Colorful Village, Tridi Village, Arema Blue Village, and White Village, had similar social characteristics. The four villages are located along the Brantas Riverbank and are part of a densely populated area with a relatively low level of economic well-being (Kistanti 2019). This geographical location also shapes the lifestyle of the urban poor, who are mostly migrants and work in the informal sector, such as day laborers, street vendors, or other odd jobs. They also tend to have limited levels of education and skills, resulting in low social participation in community activities.

Historically, these villages developed as a form of survival for communities that did not have access to decent housing in the city center. As a result, they live in unhealthy environmental conditions with minimal infrastructure. For example, Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan and Kampung Tridi were formerly known as "slum" areas and were even nicknamed "criminal villages" because they were often used for drinking, gambling, and other deviant social activities (Topandean 2022). The head of the Kampung Tridi community stated that before their village became a tourist village, many residents did not have stable jobs and were often involved in deviant behavior in public spaces. Not only are people in this area experiencing economic poverty, but they are also experiencing social and symbolic marginalization. Negative stigmas like "thug village," "pickpocket village," or "slum village" are strongly attached to their identity. The people here are often identified as part of the "*wong cilik*" or the marginalized lower class. This identity indicates that before the area became a thematic village, its residents were in a subordinate position within the broader urban social structure, both in terms of access to public services and social representation.

This lifestyle is a manifestation of an old habitus formed through daily life experiences and interactions with the social environment. Bourdieu explains that habitus is formed through historicity and the unconscious incorporation of values from past experiences (Bourdieu 1990). For example, the low environmental awareness, evident in the habit of dumping waste into rivers and poor sanitation in the area, is part of an old habitus that has been internalized into daily life (Syauqiyyah 2021). Before the KOTAKU program was introduced, the government

showed limited attention to those villages. This area is often even considered a "burden on the city," impacting the formation of structural inequality in access to public services and the right to urban space (Sinaga 2025).

However, within these limitations, social practices began to emerge that formed the initial potential for social capital. In Kampung Putih, for example, the community already has a habit of setting aside money to buy cement and bricks to build boundary foundations along the riverbank. In Kampung Biru Arema, the community has started planting using vertical gardening as an effort to improve air quality in the narrow alleys. Although it seems simple, this habit is the seed of new collective values that could potentially support change as the village is transformed into a tourist destination. Even in Kampung Tridi, the habit of people gathering for casual daily activities without a formal agenda also contributes to building strong social bonds among the community.

Social Transformation in Thematic Villages: Reading Habitus, Capital, and Arena through the Lens of Bourdieu

Changes in individual habits cannot happen drastically in a short amount of time, especially when an environment previously inhabited only by the local community is suddenly crowded with tourists passing through the narrow alleys of a thematic village. Therefore, as the village undergoes physical and social functional changes to become a tourist destination, the community cannot immediately adapt to the various new demands. The adjustment process takes time because old habits still persist in daily life. Since 2018, eleven thematic villages have been recorded, spread across various areas of Malang City (DPU-PRPKP Kota Malang 2018). This program is part of a community-based residential area development policy aimed at increasing the city's tourism appeal (Pratama 2024). However, not all thematic villages have managed to survive and develop sustainably. Although Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan, Kampung Tridi, Kampung Biru Arema, and Kampung Putih started from relatively the same point, their development as tourist destinations shows different results.



Figure 1. (Eleven thematic villages are scattered throughout Malang City)

Source: Malang City Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency

Success is demonstrated by Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan and Kampung Tridi, both located in Blimbings District, Malang City. The transformation of Jodipan Colorful Village began with an initiative by students from the University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) who partnered with PT Indiana Paint through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program. This initiative transformed the village's appearance, making it more visually appealing and turning it into a popular tourist destination (Wulandari 2017). Seeing this success, the community of Kampung Tridi, which is geographically close, was encouraged to independently develop the concept of a thematic village. They then gained support from the city government and CSR to realize the plan. Because they are separated by the Brantas River, these two villages were eventually connected by an iconic glass bridge, which is now a major attraction for tourists.



Figure 2. Jodipan Colorful Village and Tridi Village

Source: Personal Documentation

The success of these two thematic villages lies not only in their visual appeal but also in their community-based management model. The two villages located in the strategically important area of Malang City Center remain active tourist destinations for both domestic and foreign visitors. The area is managed directly by the community through organizations that regulate the entrance ticket system, parking management, culinary and souvenir business units, and routine maintenance of the village's appearance (Nafisah et al. 2021). Community involvement from the planning stage fosters a strong sense of ownership and collective commitment to maintaining and developing thematic villages. This activity promotes consistent local economic circulation, particularly through the contribution of the informal sector and tourism activities. Although it doesn't fully support the residents' livelihoods, this achievement is still better than other thematic villages that have stagnated. This proves that active community involvement in management not only supports program sustainability but also strengthens social and economic resilience at the community level.

Moving across to Kampung Biru Arema, although the village looks clean and well-maintained, the community briefly attempted to make it a tourist destination by implementing an entrance fee system. However, they felt that the visual icons they had were not strong enough to attract tourists. Some ride development plans also didn't go as expected, so the initiative didn't continue. In response, the community chose to beautify the environment for the sake of collective comfort. The village remains open to tourists without an entrance fee, and visitors are warmly welcomed. This indicates that new values related to tourism have not been fully internalized into the customs and perspectives of the community. Nevertheless, a new awareness is emerging in daily life, such as arranging vehicles so they don't block the road and not hanging clothes, especially underwear, in areas easily visible to visitors.



Figure 3. Arema Blue Village

Source: Personal Documentation

Unlike Kampung Biru Arema, Kampung Putih saw a different form of response to the thematic village program. Although this village did not become a tourist destination as expected, the community demonstrated a fairly strong effort toward social transformation. They are not only tidying up the village, but also actively working to change the negative image that used to stick. White was chosen as a symbol of cleanliness and as a form of resistance against the stigma of being a "slum." Even after the tourism program didn't go as planned, the

community continued their village improvement initiatives independently, such as advocating for the construction of public facilities and maintaining environmental cleanliness. Although some of these facilities may not last long, the collective spirit of improving the village remains strong.



Figure 4. Kampung Putih

Source: Personal Documentation

Both Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih demonstrate that the community is beginning to internalize new values and take on roles in changes that reflect the formation of a new habitus, including an awareness of order, esthetics, and social responsibility, although the direction of these changes is not yet fully focused on tourism practices. Within the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's social practice, the success or failure of a development intervention is not solely determined by material factors, but also by how various forms of capital, such as economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, can be possessed, managed, and converted by individuals and groups within a specific social arena. Capital is a resource that opens access to various social opportunities, and its use is heavily influenced by habitus, which are dispositions formed through life experiences and the historical structures of society (Jatmiko & Abdullah 2021).

Economic capital includes material assets such as money, means of production, and inheritable wealth that can be directly converted into a medium of exchange. This capital is

important because it can provide access to other forms of capital, while also reflecting a person's or group's economic position (Fardiana 2020). Meanwhile, social capital encompasses all resources derived from social networks built on trust, solidarity, and mutual recognition. Social capital is collective and can be converted into other forms of capital, such as cultural and symbolic capital (Owa & Leda 2023). On the other hand, cultural capital reflects the values, norms, and abilities that have been internalized in individuals' habits and behaviors, such as the way they speak, think, and act, which are valued in a specific social context. Cultural capital can also be seen in a person's ability to symbolically influence other groups, especially when it has become ingrained in the body and mind as a social disposition (Haerussaleh & Huda 2021).

Symbolic capital provides additional meaning to other forms of capital through the social recognition granted by society (Fatmawati & Sholikin 2020). This capital only works when other social actors trust the value of the individual's capital. As stated by Bourdieu, symbolic capital is "credit, a kind of advance given only by the group to those who provide the best material and symbolic guarantees." Recognition of this social capital is contextual, depending on the arena in which it is used (Meissner, 2021, p. 181, citing Bourdieu, 1972/1977).

In the context of Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih in Malang City, the formation of thematic villages is carried out through collaboration between the Malang City Government and PT Indiana Paint in the KOTAKU (City Without Slums) program. The main goal is to make the village a creative tourism destination while also erasing the image of a slum village, as described by Rachmawati and Sutikno (2022). This project emerged as a direct initiative of the Malang City Government, which was actively promoting the city's tourism image through the development of the Sasongko Thematic Village (Sasongko, I. 2023), particularly to match the success of the nearby Colorful Jodipan Village and Tridi Village (Idris et al. 2019). Unfortunately, this technocratic approach only emphasizes visual aesthetics such as house painting and murals with Arema themes or a white Santorini-like atmosphere, without building social readiness or a supporting societal habitus. One form of this constraint is evident in how the community interprets the tourism potential of their village in daily practice. In both of these villages, the community feels they have nothing worth selling to tourists besides the

blue or white painted houses. The absence of other tourism content, such as narratives, cultural performances, or unique physical attractions, made them feel it was inappropriate to charge admission fees. The plan for educational attractions or installations also failed to materialize, further fueling public doubt about the potential of their village as a tourist destination. In this situation, even though all the assistance is available, both from the government and CSR, the exchange of social capital in both villages remains very thin. The external support provided was also not routine, resulting in intervention outcomes that were not optimal and inconsistent. The relationship between deeply ingrained habits and the tourism arena has not yet formed the capital strength capable of fully empowering the community. Not only that, the formation of new habitus is also not sustainable, so the changes that occur tend to be superficial. The absence of a participatory system and weak internal capacity building have made social transformation in both villages unsustainable in the long run. Not only that, the formation of new habitus is also not sustainable, so the changes that occur tend to be superficial. The absence of a participatory system and weak internal capacity building have made social transformation in both villages unsustainable in the long run.

This contrasts with Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan and Kampung Tridi, which not only rely on colorful visual displays but also have additional selling points such as a glass bridge and jaranan performances. These two villages were able to convert their social capital into symbolic and economic capital due to the active involvement of various endorsers such as academics, local government, and CSR (Rachmawati & Sutikno 2022). The cultural capital of the community is also developed through village identity narratives and the strengthening of collective pride. Their symbolic capital grew in tandem with public recognition of the success of the participatory and sustainable transformations they had undertaken.

The social dynamics in the development of thematic villages in Malang City, particularly Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih, can also be analyzed through the social arena approach within Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice. The arena is a social space where interaction, capital exchange, and struggle take place between social actors with different habitus, social positions, and capital ownership. In the arena, there are rules of the game and power relations that determine who can play a dominant role, who is marginalized,

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and how the distribution of capital influences the direction of social change (Bourdieu, 2005, as cited in Wiranata & MA 2020; Wati 2015 as cited in Fredianto & Septiawan 2020).

In the context of thematic village tourism in Malang City, the arena that is formed is a community-based tourism arena, where actors such as the community, government, academics, CSR, and the media interact and compete in determining the narrative, development direction, and promotion strategies of the village (Akbar 2018; Idris Ati & Abidin 2019). However, this arena is not completely open to all actors on an equal basis. For example, Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih entered this arena not with the capital they built themselves, but through external, top-down pressure. Due to the absence of a strong process of forming new habitus and balanced exchange of capital in that arena, their position tends to be weak, and they are unable to compete independently. Society does not fully understand the rules of the game in the tourism arena, so they are unable to leverage its social or cultural capital.

Conversely, Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan and Kampung Tridi are able to manage the thematic village tourism arena more actively and participatively. Social capital formed through networks with students, the community, and the media was successfully converted into widely recognized symbolic capital. This gives them a stronger position in the arena, while also increasing their chances of maintaining the sustainability of their village's tourism

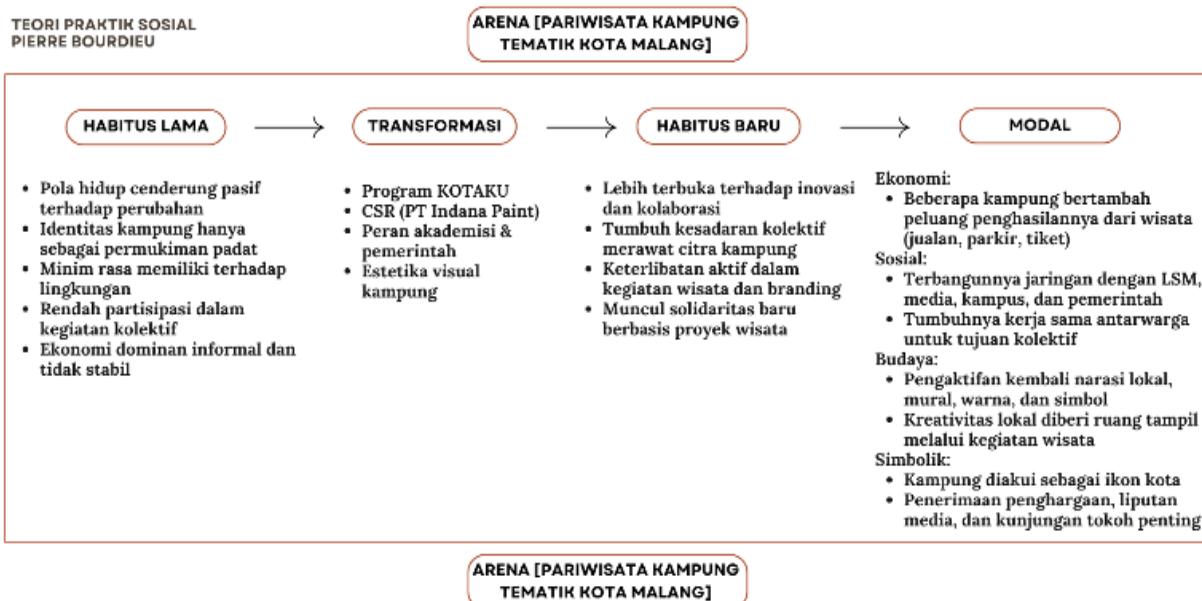


Figure 5. Bourdieu's social theory scheme in thematic village tourism in Malang City.

The fundamental problem arising from the thematic village tourism sector in Malang City is the tendency toward visual standardization as the primary approach. When almost all villages are instructed to highlight a specific paint color or mural as their main attraction, the arena becomes homogeneous and full of symbolic competition. Disparities between actors are also becoming more apparent because not all villages have the same level of social preparedness, organizational capacity, or external support. In this narrow and non-inclusive arena, thematic villages that lack narrative uniqueness or social advantages will find it difficult to survive in the long run.

Therefore, there needs to be a shift in approach when building thematic village tourism arenas so that they not only focus on aesthetics, but also open up wider spaces for community participation to define the uniqueness and identity of their village themselves. Every village must have unique characteristics shaped by local history, cultural values, and community strengths, so that the tourism arena does not become an uneven playing field of competition, but rather a collaborative space that allows for fair and sustainable exchange of capital. By understanding that the arena is a space filled with power relations and not just a physical space, development interventions cannot be determined solely from the outside. Society needs to be prepared to understand the rules, develop capacity, and actively participate in order to position itself within the arena. Otherwise, the village will only become a passive backdrop for a visually beautiful but socially fragile urban tourism project

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, through the concepts of habitus, capital, and arena, is highly relevant in analyzing the dynamics of success and failure of thematic villages in Malang City. The failure of Kampung Biru Arema and Kampung Putih as alternative tourist destinations is not solely due to program weaknesses or limitations in physical facilities, but also to the weak exchange of capital and the lack of a new habitus that supports social change. Social practices in both villages take place in a more homogeneous arena that emphasizes visual standards rather than opening up space for community creativity.

This condition is not unrelated to the top-down approach in the early stages of development. This project was initiated directly by the Malang City Government as part of a strategy to promote the city's tourism through the development of thematic villages. However, due to the limited space for community participation in defining their own village identity, the

social practices that emerge tend to be fragile and unsustainable, and even tend to fail. Conversely, the success of Kampung Warna-warni Jodipan and Kampung Tridi demonstrates the community's resilience in building the villages participatively. The bottom-up process allows for good conversion of social and cultural capital, which is reflected in the active involvement of the community from the beginning.

Reflection on Bourdieu's theory confirms that the sustainability of thematic village tourism cannot solely rely on visual appearance or aesthetic appeal, but requires the formation of new habitus and social structures that enable the local community to manage their existing capital effectively and sustainably. Therefore, thematic village development interventions should not treat communities as objects of change, but as active subjects involved in the planning process, decision-making, and long-term management.

Thus, Bourdieu's theory of social practice not only serves as an analytical tool but can also be practically implemented in designing more inclusive and contextual socio-economic development strategies. This approach encourages planners, researchers, and policymakers to view communities not merely as beneficiaries, but as social actors with their own unique histories, capital structures, and habitus. In the context of thematic village development and other forms of social intervention, applying this theory can strengthen the foundation for more sustainable change by promoting capital exchange, creating heterogeneous arenas, and fostering new habitus that align with the needs and aspirations of the local community. This is the important contribution of social science in bridging the gap between critical analysis and practical solutions for just and sustainable development.

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