

The Perspective of Aesthetic Arena within the Budaya Pulo Reconstruction Movement in Kepulauan Seribu, Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

Based on participatory observation in Kepulauan Seribu, Jakarta, initially conducted in 2023, it was found that the island residents, referred to as Orang Pulo, have been carrying out a Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement to respond to environmental and identity problems that have been recognized since the early 2000s. The movement is based on initiatives from local community members who then opened space for collaboration with various parties from outside the islands. This article aims to examine how Orang Pulo have developed and carried out their cultural reconstruction independently and organically, including by incorporating arts activities into the movement. The analysis uses a qualitative approach by observing the series of movements from 2011 to 2025 and then analyzing them through a triangulation of art aesthetics and a social practice perspective. The analysis shows that cultural reconstruction brings out the potential of Orang Pulo in spatial, temporal, social, and cultural aspects. The perspective of "Aesthetic Arena" also emerges, fundamentally through the transmission of formalism and modality, expression and arena, and imitation through representation and habitus.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Pekan Kebudayaan Nasional (PKN) 2023, organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, participatory observation was conducted on Pulau Pramuka, Kepulauan Seribu-Jakarta, which was one of the locations of the program. PKN 2023 carried the theme “Merawat Bumi, Merawat Kebudayaan” (“Nurturing the Earth, Nurturing the Culture”). The observation was related to the Olahraga and Ruang Ekspresi Warga, subprograms of PKN 2023, which focused on strengthening local residents culturally within their living spaces. Olahraga facilitated the use of community spaces for art classes attended by local residents, while Ruang Ekspresi Warga facilitated the creation of artworks that expressed the community context and were then returned to the community (KEMENBUD, 2023; Setyanto23, p. 2).

Before PKN 2023 on Pulau Pramuka was carried out, the Olahraga and Ruang Ekspresi Warga team met with Ibu Mahariah, a local community figure, to discuss the design of arts and cultural activities that would position island residents as the main actors in their own space. She explained that since the late 1990s and early 2000s, residents of Pulau Pramuka and Pulau Panggang had faced environmental and identity problems (Setyanto23, pp. 3, 20). The environmental problems emerged from the accumulation of waste brought by tourists and waste from the sea that reached the islands through ocean currents. Meanwhile, the identity problem was related to cultural degradation resulting from the transformation of the islands from living/residential spaces into practical economic spaces associated with the development of marine tourism. The island residents themselves had faced these problems since 2011 by carrying out the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement under the title Hajatan Pulang Babang. The title was taken from the local term ‘Babang’, referring to the condition of fishermen who are at sea to catch fish (Mustaqiim, 2015), while Pulang Babang marks the fishermen’s return to the island after going to sea (Irsyad et al.12, p. 8).

After discussions with Ibu Mahariah, it was agreed to hold performing arts workshops covering theater and dance, as well as a craft workshop using recycled plastic waste, to create works telling the history and life of Orang Pulo (initially a term for residents of Pulau Panggang that later came to refer to residents of the inhabited islands in Kepulauan Seribu). It was also agreed to continue Hajatan Pulang Babang in line with the PKN 2023 momentum on Pulau Pramuka, which was then titled Hajatan Pulang Babang II. The event included historical tourism, cultural activities, environmental-based workshops, and a community arts stage (HT78, 2023).

The research in Kepulauan Seribu-Jakarta, namely on Pulau Pramuka and subsequently including Pulau Panggang, presented in this article is oriented toward knowledge production through the proposal of a theoretical framework and/or concept based on reading the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement. Based on tracing various data sources related to the research context, the movement was found to be grounded in island community members who independently and organically respond to their spatial, social, and cultural

problems. These problems emerge from the intertwining of natural dynamics and regulations. The environment of Kepulauan Seribu, consisting of marine and island environments, is part of Jakarta, which includes five municipalities and one regency, namely Kabupaten Kepulauan Seribu; Pulau Pramuka and Pulau Panggang are part of Kelurahan Pulau Panggang.

By building the reading around the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement, an understanding through transmission is projected to emerge between the theoretical/conceptual framework used and offered in this article and the reality in the research corpus/location. The reality referred to concerns the movement as a manifestation of island residents' efforts to respond to their problems internally and externally, with arts elements becoming part of the movement. The reading therefore moves toward arts and social scholarship, returning to the orientation of knowledge production. This is particularly related to the arts content within the movement as a response to regulatory formalities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous discussions of Pulo, Orang Pulo, and Budaya Pulo in books, articles, and reports have contributed to an understanding of local history and culture, artistic practices, and collaborative processes within the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement. Taken together, these sources provide historical, cultural, and empirical foundations for examining artistic practices in relation to community life and the broader cultural movement.

The book *Orang Pulo di Pulo Karang* provides a foundation of local knowledge for understanding the relationship between Orang Pulo traditions, cultural practices, and local life. *Buku Saku Kelurahan Pulau Panggang* extends this foundation by discussing the formation and transmission of Orang Pulo cultural identity through historical trajectories and collective experiences. These two sources support an understanding of Budaya Pulo as cultural knowledge and practice shaped by residents' lived experiences and transmitted across generations.

The discussion of artistic practices in Pulo related to Pulau Babang, presented in *Dampak Seni di Masyarakat*, provides an empirical foundation for understanding residents' involvement in cultural research, artwork development, and collaborative performances. Meanwhile, the report on the Ruang Ekspresi Warga subprogram documents the collaborative process involved in developing the performing artwork *Balada Janda Mengandang*. These two sources help explain artistic practice as a process involving residents, local knowledge, and relationships among various parties within the cultural movement.

Turning to an academic reading of art aesthetics, Braembussche (2009) discusses the perspectives of formalism, expression, and imitation. In this article, the aesthetic discussion begins with formalism, which focuses on the perceptible aspects of an artwork and the relationships among its constituent elements. The discussion of formalism opens into expression, which refers to the articulation of the artist's "inner reality" in relation to the "outer reality" surrounding them. The relationship between these two realities opens the discussion of imitation, which

concerns mimesis and the representation of reality. These three perspectives provide a foundation for examining performing artworks at each stage of the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement.

Later, Bourdieu's perspective on social practice provides a foundation for examining cultural practices through the concepts of modalities, arena, and habitus (Barker, 2004) (McRobbie, 2005). In the context of Pulo, modalities relate to local knowledge and traditions, social networks, economic conditions, and recognition of cultural heritage. Arena refers to a relational space in which residents, cultural practitioners, and parties from outside Pulo meet, collaborate, and negotiate their interests within the movement. Habitus provides a perspective for understanding dispositions in action that develop through Orang Pulo's lived experiences, including how they respond to environmental and social changes and carry out cultural practices in continually evolving circumstances.

Previous sources and these two theoretical foundations provide the basis for developing the Aesthetic Arena perspective proposed in this article. The triangulation of art aesthetics and Bourdieu's perspective on social practice are brought into theoretical transmission as a conceptual foundation for examining artistic practices within the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement. Through this transmission, the article proposes Aesthetic Arena as a perspective that extends the examination of the relationship between the aesthetics of artworks and social practice within a cultural reconstruction movement.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement from 2011 to 2025, with an emphasis on artistic practices within the movement. The research was conducted on Pulau Pramuka and Pulau Panggang, Kepulauan Seribu, Jakarta. The research object is the series of three stages in the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement, while the research topic focuses on the artistic practices within it. The analysis centres on the staging of three performing artworks: *Orang Pulo di Pulo Karang*, *Balada Janda Mengandang*, and *Yang Tinggal dan Yang Meninggalkan*.

Data were collected through participatory observation and a literature review. Observation was conducted in October–November 2025 and March 2026, while participation in Pekan Kebudayaan Nasional (PKN) 2023 and a visit in September 2024 were positioned as preliminary research. The observations included conversations with community figures, cultural practitioners, and residents; participation in community, environmental, and cultural activities; and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with residents. The literature review covered documentation of the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement from 2011 to 2025, comprising *Hajatan Pulang Babang* (2011–2013), the environmental conservation movement (2014–2022), *Hajatan Pulang Babang II* (2023), and *Festival Berayanan* (2025).

Data analysis was conducted through the transmission of the triangulation of art aesthetics—imitation, expression, and formalism—with Bourdieu's perspective on social practice. The three aesthetic perspectives were used to examine artistic representation in the performances, including mimesis and

representation, the articulation of “inner reality” in relation to “outer reality,” and the elements and aesthetic values of the artworks. The social practice perspective was used to examine the arena of the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement through modalities (cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital), as well as habitus. The transmission of these two perspectives provides the analytical foundation for developing Aesthetic Arena.

The research findings are presented through a historiographic periodisation of the histories of Pulau Panggang, Pulau Pramuka, and Pulau Karya, drawing on the principle of history as thought. This periodisation covers the period before cultural reconstruction, including the early history of Pulau Panggang, the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods, and the post-independence period; and the period of cultural reconstruction, comprising Hajatan Pulang Babang, the environmental conservation movement, Hajatan Pulang Babang II, and Festival Berayanan. This periodisation provides a context for examining the three performing artworks in relation to the broader Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement.

RESULTS

The findings show that the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement developed through three stages between 2011 and 2025. Stage I comprised Hajatan Pulang Babang (2011–2013), which involved cultural research, arts and creative-industry workshops, and the creation and staging of the performing artwork *Orang Pulo di Pulo Karang*, featuring Babang and Babung as its main characters. This stage was followed by the environmental conservation movement (2014–2022), which expanded waste management into environmental education, conservation activities, and partnerships. Stage II was marked by Hajatan Pulang Babang II (2023), which continued the movement through cultural activities, environment-based workshops, and the performing artwork *Balada Janda Mengandang*. Stage III was marked by Festival Berayanan (2025), which involved residents in identifying local spatial and social issues and developing cultural activities grounded in everyday practices, including the performance *Yang Tinggal dan Yang Meninggalkan*. Across these three stages, cultural, environmental, and artistic practices developed as interrelated aspects of the movement involving residents and various parties from outside Pulo.

The three performing artworks present different conditions in Pulo. *Orang Pulo di Pulo Karang* presents a situational condition related to Pulo’s transformation from a residential space into a tourist destination. *Balada Janda Mengandang* represents the history, lives, and traditions of Orang Pulo in relation to environmental issues and identity. *Yang Tinggal dan Yang Meninggalkan* presents a factual condition concerning spaces related to the pier on Pulau Pramuka and residential areas on Pulau Panggang. Together, these artworks show how artistic practices bring the realities of life, cultural knowledge, and changing conditions of Orang Pulo into performing art.

These findings provide the foundation for proposing Aesthetic Arena through the transmission of the triangulation of art aesthetics and Bourdieu’s perspective on social practice. This transmission establishes three conceptual

relationships: formalism and modalities, expression and arena, and imitation through representation and habitus. These relationships provide a way to examine the aesthetic dimensions of performing artworks in relation to the social and cultural dynamics of the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement. Accordingly, Aesthetic Arena is proposed as a perspective for reading artistic practices in relation to the broader cultural movement, connecting perceptible elements of artworks, realities articulated through performance, and representations of cultural traditions with the social practices of Orang Pulo.

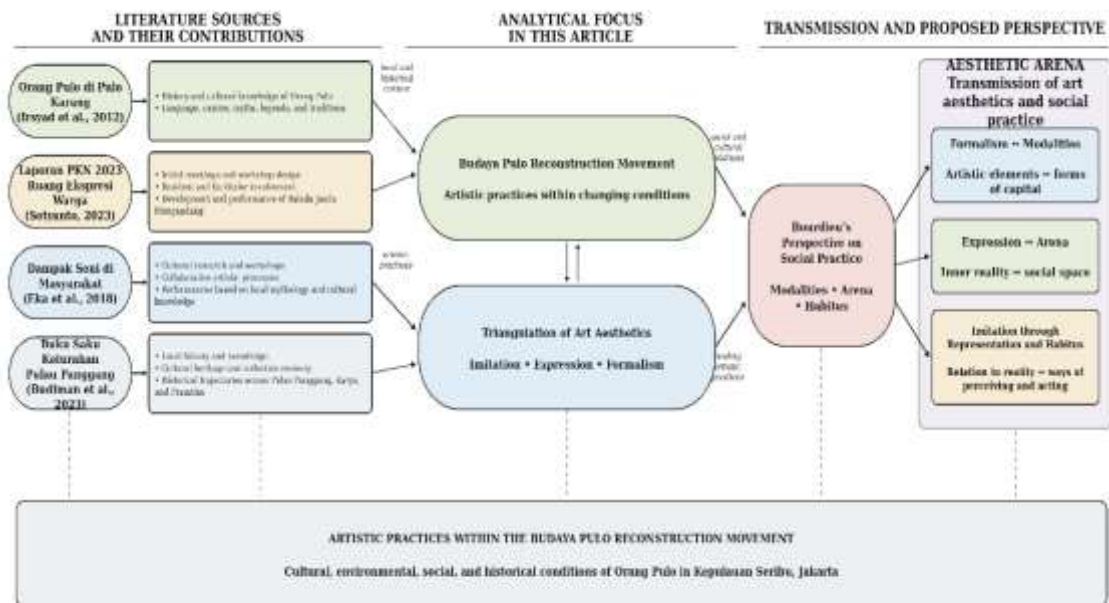


Figure 1. Conceptual framework based on the article's literature, research findings, and theoretical transmission

DISCUSSION

The three performing artworks within the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement demonstrate artistic practices related to the living conditions of Orang Pulo. These practices can be examined through the intra-aesthetic elements of the artworks, including settings, performers and costumes, utterances, and supporting elements of the performances. These elements form the artistic composition of each work while presenting the realities of life and cultural knowledge that are part of Orang Pulo's experiences. Drawing on Braembussche, a formalist reading directs attention to the relationships among the elements that constitute an artwork; expression concerns the articulation of inner reality in relation to outer reality; while imitation through representation reveals how the realities of life and tradition are presented in the works. These three perspectives open a reading of the aesthetic dimensions of performing artworks in relation to Orang Pulo's lived experiences and cultural context.

This reading is subsequently transmitted through the perspective of social practice to examine the relationship between artistic practices and the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement. The movement demonstrates the involvement of

residents, cultural practitioners, and parties from outside Pulo in activities related to culture, the environment, and social life. In this context, modalities direct attention to the resources present within the movement, arena refers to the relational space in which various parties meet and pursue their interests, while habitus concerns dispositions in action that develop through Orang Pulo's lived experiences. Artistic practices can therefore be read in relation to the resources, relationships, and experiences accompanying the cultural reconstruction movement. This reading brings together the artistic dimensions of the works and the socio-cultural context in which they develop.

Based on these relationships, the article proposes Aesthetic Arena through the transmission of the triangulation of art aesthetics and Bourdieu's perspective on social practice. This transmission establishes three conceptual relationships: formalism and modalities, expression and arena, and imitation through representation and habitus. The relationship between formalism and modalities opens a reading of the artistic elements of the works in relation to the resources present within the movement; expression and arena connect the realities articulated through the works with the relational space in which cultural practices take place; while imitation through representation and habitus directs attention to representations of tradition and the realities of life in relation to Orang Pulo's experiences and dispositions in action. Through this transmission, Aesthetic Arena is proposed as a perspective for examining the relationship between the aesthetic dimensions of artworks and social practice within the Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Budaya Pulo reconstruction movement demonstrates artistic practice as part of a cultural process related to environmental change, identity, and the social lives of Orang Pulo. Through three performing artworks created between 2011 and 2025, artistic practice provides a space for presenting the living conditions, cultural knowledge, and experiences of Orang Pulo.

This article proposes Aesthetic Arena as a perspective for examining the relationship between the aesthetics of artworks and social practice within a cultural reconstruction movement. This perspective is developed through the transmission of the triangulation of art aesthetics and Bourdieu's thinking on social practice, enabling artworks to be examined in relation to the socio-cultural dynamics in which they develop.

FURTHER STUDY

The development of artistic practices within cultural reconstruction movements should continue to provide space for residents' involvement, local knowledge, and the environmental and social conditions that shape community life. In academic research, Aesthetic Arena can be further developed to examine the relationship between artistic and social practices across diverse cultural contexts.

This study still has limitations, so further research on The Perspective of Aesthetic Arena within the Budaya Pulo Reconstruction Movement in

Kepulauan Seribu, Jakarta is needed to refine the proposed perspective and broaden its application. Future studies may examine other cultural reconstruction movements to explore how the transmission between art aesthetics and social practice emerges within different spatial, temporal, social, and cultural conditions. This further investigation may enhance the understanding of Aesthetic Arena as a perspective for examining artistic practices within community-based cultural reconstruction.

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