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# Habitus in Rewang as a Manifestation of Community Solidarity

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the practice of *rewang* (collective help) in Ngelo village, Indonesia with the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. *Rewang* is a form of *gotongroyong* (mutual assistance and community solidarity), a core value in Javanese culture, where villagers come together to assist one another during significant life events. This research is a qualitative study and uses case study approach. This research draws on interviews with informants and direct field observation to explore how *rewang* shapes and reflects the habitus of individuals within the community. The findings reveal that *rewang* serves as a site where habitus is formed, reinforced, and negotiated, contributing to the reproduction of social structures and cultural values. The practice fosters social cohesion by strengthening community bonds, reinforcing collective identity, and facilitating the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. The gendered division of labor within *rewang* highlights retained social norms and expectations, while also reinforcing the valued contributions of both men and women in maintaining social harmony.

## ABSTRAK

Makalah ini menyediakan *template* untuk menyiapkan makalah untuk produksi elektronik Filitra Cultura Journal. Abstrak yang disiapkan dengan baik memungkinkan pembaca untuk mengidentifikasi konten dasar suatu dokumen dengan cepat dan akurat, untuk menentukan relevansinya dengan minat mereka, dan dengan demikian memutuskan apakah akan membaca dokumen tersebut secara keseluruhan. Abstrak harus informatif dan sepenuhnya dapat dijelaskan sendiri, memberikan pernyataan yang jelas tentang masalah, pendekatan atau solusi yang diusulkan, dan menunjukkan temuan utama dan ringkasan kesimpulan yang berdampak. Abstrak tidak boleh lebih dari 250 kata. Abstrak harus ditulis dalam bentuk lampau. Tata nama standar harus digunakan dan singkatan harus dihindari. Tidak ada literatur yang boleh dikutip. Daftar kata kunci memberikan kesempatan untuk menambahkan kata kunci, yang digunakan oleh layanan pengindeksan dan pengabstraksian, selain yang sudah ada dalam judul. Penggunaan kata kunci yang bijaksana dapat meningkatkan kemudahan bagi pihak yang berkepentingan untuk menemukan artikel kami.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Life in rural Javanese villages presents a stark contrast to the urban experience, characterized by distinct social structures, values, and practices. While cities are often defined by individualism, anonymity, and a fast-paced lifestyle, village life revolves around close-knit communities, shared traditions, and a strong emphasis on collective well-being. In these tightly-bound communities, social interactions are guided by long-established norms and customs, with a deep respect for elders and a shared commitment to mutual assistance. This spirit of community solidarity is particularly evident in the tradition of *rewang*, a collective labor practice where villagers come together to help one another during important life events and communal activities.

*Rewang* exemplifies the enduring local wisdom of Javanese villages. Local wisdom encompasses the accumulated knowledge, values, and practices passed down through generations, guiding their way of life and ensuring their well-being (Rachmadyanti, 2017). One of the most prominent manifestations of this wisdom is the concept of gotong royong, which can be manifested through the practice of *rewang*. *Gotong royong*, as described by Sagjoyo (1999), is a customary practice of mutual assistance embedded in various social activities, encompassing kinship ties, neighborly relations, and practical collaborations. Koentjaraningrat (1983) further highlights its ethical dimension, suggesting it reflects a belief in loving one's neighbor as oneself, signifying a deep sense of social responsibility and interconnectedness. *Rewang* is a prime example of *gotong royong* in action, with

people assisting their neighbor's hosting an event. Through *rewang*, people willingly contribute their time, effort, and resources to achieve the success of the event from preparation to finish, fostering a strong sense of solidarity within the community.

Ngelo village is one of rural areas in which the villagers still uphold *rewang* practices. Located within the administrative divisions of Kemiri sub-district, Kebakkramat district, and Karanganyar regency, Ngelo village is a small community comprising approximately 57 households. Ngelo villagers retain a strong sense of communal solidarity which is evident in their continued practice of *rewang*. This tradition exemplifies the spirit of *gotongroyong* or community solidarity deep rooted in Javanese culture.

In Ngelo, *rewang* practices are present when one of the villagers is hosting important life events. Whenever a family holds an event, such as *asbancakan* (birthday celebration),  *mantu* and *ngunduh mantu* (wedding ceremonies), and funerals, the entire village comes together in a remarkable display of collective support. Neighbors, relatives, and friends readily offer their assistance, participating in various tasks, from food preparation and decoration to setting up the venue and welcoming guests. This unwavering commitment to *rewang* underscores the enduring strength of *gotong royong* in Ngelo village, showcasing its vital role in fostering community cohesion and reinforcing social bonds.

Previous research has explored various facets of *rewang*, giving insights regarding its diverse motivations, manifestations, and implications across different communities. For instance, Afifah (2022) delved into the motivations behind *rewang* participation, revealing a range of factors, from altruism and a willingness to help to expectations of rewards and fear of social sanctions. Other studies have examined the characteristics of *gotong royong* within *rewang* practices in specific locales, such as Jotosanur Village in Lamongan, where the focus was on the potential for integrating *gotong royong* values into elementary education (Huda et al., 2023). Furthermore, previous research has highlighted the existence similar practices to *rewang* in other Indonesian regions, such as Lampung, where it is known as *sakaisambaiyan*), Bengkulu (*Ngacau Gelamai*), and East Nusa Tenggara (*Gemohing*), demonstrating the widespread prevalence of collective work traditions (Fatmawati in Supriatna, 2020).

The practice of *rewang* has also been studied outside of Java, notably among Javanese communities in Samarinda, where its social, cultural, and educational values were explored (Sefriyanto et al., 2022), and in Riau, where the values embedded in *gotong royong* within the *rewang* tradition were analyzed (Ramadhani & Erawati, 2024).

However, despite these valuable contributions, there remains a gap in understanding the deeper connection between *rewang* and the formation and perpetuation of habitus within specific communities. This research seeks to address this gap by employing Bourdieu's theoretical framework to analyze how the practice of *rewang* in Ngelo village not only reflects existing social structures and values but also actively shapes the dispositions, perceptions, and actions of individuals within the community. By focusing on the intricate relationship between *Rewang* and habitus, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how this enduring tradition contributes to the social and cultural dynamics of rural Javanese communities. Moreover, this research aims to explain how the practice of *rewang* not only reflects existing social structures and values but also actively shapes the dispositions, perceptions, and actions of individuals within the community. Furthermore, this study seeks to uncover the nuanced ways in which *rewang* serves as an arena for negotiating social status, reinforcing cultural norms, and transmitting traditional knowledge across generations. Through an analysis of *rewang* in Ngelo, it is hoped that this research is able to contribute valuable insights about the connection between individual agency and social structure in the context of a rural Javanese community.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, which offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between individual agency and social structure. Central to this framework is the concept of habitus, defined as a system of durable, transposable dispositions that shape an individual's perceptions, practices, and attitudes (Bourdieu, 1990:131). Habitus is acquired through socialization and embodies the internalized structures of the social world, acting as a "feel for the game" that guides individuals in navigating social situations and making choices (Bourdieu in Lubis, 2014:112). According to Silva (2016), habitus not only indicates an orientation in the social world but also encapsulates a world in itself, representing a comprehensive worldview and a way of being.

Bourdieu's theory emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between habitus and the social environment, or field. The field is a structured social space with its own rules, hierarchies, and power relations (Bourdieu, 1989). Habitus is shaped by the field and, in turn, influences how individuals act within it, contributing to the reproduction or transformation of social structures.

This study utilizes Bourdieu's framework to analyze the practice of *rewang* in Ngelo village. It examines how *rewang* serves as a site where habitus is formed, reinforced, and negotiated. Specifically, it explores how participation in *rewang* shapes individuals' dispositions towards collective action, their understanding of social

roles and responsibilities, and their perceptions of social status and hierarchy. Moreover, it investigates how *rewang* contributes to the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices across generations, thereby perpetuating the cultural norms and values embedded within the habitus of the community.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology with a case study approach. Qualitative methods involve research that deals with non-numerical data, where data collection and analysis are conducted narratively (Dukeshire & Thurlow in Sugiyono, 2020). Moreover, a case study is a research approach that seeks in-depth data related to the object of research, in terms of activities, processes, events, programs, and activities carried out by more than one person (Cresswell in Sugiyono, 2020). This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon, capturing the complexities of social interactions and cultural practices within a bounded setting.

This study is conducted in Ngelo village which is located in Kemiri sub-district, Kebakkramat district, and Karanganyar regency on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 2024. Data collection relies on narrative inquiry, drawing upon descriptive accounts gathered through interviews and direct field observations. Interviews were conducted with five informants, they are villagers who actively participate in *rewang* practice. The informants consist of the Head of Neighborhood 01 of Ngelo village, the village's *jayeng* (head cook), a 51 year-old male villager, a 47 year-old female villager, and a 14 year-old teenager who participate in *rewang* practice. These interviews aimed to elicit personal experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding the practice of *rewang*, its significance in the community, and its connection to broader social and cultural values.

To complement the interview data, direct field observation was done to gain firsthand insights into the actual processes and dynamics of *rewang*. The researcher participated in *arewang* practice, observing the interactions among villagers, the division of labor, and the various rituals and customs associated with the practice. Detailed notes were recorded to capture the situations of social interactions, the symbolic meanings embedded in specific actions, and the overall atmosphere of the events.

This study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the *rewang* practice in Ngelo village and its connection to habitus. Primary data is gathered through interviews and direct field observation, allowing for descriptive accounts of the practice and its significance within the community. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who possess valuable knowledge and experience regarding *rewang*. The sample includes key informants, such as the head of the neighborhood association and the event coordinator, who give insights into the social structure and organization of the village, as well as the practical aspects of *rewang*. Three additional informants are a middle-aged male villager and his wife who actively participate in *rewang*, and one teenage girl who is actively involved in *Karang Taruna* (village's youth organization) and participates in *rewang* activity by doing *nyinom* (serving foods to guests), provide diverse perspectives on the division of labor, gender roles, and the transmission of cultural values. Secondary data consists of previous research about related topics complement the primary data by providing a broader context for the study and situating the findings within existing research on *rewang*, *gotong royong*, Javanese culture, and Bourdieu's theory of practice.

### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The term *rewang* originates from the Javanese word *rewang* which translates to *help* (noun) or *assistance* (noun) in English. However, *rewang* encompasses more than just the act of helping or giving assistance; it represents a deeply ingrained social practice embedded within the culture of Javanese villages. As observed in Ngelo village, *rewang* is an integral part of community life, particularly during significant events such as weddings, birthdays, family events, and funerals. *Rewang* involves the collective participation of villagers, who willingly contribute their time, effort, and resources to support the host family and ensure the smooth execution of the event.

The process of *rewang* typically begins with the host family announcing their upcoming event to their neighbors. The information quickly spreads throughout the village, either through word-of-mouth communication or WhatsApp group message, particularly if the households are located farther apart. Upon receiving this news, villagers spontaneously mobilize to offer their assistance, demonstrating a deeply ingrained sense of social responsibility and collective obligation. This spontaneous mobilization highlights the ingrained nature of *rewang* within the community's habitus, where individuals instinctively understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to the collective good.

The division of labor during *rewang* reflects traditional gender roles prevalent in Javanese society (Zaidan, 2024). Men typically take on tasks that require physical strength and technical skills. They gather to set up the venue, install the sound system, carry heavy equipment, and ensure that all necessary facilities are properly arranged. This active participation in the physical setup of the event demonstrates the men's contribution to the collective effort and reinforces their role as providers and protectors within the community.

Meanwhile, the women, primarily those who are married, play a central role in the culinary aspects of "rewang." They gather days before the event to prepare a vast array of dishes for the guests. Interestingly, this culinary team is led by a designated village head cook, often a woman respected for her culinary expertise and organizational skills, such as Ibu Ngadinah in Ngelo. She oversees and supervises the entire cooking process, informing the women about the quantity of food required and the specific menu to be prepared. This collaborative cooking process not only ensures an abundance of food for the celebration but also serves as a platform for women to share their culinary knowledge, strengthen social bonds, and reinforce their collective identity as the nurturers and caregivers of the community.

On the day of the event, *Karang Taruna* (village's youth organization), plays a crucial role in doing *sinoman* practice, that is serving the food to the guests. They diligently attend to the needs of the guests, ensuring that everyone is well-fed and comfortable. This involvement of the younger generation not only provides valuable assistance but also serves as a means of transmitting cultural knowledge and practices, ensuring the continuity of *rewang* for future generations. This proves the significant role of *Karang Taruna* in preserving the culture of *sinoman* (Utami et al., 2023).

The practice of *rewang* in Ngelo village provides a compelling illustration of Bourdieu's concepts in action. The villagers' spontaneous willingness to participate reflects a deeply ingrained habitus, a shared understanding of social responsibility and collective obligation cultivated through lifelong socialization. This habitus is evident in their effortless execution of tasks and seamless assumption of roles, showcasing their embodied social knowledge. *Rewang* also serves as an arena for the display and exchange of various forms of capital. Villagers participating in this practice strengthen their social bonds and enhance their social capital within the community, gaining recognition and respect for their contributions. Furthermore, *rewang* facilitates the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices, with older generations passing down valuable skills and traditions to younger participants, thereby reinforcing cultural capital. Within the social field of the village, *rewang* reveals power dynamics and hierarchies, with figures like the village head and head cook holding positions of authority. It also provides a space for individuals to negotiate their social positions and accumulate symbolic capital through active participation and adherence to social norms. In essence, *rewang* demonstrates how habitus shapes actions within a specific field, while simultaneously contributing to the accumulation and exchange of various forms of capital, ultimately reinforcing the social structures and cultural values that bind the community together.

The distinct gendered division of labor observed in the *Rewang* practice in Ngelo village reveals ingrained social norms and expectations within the community. The allocation of tasks, with men primarily responsible for physical labor and setting up the venue, while women dominate the culinary domain, reflects traditional gender roles prevalent in Javanese society. This division underscores the prevailing notion of separate spheres for men and women, with men occupying the public domain and women associated with domestic responsibilities.

The men's role in *rewang* reinforces their perceived strength and technical skills. Tasks such as erecting tents, handling sound systems, and moving heavy objects align with societal expectations of men as providers and protectors, responsible for the physical well-being and security of the community. Their participation in *rewang* reinforces their social standing and demonstrates their commitment to fulfilling these expected roles.

On the other hand, the women's central role in food preparation highlights their association with nurturing and domesticity. Cooking for large gatherings is considered a quintessential feminine skill, reflecting the social expectation of women as caregivers responsible for the nourishment and well-being of their families and communities. Not only that, in this activity, the women also interpret their culinary work as a form of artistic expression and cultural contribution (Budiono, 2017). This aligns with the concept of habitus, as it highlights how women's participation in *rewang* not only reinforces their social roles but also shapes their understanding of their own agency and identity within the community.

This gendered division of labor, while seemingly naturalized within the community, reinforces existing power dynamics and social hierarchies. It perpetuates the idea of distinct roles and responsibilities for men and women, potentially limiting individual agency and reinforcing traditional gender norms. However, it is important to note that this division does not necessarily imply inherent inequality. Both men and women's contributions are essential for the success of *rewang*, and their respective roles are valued within the community.

*Rewang* plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion within Ngelo village, acting as a powerful mechanism for strengthening community bonds and reinforcing a sense of collective identity. Villagers that are coming together to do a shared work prove that *rewang* creates a space for interaction, cooperation, and mutual support, nurturing a strong sense of belonging and solidarity. This *rewang* practice strengthens community bonds in several ways. Firstly, participating in *rewang* creates a shared experience among villagers, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding. Working together towards a common goal, regardless of individual backgrounds or social standing, strengthens interpersonal connections and builds a sense of community spirit. Secondly, *rewang* operates on the principle of reciprocity, where individuals contribute their time and effort with the expectation that others will do the same when they require assistance. This reciprocal exchange maintains trust and interdependence among community members, creating a strong social bond. Finally, *rewang* brings together individuals from

different age groups, social backgrounds, and economic statuses. By working together, villagers transcend social barriers and develop a deeper appreciation for the diverse contributions of each member, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious community.

Beyond strengthening bonds, *rewang* also reinforces the collective identity of the villagers. The practice embodies the core Javanese value of *gotong royong*, emphasizing collective responsibility and mutual assistance. By actively participating, villagers reaffirm their commitment to these shared values, strengthening their sense of collective identity and connection to their cultural heritage. *Rewang* also serves as a vehicle for transmitting cultural knowledge and practices across generations. Younger participants learn traditional skills and customs from their elders and is led by *Karang Taruna* (village's youth organization), ensuring the continuity of cultural traditions and reinforcing a shared cultural heritage. Moreover, the successful execution of *rewang* events contributes to a sense of community pride and accomplishment. Hence, the collective effort involved in hosting events showcases the solidarity and unity of the village, fostering a shared sense of belonging and identity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the practice of *rewang* in Ngelo village, a rural Javanese community, through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. By examining the processes and social dynamics involved in *rewang*, this research has explained the significant role this tradition plays in shaping individual habitus, reinforcing social cohesion, and perpetuating cultural values.

The findings reveal that *rewang* is not merely a practical act of helping but a deeply ingrained social practice that embodies the core Javanese local wisdom of *gotongroyong*. The spontaneous participation of villagers, the division of labor, and the collective labor involved in organizing and executing events demonstrate a shared understanding of social responsibility and a strong sense of community spirit.

Through *rewang*, individuals acquire and reinforce a habitus characterized by cooperation, mutual support, and a deep respect for tradition. This habitus guides their actions and interactions within the social field of the village, contributing to the reproduction of social structures and cultural norms. Furthermore, *rewang* serves as an arena for the display and exchange of various forms of capital, including social and cultural capital, further solidifying social bonds and reinforcing a sense of collective identity.

The gendered division of labor observed in *rewang* reflects prevailing social norms and expectations within the community, highlighting the distinct roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women. While this division can perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes, it also emphasizes the valued contributions of both genders in maintaining social cohesion and ensuring the success of one's event.

In conclusion, *rewang* serves as a powerful mechanism for fostering social cohesion and reinforcing a sense of collective identity within Ngelo village. By participating in this enduring local wisdom, villagers reaffirm their commitment to shared values, strengthen community bonds, and contribute to the ongoing cultural vitality of their community.

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