

Bali Art Festival and the Futures of Regenerative Tourism: Rethinking Festival Practices in Sustaining Intangible Cultural Heritage

Agung Parameswara*

Warmadewa University, Bali, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: agungparameswara@warmadewa.ac.id

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Abstract

The role of festivals in challenging the perception of local identity and regenerating intangible cultural heritage can be very important and, in the case of the oldest festival in Indonesia, Bali art festival, is the most important outcome for sustaining intangible cultural heritage and regenerative tourism model. Drawing upon focus group discussions with artists, scholars, and festival stakeholders, the paper explores how PKB, held annually since 1979, navigates the complexities of artistic preservation, community participation, cultural policy, and tourism development. While originally initiated to support cultural continuity amid growing tourism, PKB has evolved into a site of intergenerational artistic transmission and creative renewal. The paper situates PKB within broader discourses on regenerative tourism, emphasizing its alignment with Balinese cosmology, particularly the practice of *ngayah*—voluntary service rooted in spiritual and communal devotion. The findings highlight PKB’s successes in promoting place-based identity, youth involvement, and policy-driven continuity, but also reveal structural challenges, including bureaucratic fragmentation, spatial inequity, under-compensation of artists, and the risk of cultural homogenization. By analyzing PKB as a “living lab” of regenerative tourism, the research contributes to current debates on how cultural festivals can evolve beyond commodification and serve as agents of cultural resilience, social learning, and community empowerment. The Bali art festival offers an important case study for understanding the transformative potential of festivals in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and fostering tourism practices that are culturally embedded, socially just, and ecologically restorative.

Keywords: tourism regeneration; cultural policy; community; sustainability; Bali art festival



INTRODUCTION

Background

In recent years, the concept of cultural heritage has evolved in two significant ways, tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Del Barrio et al., 2012). The inventory of heritage items has expanded, moving beyond the previously narrow definition limited to monuments, historical buildings, or archaeological sites. It now includes these objects within their contextual framework, adopting a holistic perspective that encompasses gardens, landscapes, production methods, craftsmanship, industrial heritage, rural heritage, urban ensembles, and more (Mounir, 2012; UNESCO, 2001). In addition to covering a broader spectrum of elements such as the recognition of collective identity and the capacity of objects to engage with memory have been integrated into the traditional standards of historical or artistic significance. Within this context, intangible cultural aspects such as customs, folklore, oral traditions and performances, as well as religious and secular expressions, have also been incorporated into the inventory of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2010, 2013; UNESCO & Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003).

City destination authorities frequently utilize cultural heritage and festivals as strategic tools to attract tourists, extend visitation beyond peak seasons, and energize the local cultural atmosphere (Richards & King, 2022). However, developments of festival as means city destination are not without criticism. Richards and King (2022) identify that some scholars have raised concerns about the risks of "festivalization," the commodification of culture, and the erosion of local cultural identities due to globalized creative influences. Furthermore, it is important to question whether festivals truly offer meaningful sustainability and contribute to the regenerative tourism, despite their uniqueness in an increasingly homogenized

global landscape.

In Bali, artistic and religious practices are deeply embedded in everyday social and ceremonial life. Artistic production is commonly understood as both an aesthetic practice and a form of offering to ancestors, deities, and spiritual forces (*niskala*), while also serving performative and social functions for human. Accordingly, Picard (1990) argue temple festivals and ritual processions occur regularly as part of the ongoing relationship between communities and the deities associated with particular temples throughout Bali. The relationship between artistic practice and ritual offering in Bali also was noted by Belo (1960) that said:

“in Balinese culture no very sharp line was drawn between the performance of ritual and dramatics; any dramatic performance was in itself an offering to the gods, and the presumption was that the better the performance, the better the gods would be pleased” (Belo, 1960)

This point underscores the extent to which artistic performance in Bali has historically been embedded within religious and ceremonial life, rather than understood as a separate cultural domain in the term of festival. Noszlopy (2002) argues that the term “festival” in Bali carries a highly specific religious meaning, serving as an aesthetic judgment grounded in appearance, abundance of offerings, and a carnival-like atmosphere that features musical and dance performances. Festivals in Bali are held for numerous religious celebrations collectively known as *Panca Yadnya* - five categories of ceremonial rites performed by the Balinese community: temple festivals (*Dewa Yadnya*), rites of passage (*Manusa Yadnya*), funeral ceremonies (*Pitra Yadnya*), exorcistic rituals (*Bhuta Yadnya*), and offerings to honor priests (*Rsi Yadnya*) (Parameswara et al., 2022; Picard, 1990). These events are determined by the Balinese *pawukon* calendar, a cyclical system that repeats every 210 days

(Dershowitz & Reingold, 2014).

However, Noszlopy (2002) contends that with the emergence of Bali's Art Festival, known as *Pesta Kesenian Bali* (PKB), the notion of the festival has shifted toward a more secular and specific concept where art (in the broadest sense) becomes the primary focus, rather than a component of religious festivals or an accompaniment to spiritual activities. As such, it is increasingly associated with expressions of cultural identity. Consequently, PKB has evolved into a community festival aimed at celebrating group and place-based identities and is framed as an effort to preserve cultural arts, while simultaneously positioning the state as a key actor in their organization, legitimation, and continuity. This historical shift is particularly significant for this study which it marks the point at the festival practice in Bali became institutionalized as a public cultural mechanism to sustaining cultural heritage rather than remaining solely embedded within ritual life. Furthermore, this transition is critical from regenerative tourism approach as it enables an evaluation of whether PKB functions merely as a platform for the display and consumption of culture, or whether it contributes more substantively to the renewal of cultural practices, the strengthening of community participation, and the long-term safeguarding of Balinese intangible cultural heritage from generation to generation.

Furthermore, the advent of tourism and Bali's development into Indonesia's premier tourist destination mark processes of modernization and globalization that directly confront local communities. In this context, arts festivals are understood as a form of negotiation to safeguard intangible cultural heritage values and practices that embody local identity. Del Barrio, Devesa, and Herrero (2012) emphasize that these new cultural manifestations have become integral to the cultural demands of citizens, especially as a means of engaging with tourism. As a result, there is no longer a single model of cultural tourism -

particularly one limited to visits to monuments, museums, and historic cities, which have conventionally symbolized cultural heritage. Instead, new domains and niches have emerged that emphasize intangible elements, such as religious tourism, festival tourism, convention tourism, fairs, and celebrations, within an increasingly segmented market characterized by a growing diversity of cultural products.

The month-long annual Bali Art Festival has been running for 46 years since 1979, as the longest and most sustainable arts and culture festival and a priority tourism event in Indonesia, features parades, competitions, exhibitions, seminars, and artistic performances at the local, national, and international levels. During *Pesta Kesenian Bali* (PKB), performances are presented not only by local artists but also by participants from other Indonesian provinces and international delegations. According to Local Regulation of Bali number 04 20216, the festival aims:

.....PKB, is a cultural activity that is synergistic and collaborative between various intentions and goals, such as culture and art, education, industry and trade, which is generally intended to: maintain, foster, preserve, and develop arts and culture, in the context of the functions of art in the cultural process and civilization of society; examine the concepts and problems of Balinese art, in order to find various solutions to these problems, so that the functions of art can be optimized in daily life and in the process of civilization of Balinese society; explore, encourage and develop creations and activities of arts and culture that do not conflict with the personality of society and the nation in the context of enriching diversity, improving quality, strengthening identity, and improving the image of art, which will ultimately synergistically have implications for the quality of life of the Balinese people; encourage and provide opportunities for the

development and promotion of businesses in the field of arts and culture and folk crafts so that they are increasingly known to the market widely, thus opening up opportunities for marketing; provide healthy entertainment to the community in the context of building a healthy, strong, intelligent and characterful national mentality (Perda Bali, 2006).

In this paper, we argue that such festivals can provide valuable public services by enhancing place identity and contributing to regenerative tourism, local economic and social welfare along with other benefits such as regenerative tourism. As stated Mair and Smith (2021) there is a need for research on the potential of events as tools for promoting, provoking, and delivering regenerative tourism. Furthermore, Mair and Weber (2019) suggest that festival research is a need to move away from Western paradigms when examining non-Western phenomena. The focus should not only be on trying to run “sustainable events”; rather, we should consider how events can contribute to the sustainable economic, social, environmental, and cultural development of the places that host them (Getz, 2017; Mair, 2019). Furthermore, events and festivals are integral components of the tourist offering in several places. The capacity of festivals and events to draw tourists to a host area and enhance its consider economic and social welfare elucidates the importance attributed to them in several tourism programs and initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Festival and Cultural Tourism

To comprehend that tourism constitutes a multifaceted system of supply and demand, whereby the general populace and tourists engage in various activities, it is essential to emphasize the expansion and recognition of cultural tourism broadly, and cultural events specifically. Several

authors have provided different definitions of cultural tourism. McDougall (1998) defined cultural tourism include participation in cultural activities or visit to cultural sites. Richards (1996) argue Cultural tourism is the pursuit of acquiring new knowledge and experiences to fulfill cultural requirements and engage in cultural activities while traveling, with the objective of exploring historical sites and cultural landmarks. Foo (1999) describes a cultural tourist as “an inbound visitor who attends at least one of the cultural attractions during his or her stay. Okech (2011) argue tourism activities may include attending performing arts events, visiting historical sites, monuments, and museums, engaging in educational tours, and participating in cultural or religious festivals.

In the other hand, Richards & Wilson (2004) state cultural events ss a means to improve the image of cities, add life to the city streets, and give citizens renewed pride. Therefore, cultural tourism is an activity that emphasizes participation, experience, and the exploration of knowledge. It involves the direct participation of tourists in cultural activities within the community, such as rituals, to gain experiences, knowledge, and memories while interacting with local people (Bestari et al., 2022; Djaja Bharuna S & Anak Agung Ngurah Aritama, 2025). Cultural tourism also includes activities such as visiting cultural sites, cultural events, historical monuments, and museums to gain insights into the culture.

According to Mair and Weber (2019), most festival-related research tends to focus inwardly, paying little attention to how festivals can be leveraged to achieve broader goals - such as social, cultural, political, or behavioral outcomes. While it is essential for festivals to be commercially viable to ensure their sustainability, researchers aiming to understand their wider impact must also consider perspectives from the social sciences and humanities. These include important topics like inclusion and exclusion, the role of authenticity

and tradition, and how festivals can serve as platforms for protest, counterculture, and personal expression.

Regenerative Tourism and Cultural Policy

The Bali Arts Festival (Pesta Kesenian Bali) was first held in 1979. One of its main objectives was to ensure the sustainability of Balinese arts and culture. At that time, tourism in Bali was beginning to develop with the aim of boosting the province's economic performance. As part of efforts to support this tourism development, the Bali Arts Festival was initiated by the then Governor of Bali, Ida Bagus Mantra. In addition to supporting tourism, the festival was also intended as a platform to preserve Balinese art. To safeguard sustainability and ensure the regeneration of cultural practices within Balinese society, the Bali Arts Festival was strengthened through government policy. This included the issuance of Regional Regulation of the Level I Region of Bali Province No. 07 of 1986 concerning the Organization of the Bali Arts Festival, which was later reinforced by Bali Provincial Regulation No. 4 of 2006 on the Bali Arts Festival.

Figueira & Fullman (2025) argue culture and cultural policy are key for the protection of the future of humanity and the planet in the ecosystem on all levels, local to global in creating the capacity to be regenerative by establishing, implementing, and evaluating policies that create conditions for imagination, creativity, and creative expressions to flourish. While current perspectives on regenerative tourism are fragmented, in their state-of-the-art review, Bellato & Pollock (2023) identify interconnected core themes aligning with a regenerative tourism paradigm, including regenerative design and development, and regenerative tourism economies, among other contributions to this discourse. Approaches aligning with regenerative design and development draw from the unique potential of place and its communities to develop human capacities to 'align with and

contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of places and communities. In tourism studies, various approaches within the sustainable development paradigm have been applied. (Bellato et al., 2023). Bellato et al (2023) also argues that academics and tourism practitioners criticize the massive tourism development agenda, which has many negative impacts on nature, thus failing to balance social and ecological relations.

Therefore, sustainable tourism and regenerative tourism have emerged as paradigms through an ontological shift. Although the process is not easy, it can serve as a foundation for understanding and acting on tourism. (Bellato, 2024; Bellato et al., 2024; Dredge, 2022; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018, 2022; The New York Times, 2020). Sustainable tourism embraces an understanding of intergenerational equity in tourism's contributions to the economy, society, resource use, and environment, while ensuring that cultural aspects are maintained and preserved. Sustainability implies that tourism demand management must be well integrated with conservation practices for the future of future generations. Meanwhile, regenerative tourism is a journey from an egocentric mindset to an eco-centric one, and from an individual competitive mindset to a collective collaborative one. This approach places communities and the environment at the center of ensuring travel and tourism provide positive benefits to people, places, cultures, and nature, and supports capacity building through the renewal and long-term progress of social and ecological systems (The New York Times, 2020).

Regenerative thinking is based on indigenous knowledge of ecological systems and life, with the goal of creating conditions for all life to renew and recover. The regenerative concept focuses on place and community to restore the harmonious relationship between humans and nature that has been damaged by uncontrolled development. Duxbury et al. (2025) argue that two recurring dimensions resonate with a regenerative approach relevant to

local cultural policy. First, stewardship of the resources of place, identity, and unique potential, with subthemes including identifying and emphasizing the unique potentials of a place, its residents, and its identity; promoting cultural revival and local endogenous knowledges and practices; and acts of stewardship for the place and its culture, Second, collaboration, participation, and inclusion, with subthemes including participative approaches; emphasizing inclusion; fostering a sense of community; and promoting collaborative actions to evolve and enact regenerative approaches, catalyse transformations, and contribute to local development. The regenerative shift in cultural policy underscores and wants to promote the value of cultural creation, experimentation and participation as enriching parts of individuals and communities (Dâmaso & Rex, 2025).

METHODS

This study employs focus group discussions (FGDs) approach to collect data about Bali art festival and its challenges. This approach enables the exploration of a comprehensive, individual-oriented viewpoint to discern diverse and facilitates the examination of intricate behaviors and assesses the level of agreement among participants (Kim, 2009; Parameswara, 2024). This method was selected over individual interviews because FGDs promote interactive dialogue, fostering the emergence of diverse viewpoints among participants (Hollis et al., 2002). The methodological approach involves four critical stages: defining the research framework, executing data collection procedures, analyzing the collected data, and presenting the findings (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). This study employs a qualitative methodology via the use of focus group interviews that allows researchers to explore the perspectives of key informants and key actors of Bali art festival in a non-constraining manner, avoiding the imposition of consensus and providing a platform for the expression of their own

thoughts. Furthermore, Focus group discussions (FGDs) are valuable for exploring complex behavioral dynamics and uncovering common perspectives within a group setting (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1998). The group interaction also provides space for clarifying concerns and surfacing counter-narratives to dominant assumptions. Additionally, employing FGDs enables researchers to gather a wide range of perspectives and lived experiences, ensuring a more holistic understanding of the group under study (Kim, 2009).

Procedures

Participants for the focus group discussion (FGD) were recruited through a combination of methods, including academic referrals, network-based group formation, personal outreach, and snowball sampling techniques based on their participation as an artist since kid and extensive knowledge and experience about Bali art festival. The researcher initiated to contact the participants through a formal document of Terms of Reference (ToR) and rundown agenda which outlined the objectives of the FGD and served as an invitation to participate. Before initiating the guided discussion, participants provided information of consent form and also agreed permission to the audio recording of the discussion. During the 2 hours sessions with 12 participants of key informants and key actors consisting 1 female and 11 males, all participants engaged in a structured dialogue. Bellow the table 1 show the FGDs participants.

Table 1. Participants of Focus Group Discussion.

Key Informants	Gender	
	Male	Female
Schoolar	4	-
Artist	1	1
Curators	2	-
Organizer	1	-
Policy Actor	1	-
Journalist	2	-
Total	11	1

The focus group discussion was moderated to ensure balanced participation among participants. The moderator applied active listening, clarified important points during the discussion, and provided reflective summaries where needed. At the end of the session, participants received certificates of participation, refreshments, lunch, and transportation support of IDR 800,000, funded by the Warmadewa Research Center.

Analysis Procedures

This study employed thematic analysis to examine the qualitative data generated through the focus group discussion. Two research assistants supported the process through audio recording and verbatim transcription of the discussions in both Indonesian and Balinese in order to retain linguistic nuance and culturally specific meanings. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis in combination with the constant comparative method. NVivo 12 was used to assist with coding, data organization, and the comparison of emerging categories (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the transcripts were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the data and to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the discussion. Second, open coding was applied to identify key concepts, recurrent ideas, and emerging themes relevant to the study. This process was largely inductive, allowing categories to emerge from participants' narratives rather than being imposed in advance. As coding progressed, categories were continuously compared, refined, and reorganized. In the next stage, axial coding was used to examine relationships among the categories identified during open coding and to group the data into broader thematic clusters and subcategories. This process enabled the researcher to move from descriptive codes to more analytical interpretations of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bali Art Festival

Art and creative works as offerings are the spirit behind all activities in Balinese society. For the Balinese, an offering is a sincere act of liberation—an expression of devotion where the result of creation is offered purely, born from pure creativity. Art for the Balinese is a totality of life, inseparable from daily existence and unconstrained by space or time (Picard, 1997; Picard, 2006; Picard, 1990). The consolidation of modernity brought by development and tourism has made culture a gateway to preserving the uniqueness and authenticity of Balinese identity amid destructive global threats (Suryawan, 2021). The Bali Arts Festival (Pesta Kesenian Bali, or PKB) was first held in 1979, initiated by the Governor of Bali (1978–1988), Ida Bagus Mantra. At that time, tourism in Bali began to be developed as a means to boost the province's economic performance (Triadnyani et al., 2024; Noszlopy, 2002). The evidence from statistical data from BPS (2025) show growth number of international tourism visit to Bali since 1979-2025.

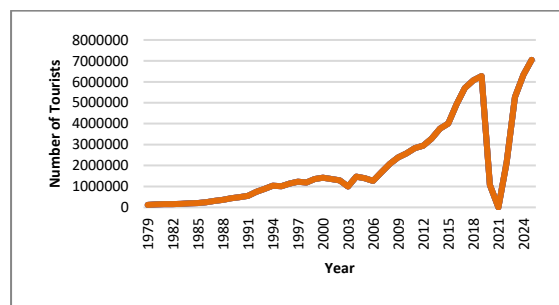


Figure 1. Number of International Tourists Visit Bali. 1979-2025. Source: BPS Bali Province, 2025

The data show that international tourist arrivals to Bali increased from 120,139 in 1979 to 489,710 in 1990, representing growth of approximately 307.6%. This upward trend continued from 489,710 in 1990 to 1,412,839 in 2000, equivalent to an increase of about 188.5%. Between

2000 and 2019, arrivals rose further to 6,275,210, reflecting growth of approximately 344.2%. These figures suggest that the emergence of PKB in 1979 should be understood within the early phase of Bali's rapid integration into the international tourism economy. As tourism expanded, the need to maintain and publicly affirm Balinese cultural identity became increasingly important. In this context, PKB can be interpreted as an institutional response that positioned Balinese arts and culture not merely as objects of tourism consumption, but as a public cultural domain requiring preservation, presentation, and regeneration.

The long-term growth of tourism therefore provides an important empirical context for understanding PKB as a cultural policy instrument that sought to support tourism development while simultaneously safeguarding the continuity of Balinese intangible cultural heritage. The preservation efforts extended beyond performing arts to include other forms such as painting, sculpture, and architecture (Mas Triadnyani et al., 2024). This effort also had an economic motivation. By providing a proper space for local arts, it was expected that the economic well-being by increase regional income and the income of local communities and tourist attraction (Susandhika, 2022; Triadnyani et al., 2024; Kayansa & Adikampana, 2017).

Furthermore, the design of performance spaces are provided for all types of shows. Large-scale performances that involve many artists and attract large audiences are held at the open-air Ardha Chandra Stage. Productions requiring specific audio quality or intended for select audiences are performed at the enclosed Ksirarnawa Theater. Smaller open-air stages are also available within the Taman Budaya (Bali Arts Center) for more modest performances. Some arts, such as the barong dance, can be performed outdoors through "ngelawang" or roaming performances around the area. By offering opportunities for various forms of art to be

staged, the festival aims to support the sustainability of Balinese culture—not merely its survival, but its growth and development in facing contemporary challenges.

In 1986, a regional regulation (*peraturan daerah*) was established to ensure the festival's continuity. This regulation was crucial because PKB was considered a monumental and historic event in the evolution of arts appreciation in Bali. It functions not only as a cultural event but also as an educational and economic activity that must be organized systematically and sustainably. As an integral part of national culture, Balinese art is a fundamental element in the civilization of Balinese society, and its existence and function must be continuously preserved. PKB is organized in the form of: (a) parades, exhibitions, and art performances; (b) discussions (*sarasehan*); (c) competitions; and (d) promotion of folk art and craft industries.

As of 2025, PKB has been held for 46 consecutive years, making it the longest-running arts festival in Indonesia. It has consistently been opened by high-ranking national officials, including presidents, vice presidents, and ministers which show on figure 2.



Figure 2. This archived photo taken in 2016 by the author showed the former president of Indonesia Joko Widodo, former Ministry of Culture and Education Anies Baswedan (L), former Ministry of Tourism Arief Yahya (C), and former Governor of Bali Made Mangku Pastika (R).

Held annually in June and July coinciding with school holidays for kindergarten to university students—the timing allows young artists, who are often also students, to participate in performances. Additionally, the holiday period encourages families and students to visit the festival as an alternative way to spend their break. The Bali Arts Festival is seen as a cultural contact point that shapes the character and identity of the Balinese people. The event is centered at the Bali Arts Center (Taman Budaya) in Denpasar, located near Banjar Bengkel on Jalan Nusa Indah. The overall architecture of the center is inspired by Hindu cosmology. The main open-air stage is named *Ardha Chandra*; the enclosed theater is called *Ksirarnawa*. To the north lies the permanent exhibition complex named *Mahudara Mandara Giri*. Despite the many positive efforts made in organizing the festival, PKB has not escaped criticism.

After more than four decades, some have voiced concerns about the performances becoming increasingly monotonous. This has sparked calls for a re-evaluation to realign the festival with its original purpose—not merely to maintain but to advance Balinese arts. Another criticism is the increasing dominance of commercial activity in the form of non-art-related commodity trading. This is driven by the proliferation of temporary stalls around the Arts Center, which are often seen as disruptive, even though they generate economic benefits. Complaints come not only from spectators but also from exhibition participants, particularly about the size of booths, the lack of visitors, and issues such as cleanliness and orderliness. Ultimately, these concerns point to the management of the festival. Nonetheless, the Balinese continue to view PKB as a sacred space for artistic expression offered in the spirit of devotion. The series of performances, ceremonial decorations made of palm leaves, and the resonant rhythms of gamelan music are all manifestations of art as a whole-hearted act of offering.

Regenerative Dimensions of Bali Art Festival

The Bali Arts Festival or *Pesta Kesenian Bali* (PKB) has consistently demonstrated its capacity as a platform for cultural regeneration. As recounted by senior performer Dewi Aryani who has participated in PKB performances for over three decades the festival serves as a vital arena for sustaining both classical and contemporary Balinese performing arts. Through structured inclusion of students from formal arts education institutions such as SMKI and ISI Denpasar, PKB has succeeded in fostering intergenerational transmission of artistic knowledge and practice. Moreover, PKB's hybrid programming combining traditional repertoires with innovative choreographies supports a dynamic dialogue between heritage and modernity. As Made Bandem noted, PKB functions as a “creative stimulus” for Balinese cultural life, cultivating artistic innovation while maintaining strong philosophical and aesthetic roots grounded in local traditions. In Figure 3, the artists from young generation participated in the opening of PKB.



Figure 3. Balinese children perform the Kecak dance during the opening of the PKB in front of the Bajra Sandhi Monument. The participation of dancers from across generations reaches nearly a thousand each year during the opening ceremony (Photo by Agung Parameswara, 2016)

This mechanism reflects one of the core principles of regenerative heritage: enabling cultural continuity through renewal and relevance. The long-term sustainability of PKB has been underpinned by a succession of legal frameworks established through regional legislation, including Perda No. 7/1986, Perda No. 4/2006, and Perda No. 4/2020. These policy instruments ensure that PKB is not merely an annual event, but a formally institutionalized cultural strategy embedded in provincial governance. However, these policy frameworks have not fully shielded PKB from the pressures of political transition and bureaucratic inconsistency. While successive governors have supported the festival, the extent and direction of their engagement have varied significantly. As Darna Putra argued, although the continuity of PKB may seem assured, each regime introduces its own interpretations, risking fragmentation of the festival's long-term vision.

Furthermore, concerns regarding potential “*swastanisasi*” (privatization) were strongly voiced by Made Bandem, who invoked the foundational vision of Governor Ida Bagus Mantra: that PKB must remain a publicly governed cultural institution. Privatization, he warned, could lead to commodification and undermine the spirit of *ngayah*—the Balinese concept of voluntary service and collective cultural responsibility. Despite its achievements, PKB faces notable constraints that threaten its regenerative potential. One recurring critique raised in the focus group discussion was the issue of programmatic monotony. According to observers such as Widnyana Sudibya and Nyoman Winata, the lack of curatorial innovation and over-reliance on familiar formats reduce the festival's capacity to inspire and engage new audiences.

Economic challenges further complicate artistic regeneration. A significant portion of artists and performance groups either receive minimal compensation or perform at a financial loss. Kadek Widnyana emphasized that many artists still

carry the ethos of *ngayah*, often feeling honored to perform even without adequate remuneration. While this reflects a deep cultural commitment, it also points to structural underinvestment, which may not be sustainable in the long term especially for younger or marginalized artists. The growing involvement of academic institutions in artistic production presents a paradox. On the one hand, collaborations with trained choreographers and composers from ISI Denpasar have elevated technical standards and introduced formal artistic discipline. On the other hand, there is concern that this trend promotes aesthetic homogenization. As Made Bandem noted, the predominance of institutional choreographers risks diluting regional diversity and overshadowing community-specific styles. Without conscious safeguards, the festival may lose the textured heterogeneity that characterizes Bali's cultural landscape.

Another tension emerging from the FGD is spatial inequity in cultural representation. While PKB invites participation from all regencies across Bali, the economic and infrastructural benefits remain heavily concentrated in Denpasar. As Iwan Darmawan and Bayu Pramana highlighted, logistical centralization not only limits access for rural communities but also has unintended consequences for local livelihoods. For instance, Bayu Pramana state:

“At the Art Centre, there is a river that runs from north to south. During the month-long PKB, the water flow is consistently high and stable. In recent years, I have spoken with local residents, particularly because I live in Kesiman. It turns out that during every PKB, from 1979 until the present, the subak irrigation system has reportedly not received sufficient water. When I spoke with several farmers, they said, “once PKB begins, nothing will grow,” and “all the water is diverted to the Art Centre.” They explained that at the dam, the water is divided into two channels: one leading left toward Kesiman and Sanur,

and the other-directed westward toward the river supplying the Art Centre. According to them, the channels to Kesiman and Sanur are closed because water is prioritized for the Art Centre. The flow is redirected through the Ketapian River, and further south toward Renon, while water that would normally reach agricultural land is diverted elsewhere. They stated that this pattern has continued for decades. As a result, while PKB achieves a certain grandeur and cultural prestige, farmers experience hardship. As some of them put it, “once PKB starts, it is better not to plant anything, because it will not produce results.” At most, they may receive irrigation once a week, often only at night after all performances have ended”.

The Art Centre’s overcapacity was also frequently mentioned. Designed for smaller audiences, the venue now struggles with overcrowding, aging infrastructure, and lack of safety protocols as Iwan raised the concern:

“Is Ardha Candra still structurally strong enough to accommodate so many people?” “Since we have an architect here,” he joked, “how much longer can that concrete actually hold?” What we really need to be cautious about are the areas along the edges of the fences. I often think, “when will we finally see news that someone has fallen?” There is absolutely no security there, and many of the fences are already corroded, yet people continue to stand along them. What is even worse is the situation at Ayodya. Yesterday, when I watched the *Calonarang* performance, people were sitting along the edges even though the stage was far away. It was very strange. That area could actually be designed as an access path for persons with disabilities. This shows that there is in fact no proper management or supervision in place”

Participants warned that without urgent investment or decentralization, PKB’s physical environment may hinder its continued growth. Moreover, the crowded schedule where multiple headline performances such as Gong Kebyar, Arja, and Gambuh are staged simultaneously splinters audience attention and devalues the experience. This fragmented programming model not only affects audience engagement but also diminishes the visibility of less-promoted genres and regions.

Community Co-Creation

Despite these challenges, PKB exemplifies several principles of regenerative tourism. Rather than commodifying culture for external consumption, the festival encourages co-creation, where cultural production and consumption are shared between artists and communities. This is evident in the enduring role of *sekaa* (community-based art groups) and *banjar* collectives, which continue to generate performances rooted in communal narratives and ritual significance. The ethos of *ngayah* emerges as a foundational regenerative practice. By valuing voluntary participation and social contribution over commercial outcomes, PKB fosters a form of cultural tourism that prioritizes meaning, memory, and mutuality. As Kadek Wigunatra emphasized, this spirit extends from performance to logistics, with community members often financing their own costumes, transportation, and meals just to ensure their participation.

In this sense, PKB functions not just as a festival but as a living laboratory of regenerative cultural tourism. It facilitates artistic experimentation, social learning, and intergenerational dialogue while resisting full-scale commercialization. Yet this model remains fragile. As noted in the cancellation of parades and miscommunications with performers, weak management structures can easily compromise community trust and enthusiasm. To advance PKB’s regenerative potential, a stronger governance framework is needed—one

that empowers local curators, ensures fair resource distribution, and integrates sustainability indicators into planning and evaluation. The call for an independent cultural commission, as suggested by Nyoman Winata, echoes this need for depoliticized, community-centered management. Furthermore, PKB illustrates how cultural festivals can serve as agents of regeneration when rooted in local knowledge systems and supported by inclusive institutional frameworks. Its success in sustaining intangible cultural heritage across generations offers valuable lessons for regions seeking to align tourism development with cultural resilience and environmental ethics.

Discussion

The Bali Arts Festival (PKB), as a long-standing annual cultural event, demonstrates the dynamic entanglement of cultural policy, community participation, and tourism development. Regenerative tourism emphasizes the capacity of tourism activities not just to reduce harm but to contribute positively to local communities and ecosystems (Duxbury et al., 2025). PKB aligns with this paradigm through its function as a cultural common that enables community self-expression, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and ritual-based participation. As the findings revealed, PKB is not merely a stage for showcasing Balinese culture to outsiders; it is a performative and spiritual practice deeply rooted in local cosmology, represented by the concept of *ngayah*. Such local agency is central to the regenerative model.

Duxbury et al. (2025) highlight that regenerative cultural policy requires a shift from extractive logics toward enabling, place-based, and value-driven approaches. PKB exemplifies this through its embeddedness in Balinese communal life and its role in revitalizing cultural expressions across generations. Furthermore, as Crespi-Vallbona & Richards (2007) noted in their study of cultural festivals, the balance between tradition and innovation is

key to sustainability. The integration of children and youth performances in PKB—like *gong kebyar anak-anak and ngelawang*—exemplifies such regenerative adaptation. The institutionalization of PKB through legal frameworks (Perda No. 7/1986, No. 4/2006, No. 4/2020) reflects an acknowledgment of culture's pivotal role in development. These policies serve as stabilizing anchors that ensure continuity, funding, and symbolic recognition. Bellato & Pollock (2023) argue that regenerative cultural policies should move beyond performative declarations and foster multi-level engagement and shared governance. In this light, PKB's legal scaffolding can be seen as both an opportunity and a constraint.

As the findings indicate, the institutionalization of PKB has, at times, generated over-centralization and artistic homogenization, particularly through the dominance of choreographers affiliated with academic institutions. This dynamic reflects a broader tendency within heritage and cultural events for dominant norms to be reproduced, elite interests to be privileged, and marginalized groups to be excluded (Getz, 2017; Mair & Smith, 2021). From this perspective, festival sustainability must be understood not narrowly, but as a multidimensional construct encompassing social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions (Laing & Frost, 2010; Mair & Smith, 2021). A regenerative orientation therefore requires more inclusive and participatory curation processes that expand opportunities for community-based *sanggar* and grassroots artists.

The findings likewise reveal concerns regarding programming monotony, limited accessibility for rural communities, and the growing presence of non-cultural commercial activities around the venue, each of which may erode cultural authenticity in festival tourism (D'Auria, 2009; Smith, 2012). In particular, the repetitive circulation of similar performances from year to year raises the risk of creative fatigue, supporting Derrett (2002, 2003)

argument that festivals which fail to innovate may stagnate and gradually lose their relevance for both local audiences and visitors. At the same time, spatial and financial inequalities across districts point to an uneven cultural geography that, in Massey's (2005) terms, reflects a form of power-geometry that constrains equitable participation. The commodification of festival space, evident in the proliferation of unrelated commercial stalls, further risks reducing PKB's sacred and cultural significance to a transactional spectacle. Collectively, these tensions point to the need for governance arrangements capable of reconciling economic utility with cultural integrity.

These concerns are particularly significant when viewed through the lens of regenerative tourism. Emerging in response to the limitations of conventional sustainability frameworks, regenerative tourism emphasizes not only the reduction of harm, but also the active restoration and flourishing of social-ecological systems (Bellato & Pollock, 2023; Dredge, 2022). Rather than positioning destinations as passive sites of consumption, this approach foregrounds local culture, place-based knowledge, and community agency in shaping tourism futures. In Dredge (2022) terms, such an approach cultivates a "social-ecological consciousness" grounded in empathy, collaboration, and long-term renewal. In Bali, where tourism has frequently contributed to cultural commodification and the erosion of local practices, this perspective offers a useful framework for rethinking PKB not merely as a cultural showcase, but as a participatory platform for renewing community identity, transmitting intangible heritage, and strengthening intergenerational learning.

Viewed from this perspective, PKB can be understood as a form of living cultural infrastructure. Although originally conceived in part to support tourism development, the festival has evolved into a platform for creative regeneration by sustaining local knowledge holders, grassroots

performance traditions, and inter-village participation. The revitalization of traditional art forms and the involvement of younger generations in artistic production illustrate the kinds of place-based and community-centered renewal envisioned in regenerative tourism (Dredge, 2022). As Bellato and Pollock (2023) argue, regenerative tourism must move beyond the aspiration of simply "leaving a place better than it was found" toward deeper systems transformation rooted in local values and ecological stewardship. In the Balinese context, this transformation is closely aligned with philosophical principles such as *Tri Hita Karana* and *Yadnya*, through which cultural practice is understood as relational, ethical, and spiritually grounded.

At the same time, PKB's regenerative potential remains unevenly distributed. Its concentration in Taman Budaya Denpasar offers strategic advantages in terms of infrastructure, visibility, and audience reach, yet it also reinforces spatial inequality by limiting comparable access, funding, and logistical support for peripheral regions. As Duxbury et al. (2023) argue, regenerative cultural tourism must recognize the interdependence of cultural, spatial, and ecological systems. A more decentralized PKB model, supported through satellite festivals or rotating venues, could reduce spatial centralization while fostering more regionally distributed forms of cultural regeneration. Such a shift would also advance the principle of cultural democracy by ensuring that a wider range of communities are able not only to participate in, but also to host and benefit from, cultural events.

In this sense, PKB resists the logic of cultural extraction and offers a prototype for ethical cultural tourism. Rather than orienting the festival solely towards tourist consumption, the emphasis on community ownership, ritual fidelity, and artistic experimentation exemplifies a regenerative ethos. The challenge lies in sustaining this balance as tourism pressures increase and political regimes change. The future

sustainability of PKB depends on developing governance models that are adaptive, transparent, and participatory. A reflexive governance model would also incorporate feedback loops from performers, audiences, and community members. Evaluation tools should not only measure economic impacts but also cultural vitality, social cohesion, and environmental footprint (Laing & Frost, 2010). Integrating these indicators into PKB's planning and reporting mechanisms would enhance its accountability and resilience.

CONCLUSION

The Bali Arts Festival demonstrates how cultural festivals can serve as living laboratories of regenerative tourism. Since its inception in 1979, the Bali Arts Festival (PKB) has evolved from a state-led initiative for cultural preservation and tourism development into a complex cultural infrastructure that supports the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, artistic innovation, and spiritual offering. Rooted in the Balinese cosmological value of *ngayah*, voluntary and sincere service as a spiritual and social practice, PKB exemplifies a regenerative ethos that prioritizes cultural meaning, community ownership, and long-term sustainability over short-term economic gain. PKB serves not only as a cultural showcase but also as a dynamic platform for fostering local identity, resilience, and adaptive creativity.

The involvement of schoolchildren, youth groups, and community-based arts groups helps ensure that Balinese cultural expressions remain relevant and dynamic across generations. Collaboration among artists, academic institutions, and local government further strengthens the creative ecosystem, although it also carries the risk of over-standardization and bureaucratic rigidity. The concentration of resources and performances in Denpasar, while logistically advantageous, contributes to spatial inequality and marginalizes participation from more remote areas.

Similarly, the increasing dominance of choreographers from formal institutions risks diminishing regional artistic diversity and eroding the festival's grassroots spirit. To protect its legacy and strengthen its future, PKB must adopt a more inclusive and participatory governance structure. Integrating regenerative tourism principles into festival planning and evaluation, such as cultural vitality, social cohesion, and intergenerational engagement, could positioning the PKB as a model of culturally responsible tourism. The Bali Arts Festival is more than an annual celebration; it is a cultural organism sustained by the dedication, labor, and creativity of Balinese communities. Its continuity and adaptability offer valuable insights into how festivals can foster cultural resilience, support regenerative tourism, and contribute to a more equitable and meaningful cultural future.

However, this study should be considered in light of its limitations. The analysis is based primarily on a single focus group discussion and a highly context-specific case, meaning that the findings are intended to provide interpretive depth rather than broad generalization. The perspectives presented here reflect the views of selected stakeholders and practitioners and therefore may not encompass the full range of experiences associated with PKB, including those of audiences, policymakers at different levels, or communities outside the festival's primary institutional network.

Within these limitations, this study offers a valuable case for understanding how cultural festivals can contribute to regenerative tourism when they are rooted in local cultural values, supported by public institutions, and oriented toward the continuity of living cultural heritage rather than its mere display. Future research could expand this analysis through additional focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, comparative case studies, artist surveys, and broader stakeholder engagement in order to assess more comprehensively the conditions under which festivals can

support regenerative cultural and tourism outcomes.

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AI USE STATEMENT

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