

# The Application of Tri Hita Karana Principles in Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning: A Case Study of Kedonganan Traditional Village, Bali

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## Abstract

Tri Hita Karana is a traditional Balinese philosophy that emphasizes the importance of balance in the relationships between humans and God, humans and others, and humans and the natural environment. Although this principle underpins many aspects of life, its application in architectural and urban planning often faces various challenges. This research identifies the gap between traditional principles and the demands of modern development. A qualitative case study approach was used in Kedonganan Traditional Village, Kuta, Bali, employing in-depth interviews and direct observation methods. The results of the study show that the people of Kedonganan Traditional Village still uphold customs and cultural traditions, which are implemented in various aspects of daily life, including religious activities, mutual cooperation, and environmental management. Collaboration between the government and traditional communities has proven effective in maintaining ecological, social, and spiritual balance. Additionally, the findings indicate that cultural, architectural and landscape elements remain relevant and functional in community life. The implications of this research highlight the importance of integrating Tri Hita Karana values into development policies to achieve sustainable balance.

**Keywords:** Tri Hita Karana, Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning, Cultural Life, Bali.

Tri Hita Karana is a traditional Balinese philosophy deeply rooted in the life of the Balinese people (Hermawan et al., 2022). This philosophy emphasizes the importance of balance among three main aspects of life: the relationship between humans and God, the relationship between humans and others, and the

relationship between humans and the natural environment (Mastika & Nimran, 2020). These three components are known as Parahyangan, Pawongan, and Palemahan, which together maintain the balance of life in Balinese society.

Parahyangan focuses on the relationship between humans and God. In Bali, this

relationship is manifested through various religious rituals and ceremonies aimed at expressing gratitude and honoring the deities (Adnyana et al., 2024). The Balinese believe that well-being and life balance can be achieved by consistently practicing spiritual activities such as prayer, meditation, and offerings at temples (Wibawa & Susanto, 2020). These rituals not only strengthen spiritual bonds but also enrich the cultural life of the Balinese community.

Pawongan emphasizes the importance of harmonious relationships among people in society. In Bali, the community highly values cooperation and togetherness (Eko & Putranto, 2021). This is evident in

various social and cultural activities, such as helping neighbors in need, participating in village events, and celebrating ceremonies together (Ariyanto, 2020). Good relationships among village residents create a strong and supportive social environment, which contributes to the rarity of social issues such as homelessness in Bali.

Palemahan focuses on the relationship between humans and nature. This philosophy teaches the importance of preserving and maintaining the natural environment as an integral part of life (Binawati et al., 2019). The Balinese highly respect nature and believe that it provides everything necessary for life. The traditional Balinese irrigation system, known as Subak, is a tangible example of Palemahan in practice (Karmini et al., 2021). Subak is a sustainable and harmonious water management system that allows rice farming in Bali to thrive without damaging the environment.

The presence of Tri Hita Karana not only influences spiritual and social aspects but also plays a significant role in sustainable development in Bali (Puspita et al., 2023). This philosophy has become a guide in architectural planning, landscape design, and urban spatial planning. For instance, many buildings in Bali are designed with a balance of aesthetics, functionality, and harmony with the surrounding environment. Thus, Tri Hita Karana helps

preserve the natural beauty of Bali while meeting the needs of modern society.

Additionally, Tri Hita Karana plays an essential role in the education and preservation of Balinese culture. Balinese children are taught the importance of these principles from an early age by parents, teachers, and religious leaders (Jamin & Widodo, 2020). Through this education, the younger generation of Bali is expected to maintain and apply the values of Tri Hita Karana in their daily lives, despite the challenges of modernization and globalization.

Tri Hita Karana has long been the fundamental basis for various aspects of Balinese life, including architecture, landscape, and urban planning (Suardana et al., 2023). This philosophy encompasses three main principles: Parahyangan (relationship with God), Pawongan (relationship among people), and Palemahan (relationship with nature), which together create balance and harmony in the daily life of the Balinese people.

In the field of architecture, the principles of Tri Hita Karana are applied by considering the balance between aesthetics, functionality, and harmony with the natural environment. Buildings in Bali are often designed to reflect the spiritual relationship with God through the use of symbolic elements and sacred spaces (Rahmawati et al., 2019). For example, temples or places of worship are built facing mountains or the sea, which are considered the abodes of deities. This not only creates a sacred space but also enhances the visual beauty and harmony within the built environment.

In the realm of landscape management, Tri Hita Karana influences how the Balinese manage and design open spaces and agricultural systems. The Subak irrigation system, which embodies the principle of Palemahan, is a clear example of how the Balinese manage natural resources sustainably (Sapta et al., 2021). Subak is a traditional irrigation system that not only ensures equitable water distribution among farmers but also preserves the environment. The world-famous terraced rice fields in Bali, such as those

in Tegalalang, reflect the harmony between humans and nature governed by this philosophy.

In urban planning, the principles of Tri Hita Karana are implemented by balancing physical development with environmental preservation. Spatial planning in Bali often integrates natural elements such as rivers, forests, and the sea into the design of cities (Ardana et al., 2021). This aims to maintain ecological balance and ensure that development does not damage the natural environment that has supported life for centuries. Additionally, the arrangement of public spaces and facilities considers spiritual and social aspects, such as providing areas for ritual activities and community cooperation.

The application of Tri Hita Karana is also evident in the efforts to preserve Balinese culture and traditions. Traditional villages in Bali continue to maintain their social and cultural structures based on these principles (Astawa et al., 2019). Traditional ceremonies, festivals, and other cultural activities are preserved as part of daily life, which not only strengthens social bonds among residents but also enriches Bali's cultural heritage. Education on the importance of maintaining balance in relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature is taught from an early age, ensuring that these values are passed on to future generations.

The application of Tri Hita Karana in physical spatial planning in Bali reflects efforts to maintain ecological and socio-cultural harmony and balance. This philosophy emphasizes the importance of balance between the relationship of humans with God (Parahyangan), the relationship of humans with others (Pawongan), and the relationship of humans with nature (Palemahan) (Rosilawati et al., 2020). These three principles are applied in various aspects of spatial planning, creating a harmonious and sustainable environment.

In the context of architecture, buildings in Bali are often designed to reflect a spiritual connection with God. For instance, many temples or places of worship are constructed with specific orientations facing mountains or

the sea, which are considered sacred places. These structures not only hold spiritual significance but also possess an aesthetic harmony with their surrounding environment.

In the field of landscape management, the principle of Palemahan is embodied in the renowned Subak irrigation system. Subak is a sustainable water management system that ensures fair water distribution among farmers (Yasa et al., 2024). This system not only guarantees water availability for agriculture but also preserves the local ecosystem. The terraced rice fields in Bali, such as those in the Tegalalang area, are a tangible example of Palemahan in practice, creating landscapes that are both beautiful and functional while being ecologically sound.

Urban planning in Bali is also heavily influenced by the principles of Tri Hita Karana. Urban spatial design aims to balance physical development with environmental conservation (Wiryawan & Ernawati, 2024). For example, many cities in Bali integrate natural elements such as rivers, forests, and the sea into their urban design. The goal is to create cities that are not only comfortable to live in but also ecologically sustainable. Additionally, public spaces and facilities are often designed to support social and spiritual activities, such as traditional ceremonies and community cooperation, which strengthen social bonds among residents.

The preservation of culture and tradition is also a crucial aspect of implementing Tri Hita Karana. Traditional villages in Bali maintain their social and cultural structures based on these principles. Traditional ceremonies, festivals, and other cultural activities are preserved as part of daily life, which not only strengthens social bonds among residents but also enriches Bali's cultural heritage (Kubontubuh, 2023). Education on the importance of maintaining balance in relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature is taught from an early age, ensuring that these values are passed on to future generations.

Desa Adat Kedonganan in Kuta, Bali, is an example where the principles of Tri Hita Karana are consistently practiced in the daily life of its community. This village is renowned for its success in maintaining balance among spiritual, social, and ecological aspects in accordance with the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. In the spiritual domain, Desa Adat Kedonganan has numerous temples that serve as centers for religious activities. The villagers regularly conduct religious ceremonies and rituals to honor the deities and maintain a harmonious relationship with God. This activity reflects the Parahyangan principle of Tri Hita Karana, emphasizing the importance of spiritual connections in daily life.

In the social aspect, Desa Adat Kedonganan places a high value on mutual cooperation and togetherness. The villagers often participate in social activities such as communal environmental clean-ups, helping neighbors with traditional events, and collaborating on village projects. This reflects the Pawongan principle, which emphasizes harmonious relationships among people and social solidarity. Ecologically, Desa Adat Kedonganan is very conscientious about environmental conservation. The villagers wisely manage natural resources, including traditional water management systems that ensure fair and sustainable water distribution for agriculture. These practices reflect the Palemahan principle, which stresses the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature.

The research by Astawa, Budiarsa, and Simpen (2019) in the *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* evaluated the awig-awig (customary law) text of Tenganan Pegringsingan Village from a critical ecolinguistic perspective. This study found that the values contained in the awig-awig reflect the Tri Hita Karana philosophy in maintaining the natural, social, and spiritual environments. The evaluation revealed the presence of positive, ambivalent, and negative values within the awig-awig text. This research shares similarities with the current study in terms of applying Tri Hita Karana to social and

environmental aspects. However, it differs in its focus on the analysis of customary law texts using a critical ecolinguistic approach.

Meanwhile the research by Nilasari, Sitindjak, and Wardani (2019) in the *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* discussed Tenganan Traditional Village as a cultural and historical tourism destination. This study revealed that the traditional spatial planning of Tenganan Village is based on the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, featuring the division of macrocosm and microcosm zones and the orientation of Hulu-Teben. This research also employed a qualitative method with an iconographic approach to describe the conditions of traditional spatial planning. The similarity with the current study lies in the focus on the application of Tri Hita Karana in spatial planning. The difference is that this research emphasizes cultural and historical tourism aspects.

Furthermore the research by Binawati, Rasna, and Sudiana (2019) in *Opcion* examined the integration of the Tri Hita Karana philosophy into Indonesian language teaching materials. The results showed that the Tri Hita Karana philosophy is relevant for integration into teaching materials for first and second-grade elementary school students. The research method used was mixed, employing descriptive and survey approaches to collect data. The similarity with the current study is the relevance of Tri Hita Karana in the context of education and social environments. However, this research differs in its focus on the integration into Indonesian language teaching materials.

Another research by Rahmawati, Jiang, Law, Wiranatha, and DeLacy (2019) in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* examined the role of spirituality in corporate social responsibility (CSR) within Bali's tourism industry. This study used a qualitative case study approach with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with tourism stakeholders. The findings indicated that spirituality, inspired by the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, plays a crucial role in

driving and managing CSR. The similarity with the current study lies in the application of Tri Hita Karana in social and environmental contexts. The difference is the focus on CSR within the tourism industry.

An important research by Mastika and Nimran (2020) in the *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites* discussed the branding model for ecological tourism village destinations in Bali. This research supports the concept of developing tourism villages through unique local values, including the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. The study used a qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm to interpret the reality of ecotourism. The similarity with the current research lies in the application of Tri Hita Karana in environmental and tourism management contexts. However, the difference is the focus on branding ecological tourism destinations and marketing strategies.

Previous studies indicate that the Tri Hita Karana philosophy has been applied in various contexts, including customary law, spatial planning, education, corporate social responsibility, and destination branding. This research expands on these studies by examining the application of Tri Hita Karana in architecture, landscape, and urban planning in Desa Adat Kedonganan. This provides a unique contribution to understanding how traditional principles can be applied in modern contexts to maintain social, environmental, and cultural balance.

Despite Tri Hita Karana having long been the foundation for various aspects of Balinese life, its application in architecture, landscape, and urban planning faces several challenges. These issues arise from the misalignment between traditional principles and modern development demands. Modern development policies often fail to consider traditional philosophies like Tri Hita Karana, resulting in imbalances between spiritual, social, and ecological aspects in spatial planning.

Furthermore, many development projects in Bali do not fully integrate the principles of Tri

Hita Karana, leading to significant environmental damage and disruption of local culture. The lack of community awareness regarding the importance of applying Tri Hita Karana in the context of modern urbanization exacerbates environmental problems and lowers the quality of life for local residents. Additionally, the implementation of Tri Hita Karana principles often remains symbolic rather than comprehensive in architecture and landscape planning, reducing their effectiveness in maintaining ecological and social balance. Even research on the application of Tri Hita Karana in urban planning in Bali is still limited, resulting in a lack of empirical data to support the development of more holistic and sustainable policies and practices.

This research is critical and urgent due to the significant challenges faced in applying Tri Hita Karana principles in the architecture, landscape, and urban planning of Bali, amidst rapid modernization and urbanization. The imbalance between physical development and the preservation of traditional values has led to considerable environmental issues and cultural disruptions. In this context, the proper application of Tri Hita Karana principles will not only help maintain ecological and social balance but also strengthen Bali's unique cultural identity. The findings of this study are expected to provide solutions to these challenges by offering concrete and applicable guidelines for sustainable planning in Bali. The importance of this research lies in its ability to address issues at their root by integrating traditional values into modern development practices.

Therefore, this research aims to explore the application of Tri Hita Karana principles in the architecture, landscape, and urban planning of Desa Adat Kedonganan, Kuta, Bali. This study seeks to identify how these principles are implemented in a modern context and evaluate their effectiveness in maintaining social, ecological, and spiritual balance. Additionally, this research aims to provide practical recommendations for the development of more

holistic and sustainable planning policies and practices in Bali. Through an in-depth and comprehensive analysis, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the field of spatial planning and cultural preservation in Bali.

## Methodology

**Study Design:** This study employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach to examine the application of Tri Hita Karana in Desa Adat Kedonganan, Kuta, Bali. This approach is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the customs and cultural traditions practiced by the Balinese community (Longhofer et al., 2012). Data collection is conducted through in-depth interviews with village officials, direct observation, and analysis of related documents.

**Data Collection:** The materials used in this study include various primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is obtained through in-depth interviews with village officials and direct observations at the research site. Secondary data is sourced from village administrative documents, historical records, and literature related to Tri Hita Karana (Carreiras & Castro, 2012). The main instruments for data collection are semi-structured interview guides and observation sheets. The interview guides are developed to steer the discussions during interviews, while the observation sheets are used to record visual findings during field observations.

**Sampling:** The research procedure begins with the preparation phase, which includes the development of interview guides and observation sheets (Gibton, 2015). This is followed by data collection through in-depth interviews and direct observation in Desa Adat Kedonganan. Each interview is recorded and transcribed to identify key themes.

**Data Analysis:** Observational data is also analyzed to support findings from the interviews. Once all data is collected, thematic analysis is

conducted using NVivo software to identify and categorize themes relevant to the application of Tri Hita Karana.

## Results And Discussion

This research reveals that the community of Desa Adat Kedonganan in Kuta, Bali, still holds their customs and cultural traditions in high regard. Based on interviews with village officials, it was found that the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which emphasizes harmonious relationships between humans and God, humans and others, and humans and the natural environment, continues to be practiced in daily life. These rituals are regularly performed at various locations such as road intersections, in front of homes, temples (Pura), and traditional community centers (Banjar adat). The traditional village functions as a community institution recognized administratively by the government and is supported in collaborating to protect the environment through activities such as communal work (gotong royong) and religious ceremonies. This collaboration not only maintains environmental cleanliness but also strengthens the harmonious social life of the community and attracts tourists to visit Bali.

Furthermore, this research finds that the Balinese community is very open and friendly towards tourists and newcomers, maintaining order and peace in daily life. Cultural landscape elements such as temples, traditional community centers (Banjar adat), and crossroads (Catus Pata) serve as important venues for the community to perform religious rituals and cultural traditions. These findings indicate that architectural, landscape, and built environment elements remain highly relevant and functional in the context of Balinese community life. An unexpected finding was the level of government involvement in supporting traditional village institutions to collaborate in environmental protection, demonstrating synergy between traditional customs and modern administration. Additionally, the appeal of religious ceremonies

as a tourist attraction underscores the significant role of cultural traditions in the local economy.

Table 1: Implementation of Tri Hita Karana in Kedonganan Traditional Village

No.	Elements	Implementation Location	Function and Role
1	Pura	Hinduism Temple	Place of religious rituals
2	Banjar adat	Indigenous village center	Facilities for social and cultural activities
3	Catus Pata	Road meeting point	Neighborhood road markers and places of religious rituals
4	Mutual cooperation	Neighborhood around the house	Keeping the environment clean
5	Religious ceremony	Temple, Banjar adat	Attracting tourists, maintaining traditions

Source: Data processed by researchers in 2024



Fig. 1. Penataran Agung Temple of Kedonganan Traditional Village and Banjar Anyar Gede Kedonganan, Bali, Indonesia  
Source: Photo taken by researchers in 2024



Fig. 2. Religious Ceremony in Front of Catus Pata Border of Kedonganan Traditional Village and Kelan Traditional Village, Bali  
Source: Photo taken by researchers in 2024

This research successfully demonstrates that despite modern development policies often overlooking traditional philosophies like Tri Hita Karana, the community of Desa Adat Kedonganan maintains a balance between spiritual, social, and ecological aspects in their daily lives. The findings reveal that traditional practices such as religious ceremonies and

communal work (gotong royong) are still regularly and consistently practiced. These findings strengthen the argument that integrating traditional values into development policies can create a better balance between modernization and cultural preservation. Therefore, development policies in Bali should pay more attention to and integrate Tri Hita Karana principles to ensure holistic balance in spatial planning. This argument is supported by cultural ecology theory which emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance between humans and the environment through sustainable cultural practices (Lin et al., 2020).

The research also shows that many development projects in Bali do not fully integrate Tri Hita Karana principles, leading to environmental degradation and local cultural disruption. However, findings from Desa Adat Kedonganan indicate that with government support, traditional communities can collaborate to protect the environment. This collaboration between the government and traditional communities demonstrates that integrating Tri Hita Karana principles can be achieved through synergy between modern policies and traditional practices. This aligns with experts' views that sustainable development must involve active participation from local communities to ensure long-term success. Therefore, this collaborative approach needs to be more widely implemented across Bali to mitigate the negative impacts of development.

While public awareness of the importance of applying Tri Hita Karana in the context of modern urbanization is still low, this research finds that the community in Desa Adat Kedonganan highly values these principles. These findings suggest that education and socialization about the importance of Tri Hita Karana can increase awareness and participation in environmental and cultural conservation. This awareness can be enhanced through educational programs integrated with local values, as proposed by cultural education theory (Suharso et al., 2020). Effective education and socialization can thus be solutions to increasing public awareness and reducing the negative impacts of urbanization on the environment and culture.

The research also finds that the implementation of Tri Hita Karana principles is often symbolic and not thoroughly applied in architectural and landscape planning. However, practices observed in Desa Adat Kedonganan show that consistent and comprehensive implementation can create a harmonious and sustainable environment. This indicates that with the right approach, Tri Hita Karana principles can be effectively applied in modern spatial planning. This approach is supported by participatory planning theory which emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in the planning process to ensure project success and sustainability (Siwen & Sijing, 2021). Therefore, architectural and landscape planning in Bali should prioritize the participation of traditional communities to achieve better outcomes.

Research on the application of Tri Hita Karana in urban planning in Bali is still limited, but the findings of this study provide important empirical data for developing more holistic and sustainable policies and practices. These findings show that with appropriate support, Tri Hita Karana principles can be integrated into urban planning to create a balance between physical development and environmental conservation. This argument is supported by

sustainable planning theory which emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in urban planning (Talukdar & Yu, 2020). Therefore, this research makes a significant contribution to enriching the literature and providing a solid foundation for the development of more sustainable spatial planning policies in Bali.

Overall, this research demonstrates that the application of Tri Hita Karana principles can address various challenges faced in architecture, landscape, and urban planning in Bali. The findings provide empirical evidence that integrating traditional values with modern policies can create a better balance between development and cultural preservation. Therefore, a holistic and participatory approach involving local communities and government support is crucial to achieving sustainable development goals in Bali. This study expands the current understanding of the importance of Tri Hita Karana in spatial planning and provides practical recommendations for the development of more effective and sustainable policies.

To avoid the gaps and issues identified, it is highly recommended that development policies in Bali consistently consider and integrate the Tri Hita Karana philosophy comprehensively. Stakeholders need to involve local communities in the planning and execution of projects to ensure that traditional values are preserved. If these issues have already arisen, there is no need to worry, as effective solutions have been identified in this research. Government support and collaboration with traditional communities can restore and maintain ecological, social, and spiritual balance. Therefore, implementing the recommendations from this study will help achieve more sustainable and harmonious development in Bali.

## Conclusion

This research concludes that the Tri Hita Karana philosophy remains relevant and significant in the architectural, landscape, and urban planning of Desa Adat Kedonganan, Bali.



Consistent implementation of these principles can maintain spiritual, social, and ecological balance in the community's life. Collaboration between the government and traditional communities, along with active local community participation, is essential for achieving sustainability. These findings provide concrete solutions to address the issues arising from the imbalance between modernization and traditional values. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to understanding how traditional principles can be integrated into modern development contexts.

The theoretical benefits of these findings include enriching the literature on the application of Tri Hita Karana in spatial planning and strengthening the argument that holistic and

participatory approaches are key to successful sustainable development. Practically, these findings provide guidance for architects, urban planners, and policymakers in integrating local cultural values into design and spatial planning. This research advances the understanding of the importance of balancing physical, social, and spiritual aspects in creating a harmonious and sustainable environment. The research acknowledges certain limitations, such as the focus on a single traditional village, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct further research in various locations with different contexts to expand knowledge and strengthen more comprehensive policy recommendations.

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