

Pecalang, Cultural Governance, and Immigration Control: Community Resilience in The Traditional Village of Canggu

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Abstract.

This study examines the role of Pecalang in the social surveillance of foreigners in Canggu Traditional Village, Bali, and its integration with local cultural governance and the formal immigration system. Using a non-interview qualitative approach based on administrative data from the Ngurah Rai Class I Special TPI Immigration Office, this study documents the dynamics of community-based social oversight in the context of globalization, international migration, and global tourism. Data on administrative immigration actions specifically deportations and enforcement measures against foreign nationals were obtained directly from the Immigration Office for the period 2024–2025. The findings reveal that Pecalang performs an adaptive function beyond securing traditional ceremonies, acting as a social monitor of the activities of tourists, digital nomads, and foreign investors. This function is reinforced through collaboration with immigration authorities, enabling early detection of potential legal and social violations. The integration of awig-awig (customary law) and formal regulations creates a synergy of community-based oversight that enforces socio-customary norms while ensuring compliance with national laws. The study also highlights the challenges posed by conflicting interests between tourism development and cultural preservation. Administrative data from Ngurah Rai Immigration Office shows a total of 300 deportation/administrative actions in 2024 and 337 in 2025 a 12.3% increase indicating growing immigration enforcement activity in Bali. These local mechanisms contribute significantly to community resilience, enabling communities to adapt to external changes without losing their cultural identity. Based on empirical findings, the study develops a conceptual model of community-based immigration oversight emphasizing early detection, preventive supervision, and enforcement of socio customary norms through collaboration among Pecalang, Traditional Villages, and formal authorities.

Keywords: *Pecalang, Community-Based Oversight, Community Resilience, Immigration Governance and Canggu.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has accelerated the movement of people across national borders, transforming regions previously characterized by cultural homogeneity into dynamic transnational spaces. In Southeast Asia, Bali has emerged as one of the epicenters of this mobility, attracting not only conventional tourists but also a growing community of digital nomads, remote workers, and foreign investors [1, 2]. According to data from the Bali Provincial Tourism Statistics Office, international tourist arrivals to Bali declined drastically during the COVID-19 pandemic from approximately 6.3 million visits in 2019 to just 1.05 million in 2020 before recovering significantly to exceed 5 million visits in 2023, with an upward trajectory projected into 2024 and 2025 [3]. This recovery has intensified the presence of foreign nationals across Bali's major tourism corridors, creating new governance challenges for both formal immigration authorities and local customary institutions.

Canggu has undergone perhaps the most dramatic transformation. Once a quiet rice-paddy village, Canggu has become one of Bali's most cosmopolitan destinations a hub for the global digital nomad community, short-stay rental businesses, and foreign entrepreneurs [4, 5] This transformation has rendered Canggu a transnational social space where global and local interests intersect daily. The intensity of cross-cultural interaction also brings complex consequences, including the potential for immigration violations, commercialization of sacred cultural spaces, and social disruption that threatens the integrity of the traditional community [6] Primary survey data from Canggu itself underscore the depth of community concern Aulia et al. [7] found that 73.4% of local residents rejected negative tourist behaviors including public intoxication, traffic violations, improper dress in sacred areas, and disrespect toward religious

ceremonies reflecting a collective moral consciousness that actively seeks to defend local cultural norms amid growing tourism pressures.

The immigration oversight system tasked with regulating the movement of foreign nationals and protecting national sovereignty faces structural limitations in addressing these dynamics at the community level. The sheer volume of foreigners, the diversity of their activities, and the geographic scope of informal settlements challenge the capacity of formal immigration enforcement to achieve proactive, ground-level surveillance. This challenge is compounded by evidence that liberalized entry policies directly amplify immigration violations employing a Difference-in-Differences design, Prihartini and Yudhistira [8] demonstrated that Indonesia's visa exemption policy causally increased the immigration violation rate by an average of 44.2%, with disproportionate effects in developing-country origin contexts. Data from the Ngurah Rai Class I Special TPI Immigration Office reveal that administrative immigration actions including deportation orders, visa enforcement and immigration detention measures totaled 300 cases in 2024 and increased to 337 in 2025, a 12.3% rise, underscoring the growing scale of immigration challenges in the region. Research by Nugroho [9] on immigration law enforcement at the Ngurah Rai office further confirms the institutional limits of state-centric oversight, finding that even with the establishment of a Foreigner Supervision Team (TIMPORA), enforcement capacity remained constrained by jurisdictional boundaries, resource shortfalls, and the essential need for community participation in monitoring foreign nationals.

Bali's unique institutional resource the *Desa Adat* (traditional village) and its customary security force, the *Pecalang* becomes particularly significant. *Pecalang* are customary law officers who hold strong social legitimacy within their communities, traditionally tasked with maintaining order during religious ceremonies and enforcing customary norms [10, 11]. As Canggu's social landscape has evolved, so too has the functional role of *Pecalang*, who now serve as informal monitors of foreign nationals' behavior and intermediaries between community norms and formal immigration enforcement [12]. This article examines how *Pecalang* and the *Desa Adat* system interact with formal immigration governance to produce a community-based oversight model that addresses the governance gap between state regulation and social reality. Using administrative data on immigration enforcement actions (2024–2025) from the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office, combined with a review of existing qualitative and ethnographic literature on *Pecalang*, *awig-awig* (customary law) and community resilience in Canggu, the study develops a conceptual model of community-based immigration oversight and identifies its implications for policy and practice.

II. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach grounded in documentary and administrative data analysis. Consistent with the nature of the research problem which centers on observable administrative outcomes of immigration enforcement rather than individual testimonies data collection focused on quantitative administrative records supplemented by documentary analysis of existing scholarly and policy literature. The primary empirical dataset consists of monthly administrative immigration action statistics from the Ngurah Rai Class I Special TPI Immigration Office, covering the period January 2024 through December 2025. These data capture the total number of administrative actions including deportations, visa enforcement measures, and detention orders issued against foreign nationals within the office's jurisdiction.

Secondary data sources include peer-reviewed articles on *Pecalang*, *Desa Adat* governance, digital nomadism in Bali, community resilience and collaborative governance official tourism statistics from the Bali Provincial Tourism Statistics Office [3] and relevant Indonesian immigration legislation. Consistent with the qualitative tradition, analysis proceeded through thematic coding, synthesis of conceptual frameworks and the development of an explanatory model linking empirical trends in immigration enforcement to the theoretical literature on community-based governance and cultural oversight. The study's design is consistent with a case-based approach that treats Canggu Traditional Village as a critical case [13] for the investigation of community-based immigration oversight, given its exceptional concentration of foreign nationals and its well-documented customary governance structures. Ethical considerations include transparency about the administrative data's origin, the absence of individual-level personal data, and full attribution of sources.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Existing scholarship on immigration oversight in Indonesia has been predominantly state-centric, focusing on formal enforcement mechanisms, administrative law, and bureaucratic capacity [14]. This approach, while providing important insights into legal procedures and institutional design, tends to overlook the role of non-state actors and community-level mechanisms in shaping day-to-day immigration governance. The growing literature on governance gaps highlights that formal regulatory systems consistently fall short in reaching the fine-grained social realities of highly mobile, transient populations particularly in tourism-intensive areas where the boundaries between short-term visitor and long-term resident are perpetually blurred [10, 12]. Research on Pecalang has established their foundational role as customary security officers in Bali's traditional village system. Indrayanti [11] traces the evolution of Pecalang from ceremonial guardians to broader community security actors, while Winata and Dewi [10] analyze the legal frameworks underpinning their authority in maintaining public order. Sukawinaya [12] further extends this analysis by documenting Pecalang's role in promoting drug-free tourism, demonstrating their capacity for collaborative action with formal law enforcement. As noted in the research gap identified by multiple scholars, no study has systematically linked Pecalang's function to the domain of immigration governance and foreign national oversight.

The concept of cultural governance provides a complementary theoretical lens. Mejía and Suárez [15] review the evolution of cultural governance as a field, emphasizing that communities do not merely receive externally imposed regulatory frameworks but actively govern cultural spaces through participatory normsetting, customary enforcement, and adaptive institutional responses. In Bali's context, *awig-awig* the codified customary law of each *Desa Adat* represents precisely such a framework: a locally produced normative system that governs social behavior within the customary village territory including norms applicable to visitors and foreign residents [16]. Community resilience theory, as elaborated in the social-ecological resilience framework, posits that communities maintain their identity and function under external pressure not through rigid resistance but through adaptive transformation [17]. In Canggu's case, resilience manifests as the community's capacity to accommodate globalization's economic benefits while simultaneously defending cultural integrity and social cohesion. The role of Pecalang in this process is not merely reactive responding to incidents after the fact but proactive, establishing a normative environment that deters violations and signals community expectations to foreign nationals.

The theory of institutional complementarity provides the integrative framework for this study. Bianchi, Nasi, and Rivenbark [18] argue that collaborative governance achieves optimal outcomes when formal institutions and informal mechanisms operate in mutual reinforcement rather than competitive tension. Applied to Bali's context, this suggests that the effectiveness of immigration oversight is maximized when Pecalang and *awig-awig* operate as institutional complements to rather than substitutes for formal immigration enforcement, each supplying capabilities the other lacks: local knowledge and social embeddedness on one side, legal authority and administrative sanctions on the other. This complementarity is conditioned by public trust: Liu [19] using an instrumental variable design, finds that trust in government has nonlinear effects on citizens' willingness to participate in collaborative governance and public-private partnerships underscoring that the Pecalang-Immigration collaboration can only sustain its effectiveness if both parties maintain legitimacy within the community they jointly serve. The practical applicability of this framework in Bali's immigration context has empirical precedent: Putri and Resen [20] document a concrete case of formal immigration-adat law enforcement synergy during the Nyepi celebration in which the Immigration Office and local police jointly handled a case involving a foreign national violating customary rules, demonstrating that coordination protocols between community norms and state enforcement are not merely theoretical but operationally established.

Administrative Immigration Actions: Empirical Trends (2024–2025)

Administrative immigration action data from the Ngurah Rai Class I Special TPI Immigration Office reveal a notable upward trend in enforcement activity across 2024 and 2025. As presented in Table 1, a total of 300 administrative actions were recorded in 2024, rising to 337 in 2025 a 12.3% increase year-on-year.

This trajectory aligns with the broader recovery and expansion of international tourism to Bali, which saw international visitor arrivals surpass 5 million in 2023 and continue to grow through 2024–2025 [3].

Table 1. Monthly Administrative Immigration Actions Against Foreign Nationals, Ngurah Rai Immigration Office, 2024–2025.

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2024	11	17	24	17	43	15	27	41	34	33	19	19	300
2025	18	28	18	19	27	28	23	37	25	39	32	43	337

Source: Kantor Imigrasi Kelas I Khusus TPI Ngurah Rai (2024, 2025).



Fig. 1. Joint patrol activity between Pecalang and immigration officers at Canggu Traditional Village area.

Source: Kantor Imigrasi Kelas I Khusus TPI Ngurah Rai.

Monthly data for 2024 reveal pronounced peaks in May (43 actions), August (41 actions), and September (34 actions), corresponding broadly to peak and post-peak international travel seasons. The year 2025 similarly shows elevated enforcement in December (43 actions), October (39 actions), August (37 actions), and February (28 actions). These seasonal patterns suggest that enforcement activity responds at least partly to fluctuations in the volume of foreign nationals present in Bali which is itself closely tied to international tourism cycles. The consistent increase across both years indicates that immigration authorities are encountering a growing caseload of violations, reflecting the expanding scale and complexity of foreign national presence in Bali. Beyond aggregate numbers, these data underscore the structural limitations of formal immigration enforcement with hundreds of enforcement actions per year and the total volume of foreign visitors and residents in the millions proactive, community-level surveillance becomes essential to complement formal enforcement. This is precisely the governance gap that Pecalang and the Desa Adat system are positioned to address.

The Role of Pecalang in Social Surveillance

Pecalang occupy a distinctive institutional position at the intersection of customary authority and practical community security. Unlike formal police or immigration officers, Pecalang derive their authority not from state appointment but from communal recognition their legitimacy flows from the same social fabric that structures everyday life in the traditional village [10]. This social embeddedness enables Pecalang to observe and assess foreign nationals' behavior in ways that formal enforcement cannot easily replicate: monitoring patterns of residence, identifying occupancy mismatches between stated and actual activities and recognizing when visitors' conduct violates customary norms. Pecalang have extended their surveillance function to encompass the monitoring of digital nomads and short-term foreign residents who occupy the gray zone between tourism and residency. Activities such as conducting business without proper authorization, sub-leasing properties in violation of visa conditions, or engaging in social behavior incompatible with adat (customary) norms come to the attention of Pecalang before formal authorities are typically notified [12, 16]. The behavioral patterns that trigger Pecalang's attention have been empirically documented: Aulia et al. [7] identify public intoxication, traffic violations, inappropriate dress in sacred areas, and disrespect during religious ceremonies as the most frequently observed and most strongly rejected transgressions among Canggu residents, with 73.4% of survey respondents expressing firm opposition to such behaviors.

Suyono and Santosa [21] clarify the formal basis underlying Pecalang's early detection role under Law No. 6 of 2011 on Immigration, foreigners conducting business activities without a Limited Stay Permit (ITAS) are engaged in permit misuse subject to administrative and criminal sanction precisely the category of violation that Pecalang are positioned to detect before formal authorities become aware. This early detection function positions Pecalang as a first-line filter in the community-based oversight architecture. The

relationship between Pecalang and the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office is characterized by a division of labor that capitalizes on each party's comparative advantages. Pecalang supply contextual intelligence knowledge of who is present in the village, how long they have been there, and whether their activities match their declared immigration status. Immigration authorities, in turn, supply legal enforcement capacity the authority to verify documents, issue orders, and initiate deportation proceedings. This complementary relationship transforms what would otherwise be two separate and mutually ignorant oversight systems into a loosely integrated community-formal partnership [17].

Synergy between Cultural Governance and Formal Immigration Systems

The normative foundation of Pecalang's oversight function is the *awig-awig* the codified customary law of Canggu Traditional Village. *Awig-awig* establish behavioral expectations applicable not only to community members but in principle to all individuals present within the village's customary territory. For foreign nationals, these norms operate as a parallel behavioral code alongside Indonesian immigration and criminal law, covering issues such as appropriate attire in sacred spaces, permissible activities in residential zones and social conduct during religious occasions. The integration of *awig-awig* with formal immigration oversight produces what institutional theory terms complementarity effects: the combination of the two systems achieves outcomes neither could achieve independently. *Awig-awig* create preventive social norms that reduce the incidence of violations before they escalate to the level requiring formal enforcement formal immigration law provides the coercive backstop of deportation and legal sanction when violations occur [10, 16].

The legal specificity of these sanctions is consequential: Suyono and Santosa [21] demonstrate that foreigners running businesses without a Limited Stay Permit (ITAS) face concrete legal consequences under Indonesian immigration law, providing the formal enforcement teeth that give Pecalang's early warnings their downstream institutional weight. An operational precedent for this synergy already exists in Bali's enforcement record Putri and Resen [20] document how the Denpasar Immigration Office and the Sukawati Police jointly managed a case of a Polish foreign national violating Nyepi customary rules, illustrating that coordination between customary norms and state enforcement has moved beyond theory into established practice. Together, these mechanisms constitute a multi-level governance architecture in which community-based prevention and state-based enforcement are mutually reinforcing.

This synergy is not without tension. The rapid commercialization of Canggu driven by foreign investment in hospitality, short-term rental properties, and digital nomad infrastructure creates economic incentives that can conflict with customary governance norms. Property owners may have financial interests in under-reporting or tolerating visa-violating foreign tenants business operators may resist reporting competitors who operate without permits. Managing these conflicts of interest requires that Pecalang maintain both social legitimacy within the community and a clear understanding of the boundaries of their authority relative to formal law enforcement [1].

Community Resilience and Adaptation to Globalization

Community resilience in Canggu is best understood not as resistance to change but as the capacity to absorb and adapt to globalization's pressures while retaining cultural integrity. The social ecological resilience framework emphasizes this adaptive dimension, distinguishing between communities that respond to external shocks by rigidly defending existing structures and those that develop flexible, innovative responses that preserve core identity while accommodating necessary change [17]. Canggu's customary institutions *Desa Adat*, Pecalang, and *awig-awig* have demonstrated this adaptive capacity across multiple dimensions. Pecalang have expanded their functional mandate without abandoning their customary authority base *awig-awig* have been selectively updated to address contemporary realities such as digital nomadism and short-stay rental and the *Desa Adat* has developed collaborative relationships with formal institutions that enhance its effectiveness without compromising its autonomy.

These adaptations collectively constitute what Astuti et al. [17] term institutional transformation the creative reshaping of existing institutional forms in response to environmental pressures. The community resilience contribution of Pecalang-based oversight is most visible in the preventive domain. By establishing a visible, socially legitimate presence that monitors foreign nationals' compliance with customary and legal

norms, Pecalang reduce the probability that minor violations will escalate into serious immigration offenses. This preventive function has significant economic value for Canggu's tourism-dependent community: maintaining Bali's reputation as a well-governed, safe destination sustains the tourist flows on which the local economy depends [22, 23].

A Conceptual Model of Community-Based Immigration Oversight

Drawing on the empirical data and theoretical synthesis presented above, the study proposes a conceptual model of community-based immigration oversight with three core operational dimensions. First, early detection: Pecalang, through continuous presence in the community, identify behaviors indicative of immigration violations unauthorized employment, extended overstay, misuse of tourist visas for commercial activities and report these observations to immigration authorities for verification and enforcement action. Second, preventive normative enforcement: through the daily application of *awig-awig* norms, the *Desa Adat* creates a behavioral environment in which foreign nationals are consistently reminded of local expectations. This normative visibility reduces both the incidence of violations and the social disruption they cause when they do occur.

Third, institutional collaboration: the effectiveness of the model depends on sustained, structured collaboration between Pecalang, the *Desa Adat* leadership, and the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office. This includes regular information sharing, joint capacity-building activities and agreed protocols for escalating community observations to formal enforcement action. The increasing trend in administrative immigration actions documented above 300 in 2024 rising to 337 in 2025 should be interpreted within this framework not as evidence of system failure but as an indicator of the system's growing activation. As community-based detection improves and collaborative channels deepen, the pipeline from community observation to formal action becomes more reliable, resulting in more cases reaching the administrative action stage. The goal is not zero enforcement actions which would imply either zero violations or zero detection but a well-functioning oversight pipeline in which detected violations are efficiently routed to appropriate responses.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that effective immigration oversight in a high-intensity global tourism destination like Canggu, Bali, cannot rely exclusively on formal state mechanisms. The structural limitations of immigration enforcement agencies constrained resources, high foreign national mobility, and administrative distance from community-level dynamics create governance gaps that community-based institutions are uniquely positioned to address. Pecalang, through their social embeddedness, customary authority, and adaptive functional evolution, have emerged as a critical component of a community-based immigration oversight architecture. Operating alongside *awig-awig* and in collaboration with the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office, they contribute to early detection, preventive normative enforcement, and institutional complementarity that together strengthen the resilience of Canggu's traditional community in the face of globalization pressures.

Administrative data from the Ngurah Rai Immigration Office showing 300 enforcement actions in 2024 and 337 in 2025 provide empirical grounding for the scale of immigration governance challenges in the region and support the argument for a robust, multi-layered oversight system. The 12.3% year-on-year increase in enforcement actions, distributed across all calendar months with peak activity in high-tourism periods, underscores the sustained and growing demand for effective immigration governance mechanisms. The conceptual model of community-based immigration oversight developed here centered on early detection, preventive normative enforcement, and institutional collaboration offers a theoretically grounded and empirically supported framework for policy development. Key policy implications include: formalizing and resourcing the collaborative relationship between *Desa Adat* institutions and immigration authorities establishing clear protocols for information sharing and joint action; providing Pecalang with relevant legal training to ensure their activities remain within appropriate boundaries and developing *awig-awig* provisions that address the realities of contemporary foreign national presence in traditional village territories. Future research should extend this analysis to other tourism-intensive *Desa Adat* in Bali, test the model through primary qualitative fieldwork including interviews with Pecalang and immigration officials, and explore the

extent to which similar community-based oversight mechanisms operate in comparable contexts across Southeast Asia.

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