Private Social Sciences Journal
E-ISSN 2798-866X
P-ISSN 2798-6314
https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v5i11.882

Volume 5
Issue 11
November Edition 2025

Agriculture as a transitional field towards habitus renewal: Examining the impact of technology and social structural change on rural development in Cibodas, West Java

Nirwasita Daniswara & Erwando

Faculty of Social & Political Sciences, Universitas Tanjungpura, Jl. Profesor Dokter H. Hadari Nawawi, Bansir Laut, Kec. Pontianak Tenggara, Kota Pontianak, Kalimantan Barat, 78115
Indonesia
e-mail: nirwasita@fisip.untan.ac.id

Received 29 September 2025
Revised 30 October 2025
Accepted 05 November 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examines how social change occurs through the transition to smart farming in Cibodas Village, West Java, Indonesia. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field within a constructivist paradigm, this study employed qualitative methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of policy documents and training materials related to smart farming. The results show that applying IoT technology for automated irrigation for fertilization and microclimate monitoring in smart farming can simplify agricultural operations and transform farmers' habits and village government structures, orienting them toward the use of advanced technology. This shift occurs as cultural capital based on digital technology is transformed into symbolic capital, thereby increasing sales confidence. This shift is particularly pronounced among young farmers, who utilize digital knowledge to simplify agricultural operations and sales mechanisms. However, for elderly farmers, their lack of literacy skills and limited access to information pose a potential disadvantage in facilitating the Cibodas Village. Agriculture in Cibodas serves as a platform for mobilizing and negotiating various forms of capital. This underscores the need for technology adoption to drive change and promote more equitable social development.

Keywords: smart farming, habitus, capital, technology, rural development, social structure, Cibodas.

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of rural development activities in Indonesia is increasingly moving towards the trend of adopting digital technology, which not only encourages productivity but also reconstructs the social structure of rural communities. This is like the presence of a smart farming model that combines automation systems, Internet of Things (IoT) technology, and data analysis has provided a new logical picture of efficiency, connectivity, and operational improvements in the form of innovation in agricultural systems that were previously oriented towards traditional mechanisms (Yuan & Sun, 2024). However, it is important to note that agricultural digitalization is not socially neutral; it intervenes in farmers' social practices, changes their daily routines, and shifts their perspectives on work and the community (Abdulai et al., 2023; Preininger, 2024). In Indonesia, especially in rural West Java, various initiatives, such as the digital project in West Java and the digital village program, have been launched to bridge the gap in access to technology. The focus of these programs is to train farmers and provide digital tools and infrastructure to adopt technology-based smart farming practices

Recent examples demonstrate that digitalization has enabled farmers to increase their capacity and gradually redefine their daily agricultural practices, although structural transformation is not yet fully complete (Fahmi & Mendrofa, 2024). The transition to smart farming can have implications for social change, such as redefining employment values, partnership network models, and how communities create and distribute value. Adoptions such as the use of smartphones for crop care, digital platforms for market access, and tools to facilitate online learning have driven a shift from traditional community farming logic to new approaches that emphasize adopters' actions, information sharing, and networked access to the economy (Abdulai et al., 2023; Daniswara et al., 2025). In this regard, the digitalization process in agriculture must be understood not only as the application of technology, but also as a process of practical cultural acceptance through phases that change the social order in rural areas of developing countries (Ludwig et al., 2021).

From a post-structuralist perspective, digital change in smart-based agriculture represents a profound restructuring of social interactions. As observed in the farming community of Cibodas Village in West Bandung, the use of digital technology in agriculture not only transforms production techniques but also shapes the social structures. From the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, the existence of smart agriculture can be understood as a new form of capital, such as cultural capital in the use of information technology, as well as gaining symbolic value from the replication of the use of smart agriculture. It is important to understand that individuals with strong information technology skills and knowledge not only achieve significant economic gains but also have an impact on increasing the capacity of social capital for rural communities that adopt the technology (Butler & Holloway, 2016; Czerniewicz, 2014).

This transition reflects a shift in farmers' habitus in terms of their ways of thinking, experiencing, and acting. This shift is shaped by the novelty of the social context, which constructs a new logic for adopting digital technology. This new agricultural habitus is observed through the increasing reliance on sensors, monitoring applications, and social media platforms for trading. Meanwhile, traditional agricultural habits based on intuition, tradition, and local authority are being renegotiated. This adoption is not immediately accepted by all farmers due to limited smartphone adoption and the ability to learn new things that make new adaptations difficult for some farmers. As a result, farmers without access to technology risk being excluded from the increasingly competitive agricultural sector, unable to meet the new demands of the ever-growing demand for agricultural products (Agbenyega, 2015; Daniswara & Budirahayu, 2025).

Furthermore, government support and private partnerships established between farmer associations and IoT technology providers for smart farming can increase the capacity of the agricultural ecosystem to integrate "advance" and "modernization" within the smart farming ecosystem. IT skills and the utilization of these technology platforms provide opportunities for access to new ways to increase the ease of agricultural entrepreneurship, replacing the strengths of traditional farming methods. This approach represents Bourdieu's capital transformation, where economic and cultural capital that utilize

technology can be transformed into symbolic capital, which generates trust value by improving the quality of agricultural products (Eichholz et al., 2013).

Beginning with the question of how technology contributes to structural social change, this study examines the changing habits of farmers who practice smart farming. It considers technology as a practical tool and "capital" for negotiating economics, norms, and power. Using qualitative field data collected in the village of Cibodas, West Java, this study explores how digital agriculture is transforming rural social structures, altering relations of knowledge, cooperation, and power, and how these processes reveal deeper processes of social mobilization rooted in Indonesia's development agenda.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm to understand how technology reconstructs the habitus of new farmers and the structures of rural social change in smart agriculture. This method was chosen because it confirms the social construction of meaningful realities by social actors (Pulla & Carter, 2018) and is used in constructivist critique, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field.

By examining the case in Cibodas Village, West Java, this research examines the subjects' views regarding the adoption of smart agriculture, perspectives on intergenerational mobility, and differences in the distribution of cultural capital in technology adoption (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Ferguson, 1993), as well as highlighting the novelty of habitus in daily practice by exploring contextual & detailed information (Zahle, 2021; Upadhyay, 2012).

Data collection was conducted in three stages. First, field observations are required to assess the tools used in smart farming, such as IoT devices, including automated irrigation and environmental monitoring systems. These observations provide a direct view of the mechanisms of farmers' habitus renewal related to technology adoption, which has implications for complementing the evidence found in the case study interviews (Sutherland, 2020). These observations are continuously recorded to identify socio-technical gaps in the field (Denny & Weckesser, 2022).

Second, semi-structured and selected interviews were conducted through purposive sampling, considering differences in age, organizational role, and technology proficiency. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to provide data relevant to the context of the research phenomenon (Denny & Weckesser, 2022; Hoang, 2020). The interviewees included smallholder farmers, representatives of farmer associations, government officials, and IoT industry partners. The interview questions were structured around the reasons for adoption, changes in daily life, perceived risks and benefits, and ecological and demographic changes. Third, a literature review was conducted to determine the relevance of training materials and interventions by relevant stakeholders to encourage the use of smart farming. These three approaches contribute to a clearer assessment of structural changes dominated by the logic of technology adoption among farmers (Tofu & Mengistu, 2023; Regan, 2019).

Meanwhile, the triangulation process steps, starting from observation, interviews, and document analysis, were carried out to increase the credibility and depth of the findings by analyzing the validity of various data collections (Morse, 2015). Iterative manual coding was conducted to facilitate the analysis. Interview transcripts and field notes were coded thematically and comparatively to identify patterns, themes, and implicit meanings (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Next, triangulation of observations, interviews, and document analysis was conducted to verify the data through member checking with several key informants, structured interviews with colleagues and research collaborators who were not involved in the data collection process, as previously recommended by Lietz et al. (2006) to increase the study's trustworthiness.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results show that the implementation of smart farming in Cibodas drives technological and social change. Through tutorials and IoT devices from technical partners and government programs, a

digital farming system was created and technology was used for fertilization, microclimate monitoring, and irrigation systems. One resource person explained, "Based on government and Habibie Gardens guidelines, we have begun implementing an IoT-based irrigation system. The water and time savings are tangible, and everything can be monitored via smartphone." (Uden, Agronative Farm member, 30-year-old). Smart farming tools oriented toward automation systems can improve the efficiency and ease of plant maintenance, especially for high-value agricultural products, such as beef tomatoes and export-quality vegetables. However, the adoption of smart farming remains heterogeneous among certain subjects, influenced by differences in age and experience accessing digital resources. The adoption of smart farming equipment demonstrates how social capital shapes a new habitus for young farmers whose value-oriented structure can assemble local agricultural fields, as conceptualized by Bourdieu (Carolan, 2005). See Figure 1

Figure 1. The Lembang Agrotani Farmers Association uses an Automatic Watering System from the Habibi Garden Application

Source: Observation Results, 2024

Some farmers aged 50 and over struggle to use smart farming technology equipment and prefer to maintain outdated or semi-modern practices. As expressed by the Cibodas village head, "It is a bit difficult for older people to use the equipment. We're used to traditional methods, not mobile phones." (Didin Sukaya, Cibodas village head, 52-year-old). This gap highlights how the habitus of older farmers, which has been historically constructed through the belief in traditional agricultural practices, as well as limiting new technological models in improving agricultural operations (Radoll, 2011). This difference also underscores the importance of symbolic capital in providing confidence in the existence of agricultural technologies that need to be utilized (Eichholz et al., 2013). This difference in views provides a field note on the shortcomings of older farmers who are not only not accepting new forms of agriculture but also continuing traditional beliefs that have become inherited.

The emergence of new trends in agriculture illustrates a shift in the societal context, where technological adaptation has the potential to disrupt long-existing structures, but on the other hand, also forms new structures and builds the identity of local actors when some adopt agricultural technology (Agbenyega, 2015). In this context, agriculture functions as a field, an arena where farmers compete to stake capital to increase income (Jain, 2013). As part of this process, young farmers mobilize cultural capital by accessing, understanding, and utilizing the ability to use digital technology as a new tool to improve the ease of agricultural operations. As one young farmer put it, "I learned about smart farming on YouTube and tried it myself in my garden. My colleagues often come here to ask questions" (Dadan, Secretary of Agronative Farm, 42-year-old).

The interview findings show how young farmers use cultural capital in the learned of technology to achieve a dominant position in the field of increasing income and facilitating agricultural business (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007). In contrast, older farmers avoid change because they rely more on the legacy of previous farming experiences and learn through collective knowledge transfer. Older farmers argue that social learning in farming is more easily absorbed through attending group meetings. This suggests that farmer habitus is maintained through social relationships and experiential learning, while younger farmers' identities are learned through individual learning of new agricultural tools (Fantasia, 2008).

Figure 2. The Makakal Farmers Group utilizes Farming Media & Plant Nutrition Control Tools

Source: Observation Results, 2024

The pattern shown in Figure 2 reflects the evolving habitus of technology use among young people, characterized by self-directed learning and a profitable orientation, coexisting with traditional customs that uphold collectivity in the changing world. This dynamic creates new power structures and increase in symbolic capital accumulation at the local practical level (Fantasia, 2008; Reed-Danahay, 2002). Furthermore, smart agriculture industry players facilitate this change through capacity building and repositioning of digital infrastructure. Partnerships between farmer associations, the government, and Habibie Garden IoT developers can provide opportunities for IT access, accelerating the adoption of technological competency development as a driver of equitable rural development. This aligns with the symbolic view of agricultural social networks in the form of new knowledge, as a reference for symbolic capital that determines norms of efficiency recognition among local actors in agriculture (Brunori, 2006).

This is as explained by a member of the farming community who said: "The government provides support in the form of training and equipment, but ongoing support is our responsibility. Younger members often take care of the digital side" (Panji, Makakal Farmers Association member, 28-year-old). These findings reveal dynamics that offer social insights and new forms of configurations. For example, technological literacy becomes symbolic capital that determines increased trust in the efficiency value of adopting smart farming technology within rural agricultural networks, where old structures are not lost but recombined (Wang et al., 2017).

The existence of social support, learning from other organizations, and agricultural technology adoption workshops has provided essential forms of mobilization and adoption to improve the operational efficiency of farming activities in the study area. As observed Mets-Oja et al. (2025) communities utilize new cultural and social capital to bridge gaps, reshape social spaces, and create new forms of identity within the local context. These social changes have also expanded market connections and social identities. For example, digital social media platforms are used for price research, monitoring customer growth, and as a direct sales tool that can provide more affordable prices without going through brokers. This is as expressed by Panji: "Online ordering allows us to sell directly and maintain affordable prices" (Panji, Makakal Farmers Association member, 28-year-old). See Figure 3.

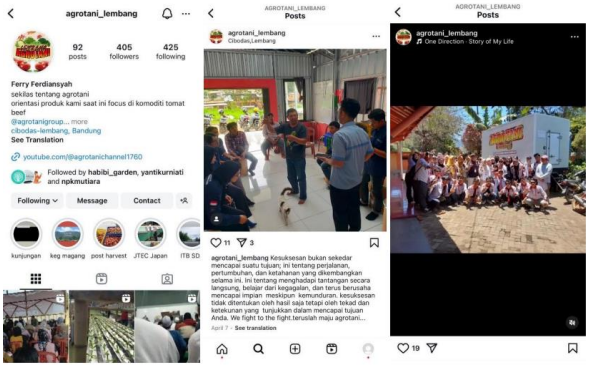

Figure 3. The Agrotani Lembang Farmers Group Utilizes Instagram as a Medium to Promote Agricultural Products

Source: Observation Results, 2024

Furthermore, some farmers still rely on conventional networks and sales partners, disregarding the need for online sales. This is as expressed by Triana, *"For us, the vegetable market network has facilitated sales because of the trust in smart farming, so online sales are less important"* (Triana, chair of the Makakal Farmers Association, 42-year-old). This difference shows that technology is not simply a tool to increase efficiency but rather a sociocultural force that renegotiates the logic of market response and collaboration of sales partner networks in the field. Accordingly, smart farming acts as a reconstructive habitus (Harracá et al., 2023), which can provide renegotiated power through symbolic values and cultural capital in the field (Demirel et al., 2021), leading to a restructuring of the habitus through social and economic capital in rural areas (Gómez, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Technological and social changes are occurring in the adoption of smart farming in Cibodas Village to increase agricultural productivity. Increased productivity through smart farming models, such as automated irrigation and microclimate monitoring tools, can simplify crop maintenance, particularly for high-value crops. However, implementation is uneven, driven by differences in age, experience, and access to digital tools. Younger farmers predominantly practice smart farming, whereas traditional or semi-modern farming practices are still more common among older farmers.

In Bourdieu's view, agriculture is interpreted as a "field" in which subjects compete to mobilize capital in various forms: Digital literacy can be interpreted as cultural and symbolic capital that strengthens legitimacy and status by reconstructing or even eliminating old hierarchical structures. Practices differ across generations: younger farmers exhibit a technological habitus (self-directed learning and social network-based business models). In comparison, older farmers maintain a social habitus (interpersonal trust and self-directed learning).

Key actors, including government agencies, farmer associations, and IoT developers, support this transformation through training and digitalization. However, sustainability depends on the resource capacity of local communities and the division of roles, which often leads to outsourcing digital transformation to younger members. In addition, digital platforms are used to set prices and sell directly to the market, whereas some farmers still use traditional market networks. Overall, a new habitus is emerging in smart farming alongside the old one. The transformation of the digital economy into a social and economic economy is underway, but it requires empowerment and inclusivity to distribute benefits equitably.

Ethical Approval
Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement
Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions
ND designed the research, including the expansion of the literature framework, methodology, and data collection. He supervised the fieldwork and analysis, summarized the findings, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. He also served as corresponding author, led discussions with the editor and reviewers, and oversaw the review process at every stage. E contributed to the development of a comprehensive literature review, data collection (interviews and observations), as well as data curation and cleaning. He was also involved in the initial analysis, preparation of visualizations, and writing of the methodology and results sections. E assisted in the preparation of the final manuscript, including reference checking, compilation of appendices, and alignment of citation styles.

Disclosure Statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data Availability Statement
The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

Funding
This research received no external funding.

Notes on Contributors

Nirwasita Daniswara
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-8773-3675
Nirwasita Daniswara is a Lecturer and Researcher in the Social Development Programme, Faculty of Social & Political Sciences, Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak, Indonesia. His research interests relate to Development Studies, Sociology, Rural Tourism Development, Urban and Regional Planning.

Erwando
Erwando is a Lecturer and Researcher in the Administration Public Programme, Faculty of Social & Political Sciences, Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak, Indonesia. His research interests relate to Public Administration, Rural Development, Sustainability.

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