

NUSANTARA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WEST KALIMANTAN: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND NARRATION OF BELONGING

NUSANTARA DARI PERSPEKTIF KALIMANTAN BARAT: PELUANG, TANTANGAN DAN NARASI RASA MEMILIKI

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ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini bertujuan menjelaskan pendirian Nusantara dari sudut pandang Kalimantan Barat dan lebih lanjut menganalisa konstruksi rasa memiliki atas Pulau Kalimantan dan Indonesia. Sementara ini penelitian terdahulu mengenai Nusantara hanya berfokus pada Kalimantan Timur dan Indonesia, tulisan ini mengisi celah tersebut dengan memfokuskan pembahasan pada sudut pandang Kalimantan Barat dan menggabungkannya dengan teori rasa memiliki. Metode penelitian yang dilakukan bersifat kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui evaluasi atas literatur yang didapat dari naskah kebijakan, artikel jurnal, buku, laman pemerintah dan berita daring, serta observasi autoetnografi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menerapkan teori rasa memiliki dan koding *grounded theory*. Tulisan ini menemukan beberapa peluang dan tantangan bagi Kalimantan Barat, mulai dari efek *spillover*, daya tawar politik, kemungkinan hubungan bilateral dengan Malaysia dan Sarawak, perpindahan orang dan keterhubungan di Kalimantan dan masalah keamanan di perbatasan internasional. Selain itu, tulisan ini juga menemukan bahwa implikasi dari pendirian Nusantara adalah untuk dapat meningkatkan rasa memiliki bagi orang asli Kalimantan dan menguatkan rasa kebangsaan masyarakat Indonesia. Artikel ini juga menyarankan Pemerintah Indonesia untuk mempertimbangkan pelajaran-pelajaran dari pemindahan ibu kota negara lainnya, seperti Putrajaya, Brasilia, Ottawa dan Canberra.

Kata Kunci: daya tawar politik, hubungan bilateral, keuntungan komparatif kewilayahan, Nusantara, rasa kebangsaan, rasa memiliki.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explain the establishment of Nusantara by focusing on West Kalimantan's perspective and analysing the construction of belonging in Kalimantan Island and Indonesia. While previous studies have mainly focused on East Kalimantan and Indonesia as a whole, this paper addresses the gap by focusing on West Kalimantan's point of view and combining the theory of belonging. This research method is qualitative in nature by collecting data through desk evaluation literature studies from policy papers, journal articles, books, government websites, and online news, as well as autoethnography observation. The data analysis applied the theory of belonging and grounded theory coding. This paper reveals that West Kalimantan presents several opportunities and challenges, such as the spillover effect, political bargaining, possible bilateral relations with Malaysia and Sarawak, mobility and connectivity in Kalimantan, and security concerns on the international borders. Furthermore, it is found that the implication of the establishment of Nusantara is to enhance the native Kalimantan people's sense of belonging and strengthen the national belonging of Indonesia's citizens. This paper recommends that the Indonesian government consider several lessons learned from previous capital city relocations, such as Putrajaya, Brasilia, Ottawa and Canberra.

Keywords: *bilateral relations, national belonging, Nusantara, political bargain, regional comparative advantages, sense of belonging.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to explain the opportunities and challenges of Nusantara's establishment in West Kalimantan and explore its potential impact on the sense of belonging. The growing attention on Nusantara as the new capital city of Indonesia led to several publications addressing essential issues or topics comprehensively, such as defence strategy and border diplomacy (Alviani et al., 2022), food security (Jiuhardi et al., 2024), architecture and city design (Sari, 2022), economic development (Hasibuan & Aisa, 2020), communication (Takariani et al., 2023), public policy (Hariati & Saputri, 2022), gender (Dewi, 2022) and environmental problems (Pusung et al., 2024).

However, less discussion has been made on the neighbouring region's point of view. As a prestigious project, Nusantara should not only serve its own but have less impact on the surrounding provinces due to its aim to shift Indonesia's development orientation to be more nationwide than the previous Java-centred mindset. Therefore, this paper will explore the study of Nusantara from the perspective of West Kalimantan by addressing the following research questions: What are the opportunities and challenges of establishing Nusantara for West Kalimantan? How could Nusantara potentially enhance the sense of belonging of the local people of Kalimantan and Indonesia?

At least two publications address the perspective of other regions on Nusantara. As a starting point, both articles provide comparative findings on how local settings might be influenced differently.

First, an article by De Fretes and Korwa (2022) argues the relocation of Indonesia's capital city from Papua's perspective, the eastern side of Indonesia. The article argues that Nusantara's establishment will not have direct impacts on the development of Papua due to several factors: only local elites will travel there, the logistics supply chain to Papua will remain from Java, Java also keep on providing the best option of health and education facilities which attract Papuan people, unchanging militaristic approach to deal with

conflicts in the region and Nusantara in local media as an unpopular public opinion to discuss compared to human right and new autonomy region initiative (De Fretes & Korwa, 2022). Despite the critics, they argue that the Papuan people never rejected the relocation plan. Their concerns resonate with our argument on the support from the local government and people in West Kalimantan, although geographically located on the other side of the island.

Second, a publication from the perspective of Sarawak, a state in Malaysia on Kalimantan Island. The article reveals that establishing Nusantara will provide Sarawak with tourism and industry potential (Ismail et al., 2024). However, Ismail et al. (2024) neglect to consider the distance and travelling time from Nusantara to Sarawak today as a complication to gaining such opportunities. In this paper, we will critically engage with the issue which shows that the island's western side has higher challenges in the current establishment of Nusantara.

Besides those publications, the previous research on Nusantara, which focuses on the local people, mainly discusses the impact of relocation on land conflicts with the government, cultural preservation and the indigenous people. Firnaherera and Lazuardi (2022: 74–75) and Warsilah (2023, p. 89) discuss the agrarian conflict or rights of the local and indigenous people concerning their private and customary land in the land conversion process due to the construction of Nusantara. Moreover, Djayanti et al. (2022: 8–13) and Warsilah (2023: 89–90) argue that the capital city relocation might trigger possible social conflict due to the influx of migrants through the marginalisation of local people by the newcomers and the decreasing role of customary organisations. Other existing problems of the indigenous people of Dayak in East Kalimantan, also addressed by Warsilah (2023: 89–91), were education, economic and land control, the mastery of high technology and local participation in development. The previous studies argue that the contrasted interests of the government and the people over the land and the clashing identity between the locals and newcomers possibly lead to social conflict mainly

discussed through ethnicity and cultural identity concepts.

However, most of them focused on the relationship between upholding ethnic identity *vis a vis* the existence of indigenous people and the welfare or economic approaches. Those papers also neglected the discussion on the people's sense of belonging to the place and their homeland, the East Kalimantan area and, in general, Kalimantan Island. Especially when Dayak, as the indigenous people on the island, strongly believe in Mother Earth's sacred role in their daily lives (Alloy et al., 2008: 3). Therefore, this paper contributes to significantly addressing the gap in explaining the local people and their identity by analysing their belonging to the establishment of Nusantara.

Furthermore, we provide our paper's outline below for readability. The following section explains our theoretical framework and methodological approach. The paper further discusses the opportunities and challenges of relocating Indonesia's capital city from West Kalimantan's point of view. The article then argues that the sense of belonging to the island and the capital city is the implication of Nusantara's establishment. The government of Indonesia also used Nusantara to forge their national belonging. This paper concludes the discussion and provides several recommendations in the latest section.

The theory of belonging provides flexible approaches to dealing with the debate over identity in a particular community. Pfaff-Czarnecka (2011) defines the theory by introducing the concepts of commonality, sense of mutuality and attachment. The commonality is the perception of people sharing similarities such as cultural forms (language, religion, lifestyle), values, experience and memory construction (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 202). A sense of mutuality is defined as ties embodying each community member as the impact of those commonalities in the form of rules (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011: 205). The attachment connects people to the material and immaterial worlds (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011: 206), such as space and locations, natural objects, landscapes, climate and material possessions. Pollini (2005) highlights the importance of attachment by focusing on the connection

between people and places. The three concepts are categorised as the elements of belonging that impact the solidarity actions of people based on those feelings. Furthermore, Yuval-Davis (2006) offers the politics of belonging concepts to explain the construction of belongings conducted by actor(s).

Thus, this article addresses two scientific gaps. First, previous studies of Indonesia's new capital city have not explained the potential impact on other regions in Kalimantan Island and the neighbouring region's points of view in responding to the establishment of Nusantara. Second, the intersection of those studies and the study of belonging, which focuses on the relationship between people and place, is also under research within the previous research on identity and local people.

These gaps inspire us to focus our explanation on two points. First, this paper will explore Nusantara from the West Kalimantan's point of view. As this paper previously argues, the perspective of other regions is neglected in several publications on Indonesia's new capital city relocation; West Kalimantan provides unique characteristics to explain the possible local and international impact of establishing Nusantara in Kalimantan. West Kalimantan province is significant for the research due to its furthest distance and lowest human development index compared to the East, Central, South and North Kalimantan Province of Indonesia and its strategic location bordering the Sarawak State of Malaysia (Muharrami, 2022). Besides, the cross-border interaction between West Kalimantan and Sarawak influenced mobility through the border areas (Awang et al., 2013), including the migration of Indonesian people from Java, East Timor and other regions seeking agricultural and construction jobs in Sarawak as well as domestically the border region in West Kalimantan (Andilala & Ardiansyah, 2022; Potter, 2012).

Secondly, this paper incorporates the discussion on belonging by demonstrating the local people of Kalimantan's perspective and how Nusantara would foster the notion of national belonging towards Indonesian people.

Thus, this paper aims to explain and discuss the potentially significant impact of Nusantara by understanding West Kalimantan's perspective and further analysing the construction of belonging in Kalimantan Island and Indonesia. The potential effects of Nusantara are not just a future possibility but a pressing issue that requires immediate attention and understanding.

Throughout the literature review on belonging, incorporating the theory into this paper's discussion is a two-fold solution to people's relations towards Nusantara and Indonesia. First, as suggested by Pfaff-Czarnecka (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011: 202), examining and focusing on the commonalities towards the inhabitants of Kalimantan Island as an attachment (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011: 206) which connects the people and place(s) (Pollini, 2005). Further, the theory helps to explain a sense of mutuality among the natives of Kalimantan and how they perform such mutualities (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011: 205). Second, from a nationalistic perspective, the new capital city of Indonesia's philosophical reasons for relocation and the name could also unite the Indonesian people with a firmer nationalism bound in the future. Thus, the use of belonging theory aims to examine the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006) process through several positive and nationalist narratives by the government during the establishment of IKN.

The authors conducted qualitative research by applying desk evaluation on several pieces of literature and observations to collect data on West Kalimantan's point of view, including those of the local government and the people. The data was obtained through literature based on policy papers, journal articles, books, government websites and online news. In addition to the data from several literature sources, this paper included primary data from our daily observations as the native people of West Kalimantan and local researchers from one of the universities in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, through an autoethnography method.

According to Dauphinee (2010), Löwenheim (2010) and Neumann (2010), the autoethnography method enables the researcher to focus on his/her relation to the world being researched. Besides, according to Löwenheim (2010: 1025–1029), an

autoethnography aims to connect the researcher's experience, memory and emotion with the readers and make them understand the written personal story. Other ethical issues in autoethnography include the motives for writing the research paper, what the authors knew about encountering the research and being open about the privileged status (Dauphinee, 2010: 809).

Through incorporating this method, the researchers used our role as the native people of West Kalimantan who were born and lived in the region until senior high school. Then, we continued to higher education institutions in West Java. After graduation, both authors accepted a lecturer position at Universitas Tanjungpura Pontianak for the past eight years. Therefore, our experiences in living and observing daily life, conversation, and public opinion discourse in West Kalimantan benefit this research by exploring the point of view of West Kalimantan towards the establishment of Nusantara. However, as Neumann (2010: 1051) and Dauphinee (Dauphinee, 2010, p. 806) suggested, we reflected and were aware of those positionalities throughout the research process to prevent bias in conducting analysis.

In analysing the data, the authors followed Charmaz's grounded theory coding (2014) by categorising all relevant data from the literature and observation and then classifying it into several themes. We classified two themes: opportunities and challenges of Nusantara and the sense of belonging towards Nusantara. The first theme emerges from the data with the "West Kalimantan" code in every literature. The data analysis grouped the local government and people's points of view in response to Nusantara's project. In addition to the data, we addressed the researcher's memo by reflecting on and memorising our experience related to the topic. This research further examined the topic to explain and understand the flexibility of people's feelings towards their identities and places. Furthermore, we managed to understand the process of constructing, negotiating, and maintaining a sense of belonging to Kalimantan Island and Nusantara, as well as to the national belonging of Indonesia, by implementing the

politics of belonging concept from Yuval-Davis (2006).

DISCUSSION

Opportunities and Challenges of the Nusantara's establishment in Kalimantan Island

Opportunities from the Nusantara's establishment in Kalimantan Island

This paper argues several opportunities from the perspective of West Kalimantan: the spillover effect from the capital city's development, increasing West Kalimantan's political bargain and attracting Malaysia to invest and collaborate internationally. Aside from these opportunities, West Kalimantan also faces various challenges that may hamper their interest towards the Nusantara's construction: the mobility and connectivity in Kalimantan, the popularity of Sarawak for the West Kalimantan's people and the international security concerns at the borders of Indonesia and Malaysia.

The establishment of Nusantara on the eastern side of Kalimantan is supposed to have a spillover effect on another part of the island. Chen and Wei (2018: 994) explain the spillover effect by giving the example of a railroad construction project in China that provides accessibility to other economic capitals that connect the affected areas. Although spending huge and long-term return investment, they argue that the effect of one development project benefits the connectivity of regions and boosts economic growth (Chen & Wei, 2018: 994). Their argument resonates with the goal of the capital city relocation to achieve equal wealth distribution and development throughout the Indonesian archipelago. This aim is one of the factors that Indonesian Twitter users positively discuss in supporting the relocation policy (Rifaed et al., 2023: 266).

In the era of decentralisation, Grindle (2007) argues that the local government's efforts and coordination highly influence the province's regional development. For instance, Sarawak in Malaysia showed a best practice with the slogan "Sarawak First" to prioritise the development of their region. Since Malaysia's 15th general election, the *Gabungan Parti Sarawak* (GPS)

has promoted the slogan to express their future government commitment to the development of Sarawak and its people (Chandra, 2022). In addition, the Premier of Sarawak, who led the party and won the election, also stated that this slogan was not intentionally to provoke the independence movement but to strengthen social cohesion amongst Sarawakians, further strengthening Malaysia (Sulok, 2024).

The local government of West Kalimantan must take the initiative to achieve the spillover effect and offer a host of unique advantages that position it as a pivotal component in the success of the IKN and a potential hub for the region. Several opportunities and superiority of West Kalimantan for supporting and becoming the hub for IKN are (1) the national and international strategic location and abundant natural resources; (2) multicultural populations; (3) positive social integration and regional development progress; (4) the domestic political context of Indonesia post-Jokowi and (5) the utmost support for IKN from the local governments in West Kalimantan.

West Kalimantan, strategically located on the western side of Kalimantan, is closer to Jakarta, the previous Indonesia's capital city, which is only 90 minutes of direct flight from Pontianak, the province's capital city. Its strategic geographical location, nestled on the Indonesian Archipelago Shipping Lane (ALKI I)¹ and sharing five formal international land border gates with Sarawak (Malaysia) and several traditional border crossings throughout a 966 km borderline (Oxtora, 2023b), presents unparalleled opportunities for it to emerge as a primary gateway to the East Asia Region and East Malaysia. In addition to its strategic location, the Indonesian government had Kijing International Port and three airports in different big cities in West Kalimantan: Pontianak, Singkawang and Sintang. Kijing's international port will be the main gateway for exporting and importing goods and natural resources on the western side of Kalimantan (Wiko et al., 2023). Moreover, these

1 For further explanation about ALKI, see Puspitawati, D. (2018). Indonesia's Archipelagic Sea Lanes (ASLs) Designation: Rights Turning to Obligations?. *Hasanuddin Law Review*, 4(3), 265-280.

airports might become the hub to connect West Kalimantan and other provinces in Kalimantan and IKN, as well as the possibility of reopening international flights to Malaysia.

Besides the strategic location, West Kalimantan can provide and support the Nusantara with abundant natural resources. The province is known for its mining activities, particularly in granite, andesite, zircon, bauxite, gold², and coal, which significantly contribute to its domestic economy and export commodities (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2024; Info Publik, 2024; Oxtora, 2024; Pemerintah Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2021: 96–97). Moreover, West Kalimantan also has several potential energy raw materials, such as biodiesel from palm oil plantations and uranium (Ciputra et al., 2020; Potter, 2009). In particular, with the discovery of an estimated 404.480 tons of uranium reserves in West Kalimantan (Ciputra et al., 2020: 6), the Indonesian government is expected to construct the first Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) in Southeast Asia at Mempawah District, West Kalimantan (Herawati & Sudagung, 2020; Sudagung & Aclandea, 2019). Additionally, the forestry sector, including timber, palm oil production, rubber, coconut, cocoa, pepper and coffee bean, is another key driver of economic activity in West Kalimantan (Dedi & Petrus, 2023; Potter, 2009; Syarawie, 2022). West Kalimantan is one of the top two provinces in Indonesia for palm oil production, following Riau (Ningrum, 2023). The palm oil potential also triggered robust bilateral cooperation with Malaysia during the embargo of palm oil from the European Union (Sandria, 2023).

Although strategically located in the region and has several potential natural resources, West Kalimantan faced several natural disasters, such as forest fires, flooding, landslides and minor earthquakes. The forest fire was caused

by irresponsible burning, even though the local people of Kalimantan have a safe method for clearing land (Astro Awani, 2023; Suara Pemred, 2019). Besides forest fires, annual flooding with the overflowing Kapuas River also occurs, as well as landslides due to deforestation and heavy rain (Pemerintah Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2021: 20). Despite West Kalimantan being located outside the Indonesian Ring of Fire, it has been recorded to have relatively low earthquake activity. However, several small earthquakes have been in the area with minor impacts (Nasaruddin, 2023). Regardless of occasional natural challenges such as forest fires, flooding, landslides, and minor earthquakes, West Kalimantan's local government remains committed and has made several efforts to mitigate these risks (Ardianto et al., 2022), highlighting its resilience and dedication to supporting IKN.

Moreover, the 2010 census revealed that West Kalimantan is home to a variety of multicultural communities, including Dayak, Malay, Chinese, Javanese, Madurese, Buginese, Sundanese, and other ethnic groups (Qodir et al., 2022: 123). Historical migration from China as a result of 17th-century gold mining expansion and cross-border migration alongside Dutch and British influences have also contributed to the present demography (Gin, 2016). Additionally, the transmigration policy during the reigns of Soekarno and Soeharto has further enhanced the multicultural populations in West Kalimantan (Arndt, 1983; Potter, 2012). These events demonstrated that West Kalimantan has a history of accommodating international and national migration, as well as fostering social integration between indigenous and migrant populations by upholding inter-ethnic relations³ (Prasojo, 2017: 437–439). For instance, in Pontianak, the capital city of West Kalimantan, according to our empirical observations, the assimilation process shown in the evolving of cuisines from various Indonesian groups featuring a blend of recipe

2 As previously mentioned about the Chinese migration in the 17th century for gold mining, West Kalimantan has been known for its traditional gold mining, which further became an exciting discussion among social science researchers concerning the relations between Chinese and local rulers. See Maksum and Sahide (2019), Gin (2020) and Hui (2011).

3 Similar practices happened in the multicultural population of East Kalimantan, where locals intermarry with migrants. The issue of belonging to a particular group can lead to a blending of ethnic identities or forming national identity (Oesterheld, 2016, p. 153).

innovations that enhance the food's origin, such as those from the Chinese, Malays, Javanese, Maduranese, Sumateran, Sundanese, Dayaks, and more.

The local communities and governments in West Kalimantan have learned and negotiated their identities continuously from previous ethnic conflicts⁴ (König, 2016: 133–134). According to Davidson (2008: 204–209), the conflicts have resulted in (1) increased and ongoing communication between different ethnic communities, (2) a greater acceptance of ethnic differences, (3) civil society groups playing a more prominent role and (4) increased demands for the revitalisation of state institutions. People are remembering the tragic past, and local leaders are working together to prevent such events from occurring again. Additionally, the decentralisation of Indonesia post-reformation has led to a greater emphasis on preserving each ethnic group's cultural heritage. This has been reflected in the integration of cultural events like the annual *Gawai Dayak*, Chinese New Year, *Cap Go Meh* Festival, and *Robo'-Robo'* into provincial and national tourism agendas (Mahardika, 2023; Pemerintah Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2024; Prasojo, 2017). As a result, West Kalimantan has become known for its multicultural inhabitants, who have successfully negotiated conflicts and established intra-regional integration among the diverse ethnic groups living in the province.

Furthermore, the West Kalimantan government has successfully increased regional development progress, especially the human and village development index, in the last five years. According to the annual report of the Indonesian government, the human development index of West Kalimantan showed a rapid yearly increase from 2019 to 2023, reaching 68.63 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2023: 149), compared to the 2019 index of 67.65 (Nurjali, 2023). However, West Kalimantan is currently ranked 30th among 34 provinces in Indonesia. Moreover, the West Kalimantan provincial government boosted the establishment of the

independent village from only one to 87 villages in 2019 (Yasyi, 2020). Following their success in 2019, the provincial government further increased the number to 877 independent villages in the next four years (Oxtora, 2023a). In 2023, the province of West Kalimantan showed the most improvement in Indonesia by ranking 6th nationwide and as the top province in Kalimantan Island in Indonesia's Village Development Ranking (Kurniasari, 2023).

Moreover, West Kalimantan has experienced favourable political outcomes in every presidential and national election since 2014. The region always has the elected president and the most dominant party in the national parliament in the election as the winner.⁵ Especially during the 2024 national election, Nusantara became a significant issue, and the three presidential candidates had slightly different approaches⁶ to the prospect of the new capital city, which was promoted in every campaign in West Kalimantan. Nevertheless, Prabowo and Gibran, who symbolised themselves as the heir of Joko Widodo, got the most votes in West Kalimantan (Mantalean & Ihsanuddin, 2024).

The issue of Nusantara during the campaign influenced the political condition of West Kalimantan. Based on our observation, the West Kalimantan people were divided into two

4 The 1998 conflict between the Maduranese and Dayak people and the 2001 conflict between the Malay and Maduranese communities.

5 Joko Widodo won two elections in West Kalimantan (2014 and 2019) (CNN Indonesia, 2019; Wibowo, 2014), and Prabowo Subianto won in the 2024 presidential election (Mantalean & Ihsanuddin, 2024). Meanwhile, the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P) has received the most votes in West Kalimantan during the last three national parliamentary elections (Hakim & Gatra, 2019; Kompas.com, 2014; Rahmawati, 2024).

6 Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin strongly criticised the project and offered a more inclusive project to achieve equal economic development throughout the island (Respati & Setiawan, 2023). The other two pairs, Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD, proposed to continue what Joko Widodo had already started with different opinions on the project. Prabowo-Gibran urged their future policy to increase funds for the project, while Ganjar-Mahfud alternatively suggested collaborating with investors as a supplement to the national allocation budget (Respati & Setiawan, 2023).

dissenting groups: the pro-Nusantara and the opposition. Whether the project was to pass on the legacy of Joko Widodo to non-Java areas or shift priority to other essential projects, such as infrastructure, education and the economic sector in Kalimantan. The political situation caused the temporary acting governor of West Kalimantan to controversially endorse candidate⁷, who openly supported the continuation of Nusantara's project (Mundzirin, 2024).

Besides several previous opportunities, the West Kalimantan provincial government provided the most support and acknowledgement to Nusantara. For example, the Governor of West Kalimantan brought the soil from the equator line in Pontianak city and the water from the meeting points of the Kapuas and Landak Rivers with a strong message that the soil and water could give fertility and peace at the new capital city on his visit to the *Tanah Air* unifying ritual at Nusantara's "Titik 0" (central) in March 2022 (Yunanto, 2022). He also believed establishing Nusantara in East Kalimantan would benefit West Kalimantan due to its strategic location and transport access improvement from West Kalimantan to Nusantara (Shobah, 2022; Ulum, 2019). The local government recognised that the previous administration of Joko Widodo (2014-2024) had given significant attention to West Kalimantan and acknowledged his commitment to making West Kalimantan a priority in national development planning by visiting the province once a year. The visits focused primarily on international border posts and regional development (Darsani, 2024; Sudagung & SD, 2020). The West Kalimantan provincial government is also preparing for land connectivity to Nusantara, which will be a long-term preparation and needs to collaborate with all provinces on the island.

From an international relations point of view, establishing IKN would provide more bilateral opportunities between Indonesia and Malaysia, especially West Kalimantan and Sarawak. Malaysia should be the most crucial ally for Indonesia, especially for West Kalimantan, due to

⁷ However, in the following days, he clarified the statement, asking to think about the proposal from each candidate for the benefit of West Kalimantan's people (Safela, 2024).

the flourishing bilateral relations and the location of Nusantara in Kalimantan, where they share the same island as Sarawak and Sabah. Since the project was announced in 2019, Malaysia has responded positively to Indonesia's plan (CNN Indonesia, 2020; Galiartha & Liman, 2022). Moreover, in 2023, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim issued an increase in the regional budget for Sabah and Sarawak, the establishment of interconnected roads between Sabah and Sarawak and the development budget for border towns near North and East Kalimantan province (The Star, 2023). Malaysia's Prime Minister boldly announced plans to invest in Nusantara, while delegates and businessmen visited to observe the construction and confidently agreed to invest (Dianti, 2023; The Star, 2024). Malaysia is committed to participating in Indonesia's new chapter and reaping relocation benefits due to solid bilateral relations and favourable distance.

The state of Sarawak and Sabah also showed their optimistic support for relocating Jakarta to Nusantara in Kalimantan Island. As a neighbouring region, both states in Malaysia might also consider receiving spillover effects from the establishment of Nusantara. For example, Ismail et al. (2024) argue that the Nusantara might boost Sarawak's industry and tourism sector. In addition, the relocation project might benefit from attracting more investment to the island, giving them direct and indirect impacts (FMT Reporters, 2021).

Sarawak has been showing an increasing interest in Indonesia's new capital city. One of the authors has been invited to give a presentation at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak in 2022 to inform the academic community about the recent issue of Nusantara. Several online discussions have also been held on the establishment of Nusantara from the Malaysian perspective.

From West Kalimantan's point of view, Sarawak's interest also influenced the investment plan that will come to the province. For example, Sarawak has proposed a collaboration in the agricultural sector to boost the palm oil industry in Kalimantan (New Strait Times, 2023). Besides the agricultural sectors, Sarawak is preparing to discuss the connectivity elevation by establishing

a railway connection from West Kalimantan to Sarawak (New Strait Times, 2023). Lately, in April 2024, the Consul General expressed his intention to attract investors to Pantai Temajuk, West Kalimantan, located near the border of Sarawak and West Kalimantan and aim to boost the Sarawak medical health tourism and expand their promotion to East Kalimantan (The Borneo Post, 2024). Our findings suggest that their initiative could be considered an active plan to connect Kalimantan from the eastern side to the western side, and West Kalimantan could benefit from their action.

The positive responses from Sarawak and Malaysia could be a good starting point for West Kalimantan to conduct sustainable international cooperation and collaboration. West Kalimantan and Sarawak have potential advantages with their people's historical close social relations benefiting from their ethnical and family identity. The annual ethnic international festivals at the border area attracted both border communities to visit each other, increasing their sense of belonging to each other (Bombastic Borneo, 2019; Kitow & Giring, 2022). The high mobility for work and trade could also become their foundation for more collaboration across borders. Besides, the institutional cooperation and collaboration between universities in West Kalimantan and Sarawak have increased through joint research and community service programs (JA, 2023; Suara Sarawak, 2024).

However, with the growing interest from the Malaysian side and the potential bilateral relations among states or provinces, Indonesia should also consider the lessons learned from Putrajaya, Malaysia, which developed slowly due to the overwhelming presence of Kuala Lumpur. The development of Putrajaya was started in 1993 to serve as Malaysia's newest administrative capital, discarding the colonial legacy in Kuala Lumpur and rising as the new face of Malaysia in the 21st century (Ariffini, 2003; Morshidi & Rahim, 2011: 225; Moser, 2010). Putrajaya is located about 25 kilometres south of Kuala Lumpur and is designed to offer a peaceful environment in contrast to the bustling nature of Kuala Lumpur (Ariffini, 2003: 40).

Despite its purpose and vision to represent 21st-century Malaysia (Ariffini, 2003), Putrajaya is left behind in the growing development of Kuala Lumpur as a global city and its former presence for administrative roles in Malaysia (Morshidi & Rahim, 2011: 235–236). Furthermore, the city's economy and demography have developed slower than expected, with Kuala Lumpur remaining the centre of investment and employment and Putrajaya only serving as an administrative city (King, 2007: 131). The development of Putrajaya has been hindered by various challenges, including its proximity to Kuala Lumpur, conflicts over office allocation, transportation and infrastructure limitations, slow economic and demographic growth, unattractive design with less representation of Malaysia and minimal climatic response in planning and architecture.

Putrajaya faced a conflict over office allocation within the government districts, particularly between the executive and legislative powers (King, 2007: 131). Additionally, many focused government offices have yet to be moved from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya, raising questions about the necessity of replacing Kuala Lumpur as the administrative capital. In supporting governmental activities, the transportation and infrastructure in Putrajaya are primarily designed for automobiles, resulting in a lack of public transportation (King, 2007: 131). This resulted in a dominant use of private transport compared to public transportation usage as the initial design in Putrajaya (Borhan et al., 2014: 2).

The master-planned housing development in Putrajaya has been criticised for its design, which is dominantly influenced by Middle Eastern architecture and overwhelmingly presents Malay and Islamic symbols. While Malaysia is branded as a multiracial country with a presence of mixed ethnic groups in the urban environment of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya does not truly serve to represent Malaysia and has made it less appealing to many Malaysians. As a result, non-Malay and non-Muslim Malaysians have been hesitant to move there (King, 2007: 132–135; Moser, 2010: 291–292). Lastly, another significant shortcoming is the minimal climatic response in planning, architecture, and landscape architecture, as

the city missed the opportunity to incorporate innovative microclimatic features for passive cooling. Putrajaya's efforts to become a green city by 2025 have faced challenges, with the city's traffic volume expected to increase significantly, leading to a rise in carbon emissions, and the maintenance required to sustain its greenery has also had unintended negative consequences (Moser, 2010: 293–295).

Challenges from the Nusantara's establishment in Kalimantan Island

Despite the opportunities mentioned previously, West Kalimantan may face three significant challenges: mobility and connectivity to Nusantara and the comparative advantages of East Kalimantan province, the popularity of Sarawak compared to West Kalimantan and international security issues in the border area. These challenges could hamper West Kalimantan's efforts to become the hub of IKN and further elevate its regional development.

Mobility and transportation now are the biggest challenges for West Kalimantan. The distance between Western and Eastern Kalimantan, one of the world's largest islands, is a significant issue. The journey between Pontianak and Penajam Pasir, the location of Nusantara, takes 31 hours by car or 4,5 hours by flight with a stopover and costs 2,4 million rupiah. A direct flight was introduced in January 2024, which takes around 1,5 hours and costs 1,5 million rupiah. Despite being on the same island, travelling between these locations requires significant time and money.

Besides mobility and transportation access to IKN, West Kalimantan is comparatively far from East Kalimantan province. For example, the human development index of East Kalimantan in 2022 was 77,44, which was the third highest in Indonesia and the highest in all Kalimantan provinces (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kalimantan Barat, 2023: 650–651). East Kalimantan is one of the most significant contributors to the national economy through mining and oil production (Dinas Perkebunan Provinsi Kalimantan Timur, 2012; Syarawie,

2024). Additionally, its strategic advantages, such as the natural resources and typology, areal availability, less conflictual populations, security considerations, demography and advanced infrastructure, compared to other Kalimantan provinces, became the reason for relocating and establishing the new capital in the province (Sheridan, 2023). As previously described, West Kalimantan, compared to East Kalimantan, is one of the provinces where forest fires almost occur annually, even transferring the haze to Sarawak, Malaysia (Astro Awani, 2023).

Secondly, there may be an influx of travellers to Sarawak compared to Nusantara due to its popularity and accessibility from West Kalimantan. In the last two years, the number of people crossing from West Kalimantan to Sarawak has been higher than in the other direction, for example in the Eid al-Fitr holiday season of 2023 and 2024, 11.000 and 15.061 people, respectively, crossed the borders to Sarawak through the Entikong International Border Post (Barus, 2024; Timotius, 2023). Sarawak has become one of the West Kalimantan people's favourite destinations for seeking proper medication (Asmara, 2022; KalbarOnline, 2023). Sarawak is a budget-friendly tourist destination accessible by an eight-hour bus ride from Pontianak for just 350,000 rupiahs and by flight from Jakarta to Kuching with double the bus fare (P, 2023).

Furthermore, Malaysia and the neighbouring Sarawak region have already planned to maximize the potential of Nusantara for their benefit. Nusantara serves as a catalyst for their development progress, ensuring that they are prepared for further development and increased economic advantage in the region. Currently, Indonesian workers seek jobs in Malaysia due to the better opportunities available there (Andilala & Ardiansyah, 2022). Although Sarawak currently lags behind other peninsular states in Malaysia (Chandra, 2022), the land connectivity and close cultural relations help West Kalimantan to reach and adapt better (Amster, 2010; Awang et al., 2013; Efriani et al., 2020; Sudagung & Chalid, 2016). Suppose West Kalimantan is not prepared for the future increasing development of Sarawak. In that case, the province will remain

dependent on Sarawak, and the economic capital will only flow to the other side of the country.

The last challenge is the security at the border area. Although Indonesia and Malaysia are currently enjoying harmonies in their bilateral relations, transnational crime at the borderlands, such as human trafficking and drug and goods smuggling, is an existing threat. This threat will probably increase due to the influx of migrants to Nusantara. Indonesia and Malaysia must respond and prepare for future improvement cases. An open and fluid border is not an option nowadays. Thus, the states must secure their land and sea borders. As West Kalimantan has a long border with Malaysia, the condition might provide them with better border security facilities, personnel, contingency plans and evacuation routes (Purnama & Chotib, 2023). The province, which has the most formal and informal international border gates on the island, also needs to be ready for the movement of people and goods, including criminal activities, across the borders once Nusantara operates.

The Establishment of IKN Towards the Sense of Belonging to Kalimantan Island and Nusantara

Those opportunities and challenges further led to the discussion of a sense of belonging to the island and Nusantara. The following argument in this paper discusses how Nusantara could improve the sense of belonging of the Kalimantan natives and foster Indonesia's national belonging. Most inhabitants of Kalimantan approve of the plan. A friend who lived and worked in Balikpapan near Nusantara was excited and proud to become *Warga Ibu Kota* (a capital city resident). His sentiment was a testament to the pride the people of Kalimantan feel. We also felt the same in response to the initial idea of the relocation.

Additionally, a statement from an Indonesian politician that Nusantara is the location of *jin buang anak*⁸ in early 2022 united the Kalimantan people even more. The statement has increased

8 It is a phrase in the Indonesian language which literally translates as a place where the devils abandon their children. The phrase means an unwanted place by the people with a negative impression.

their sense of belonging due to their commonality over Kalimantan as their homeland. Not only did the Dayak community in East Kalimantan react, but in West Kalimantan, both Dayak and the Malay communities also conducted protests and condemned the statement (Yuniar, 2022). Some Dayak groups in several regions of Kalimantan even performed rituals. On social media, Dayak people from Sabah and Sarawak responded similarly (Sudarlan, 2022). Their complaints showed their mutuality and intense loyalty to their attached home. Especially for the Sarawakians, as the spirit of "Sarawak First" has already emerged, their attachment to the island is more robust than their feeling towards Malaysia. In this context, the concept of mutuality from Pfaff-Czarnecka (2011), driven by the commonalities, explained the various support from different ethnic and nationality groups for Nusantara.

For the indigenous people of Kalimantan in Indonesia, Nusantara has become a trigger to promote the rise of ethnic revival. Previously, ethnic revival gained more space in Indonesian society after the fall of Soeharto in 1998 (Duile, 2023). Since the end of Soeharto's administration, Davidson (2008: 108–116) reveals the role of an ethnic organisation in West Kalimantan, Yayasan Pancur Kasih, has become more prominent in ethnic preservation, advocacy and activism. König (2016) and Sillander (2016) explain that Dayak, the indigenous Kalimantan, felt marginalised and discriminated against during the New Order era in Indonesia. Especially in the present East Kalimantan, as previously described in this paper, the same problems occurred in addition to other issues, such as low level of access to education and health care services, low participation in local development and potential marginalisation by the future migrations to IKN (2023: 82–84).

In the context of ethnic revival, establishing Nusantara is a momentum to attract more attention to the preservation of customary lands and ethnic group's identities. From the observation, it is revealed that more indigenous groups were involved in supporting Nusantara. The plan to move the centre of Indonesia to Kalimantan has opened a new space of dialogue

between the government and the indigenous people. On several visits to West Kalimantan and East Kalimantan, Indonesia's President met with Dayak groups and pledged their support for the national policy, especially for the new capital city (CNN Indonesia, 2022, 2023). The Dayak groups supported Nusantara's project because Joko Widodo's administration respected those ethnic groups (Pebrianto, 2022a). Moreover, the future president, Prabowo Subianto, received support from the Dayak groups in the latest presidential election campaign due to his commitment to continue Joko Widodo's legacy in the new capital city over the past decade (Abdullah, 2024).

The indigenous people also utilised the new capital city discourse to criticise the lack of attention while demanding more political bargains regarding their identity attribution. For example, they condemned the backward image of Kalimantan indigenous people and requested more access to participate in developing Nusantara (Arianto, 2023; Pebrianto, 2022b). Several publications offered the government to issue several policies responding to the demand, such as including the local language in the national schooling program in Kalimantan province as practised in Sarawak (Budiarta, 2019; Ting & Rose, 2014) and respecting plurality and multiculturalism and the customary communities in their daily life (Purnomo & Demartoto, 2022). Nusantara then translates as a place for customary, ethnic and cultural preservation by accommodating space for the locals (Siahainenia et al., 2023).

Despite the rise of the indigenous identity, several issues related to the indigenous people also emerged with the plan to establish the Nusantara. Especially in East Kalimantan, high land conversion, food crisis, poverty, low access to education and health services and social exclusion have become vital (Warsilah, 2023: 82–84). However, as this paper aims to present the perspective from West Kalimantan, it will still take into account the local issues in East Kalimantan. These issues are crucial and need more attention from both national and local governments. They can also serve as a reflection of the current situation in West Kalimantan,

which was previously described as relatively lagging behind compared to East Kalimantan.

Furthermore, for the local government and people in West Kalimantan, Nusantara is a new hope. They are proud to be the residents of the capital city's island. Jokowi's legacy in the region impacts this feeling because the government involved them in Indonesia's national development policy. During his last year of presidency in 2024, Jokowi visited West Kalimantan to inaugurate the duplication bridge in Pontianak and Singkawang airport, supervising the national cross-border gates, smelter project at Kijing Port and visiting other regency in the province (Darsani, 2024). Besides, Jokowi was the first president of Indonesia to visit the Sekadau Regency in West Kalimantan since its establishment in 2003 (BPMI Setpres, 2024). With his numerous presences in the province since 2015 (Darsani, 2024), the president of Indonesia was giving West Kalimantan people more attention than they have long waited for.

Our following argument is that the capital city symbolises a state's identity and a component of national belonging. The new capital city represents an opportunity for Indonesia to forge a new sense of belonging. Nusantara has the potential to create new bonds, mutuality, and attachments among the people. Joko Widodo chose the name Nusantara based on three philosophic reasons, which are to remember the past through the magnificent era of Majapahit, to define the archipelagic state that is united by the sea, and to accommodate the diversity of culture in the society (Sembiring, 2022; Widodo, 2023:10–11).

The new state capital represents diversity, such as religion, ethnicity, and ideology, to become an object of national pride (Ishenda & Guoqing, 2019). For example, the *Tanah Air* ritual inaugurated the capital city as part of the unifying philosophies. The 33 governors joined a cultural ceremony led by the local Dayak community leader, which united Indonesia's land and water. They placed all the land and water together in a large jar at "Titik 0" Nusantara. This symbolic ceremony was an attempt to instil value, experience, and memory from all

Indonesians. It was a meaningful gesture that the first step of Nusantara began with the great spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). This paper analyses the name and the ritual as part of the politics of belonging, as suggested by Yuval-Davis (2006), conducted by the Indonesian government in which the state actor plays a significant role in fostering and maintaining their national belonging.

Indonesia will write a new history by relocating its new capital city. The realisation of Nusantara's project is one solution for Indonesia to move on to better-imagined communities and enhance comprehensive nationalism throughout the archipelago. In the Indonesian context, Anderson (2006: 4) discusses the concept of nation and nationalism as an imagined community that was contested and changed over time. The new location of the capital city will also help the Indonesian people to familiarise themselves with Indonesia's other regions through shared memories of Nusantara as the new epicentre.

The idea of developing other Indonesian regions/islands could happen shortly, as opposed to the narration that the Soeharto administration established the long-standing dominance of Java as the centre of Indonesia. The 32 years of the Soeharto regime created a Java-centric mindset based on Javanese values in his leadership style and his orientation on uniforming Java as the role model on national development (Vatikiotis, 1998). Thus, other regions outside Java demand more development attention from the central government after the fall of Soeharto. However, Basuki (2023: 62) suggests that Indonesia's government remember this historically discriminatory policy to ensure Nusantara is a city for all.

The previous section highlighted the lesson learned from Putrajaya, Malaysia, which showed that the initial design for national representation might pose a threat to existing multicultural communities. This is particularly true in terms of which identity is being represented in the new capital city. Moreover, previous capital cities such as Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur have developed and served as global mega-cities for decades, which is hard to replace with a newly established and

growing city. Additionally, developing a new city presents challenges in terms of economic and ecological approaches, especially in achieving a balance between these two sectors. Lessons from Brasilia, Canberra, and Ottawa on harmonising natural landscapes and indigenous inhabitants provided excellent examples of achieving this goal (Mulyani, 2023: 280; Nasution, 2023: 42). Further lessons from Brasilia, as suggested by (Obermayr et al., 2023: 180–181), revealed the importance of excellent and consistent concepts, responsive policies towards social cohesion due to migration, and conducting the best governance to manage the capital city and the surrounding regions.

Furthermore, it's essential to consider several counterproductive events related to IKN in 2024. These events need to be addressed in order to promote a stronger sense of belonging to Nusantara and Indonesia. For example, showcasing the houses of ministers and their supporting facilities while many people in Indonesia struggle economically with housing and employment (Indraswari, 2024; Sorongan, 2024). Additionally, the decision to invite influencers and public figures to experience the IKN firsthand has drawn criticism from the public (Detik News, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, Nusantara, as a new capital city, will go down in history as a new chapter in Indonesia's story. Nusantara provides opportunities and challenges for the West Kalimantan local government and people as the western neighbour on the island. The province has been facing issues of spillover effect, political bargaining, possibly bilateral relations with Malaysia and Sarawak, mobility and connectivity obstacles and security concerns on the international borders to gain direct and indirect impact by the announcement of Nusantara's project since 2019. The impacts could be positive or negative depending on the response from the local government and the people of West Kalimantan. However, as this paper argued, West Kalimantan has been ready to prepare as the hub for IKN despite facing several threats from the mentioned challenges.

Additionally, despite the existing problems regarding the local people of Dayak in IKN, this research found that establishing Nusantara in Kalimantan will also boost the sense of belonging of the local people of West Kalimantan and the native Kalimantan people. By examining the commonalities and understanding of mutuality and solidarity towards Kalimantan Island from the theory of belonging (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011; Pollini, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006), this paper revealed that the sense of belonging comes from their strong attachment to their homeland. The movement and support were consolidated through ethnic solidarity among the local people of Kalimantan. This was triggered by the establishment of Nusantara on the island and the Dayak's active participation in national politics.

For practical recommendation, as suggested by Widodo (2023: 15–17), the Indonesian government should operate the establishment of Nusantara not only to remember the past but also to craft for sustainability and preserve local wisdom. The narrative of Nusantara has the potential to strengthen the citizen's sense of national belonging and lead to a renewed nationalist spirit. The government of Indonesia can also use Nusantara as a new attachment that creates the foundation for a more equitable economic and development distribution across Indonesia.

Despite our findings and concluding remarks, this paper acknowledges limitations throughout the research process. Therefore, this paper recommends that future research compare this study with a survey of the people and interviews with local elites regarding the opportunities and challenges, as well as their sense of belonging towards IKN. Furthermore, more research can be done to explore West Kalimantan's perspective on Nusantara in response to the development of Indonesia's political setting within the future Prabowo administration and the upcoming local government's leader election in November 2024, especially on how the next government will sustainably continue the development project.

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