



Capital City Relocation: A Comparison of the Social Impacts of Putrajaya, Malaysia, and Nusantara, Indonesia

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Abstract

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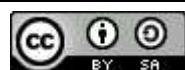
Purpose: This study discusses how capital city relocation influences society through a comparison of Putrajaya in Malaysia and IKN in Indonesia. It focuses on displacement, livelihood change, social cohesion, indigenous rights, and national resilience.

Study Design/Methodology/Approach: The study uses a qualitative approach and a critical literature review supported by field observations and interviews with community leaders, residents, and government officials in East Kalimantan. The secondary data consist of policy papers, academic publications and media reports. The data are analysed thematically through the Ordinary Cities perspective and the Asta Gatra framework.

Findings: Although Putrajaya has successfully transformed into a modern administrative centre, however there is ongoing social issues like evictions, livelihood erosion, and weakened community cohesion. In contrast, IKN development is still in process but has potential risks of land conflicts and socio-economic disparities. These findings show that capital relocation must be managed through inclusive governance, land protection, and meaningful community participation.

Originality/Value: The novelty of this study lies in comparing the cases of Indonesia and Malaysia to demonstrate how strengthening *Tri Gatra* through land security and spatial planning, and strengthening *Panca Gatra* through socio-political governance, can form the basis for a capital city relocation policy that is just, inclusive, and in line with national resilience. The study also integrates the Ordinary Cities perspective with the Asta Gatra framework to assess capital relocation as a locally grounded and socially inclusive transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

Capital city relocation has been done to stimulate growth centres and reduce socio-environmental burdens in older cities as a response to urbanisation pressures and metropolitan stagnation. Relocating the capital city is also meant to create new symbols of national identity (Dyastari and Candra, 2022; Hilal et al., 2024). However, capital city relocation has not always been successful, as the relocation involves managerial, technological, social, political, and cultural decisions (Taufiq, 2020). It is therefore not merely a spatial or administrative project, but also a strategic transformation that affects state legitimacy, social justice, community resilience, and local identity. With the national resilience categorised resilience concept, a capital city relocation has been identified to have an impact on nature, resources, demographics, ideology, politics, economics, socio-culture, and security aspects (Alfi et al., 2023; Suryohadiprojo, 1997). Thus, capital city relocation is one way to enhance national resilience.

In Southeast Asia, for example, Putrajaya, envisioned by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, was developed in 1995 to establish a symbol of progressive Malay-Islamic values (Marchettini, 2004; Rachmawati et al., 2021). More than two decades later, although the city has succeeded administratively, the city still has limited social diversity and weak community cohesion (Adinugroho et al., 2022; Marchettini, 2004; Rachmawati et al., 2021). This case shows that administrative success does not automatically produce inclusive urban life, especially when relocation is dominated by top-down planning and limited community participation.

The capital city relocation of Indonesia to East Kalimantan (IKN) may face similar challenges. Although legally reinforced by Law Number 21/2023, an amendment to Law Number 3/2022 and being promoted as a Smart Forest City and a Global City for All (FISIP Universitas Indonesia, 2020), empirical findings through the national resilience framework have indicated that many projects regarding the IKN prioritise economic benefit over socio-cultural and ecological interests (Adinugroho et al., 2022; Perwira et al., 2024). The accelerated development may neglect community integration, fair land settlement, and cultural protection (Perwira et al., 2024). These concerns are particularly important because IKN is located in an area with indigenous communities, customary land claims, ecological sensitivity, and existing local socio-cultural systems.

Existing literature on capital relocation from a national resilience perspective is limited. The literature is often based on geographical science, development demography, environmental geography, and urban planning (Rachmawati et al., 2021), however, it rarely covers the national resilience concept. Moreover, previous studies have not sufficiently connected the social impacts of capital relocation with the *Asta Gatra* framework and the Ordinary Cities perspective. To fill this gap, this study examines how capital relocation can be designed to strengthen national resilience through application of the *Asta Gatra* by using a mix of reviewing literature and conducting field visits, especially drawing lessons from Putrajaya and ongoing development in IKN. The novelty of this study lies in its comparative reading of Putrajaya and IKN to show how capital relocation should be assessed through justice, meaningful participation, land security, socio-cultural protection, and national resilience

Three research questions are used in this study. The first question is how Indonesia's capital relocation to IKN has been designed to strengthen national resilience (*Asta Gatra*). The second question asks what lessons can be drawn from other cases of capital relocation, for example, Putrajaya, particularly regarding displacement, weakened social cohesion, and top-down governance, to help anticipate and mitigate similar risks in IKN's development. The third question explores the extent of IKN's planning and implementation in comparison with Putrajaya. This comparison is carried out to examine how the principles of the Ordinary Cities framework have been implemented, especially justice, meaningful participation, and grounded local practices shaped by community perspectives, and how affected populations perceive the social and cultural transformations brought by the relocation. By addressing these questions, this study positions capital relocation as a multidimensional process that must balance modernisation, inclusivity, ecological protection, and national resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review shows how countries manage the complex process of capital relocation. Relocating a national capital requires strategic planning, inclusive governance, and proactive measures to mitigate social and environmental impacts. Cases of capital city relocation, for example From Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia in Brazil and from Lagos to Abuja in Nigeria, issues of community displacement, infrastructure pressures, and the exclusion of local voices from planning are shown (Shimamura and Mizunoya, 2020). Focusing on Putrajaya in Malaysia and IKN in Indonesia, both offer lessons on urban and social planning and policies to minimise negative effects on local communities.

Malaysia's capital city relocation plan was to control urbanisation and improve administrative efficiency (Rachmawati et al., 2021). In Indonesia, the capital city relocation to IKN is to reduce congestion and ecological damage and to avoid disaster risks in the Jakarta area. The development of Indonesia's new capital city is still in early stages, with the first government zone targeted for completion by 2029 (Zainal et al., 2025). Despite having different backgrounds, both capital city relocation projects in Malaysia and Indonesia face similar challenges, which are social tensions, environmental risks, land disputes, and economic disparities (Abdullah et al., 2020; Shimamura and Mizunoya, 2020; Zainal et al., 2025).

Transparency, community involvement, and responsible resource management are therefore critical so the capital city relocation strengthens national resilience through the *Asta Gatra* Framework (Borhan et al., 2014; Dyastari and Candra, 2022; Firnaherera and Lazuardi, 2022). While there are studies on the socio-environmental challenges of capital relocation, there is a lack of studies that use the *Asta Gatra* Indonesia framework. This gap needs to be filled with study that connects economic growth with cultural sustainability, social justice, ecological sustainability, and overall national resilience.

Theoretical Studies

Jennifer Robinson's Ordinary Cities theory states that all cities have their own potential, dynamics, and creativity and should not be evaluated through Western global

city hierarchies. The ordinary city theory is relevant for understanding capital relocations in Malaysia and Indonesia. The idea of the ordinary city comes from frustration with modern city design that talks about partnership and social cohesion but often fails to consider problems of justice, citizenship, and democracy (Amin and Graham, 1997). Many policy programmes, like City Challenge in the UK, promote the language of empowerment, yet they tend to imagine cities as conflict-free spaces and often support the interests of city leaders who want social harmony mainly to attract investment and wealthy residents. However, creating unity in a diverse and complex city requires much more than this kind of policy. City policy and design must restore social justice, meet social needs, and empower communities. This policy and design mean democratising institutions, encouraging democratic practices in local organisations, and supporting participation. Some may argue that these ideas are too radical and that cities should focus only on improving public spaces, reducing crime, or preventing social conflict. However, this argument ignores the real economic costs of inequality, like unemployment, crime, fear, declining infrastructure, and the loss of skills and creativity. The overall city condition affects economic performance, and a strong sense of place and belonging can unlock people's hidden potential.

The Ordinary Cities theory also rejects the distinction between “global cities” and “third world cities”, criticising the association of modernity solely with the West and the idea that innovation belongs only to Northern cities (Robinson, 2013). The theory also critiques colonial binaries that label cities as “advanced” or “backward”, instead recognising cities as dynamic spaces shaped by local histories and global influences rather than as imitators of Western models. This theory shows that capital city relocation must be a grounded urban project that is shaped by national identity and aspirations. IKN development must involve affected communities because relocation changes daily life, land, and culture. For example, current fieldwork in East Kalimantan shows gaps between top-down plans and local needs.

The development of a new capital city requires infrastructure capable of enhancing governmental functionality in the digital era (Rachmawati et al., 2020). Governments now depend on rapid and accessible information flows to strengthen administrative control and improve public service delivery. Innovations like the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, and artificial intelligence significantly reduce administrative burdens, enabling more efficient planning, organising, and monitoring processes or transparency. These innovations can also contribute to education, health, and commerce. Overall, these innovations should be the foundations for the capital city to become a smart city that integrates advanced technologies to elevate the population's quality of life. While simultaneously optimising technological capabilities, capital city planning must also account for spatial capacity, cultural identity, and natural heritage (Moser, 2010).

The concept of Indonesian national resilience is commonly understood through the Asta Gatra framework, which consists of Tri Gatra, namely geography, demography, and natural resources, and Panca Gatra, namely ideology, politics, economy, socio-culture, and defence-security (Suryohadiprojo, 1997; Hanita, 2020). This concept is designed to identify and respond to threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances (ATHG) that may affect national stability (Suryohadiprojo, 1997). A threat refers to any deviation from a

national target, a challenge introduces new goals to be achieved, an obstacle weakens progress, and a disturbance disrupts the attainment of national objectives (Hanita, 2020; Hikmawan, 2020). In relocating the capital city, national resilience should become one of the main considerations, as this process intersects with nearly all dimensions of *Asta Gatra*. Geographically, a relocation allows the state to position its administrative centre in a safer, more strategic, and more accessible area. Politically and ideologically, a new capital can strengthen state authority, identity, and legitimacy. Economically and socially, relocation can reduce disparities, encourage regional development, and mitigate vulnerabilities associated with overcrowded or environmentally stressed cities. From a defence and security standpoint, situating the capital in a less exposed and more defensible location enhances long-term strategic stability. Because resilience requires a collective effort from government, academia, media, business, and communities (the pentahelix), capital city relocation must be planned and implemented collaboratively to ensure that it strengthens national resilience rather than creating new vulnerabilities (Nopi Nopita Sari et al., 2024).

Empirical Studies

Throughout history, many countries have chosen to relocate their capital cities for political, economic, and strategic reasons (Ishenda and Guoqing, 2019; Moser, 2010; Muluk bin Abd Manan and Suprayitno, 2025; Rachmawati et al., 2021). In several cases, new capitals were intentionally established in less developed regions to encourage more equitable national development and reduce the dominance of major urban centres. The relocations were also viewed to decentralise power, promote cooperation or power-sharing, and reduce the likelihood of civilian conflict by distributing political and economic interests more evenly across geographic areas. Other motives can be geographical and security considerations for the administrative centre. Following World War II, at least sixteen countries relocated their capitals. Montenegro is the earliest example in the modern era, moving from Cetinje to Podgorica in 1946. Malaysia's capital relocation is the most recent, from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya in 2000. In the 21st century, Tanzania and Myanmar also relocate their capitals. Tanzania's capital relocation is a unique case for having moved its capital twice, from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma in 1973 and back again in 2016. In the Southeast Asia region, Myanmar and Malaysia show different backgrounds to capital relocation. Myanmar's capital relocation was driven largely by geographical and military considerations. The Myanmar government wants to position the whole function of the capital city in a more secure and centralised area. The resulting new capital, Naypyidaw, was surrounded by eight satellite towns and equipped with international airport and highway connections. Malaysia, meanwhile, only carried out partial relocation by only relocating administrative functions to Putrajaya. Besides that, the capital relocation of Malaysia is also based on aspirations to strengthen national Islamic identity.

The relocation of capital cities is frequently driven by a combination of environmental, social, and geopolitical pressures (Khavarian-Garmsir et al., 2019; Rachmawati et al., 2021; Rossman, 2018; Su et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). Rapid population growth, which is projected to reach 60% more by 2030, will push cities beyond

intended capacity and consequently increase environmental pressures like pollution, land-use change, resource depletion, and public health problems. Air pollution problems, commonly caused by population growth with uncontrolled transportation emissions, have occurred in cities like Kuala Lumpur and Yangon. Another major concern is the heat-island effect, where dense buildings trap heat and elevate temperatures, as also evidenced in Kuala Lumpur and Yangon. Overpopulation in capital cities has also caused housing shortages and land unavailability, elevated land prices, and sometimes triggered gentrification, marginalisation, and the formation of slums. Another driver of capital city relocation is natural disaster risk, like floods, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, and landslides. Cities that lie in vulnerable coastal or deltaic regions, like Jakarta, Yangon, and Kuala Lumpur, have a larger risk of flooding, especially in the rainy season. Jakarta is also located near the Ring of Fire, which has a relatively big risk of volcanic eruption and earthquake. Geographic centrality also can influence capital relocation to improve national connectivity and administrative accessibility. The geographic centrality driver on capital relocation is exemplified by Malawi, Brazil, and Myanmar.

METHODS

The study uses a qualitative research design that integrates a structured literature review with field-based inquiry to examine the social, cultural, and political dimensions of capital city relocation in Putrajaya, Malaysia, and IKN, Indonesia. A qualitative approach is appropriate because capital relocation is not only a technical and spatial intervention but also a transformative social process embedded in issues of power, identity, justice, and governance (Krippendorff, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). The Putrajaya case was examined mainly through secondary sources, including academic publications, policy documents, and previous empirical studies, while the IKN case was analysed through both secondary data and field-based evidence. The literature review identifies theoretical gaps and constructs the analytical framework using Jennifer Robinson's Ordinary Cities theory, which rejects Western hierarchical models and encourages understanding capital relocation as a locally grounded urban transformation, alongside the national resilience concept (*Asta Gatra*) and global capital relocation studies.

Fieldwork was conducted in July 2025 across the IKN government zone and surrounding districts in Penajam Paser Utara and Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan, to gather empirical insights from indigenous leaders, government officials, religious figures, and affected local residents selected through purposive sampling. Participants were selected because of their direct knowledge of, or experience with, land change, relocation, community adaptation, and socio-cultural transformation around the IKN area. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (Cantelmi et al., 2021), were used to support the interpretation of local perceptions, validate narratives, and triangulate data. This method enabled the study to compare official planning narratives with community-based perceptions of participation, livelihood change, land security, and cultural protection.

All data were processed using thematic coding, combining deductive themes derived from theoretical frameworks with inductive themes emerging from field narratives. The main analytical themes included displacement, livelihood change, social cohesion, indigenous rights, land governance, ecological pressure, public participation, and national resilience. The findings were validated through stakeholder checks and source triangulation (Foley et al., 2025; Taquette and da Matta Souza, 2022). Through this integrated methodology, the study provides a comparative understanding of Putrajaya and IKN, foregrounding justice, national resilience, and indigenous rights as central considerations for evaluating the long-term viability of capital city relocation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Putrajaya Case Study

The relocation of Malaysia's capital city to Putrajaya in 1999 was initiated by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's vision of a modern and culturally grounded capital city. The new capital city was designed with Malay-Islamic aesthetics under the concepts of "City in a Garden" and "Smart City" (Sumarno, 2020). Putrajaya became a fully functional administrative capital in 2020 (Abdullah et al., 2020; Jiang, 2023; Rasdi et al., 2020; Sofian et al., 2023). The Malaysia capital city relocation near Cyberjaya enabled synergies between technology and smart city concepts (Moser, 2010). The Putrajaya design prioritises open spaces, recreation, aesthetics, architectural icons, and strong local identity. Accessibility is also taken into consideration, as demonstrated by Putrajaya's proximity to Kuala Lumpur International Airport and the integrated transportation network of buses, trains, and monorails (Borhan et al., 2014; Jiang, 2023).

However, behind the modern image, there are social issues. The project displaced long-established plantation communities in Prang Besar, resulting in loss of livelihoods, social disruption, and declining well-being, which escalated into weakened kinship networks, increased crime, and deteriorating health among resettled residents (Narayanan, 2017). The relocation of new residents, who are mostly civil servants, also creates demographic homogeneity that results in social bubbles distinct from the diversity of surrounding communities (Firnaherera and Lazuardi, 2022). The city's population is still below the planned capacity. The city occupation only reached 100 thousand residents in 2019 and is projected to have steady growth to reach 150 thousand residents by 2030, however well below the planned capacity of 570,000 (Majizat et al., 2016; Marchettini, 2004; Mohamad et al., 2020). Another issue is the absence of elected local governments that reinforces top-down administrative structures (Borhan et al., 2014).

The move of Malaysia's capital city from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya brought economic changes to the original communities (Mohamad et al., 2020; Narayanan, 2017). Before relocation, most residents were engaged in agriculture and estate labour, which provided steady income, access to land, and relatively low living costs. After resettlement in flats, many residents become unemployed or are forced into low-skilled jobs like cleaners, operators, and truck attendants. After years of working in the agricultural sector, the inability to adapt to the urban labour market led to a drastic decline in livelihood stability. Although some reported increased income, this increase did not improve

standard of living due to the significantly higher cost of living and the need to repay housing loans. The loss of agricultural land, previously a vital source of food and supplementary income, further weakened economic resilience. Compensation offered to residents was insufficient and often used immediately for debt repayment. As a result, many families experienced financial strain, depended heavily on other family members for support, and struggled to meet basic expenses.

From the perspective of the Ordinary Cities framework, the Putrajaya case demonstrates that a capital city may succeed administratively while still failing to produce inclusive urban life. Its modern infrastructure, symbolic architecture, and smart city orientation were not fully matched by social justice, meaningful participation, and livelihood protection for the original communities. This shows that capital relocation should not be evaluated only through administrative efficiency, spatial order, and architectural identity, but also through its ability to sustain social cohesion, protect affected residents, and prevent the marginalisation of local communities. For IKN, Putrajaya provides an important warning that a new capital can become physically modern but socially fragile if community integration and livelihood security are not treated as central planning priorities.

Nusantara Case Study

Unlike Putrajaya, which already operates as Malaysia's administrative capital, IKN is still in planning and construction (Faturahman et al., 2024). The planning of IKN is based on three concepts. The first one is "Smart Forest City", which should preserve over 75% green space. The second one is the "ten-minute city" concept that prioritises walkability and mobility. The third one is the "City for All" concept, or a socially inclusive city that aligns with the SDGs and "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*" to promote social integration and respect for local wisdom.

The Government of Indonesia, through President Joko Widodo, officially announced on 26 August 2019 the relocation of the national capital from Jakarta to a new site in Penajam Paser Utara and Kutai Kartanegara Regencies, East Kalimantan (Faturahman et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2022; Tukimun et al., 2022). The new capital, *Ibu Kota Negara* (IKN) *Nusantara*, is planned to cover approximately 256,142.74 hectares, an urban area of 56,180.87 hectares, and a 5,644-hectare core government zone. The location was selected based on several strategic criteria: its central position within Indonesia, relative safety from earthquakes and tsunamis, availability of large areas of state-owned land, suitable topography and soil conditions, sufficient water resources, low risk of floods and forest fires, proximity to existing urban centres, cultural openness to newcomers, and its suitability for defence and security needs.

IKN Nusantara is envisioned as a "Smart, Green, Beautiful, and Sustainable" city. This vision is to be implemented through the integration of a forest city concept with a smart and intelligent city framework, ensuring that urban development remains in harmony with nature (Faturahman et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2022; Tukimun et al., 2022). The delineation of the IKN area follows principles that are 'One River, One Management', upstream-downstream integration, and the protection of key ecosystems, like the *Bukit*

Soeharto Grand Forest Park (Tahura) as a buffer and biodiversity conservation zone. Infrastructure and transportation development must therefore protect water catchment areas, forests, karst landscapes, and riparian zones; support rehabilitation and revegetation; ensure highly efficient water use; and maintain both surface and groundwater quality. In this way, IKN is designed not only as an administrative centre but also as a model of environmentally responsible and climate-resilient urban development.

The new capital is also framed as a flagship smart city that relies on digitalisation, connectivity, and advanced information and communication technology (ICT) to manage resources efficiently and improve public services (Faturahman et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2022; Tukimun et al., 2022). IKN is not designed to stand alone but to function within a broader regional system in East Kalimantan, supported by partner cities like Samarinda and Balikpapan. As the provincial capital, Samarinda already has relatively advanced infrastructure, economic potential, and social facilities and has formally adopted the smart city concept in its long-term development plans. Spatial and transport planning, like road networks, toll roads, and the proposed Trans-Kalimantan railway between Balikpapan and Samarinda, aims to strengthen physical connectivity and smart mobility between IKN and its surrounding cities, thereby enhancing accessibility, logistics, and regional integration.

Economically and demographically, the development of IKN is expected to act as a major growth engine for East Kalimantan and Indonesia as a whole (Faturahman et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2022; Tukimun et al., 2022). The new capital will attract investment in trade, services, infrastructure, property, and small and medium enterprises, while also generating new employment opportunities. Population projections estimate that IKN will host around 1.7-1.9 million residents by 2045, with Samarinda and other nearby cities functioning as buffer and partner regions that absorb, support, and interact with this growth. Physical, economic, and technological connectivity between IKN and Samarinda, through transport infrastructure, digital networks, and integrated services, will create two-way flows of people, goods, information, and capital, encourage more balanced regional development, and strengthen the regional role of East Kalimantan within the national economy.

Politically and administratively, IKN Nusantara is intended to become a symbol of national progress, modern governance, and sustainable development, while reinforcing unity in diversity (Faturahman et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2022; Tukimun et al., 2022). Its realisation requires close coordination between the central government and local governments in East Kalimantan, as well as collaboration with the private sector and communities. Policy harmonisation in areas like land use, housing, infrastructure, public services, and smart city systems is essential to ensure that IKN and surrounding cities develop in a mutually supportive way.

However, the official vision of IKN as a smart, green, beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive capital still faces a major implementation gap. The ideals of environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and regional integration need to be assessed against unresolved issues of customary land rights, livelihood transition, community

participation, and ecological pressure. Field observations and community-based accounts indicate that local concerns are concentrated on land security, access to economic opportunities, cultural continuity, and the limited space for meaningful participation. These concerns suggest that affected communities do not necessarily reject development itself, but question whether the relocation process sufficiently recognises their rights, histories, and socio-cultural attachments to land.

The development of *Ibu Kota Nusantara* (IKN) in East Kalimantan has generated criticism, particularly regarding its negative impacts on Indigenous peoples and democratic governance (Devinta and Addiansyah, 2024; Nurhidayat and Rahman, 2023; Widadio and Budhi, 2024). Although the legal basis for relocation was formally established through Law Number 3 of 2022, the law was drafted and passed in a very short period and is widely viewed as lacking meaningful public participation, especially from Indigenous communities who are directly affected. With broad decision-making powers over planning and development, the establishment of the IKN Authority (OIKN) further centralises control and marginalises local voices. This top-down process contradicts democratic principles and the notion of meaningful participation, where affected communities should have the right to be heard, to have their views considered, and to receive explanations regarding decisions impacting their lives. As a result, people perceive the policy process surrounding IKN as procedurally flawed and normatively unjust, potentially leading to deeper social conflicts.

The most serious negative impacts focus on the marginalisation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples living in and around the IKN area (Devinta and Addiansyah, 2024; Nurhidayat and Rahman, 2023; Widadio and Budhi, 2024). Data from Indigenous organisations indicates that at least 21-22 Indigenous communities, like Paser, Dayak Kenyah, Modang, Benuaq, Tunjung, Punan, Basap, and Kutai, are present in the IKN and its expansion zone, with tens of thousands of people potentially affected. Despite this, Indigenous participation in policy formulation has been extremely limited, often reduced to 1-2 representatives per community. Their *hak ulayat* (customary land rights), which are recognised in customary law and formally acknowledged in the 1945 Constitution and international instruments like UNDRIP, are at high risk of being violated. Many Indigenous people are pressured to relinquish their land for development, often with compensation that does not reflect spiritual, cultural, and historical attachments to the land and is based only on market value. Eviction letters in areas like Sepaku, the loss of sacred sites like Batu Badok and Batu Tukar Tondoi, and the displacement of ancestral graves illustrate how the project threatens not only livelihoods but also cultural identity, traditional knowledge, and social cohesion. This phenomenon amounts to layered injustice, covering areas of legal, cultural, economic, and existential concern.

Ecologically and socio-economically, IKN's development also brings potentially severe negative consequences (Devinta and Addiansyah, 2024; Nurhidayat and Rahman, 2023; Widadio and Budhi, 2024). Kalimantan's tropical rainforest, long regarded as one of the "lungs of the world" and home to rich biodiversity, including endangered species, is under pressure from land clearing, infrastructure construction, and the conversion of productive customary land into industrial and urban uses. Indigenous communities, whose livelihoods have historically depended on forests, agriculture, and local natural

resources, face the loss of their subsistence base and are pushed into unfamiliar and competitive urban economies. Many risk becoming economically marginalised, lacking formal education, skills, or capital to compete with incoming civil servants, investors, and urban professionals. Modernisation and globalisation associated with IKN may also accelerate cultural erosion and weaken customary law and traditional social institutions while exposing Indigenous youth to social problems and identity loss. At the same time, basic facilities for Indigenous communities, like adequate housing, access to clean water, and culturally appropriate social services, often lag far behind the rapid construction of government buildings, offices, and elite infrastructure in the new capital area.

Comparative Analysis of Putrajaya and IKN

A comparison between Putrajaya's development and IKN's current planning reveals fundamental structural, socio-political, and cultural differences. Putrajaya was conceived primarily as an administrative capital to ease congestion in Kuala Lumpur, improve governmental efficiency, and project a modern Islamic national image through carefully curated architecture, garden-city design, and advanced ICT-based governance. Malaysia's capital relocation model was largely technocratic, with state-driven land acquisition being more centralised, indigenous land issues being relatively limited, and the main narrative emphasising modern infrastructure, smart governance, and national identity-building. By contrast, IKN is planned and promoted not only as a smart and green capital but also as a symbol of social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and long-term national resilience (Asta Gatra) in a region characterised by complex socio-cultural diversity and deep-rooted indigenous presence (Devinta and Addiansyah, 2024). The designated IKN area overlaps significantly with customary territories and existing settlements, making land rights, cultural protection, and meaningful participation central issues in its development trajectory.

Although IKN rests on a clear legal foundation through Law Number 3/2022 (Firnaherera and Lazuardi, 2022), the speed of the law-making process and the limited involvement of affected indigenous communities have raised concerns about democratic deficits, procedural justice, and the risk of reproducing patterns of marginalisation described in earlier studies on indigenous exclusion in Indonesia. Using the national resilience concept, the core challenges for IKN are less about pure physical or economic feasibility and more about socio-cultural, ideological, and political dimensions, how to build cohesion among diverse groups, prevent and resolve land conflicts, respect hak ulayat, and safeguard local ecosystems and cultural heritage while pursuing ambitious smart city and "world-class capital" goals. From the perspective of the Ordinary Cities framework (Robinson, 2013), IKN should avoid simply mimicking Western or Gulf-style capital city models and instead become a site of local urban experimentation grounded in social justice, indigenous rights, and kearifan lokal. Unlike Putrajaya, whose benefits and symbolism were more clearly aligned with state elites and a relatively controlled urban landscape, the long-term success of IKN will depend on whether the city can transform symbolic participation into substantive engagement, where indigenous peoples and local communities are genuinely heard, their proposals considered, and their rights protected,

and thereby truly embody the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* in both governance practice and spatial development.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of Putrajaya and IKN

Aspect of Comparison	Putrajaya	Nusantara
Main Planning Philosophy	Modernity, administrative efficiency, and Malay-Islamic national identity	Environmental sustainability, smart governance, <i>Bhinneka Tunggal Ika</i> , and national resilience
Planning Approach	Dominantly top-down and driven by a technocratic vision	State-led and centralised through OIKN, with limited meaningful participation
Stage of Development	Already functioning as Malaysia's administrative capital	Still in the planning and construction process
Public Participation	Very limited and mostly formalistic	Limited, particularly among Indigenous and affected local communities
Community Model and Social Cohesion	Relatively homogeneous, dominated by civil servants and administrative functions	Heterogeneous, involving Indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, civil servants, and investors
Land and Displacement Issues	Displacement of plantation communities in Prang Besar	Customary land disputes, hak ulayat insecurity, and potential displacement of Indigenous communities
Livelihood Impact	Loss of agricultural livelihoods and adaptation to low-skilled urban jobs	Potential transition from forest, agricultural, and local resource-based livelihoods to competitive urban economies
Governance Challenge	Absence of elected local government and persistence of top-down administration	Centralisation of authority, procedural justice concerns, and limited community representation
Ecological Dimension	Garden city and smart city design with controlled urban landscape	Forest city vision, but with risks of land clearing, ecological pressure, and biodiversity loss
Ordinary Cities Implication	Modern administrative success does not automatically create inclusive urban life	Must avoid becoming only a symbolic smart city and instead become a locally grounded, participatory, and inclusive capital
Asta Gatra/National Resilience Implication	Supports administrative efficiency but reveals weaknesses in social cohesion and livelihood resilience	Has potential to strengthen Tri Gatra and Panca Gatra if land security, ecological protection, social justice, and participation are ensured
Main Challenges	Building the "soul of the city", strengthening participation, and improving social cohesion	Managing land conflicts, Indigenous rights, ecological sustainability, socio-economic inequality, and meaningful participation

Source: Processed by authors (2025)

The comparison in table 1 shows that Putrajaya and IKN share a common pattern of state-led planning, but differ in the scale and complexity of their social risks. Putrajaya's experience demonstrates how a technically successful administrative capital may still produce social exclusion when original communities lose land, livelihood stability, and social networks. IKN faces similar risks, but in a more complex setting because its development intersects with customary territories, Indigenous identity, ecological protection, and national resilience. The main lesson from Putrajaya is that

capital relocation should not be measured only by infrastructure completion, administrative efficiency, or symbolic modernity, but by its ability to prevent displacement, protect livelihoods, ensure meaningful participation, and build inclusive urban citizenship.

From the Ordinary Cities perspective, both cases show the importance of treating cities as locally grounded and socially contested spaces rather than as neutral sites of planning. Putrajaya reveals the limits of a technocratic model that prioritises order, symbolism, and administrative functionality. IKN, meanwhile, still has the opportunity to avoid similar weaknesses by embedding Indigenous rights, ecological protection, and participatory governance into its development process. In this sense, IKN's success will depend not only on whether it becomes a smart and green capital, but also on whether it becomes a socially inclusive and resilient city rooted in local histories and community aspirations

CONCLUSION

The study shows that capital city relocation is an infrastructural project with deeply social, political, and cultural transformations that must be evaluated through frameworks of justice, participation, and national resilience. The comparison between Putrajaya and IKN shows that both projects aim to modernise governance and stimulate regional development. IKN faces far more complex socio-cultural and ecological challenges due to its location within indigenous territories and its aspiration to embody inclusivity, sustainability, and local identity. The Theory of Ordinary Cities stated that successful capital relocation must be shaped by local histories, diverse voices, and grounded urban practices rather than by replicating external models. Empirical evidence from Putrajaya underscores risks of displacement, social fragmentation, and livelihood disruption if community needs are overlooked. Similarly, early findings from IKN reveal concerns about limited participation, procedural injustice, indigenous marginalisation, and ecological pressures. The study concludes that the long-term viability of IKN depends on the government's ability to convert symbolic commitments into substantive engagement, protect indigenous rights, align development with national resilience principles, and ensure that modernisation does not reproduce inequality but strengthens unity in diversity.

The study has several limitations. First, the fieldwork period was relatively short and geographically concentrated in selected districts around IKN, making the fieldwork difficult to capture variations in experiences across different indigenous groups and socio-economic groups. Longer-term ethnographic engagement is needed to understand how cultural adaptation, identity shifts, and livelihood transitions unfold over time. Second, the study focuses primarily on social and cultural impacts, leaving economic modelling, environmental projections, and institutional performance assessments underexplored. Future research should combine qualitative and quantitative methods to generate more comprehensive scenario analyses. Third, this study has not yet examined the perspectives of private investors, construction firms, or national-level policymakers, all of whom are significant in shaping IKN's outcomes. Finally, comparative studies extending beyond Putrajaya to cases like Brasília, Canberra, Naypyidaw, and Abuja would enrich

understanding of global patterns and help identify which governance models, compensation systems, and participatory mechanisms are most effective in preventing social exclusion.

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