

Massive Development of Nusantara Capital City in the Perspective of Ecological Politics

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 17 August 2024

Revised: 30 September 2024

Accepted: 30 September 2024

Available online: 30 September 2024

E-ISSN: 2830-6821

How to cite:

Bangun, Immanuel Christwo. 2024. "Massive Development of Nusantara Capital City in the Perspective of Ecological Politics". *Langgas: Jurnal Studi Pembangunan*, 3(2): 75-89

ABSTRACT

The development of the Capital City of Nusantara (IKN) in East Kalimantan is one of the most ambitious projects in Indonesia's modern history. Through a Political Ecology approach, this paper highlights how power and political dynamics shape interactions between humans and the environment and influence policies and practices that impact the exploitation of natural resources. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection through literature study. The development of IKN is not only influenced by political decisions that often ignore environmental aspects but also by the constellation of government that tends to be authoritarian and unconstitutional. This is reflected in the process of drafting the IKN law, which invited various polemics and questioned its legality. In the end, IKN development has the potential to damage the environment and deepen social injustice due to political practices that are not inclusive and democratic.

Keywords: ecological politics, power, development, environment, Nusantara Capital City

ABSTRAK

Pembangunan Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) di Kalimantan Timur merupakan salah satu proyek paling ambisius dalam sejarah Modern Indonesia sekaligus menjadi perhatian penting dalam hubungan antara politik, ekonomi, sosial dan lingkungan. Melalui pendekatan Politik Ekologi, tulisan ini menyoroti bagaimana dinamika kekuasaan dan politik membentuk interaksi antara manusia dengan lingkungan, serta mempengaruhi kebijakan dan praktik yang berdampak pada eksploitasi sumber daya alam. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui desk research. Pembangunan IKN tidak hanya dipengaruhi atas keputusan politik yang sering kali mengabaikan aspek lingkungan, namun juga oleh konstelasi pemerintah yang cenderung otoriter dan inkonstitusional. Ini tercermin melalui proses penyusunan undang-undang IKN yang mengundang berbagai polemik sekaligus dipertanyakan legalitasnya. Pada akhirnya malah meminggirkan kepentingan masyarakat marginal seperti masyarakat adat dan menyampingkan keberlangsungan lingkungan sekaligus bertendensi dalam menguntungkan segelintir elit. Pembangunan IKN, walaupun menjanjikan pertumbuhan ekonomi; namun pada kenyataannya berpotensi terhadap kerusakan lingkungan dan memperdalam ketidakadilan sosial akibat praktik politik yang tidak inklusif dan demokratis.

Kata Kunci: politik ekologi, kekuasaan, pembangunan, lingkungan, Ibu Kota Nusantara



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DOI: [10.32734/ijbsp.v3i2.17910](https://doi.org/10.32734/ijbsp.v3i2.17910)

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Capital City of Nusantara (IKN) in East Kalimantan is one of the most ambitious mega projects in the history of Modern Indonesia, this puts it in the same position as the Lighthouse Political project that Soekarno had adopted before (Tri, 2023). This project is carried out with the aim of distributing the economy and government, which has always been considered centralised in Jakarta, to other regions in Indonesia. The government claims that the relocation of the capital city will open up and encourage opportunities to increase economic growth (Ma'mun, 2023; Setneg.go.id, 2022). It is hoped that the development of IKN can answer various polemics that occur in Jakarta, such as reducing regional disparities and overcoming environmental problems such as flooding and overcrowding (Rizqiyah, 2023). This is considered by the government as urgency factors that can encourage the implementation of IKN development (Setneg.go.id, 2022). However, behind this grandiose development narrative, there are a number of fundamental problems that need to be reviewed, especially from the point of view of ecological politics.

Political ecology examines the relationship between political power and environmental issues, and how the resulting policies impact society and ecosystems (Blaser & Escobar, 2016; Bryant, 1991, 1998). In the context of IKN, this approach becomes relevant to analyse how massive development; in this case IKN as the government's main development program - can lead to environmental damage, exploitation of natural resources and social injustice which will have a prolonged impact and harm the community in the future, especially the indigenous people in Kalimantan. According to political ecologists such as Bryant (1998), decision-making is often motivated and controlled by powerful political and economic interests, which tend to ignore the impacts on the environment and local communities. Robbins (2012) also emphasises that political ecology critically explores the ways in which power, economics and environmental knowledge are intertwined and how these relationships contribute to creating conditions of ecological injustice. On the other hand, the development of IKN has drawn a variety of public responses after attracting much controversy from the planning stage to its implementation. The main issue is the legislative process which is considered to be rushed, haphazard, and lacking in transparency; this is further exacerbated by not involving the community in the IKN planning process, such as the formulation of Law No. 3 of 2022 on IKN (Prahadi et al., 2023). The IKN Law was drafted very quickly, in just a matter of months without adequate public involvement. This has led to polemics about the legitimacy of the policy-making process, as well as suspicions that this decision is only bent on the interests of the political elite in terms of both economy and power rather than the wider community.

In addition, the development of IKN is signalled to have significant negative impacts on the environment. For example, deforestation, water pollution and loss of biodiversity are some of the forms of environmental degradation that occur as a result of this project (Adnan et al., 2023; Faturahman et al., 2024). Development impacts that cause deforestation have affected environmental sustainability. This impact has been hardest felt by indigenous peoples who depend on the sustainability of forest ecosystems for their livelihoods. Indigenous peoples are the most vulnerable to agrarian conflicts that arise, either with the government or with private parties involved in the development of IKN. Previous writings also show that agrarian conflicts involving indigenous peoples not only sacrifice their land and natural resources, but also involve human rights.

So far, the development of IKN also reflects indications of a power struggle over resources by a handful of elites. Development projects are seen as an opportunity for elites to strengthen their power through resource exploitation efforts, which ironically puts people in the weakest and most affected position, especially for local communities (Robbins, 2012). The passivity and lack of access for communities to be involved in the decision-making process exacerbates the injustice. On the other hand, the huge budget allocation for this project has created a heavy financial burden for the state, which at the same time forces the government to tighten its belt and look for various ways to fund development, including through controversial policies that attract public attention such as tax increases, reduction of fuel subsidies, and plans for the Public Housing Savings (Tabungan

Perumahan Rakyat; Tapera) programme, which is assumed to be a government trick aimed at contributing to the additional budget for the IKN project.

It is undeniable, then, that the controversy surrounding the construction of IKN ultimately raises fundamental questions about whether or not this project actually reflects a democratic constellation of governance. Democracy, which requires the active participation of the people in decision-making processes that affect them, such as in the planning and development process (Siregar et al., 2024). Democracy includes the protection of rights, especially the rights of marginalised communities such as indigenous peoples and environmental sustainability. Democracy should involve effective participation, which provides equality in voting, adequate information and control over political agendas, such as policies. However, when viewed in the context of IKN, the neglect of community participation in the policy-making process and development implementation illustrates the existence of a democratic deficit, by closing public access to participate directly in the political agenda, in this case starting from the drafting of the IKN law which was so short and rushed (Rasji et al., 2024). On the other hand, democracy must ensure that policies reflect the public interest and are not dictated by the ruling elite (Kraft & Furlong, 2017). In line with the concept of democratic governance, which requires the active participation of the community in decision-making that affects them. Democratic governance is a political system characterised by popular power, where public participation in the policy-making process is one of the key elements to ensure the legitimacy and accountability of government (Williams in Pretorius, 2008). In the case of IKN, it appears that the elite's interest in political and economic power is more dominant than public urgency, especially for the rights of indigenous peoples and environmental sustainability. Thus, this research raises the question of how the development of IKN reflects a democratic constellation of government, or instead strengthens the power of political elites who tend to be authoritarian, especially regarding environmental impacts and community involvement. This article seeks to explore the issues surrounding the development of IKN from a political ecology perspective, including its environmental, social, economic and political impacts.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLOGICAL POLITICS

The issue of environmental problems has been a major concern since the mid-20th century when the concept of sustainable development was heavily promoted (Bryant, 1991, 1998; Paulson et al., 2003; Schubert, 2005). This is based on development that only focuses on economic growth without considering other impacts such as environmental and social. According to Bryant (1998) the concept of sustainable development is actually unsustainable if it only focuses on economic growth and opening up access to the exploitation of natural resources, rather than paying attention to ecological sustainability and the welfare of people who also depend on these natural resources. Although when seen as an approach, sustainable development means development that uses resources in a way that allows those resources to remain for others (Mohieldin, 2017) or in other words, being able to fulfil the needs of the current generation without jeopardising the survival of future generations, but in reality this is not the case. The state, which is considered as the party that has great power over ecological goods (natural resources), is unable to make effective policies (Bryant, 1991). This is also based on the large number of actors involved with their own priorities and practices, making joint decisions difficult, even in countries with adequate coordination systems (Bryant, 1991).

On the other hand, this concept of development is widely adopted by third countries, namely developing countries, especially countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia such as Southeast Asia, which are trying to catch up with the economic and social aspects of developed countries (Bryant, 1991). However, it cannot be denied that the concept of development, which is generally understood as a way of promoting economic growth, often ignores the environmental and social impacts that have been caused. In fact, in the view of political ecology, sustainable development must consider

the relationship between humans and nature (Bell et al., 2005). Prioritising people's lives and the sustainability of nature, becomes a reference in implementing a development. (Mensah, 2019).

Political ecology is broadly a conceptual approach that looks at the interrelationships between nature, culture and power (Blaser & Escobar, 2016). On the other hand, ecological politics is a framework orientated towards ecology and political economy. By bringing together these relationships and frameworks, Political Ecology aims to address the weaknesses of each, such as the lack of attention of human and cultural ecology to power, as well as the lack of understanding of nature in political economy (Blaser & Escobar, 2016). This is where political ecology plays an important role in development, emphasising the interaction of development ideas with power, environment and society. In this regard, Bryant (1991, 1998) sees that ideas of development, power and exploitation of natural resources are intertwined to form deep injustices. Political ecology, in his view, refers to an analytical framework that shows how political and economic power is used in the exploitation of natural resources, where this process has an impact on society, especially marginalised communities who are considered the most vulnerable. In the context of development, power is often controlled by political and economic elites who have access and authority over resources (Buur et al., 2020; Ferraz et al., 2020). Actions on how natural resources are managed, utilised or exploited tend to exclude affected local communities; communities are often denied the opportunity to participate or voice their aspirations, creating structural injustice between elites and communities. The benefits of natural resource exploitation are mostly enjoyed by a few, as opposed to the communities who are the ones who directly suffer the environmental and social costs of resource exploitation.

The development policies adopted by the state are often based on political interests to strengthen power (Bryant, 1991; Gorby et al., 2023). Developing countries view the concept of development as a tool to increase state income and attract foreign investment without regard to other important aspects such as social welfare and environmental sustainability. Massive development that relies on the exploitation of natural resources without full consideration will only create bigger problems in the future. In addition, the exploitation of natural resources that occurs in development is inseparable from the dynamics of the global economy which is driven by capitalism. Bryant explains that as a result of global capitalism, natural resources are only seen as a commodity that is exploited for economic gain. This massive exploitation becomes a problem when natural resources are used as the main source of income. Not to mention that global capitalism has created a situation where natural resources, which should be common property, are instead controlled by multinational corporations that have great economic and political power while the affected local communities get little or no benefit at all. Moreover, in such cases, the profits generated by the exploitation are taken by the elites who use them to strengthen their power and enrich themselves.

This is further exacerbated by the exploitation of natural resources, which has the potential to cause significant social conflicts between communities and elites (Robbins, 2012). Affected communities such as local communities who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods must deal with development projects that threaten their livelihoods and survival. Bryant emphasises that marginalised communities such as the poor, local communities and indigenous peoples are the most victimised and exposed to unjust development policies. This view is in line with Beck (1992, in Bryant, 1998) who revealed that the concept of 'communities at risk' can be used as a means to understand the common and invisible threats that humans face due to certain human actions. In this case, at-risk communities refer to groups of people who are vulnerable to the impacts of modernisation (Kusvianti et al., 2023). In other words, modernisation through development policies made by a handful of elites, can turn out to be a threat to vulnerable communities because they do not have the power to deal with these impacts. This not only deprives them of their rights to land and natural resources, but also threatens the sustainability of their communities and cultural identity. Not to mention land expropriation, environmental destruction due to exploitation leads to a wide range of unavoidable social problems such as poverty and social inequality.

Therefore, achieving truly sustainable development requires a change in our perspective on the relationship between humans and nature. This means respecting ecological boundaries by considering long-term impacts on the environment and people's well-being. It is important not only to assess development in terms of economic growth, but also how well it can fulfil the needs of the current generation without harming future generations. The participation of communities, especially those directly affected, is an important factor in the development process because they are the ones who will feel the impact of these policies directly. This should not only be the responsibility of political or economic elites with vested interests. Local communities have better knowledge and understanding of how to manage natural resources in their area. Political ecology provides an opportunity to evaluate how social, economic and political factors contribute to environmental crises, although these relationships are not always as obvious as ecological problems such as poor land management, inappropriate technology and overpopulation (Paulson et al., 2003). Ecological politics aims to consider the environmental and social impacts of any development decision and ensure that the benefits of development are fairly distributed to all parties, especially to the community. Development should be carried out with respect for the rights of local communities and help maintain the biodiversity and ecosystems that sustain life on earth.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative methodology with descriptive research. This research discusses how the ideas of IKN development through the Political Ecology approach, especially those studied by Raymond Bryant (1991; 1998), which emphasises the importance of understanding how power and political dynamics influence and shape human interactions with the environment and the complex relationship between politics, economics and social in influencing the environment and the various problems that follow, especially in developing countries such as in Africa, Latin America and Asia, specifically Southeast Asia. Through the study of political ecology, it is found that environmental problems cannot be separated from the social, political and economic context. This is also driven by how ideas of development underpin policies and practices that ultimately affect the environment. In this case, it is related to the acts of exploitation of natural resources that cause various kinds of environmental problems. The main data sources in this article include Law No. 3 of 2022 on IKN, the National Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional; RPJMN) 2020-2024, Appendix to the Master Plan on IKN (Outline Lampiran Rencana Induk IKN) and IKN planning documents from the National Development Planning Agency (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional; Bappenas), and videos related to IKN from the Youtube platform. The data collection is done through desk research, namely examining various literatures such as documents and relevant written sources. Data were obtained from books, journal articles, laws and regulations, news articles, etc. The data analysis technique in this research is thematic analysis, where data is analysed based on themes that emerge from the data sources that have been collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the context of this research, the main themes analysed include political power, exploitation of natural resources, social-ecological impacts of development, and public participation in the IKN legislative process.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NUSANTARA CAPITAL CITY (IKN): ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS FROM A POLITICAL ECOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

The plan to relocate the Capital City of Nusantara (IKN) has been determined since 26 August 2019, where the IKN development area is in East Kalimantan Province, precisely in North Penajam Paser Regency and parts of Kutai Kartanegara Regency which takes up at least 256,142 hectares of land (Wibowo, 2022). The IKN development stage is planned for 2022-2024. Of course, this development process has drawn various kinds of responses, including criticism from various parties including experts. This is based on the status of IKN, which is built on land with forest status as well

as located on the island of Kalimantan, which is part of the world's lung area, at least Kalimantan contributes 45% as a conservation area and forest (Aurora, 2012). Although previously, President Joko Widodo asserted that the development of IKN has a sustainable forest city concept that maintains 75% of the green open space area with 65% as tropical forest (ikn.go.id, 2021). In fact, almost most of Kalimantan's forest areas have become production forests, at least according to information from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry that granting permits to companies that own plantation forests in the IKN area can utilise their assets until 2027 (Yanuar, 2024). The United States Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) through satellite imagery released shows a comparison of forest conditions in the IKN development area in April 2022 and February 2024 which is quite contrasting, with previously having dense forest conditions but gradually the forest area has narrowed due to development (visibleearth.nasa.gov, 2024).

However, environmental experts argue that this development will still have the potential to damage forest areas. Given that the 256 hectares of land is forest, 70 per cent of the area will be green. This means that infrastructure and other developments will have to sacrifice 30 per cent for deforestation (Sucahyo, 2023). On the other hand, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's recognition for rehabilitation and reforestation is currently limited, which can only cover 900 hectares per year (Utami, 2024). This means that it is quite contradictory to compare the government's vision and mission to make IKN a green land. It will take at least 88 years to restore the IKN area to become forest again and it should be underlined that out of 70 per cent, only 43 per cent is still worthy of being called forest (Sucahyo, 2023). In addition, deforestation will be accompanied by forest degradation; where deforestation is changing forests into non-forests such as infrastructure development and settlements, while degradation is a decrease in the quality of forests into plantations such as gardens and agricultural land (Putri et al., 2024; Wahyuni & Suranto, 2021). Forest change conditions carried out through logging and burning forests in continuity can cause global warming (Syah, 2017). Of course this can cause indications of significant changes in the forest landscape, both in quality and quantity, which tends to have the potential to destroy the ecological function of forests as the lungs of the world. Considering that the IKN area, located on the island of Kalimantan, is one of the largest tropical forest areas in the world and has rich biodiversity and is a place of life for many indigenous peoples (Sucahyo, 2023). Not to mention that the development that is considered to be rushed is also at the expense of several areas such as the East Kalimantan forest area, also the bridge connecting Balikpapan with North Penajam Paser will also sacrifice mangrove forests, accompanied by the construction of a toll road that will cut the buffer zone of the Wain River protected forest which is home to vulnerable species such as the Honey bear (Sapariah, 2024).

In addition to environmental risks, the development of IKN also has economic risks that must be considered by the government. This is based on the scenario of the total financing needs of IKN by Bappenas, which is around Rp.466 trillion. The scenario relates to infrastructure needs such as government buildings, education and health facilities, facilities and infrastructure, property and land acquisition needs which will be financed through the state budget, BUMN, KPBU and private sector (Bappenas, 2019; Silalahi, 2019). Although the government stated that around 19.2% of the total budget cost of Rp.466 trillion will be covered by the state budget, there is still a risk of increasing the state budget in the event of failure of development by the private sector (Hasibuan & Aisa, 2020). In fact, until now, the government is still processing foreign investors to invest their capital in IKN (Sari, 2024). There are various kinds of expenditures that are considered to have no urgency towards the development of IKN, adding pressure to the budget that should be used for more urgent and strategic needs. These expenses include incentives for state civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara; ASN) who move to IKN, the government plans to move 32,937 employees. This does not include allowances for ASNs that include accommodation costs (Silalahi, 2019). Furthermore, the holding of the independence ceremony on 17 August 2024 at IKN is also a burden on the state budget (Tempo, 2024).

This extravagance at least illustrates how IKN is built on the basis of elite interests, especially since the budget is obtained through taxes from the public. Given the difficult circumstances of society and the huge amount of state expenditure, it can be illustrated that taxation is predicted to fall short of the target and the deficit will grow. Thus, the relatively large budget allocation for development has created a heavy financial burden for the state, while at the same time making the government have to find various ways to cover development funds, one of which includes through controversial policies such as tax increases, reducing fuel subsidies to the plan for the Public Housing Savings (Tabungan Perumahan Rakyat; Tapera) programme that has attracted public attention (Anggrainy, 2022; cnnindonesia.com, 2024; Nisaputra, 2022). Coupled with the government, which until now continues to try to attract the attention of foreign investors in the development of IKN, it cannot be denied that this will potentially open up the practice of global capitalism which will increasingly lead to massive exploitation of natural resources in Indonesia, especially in the IKN area which causes environmental damage to nature.

As Bryant points out, as a result, ownership of natural resources, which should be shared, has instead shifted to exclusive ownership by investors and elites. Treating natural resources as the main commodity for economic gain is a misguided view. This exploitation has led to the narrowing of opportunities for communities to enjoy existing natural resources; the government's favouritism towards the elite has further marginalised the position of communities as powerless. In this case, the local people of IKN who depend on natural resources such as farming, cattle rearing and fishing, inevitably have to surrender themselves to greedy competition. On the other hand, the tendentious interests seen in the development of IKN really put the community at a disadvantage. The granting of long-term land use rights for investors, accelerating deforestation rates, marginalising indigenous peoples and threatening the environment in East Kalimantan have drawn much criticism and further rejection from civil society groups (Farisa, 2022). In the IKN Law, there is a provision that allows business use rights for investors for up to 95 years. Of course, this is considered a form of government partiality towards the elite, where this policy favours investors and capital owners, but on the other hand, it is a form of discrimination because it harms local communities, especially marginalised communities such as indigenous peoples who have long settled in the IKN area (brin.go.id, 2024; Lumbanrau, 2023).

Researchers from BRIN's Political Research Centre noted that there are several environmental issues arising in East Kalimantan and the IKN region; including deforestation, forest degradation, overlapping land permits, animal protection challenges and agrarian conflicts that occur between communities, companies and the government, the Strategic Environmental Assessment which is considered rushed in its preparation and the lack of community participation in the drafting process of the IKN Law which should involve academics and local communities in order to maintain the sustainability of the affected environment (brin.go.id, 2024). On the other hand, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia stated that maladministration had been proven in one issuance of a certificate or land tenure and ownership inside and outside the IKN delineation by the Kutai Kartanegara Regency government and the North Penajam Paser Regency government (Rizky, 2023). Reflecting on this phenomenon, the development of IKN looks very poorly prepared, very rushed. Even though it claims that this development is a long-term development, the many problems that have occurred indicate that there are indications of political interests in this project. The government seems to prioritise the interests of investors through the granting of land use rights over a very long period of time, which will lead to massive exploitation of natural resources. Meanwhile, fundamental issues such as land tenure and environmental protection continue to invite polemics. This not only creates social injustice, especially for marginalised communities, especially indigenous peoples who have spent their entire lives in IKN, but also illustrates how the gap between the elite and the community is so wide open.

It is undeniable that development ideas will come at the expense of social justice for the community, this injustice is a form of discrimination experienced by marginalised communities who

are prone to exploitation, both in terms of the economy such as the land they occupy or in terms of power that does not involve their rights as civilians. The development of IKN illustrates that there is indeed an imbalance between the power held by the elite and the community. This is experienced by the Dayak Paser community as part of the indigenous community who are worried about their powerlessness over their rights. This concern is based on their territory being counted as land for the IKN development area, where most of this land has also been used for corporate interests (Utama, 2019). On the other hand, many inland indigenous peoples still do not have strong land deeds over customary land, of course this further positions them in helplessness if the government does not take part in handling cases experienced by indigenous people. Unfortunately, it is often inevitable that these land disputes occur due to interference from the government and their bias in favour of entrepreneurs to be able to turn customary land into state land (Melfi et al., 2022).

DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: QUESTIONING THE ROLE OF POWER AND ELITE INTERESTS IN NUSANTARA CAPITAL CITY'S POLICY

The hasty process of drafting Law No. 3 of 2022 on IKN raises serious questions about transparency and public participation in decision-making. It takes a very short time to design and draft IKN into a law that was stipulated and officially passed by the Indonesian Parliament on 3 October 2023 (dpr.go.id, 2023). Previously, Minister of National Development Planning for the 2016-2019 period, Bambang Brodjonegoro, said that the President wanted to realise the development of the capital city. Bambang said that the study of relocating the capital city had just begun and was expected to be completed around 2019. In fact, Bambang only submitted the results of the study on the relocation of the national capital three days before the announcement made on 26 August 2019 (Tempodotco, 2024). The details, which are claimed to be completed in two years, are still mysterious because they are not disclosed to the public. The development plan at IKN was considered rushed and drew criticism from various circles. In addition, in January 2022, the Indonesian parliament passed the IKN bill into law. The legal standard for the IKN Development was made in a lightning fast and closed manner where it only took 43 days for the government and Indonesian parliament to pass the law (Tempodotco, 2024). Of course, this law is considered unconstitutional because of its short and hasty completion period and does not involve the participatory role of the community, especially the local and indigenous communities of East Kalimantan such as the indigenous peoples of Paser Balik, Balik Pemalaun, Paser Maridan and Balik Sepaku Tribe as the affected communities (Ayunda, 2024; Meiliana, 2022; Rasji et al., 2024). The lawsuit filed by the community regarding the IKN Law to the Constitutional Court for not involving them is proof that the government does not place the position of the community as an important entity, this is inversely proportional to the status of popular sovereignty as the highest in democracy (Izzani & Rahmadini, 2024). The development of IKN in reality ignores the principles of democracy and social justice driven by elite interests. In fact, community involvement in policy-making is important to create responsive policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of the public.

Quoting Indonesian Constitutional Law Expert, Bivitri Susanti, the IKN form of government is considered very undemocratic. This is based on the government's approach, which sees the development of IKN as a project. Rather than considering democratic principles, the government prioritises the smooth running of IKN as a project (Damarjati, 2022). In addition, when interpreting the contents of the IKN Law, it can be concluded that in the IKN form of government, there are no elections directly elected by the people. Including in choosing leaders; the Head of the IKN Authority and the Deputy Head of the IKN Authority who are directly elected by the president by considering the decision of the House of Representatives, have the same position as ministers and are directly responsible to the president, and during their term of office can be appointed and extended again by the president. Furthermore, the absence of a regional legislative function in IKN, namely there is no regional representative council at both the provincial and district/city levels,

causing the budgeting of funds to only be allocated directly through the State Budget (APBN) and does not have the Local Budget (APBD).

Table 1. Articles Related to Nusantara Capital City Government Structure

Article	Article Content	Interpretation
1	(2) The State Capital named Nusantara and hereinafter referred to as IKN Nusantara is a special regional government unit at the provincial level whose territory becomes the seat of the State Capital as stipulated and regulated by this Law.	IKN is a province-level area that has a special status as the seat of the National Capital.
5	(3) With the exception of other regional government units, the IKN Nusantara only holds national-level general elections. (4) The Head of the Nusantara IKN Authority is the head of the special regional government of the Nusantara IKN which has a ministerial level position, appointed, appointed, and dismissed by the President after consulting with the House of Representatives.	IKN does not have an elected leader, but is appointed directly by the president with consideration from the House of Representatives, nor does it have a local government structure.
10	(1) The Head of the Nusantara IKN Authority and the Deputy Head of the Nusantara IKN Authority as referred to in Article 9 shall hold office for 5 (five) years as of the date of inauguration and thereafter may be appointed and reappointed for the same term of office.	The term of office of the IKN leader is 5 years, with the provision that it can be elected and extended again by the President.

Source: Compiled by Author, 2024

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the loss of political representation of local communities reinforces concerns about the status of IKN development, which is actually only used as a means of interest for the elite. The absence of a Regional People's Representative Council in IKN further emphasises how the community's position in the decision-making process will be neglected. The loss of the right to express their aspirations as part of the IKN community is evidence that public participation has been deliberately closed by the elite in order to further their interests in exploring and exploiting natural resources in the IKN area. The absence of the Regional People's Representative Council means eliminating the checks and balance mechanism that is important in a democratic system of government, which requires institutions that oversee all actions taken by the government in deciding every policy made. Concentrating full control on the central government means that it has closed the opportunity for the community to be active in any political decisions that will affect their lives in the future.

Therefore, the existence of a Regional People's Representative Council in the IKN region is an important entity in ensuring that the aspirations and interests of local communities are not overlooked. In addition, the renewable term of office of the Head of the IKN Authority and the Deputy Head of the IKN Authority without clear limitations raises concerns about the potential for abuse of power and irregularities such as the practice of corruption, collusion and nepotism. Especially in the absence of adequate oversight from political representative institutions in the IKN region. Unrestricted terms of office tend to open up acts of authoritarianism that are difficult to control and pose a serious threat to democracy. Without a Regional People's Representative Council, the supervision of executive policies is weak and triggers the opening of space for government arbitrariness against the people in the IKN region (Damarjati, 2022). This statement is also supported by Ian Wilson, a political observer from Australia who sees that IKN has shown an increasingly autocratic government that is separated from popular sovereignty; given that if this development is physical, it will be far from the dynamic society that is the basis of democratic consolidation in Indonesia (Llewellyn, 2024). On the other hand, the absence of public representation in IKN's form of government will shut down expressions of people sovereignty, such as rallies, protests, and mobilisations, which have become important forms of checks and balances on power (Llewellyn, 2024).

The development of IKN does cause anxiety for the community, especially indigenous peoples. The lack of regulations governing the rights of indigenous peoples is a trigger for disputes

between elites and communities, not to mention the various claims in the name of investment and strategic projects that create vulnerability to forest grabbing which is part of their customary land. (Sucipto, 2022). Supported by the fact that the Draft Law on Indigenous Peoples has not yet reached the legislative stage, it gives the government the freedom to continue to intervene in indigenous territories (Harahap, 2024; Hariandja, 2024). Intervention in the form of dispossession is often driven by government projects that often put indigenous peoples in conflict with the law when defending their territories. Indigenous peoples have been confronted with development projects that ignore human rights principles (Hariandja, 2024). In the IKN development itself, several locations have in fact been installed boundary stakes, even though indigenous community representatives have not felt involved in the development process, even since the announcement of the development plan (Ayunda, 2024). This is clear evidence that the development of IKN does not apply the principles of democracy as it should. Development, through a political ecology approach critically explores how power, economic and social are interrelated and contribute to creating conditions of ecological injustice. This is also what happened in the development of IKN.

Table 2. Aspects that Impact Environmental Issues on the Development of Nusantara Capital City

Aspects	Action	Impact of Environmental Problems
Politics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regulate the unconstitutional IKN Law 2. No community involvement from design to implementation of IKN development programme 3. The Head of the Authority and the Deputy Head of the Authority are directly elected by the President together with the House of Representatives without going through elections. 4. No Regional People's Representative Council (no regional legislative function) in IKN 5. Favours the elite through the IKN Law to attract foreign investors and cornering people's rights 	Contributing to environmental problems; such as land degradation, ecosystem damage, resource exploitation, deforestation, pollution and degradation of water quality and biological resources, oppression of local animals, global warming and leading to massive exploitation of natural resources.
Economics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using the State Budget (APBN) 20% (Total IKN budget of 466 trillion, with 90.4 trillion from APBN; 252.2 trillion from business entities and 123.2 trillion from private investment) 2. IKN financing is obtained from the APBN, not the Local Budget (APBD) like other regions 3. Making policies that tend to harm the people (raising taxes, reducing fuel subsidies, TAPERA plans) in order to close the IKN fund budget 4. Opening up neoliberal economic practices through the ease of investment licensing to foreign investors (through the job creation law and the IKN law) which allows for massive exploitation of natural resources. 	
Social	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not involving the community in the IKN development process 2. Has not passed the Indigenous Peoples Bill as affected communities in the IKN development project 3. Potential conflict over land claims involving communities and the government in the IKN area 4. No mediation in the eviction action; the community was only informed through the placement of eviction pamphlets. 	

Source: Compiled by Author, 2024

It is inevitable, then, that if the government still sees democracy as something procedural only, simply making democracy a forum for electoral votes. It should be noted that public participation is not only limited to elections, but also includes processes of consultation and dialogue between

government and citizens, which allow people's voices to be heard and considered in decision-making (Bevir, 2004). It is inevitable that the development programme becomes a way for elites to maintain their status quo, especially with regard to their political power and economic resources. This development becomes a new source of livelihood by exploiting natural resources that have the potential to fulfil the interests of the elites. The community is only involved in certain moments and interests, not in every political matter that should be available to the community. Likewise, in the decision-making process carried out, the community should be included as the party that will have the most impact on every policy made, including the construction of this IKN. But on the contrary, this project is unconstitutional because it is not in accordance with the essence of democracy.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Capital City of Nusantara (IKN) reflects a government constellation that tends to be authoritarian and elitist, with minimal public participation in the decision-making process, which is dominated by elite political and economic interests through the exploitation of natural resources. On other hand, The development of IKN in East Kalimantan is an ambitious project that is expected to bring hope for economic redistribution and solutions to environmental problems that occurred in the previous capital city, Jakarta. However, from the perspective of ecological politics, the project has generated a wide range of polemics, mainly regarding the potential for environmental damage, massive exploitation of natural resources and social injustice to marginalised communities, especially indigenous peoples. The main criticism focuses on the lack of opportunities for communities to participate in the legislative process and implementation of IKN development, reflecting a democratic deficit. In addition, the negative environmental impacts of IKN such as deforestation and forest degradation, as well as the risk of significantly increasing the development budget, add to the financial burden on the state. The development of IKN is seen to favour the political and economic elites, while local communities, especially indigenous peoples, are the most affected. In the absence of oversight mechanisms such as local parliaments in IKN areas, concerns over abuse of power are heightened. The development of IKN reflects elite interests rather than democratic and participatory governance constellations, sacrificing social justice and environmental sustainability in favour of maintaining the status quo of power and economy through the exploitation of natural resources.

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