

Amid Construction and Concessions: Social-Ecological Impacts of Indonesia's Capital Relocation

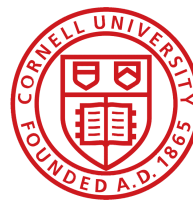
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September 2024



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## Abstract

In 2019, the Indonesian government, led by President Joko Widodo, made the executive decision to relocate the country's capital from Jakarta, located on the island of Java, to East Kalimantan, on the island of Borneo, due to economic and environmental challenges. In response to this change, indigenous communities in East Kalimantan, academics, and civil society organizations have expressed a variety of concerns about the IKN. This paper highlights controversies surrounding the IKN's impact on land rights, political representation and participation, ecological degradation, and economic issues through a thorough literature review. Additionally, perspectives from current communities located within the IKN territory, shared through an archival investigation on the Paser and Balik peoples and qualitative analysis of four focus group discussions from the villages of Pemaluan and Mentawir, demonstrate how Nusantara has, and will continue to, dramatically alter the physical and cultural landscape of East Kalimantan.

## 1. Introduction

A study of the environment reveals more than what meets the eye—it is an exploration of time and temporal context, encompassing geography, culture, economy, society, politics, and history (Hirsch, 2017). In the case of East Kalimantan, located in Indonesian Borneo, this region can be seen as a timescape that “encapsulates the past, present, future, and the social as much as the natural” (Adam, 1998, p. 56). Since logging companies descended onto the rainforests of East Kalimantan in the 1960s, there have been continual transformations in the relationship between this environment and the humans that inhabit, as well as augment, it. Whether it be villages comprised of transmigrants and indigenous communities or national government officials, the effects of the relocation of the Indonesian capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan will be felt across all stratas of Indonesian society.

It is clear that the Indonesian capital relocation will drastically change the environment, economy, and way of life for many Indonesians, especially those currently residing in the area where the new capital is being constructed. Among those residents are the indigenous groups of the Paser and Balik peoples. Having lived in East Kalimantan for generations, with close ties to the land that are reflected in their traditions, culture, and knowledge—how will their histories be remembered and futures altered? Therefore, an analysis of the capital relocation within a political, historical, and cultural context can illuminate a greater understanding of the potential benefits and repercussions that Nusantara will bring to the residents of East Kalimantan, especially the Paser and Balik.

## 2. Methods

Sources were found using a list of relevant search terms pertaining to the research topic:

1. Indigenous groups in the Nusantara region
  - a. Paser/Pasir/Passir
  - b. Balik (can be for Balik people or Balikpapan/Balik Papan, a city in East Kalimantan)
  - c. Kutai/Koetei
  - d. Basap/Bassap
  - e. Benuaq
  - f. Dayak
2. Key locations
  - a. Borneo
  - b. East Kalimantan/Kalimantan Timur
  - c. Samarinda (city in East Kalimantan)
  - d. Mahakaz/Mahakkam (one of Borneo's major rivers)
  - e. Pemaaluan/Pamaluan (village in IKN area)
  - f. Mentawir/Mentawer/Mentawar (village in IKN area)
  - g. Sepaku (district in IKN area)
3. Key organizations
  - a. Weyerhaeuser (global timber corporation)
  - b. ITCI / International Timber Corp (Weyerhaeuser's previous Indonesian division)
  - c. Inhutani (Indonesian logging company)

In addition to Google Scholar and JSTOR, Cornell University's Kroch Library Asia Collections and digital Southeast Asia Visions Collection, as well as the Bibliography of Asian Studies, were also utilized in source searching.

Last, I qualitatively analyzed a set of four focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted by Drs. Walker DePuy and Wendy Erb in July of 2023 in the villages of Pemaluan and Mentawir, which are within Nusantara's administrative boundaries. These FGDs were focused on impacts to community residents from the capital relocation and construction of Nusantara, with separate discussions held for men and women to ensure comfort and equity in participation in both Pemaluan and Mentawir. These FGDs covered a range of topics including impacts to their surrounding environment, their economies and livelihoods, their individual and communal rights, and more. The FGDs were conducted in Indonesian and then transcribed and translated to English by Indonesian research assistants with the aid of the Google Translate tool.

### 3. Nusantara Background

In the face of economic and environmental challenges, the Indonesian government, led by President Joko Widodo, made the executive decision to relocate the country's capital from Jakarta, located on the island of Java, to East Kalimantan, on the island of Borneo, on August 26, 2019. The capital region is divided into three rings of development. According to Law 3, which details the capital relocation plan, the first and largest ring is the IKN Development Area (KPIKN), which encompasses 199,962 hectares of land between the North Penajam Paser Regency and Kutai Kartanegara Regency. Within this zone is the second ring, Kawasan Ibu Kota Negara (KIKN), which comprises 42,000 hectares of land. Lastly, the third ring, Kawasan Inti Pusat Pemerintahan (KIPP), of 6,671 hectares, is designated for the central core of the government area. Figure 1 illustrates the three rings described above:

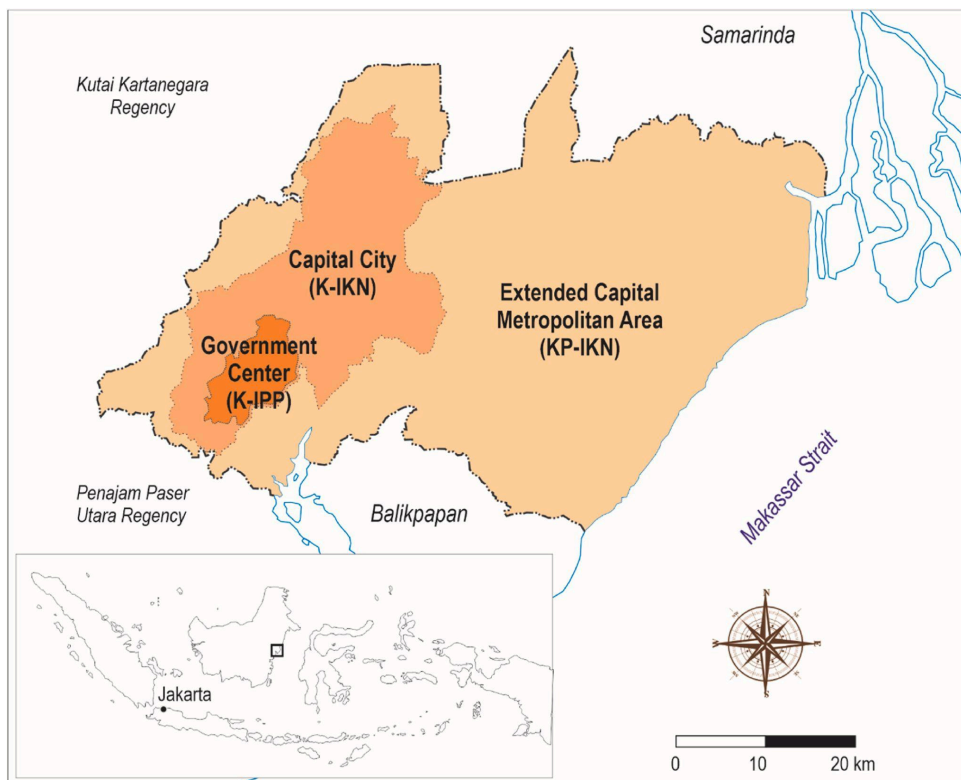


Figure 1. Map of the IKN's three ring boundaries (Hudalab, 2023, p.4)

According to Indonesia's Law 3 of 2022, the capital will be revolutionary in its capacity to be smart, sustainable, and, above all, an integrated "forest city" whose harmonious coexistence with nature will support both humans and nonhumans through efforts ranging from sustainable development to biodiversity conservation. The law cites that the location of East Kalimantan was chosen due to its comparatively minimum risk of natural disasters and the presence of existing infrastructure, including "decent airports, sea ports and toll roads" (p. 26). What's more, its central location within Indonesian territory is believed to be beneficial for economic stimulation and expansion beyond the island of Java (Nurjaman & Rusata, 2023).

Furthermore, the new capital of Nusantara is designed to demonstrate Indonesia's strength on the global scale as a competitive global leader. By promoting Nusantara as an activity center that will invigorate economic opportunities outside of Java while still preserving the surrounding natural landscape, the government aims to realize this city as the apex of green urbanism representing the contemporary "identity, social character, unity, and greatness of the nation," as stated in Law 3.

Simply put, the vision for the capital is ambitious. In the five years since relocation began, the new capital has undergone rapid construction and been scheduled for inauguration on August 17, 2024. Many questions and concerns have also been raised by non-governmental stakeholders who are and will continue to be the most heavily impacted by the megaproject: the general Indonesian public, communities surrounding the IKN area, East Kalimantan's indigenous and transmigrant residents, just to name a few. The main concerns include land rights, political representation and participation, environmental degradation, and economic challenges.

## 4. Controversies Surrounding Nusantara

### 4.1. Land rights

In Law 3, the government claims that land for the IKN will primarily be located in lands that are not subject to ownership titles to minimize local resident relocation and land compensation. However, while this may seem straightforward, the existence of industrial plantation forests and mining company concessions located within or near IKN territory coincide with the customary land of local indigenous communities, including the Balik peoples, which are not entirely protected by legal ownership titles (Nurjaman & Rusata, 2023). This overlap is a main point of conflict between these communities and the government. For instance, in the Sepaku District, several villages and subdistricts utilize land management systems that rely on customary law, *adat*, which establishes land as a natural resource that is preserved for and inherited by future generations of the community (Fahmi et al., 2024). Since they do not rely on written laws of land ownership, but instead follow the practice of traditional customs, official documentation of property is limited within these communities. Additionally, it is also a challenge to obtain land ownership certificates, and one traditional leader of the Paser peoples estimated that, in 2022, there were still 5000-6000 hectares of ancestral land that had not received certification (Umasangaji et al., 2022).

The government has marked IKN boundaries within customary territories without consultation and established that “community land whose ownership cannot be proven automatically becomes state property” in the national Land Bill (Nurjaman & Rusata, 2023, p. 142). Moreover, land brokers, with the support of local officials who are responsible for issuing land certificate documents, have even taken advantage of the lack of property documentation to sell residents’ land to speculators at high prices, sometimes without the owner’s consent, and manipulated the registration process so the land’s rights are registered under another individual’s name (Nurjaman & Rusata, 2023). With the multitude of issues surrounding land ownership and management in the IKN area, there is significant

cause for concern of how external pressure will affect residents' ability to stay in possession of their property.

#### 4.2. Political representation and participation

From conception to inauguration, the national government has propelled the project through specialized fast-tracked legislation, planning for the IKN to be actualized in five short years during a time of stagnant economic growth for the country (Susmiyati et al., 2023). Throughout the decision-making process, the national government has facilitated minimal feedback and participation from stakeholders who will be most impacted by IKN construction, such as the regional government of Kutai Kartanegara, the Balik peoples of the Sepaku district, and other local residential groups near the IKN's core development zone (Buana et al., 2022). In fact, the administration has faced severe backlash from both indigenous residents and civil society organizations, such as Forest Watch Indonesia, with many questioning: "Is this plan [for the IKN] merely forced to assure that there's a 'legacy' from Jokowi's Administration?" (Johansyah et al., 2020, p.3).

In fact, interviews conducted with a variety of IKN stakeholders indicate that those who feel benefitted from this project are investors, businesspeople, and property entrepreneurs, as well as politicians with extractive industry concessions (Kodir et al., 2021). There are also suspicions that the IKN is not just a project to benefit Jokowi's legacy, but also one meant to benefit his political allies, many of whom have been granted large land concessions in the IKN area (Johansyah et al., 2020). Even against governmental pressure, local communities have unified to resist unjust land reallocation and defend their rights to be represented in public by their village leaders and/or local government officials who understand their interests. However, if the project was never meant to prioritize the public, it would explain why advocacy efforts by local residents or organizations such as the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago for land protection and reclamation have been unsuccessful (Umasangaji et al., 2022).

### 4.3. Ecological degradation

While moving the capital may be seen as a solution to Jakarta's ailment of environmental issues, it can also be argued that the solution remains unresolved, and the problems have just been relocated from Java to Borneo (Nurjaman & Rusata, 2023). Historically, East Kalimantan has been dominated by the coal industry, serving as one of the largest coal exploitation areas in Indonesia in the last two-and-a-half decades, with timber, palm oil, and mining operations acting as major ecological threats to the region as well (Susmiyati et al., 2023). These industries operate on land that they own through concessions, which are legal contracts between the government and an entity, such an individual or company, that establish the rights of the entity to utilize land for activities including logging or marketing products in a given forest area (Umasangaji et al., 2022).

The increased pressure from high migration flow to the IKN will cause the rate of land transfer and deforestation to further increase the environmental vulnerability of the area, which has recently been assessed to be relatively high due to issues from abandoned coal mining areas and pits (Kurniawan et al., 2022). This is especially concerning due to the 142 concessions for the coal mining, forestry, and plantation industries that have already been granted within the IKN region (Fig. 2).

Additionally, in Law 3, one of the main reasons stated as to why the location of East Kalimantan was chosen for the new capital was due to its "minimum risk for natural disaster" (p. 26). While it is true that East Kalimantan is less prone to environmental disasters compared to Jakarta, there are still plenty of dangers posed by catastrophes that have occurred in the past, such as the 1997-98 forest fire that burned over 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> of East Kalimantan, of which 23,000 km<sup>2</sup> impacted natural forest concessions (Nieuwstadt et al., 2001). What's more, it has been highly advised against clearing land for settlements in East Kalimantan's urban areas, due to the region's existing environmental vulnerability (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is an alarming lack of preparatory measures that have been planned by the government: Just three years before its planned inauguration, "disaster mitigation efforts related to potential disasters in the new capital area [were still not] clear" (Rahmat et al., 2021). This is no change from 2019, where a detailed study on disaster mitigation in the new

capital city in East Kalimantan had yet to be made available, despite the government's knowledge that its location will expose it to forest fires and coal power plant pollution (Susmiyati et al., 2023). Without changes in policy to enforce regulations of proper environmental protection from these extractive industries, the ecological destruction caused by poor governance in Java could be repeated in East Kalimantan (Johansyah et al., 2020).

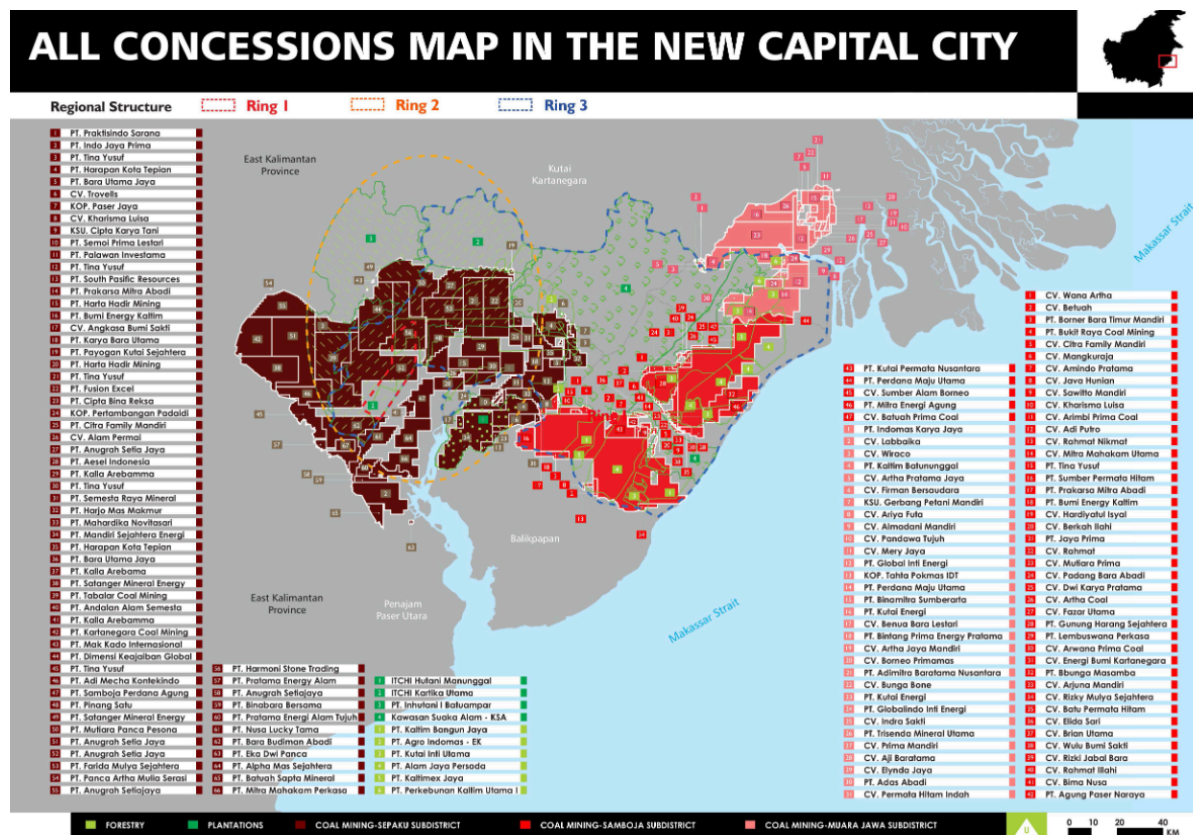


Figure 2. Map displaying all of the commercial concessions and their boundaries that have been granted within the IKN development area. The colors correspond to what industry the concessions belong to. Light green: forestry. Dark green: plantations. Brown: Coal mining within the Sepaku subdistrict. Orange: Coal mining within the Samboja subdistrict. Coral: Coal mining within the Muara Jawa subdistrict. The numbers of the concessions correspond to the owners of the concessions, which are listed on the sides of the map (Johansyah et al., 2020 p. 4).

It should not be forgotten that the staggering amount of land clearance and conversion in East Kalimantan will also continue to affect the region's biodiversity by heavily driving habitat fragmentation for the region's wildlife populations (Verstegen et al., 2019). Many species in the region are suffering from habitat loss, most notably the endemic orangutan and Bornean gibbon (Fuller et al., 2004), though the IUCN Red List has identified habitat loss as a major threat to the endangered proboscis monkey and straw-headed bulbul as well. In particular, one of the main drivers of the straw-headed bulbul's critical endangerment is land-related threats due to urbanization and development. With an explosion of natural habitat destruction propelled forward by industrial exploitation and infrastructure expansion for the IKN a significant number of near threatened, vulnerable, and endangered species' populations will be put increasingly at risk.

## 5. Impacts of the IKN on Local Communities

To study how the lives of current residents within the IKN development zone will be drastically transformed due to the new capital, it is essential to first understand the history of these communities who have resided in the area long before the capital was conceptualized. In the following analysis, four focus group discussions, conducted by Drs. Walker DePuy and Wendy Erb, in the villages of Pemaluan and Mentawir, illuminate residents' hopes and concerns regarding land rights, economic development, and heritage preservation in the context of Nusantara.

### 5.1. Land

As described earlier, the development of the IKN will change who owns land within the region and how it will be used, which directly impacts existing residents' livelihoods. Focus group participants detailed how their land represents more than just property, acting not just as primary sources of income for families but also as places of heritage that hold immense cultural value. One member from the focus group of Mentawir men shared:

“What is clear is that if our agricultural land is taken, even if it is appropriately exchanged for money, let’s say. However, we, for example, look for a new location, then we start from zero again... For example, if I have 4 hectares of oil palm. It was already producing. Then it’s taken, exchanged for money, it’s called. But, if I open another piece of land, it’s not necessarily enough to succeed. It takes a long time. 4 years, 3-4 years, sir. If it’s only 1 billion, it will run out in half a month.”

While financial compensation might be perceived as an appropriate exchange for governmental acquisition of the current residents’ agricultural land, this resident explains how even 1 billion rupiahs would be insufficient funding for the long-term drawbacks of rebuilding land for agricultural production. The disruption of land being harnessed for ongoing, viable agricultural production is a serious blow to important sources of income for villages, with this sentiment echoed by a woman in Pemaluan: “But for women who farm, farming is decreasing because a lot of land is being taken.”

What’s more, focus group participants have expressed their desire to retain their land ownership, despite external pressure to relocate elsewhere. Among the women in the Pemaluan focus group, one indigenous participant stated:

“What I mean is, we as a community ask that, if possible, we not be removed from Pemaluan...That the indigenous people remain here, that’s all I ask. Many people here are selling land, right, meaning that we want to be discarded, right? While if we can keep our territory, that’s all I want. Because we are the indigenous people here.”

Similarly, another woman worried that “...if [relocating] indeed happens, we don’t know where we should move to. Because [Pemaluan] is the place where our ancestors were first born.” Community members’ deep ties to the land, rooted in the history of generations who lived on and cultivated the

land before them, demonstrate the persistence of a collective memory for the native Pemaluan village members.

Moreover, when practices are being limited by the reduction of available land, including the farming ritual of the besoyong mantra (Umasangaji et al., 2022), and further suppressed by governmental regulations in the case of swidden agriculture, which involves burning, this persistence turns into resistance. One man from Mentawir explained how regulations against the traditional practice of swidden agriculture are making farming more difficult:

“To add something else. Now there are government regulations. Because our tradition is to burn, sir. Every time we clear the land, we burn it. And also, we understand the tricks of burning. But there are regulations from the government that we cannot burn, there cannot be smoke, and so on additionally. We can’t farm like that, sir.”

Therefore, the impact of the IKN on local communities’ land pertains not only to issues of land ownership, but also cascading effects of relocation on their economic opportunities and heritage preservation.

## 5.2. Economy

As a result of the IKN, there have been new economic opportunities available to native Kalimantan residents, which have led to positive outcomes as well as alarming criticisms. First, Pemaluan men and women shared in focus group discussions about the benefits of IKN development on the local economy. The women agreed that the short-term impact on business has been “quite good” so far and a man from the village observed how the IKN has immediately helped with unemployment issues:

“First of all, our children here are no longer unemployed. With the construction of the IKN, our children have now started being able to work. That’s a positive impact that can already be seen.”

On the other hand, there are concerns that the influx of migrants from islands, especially Java, will threaten the economic opportunities available to these residents. While this potential problem has not gone unnoticed by the government, the training that has been provided to residents is not well systemized or long-term, poorly preparing the Sepaku sub-district to “compete with migrants who have more potential and mature preparation in education and experience” (Susmiyati et al., 2023, p. 159). One focus group member among the Pemaluan women described the lack of reach for certain job training areas, such as around small business, which “rarely reaches women.” In contrast, another woman voiced an astute observation about land conversion’s impact on agricultural job opportunities: “Later, we think, if we no longer work for the company and want to return to farming, our land won’t be there either.” This point highlights the potentially large-scale, irreversible changes that the IKN will bring to the land and people’s connected livelihoods. Indeed, these changes have already begun to impact Mentawir, where a woman raised concerns about the lack of fish in the area compared to pre-IKN development: “In the past, after a short while looking for fish, you would get one. Nowadays, sometimes the men look for fish for a whole night so we can eat, and there aren’t any.” This is just the beginning—the livelihoods of coastal fishing-based communities by Balikpapan, a city in East Kalimantan, are also potentially threatened by the depletion of natural resources and ecological damage due to the IKN’s expansion (Nurjaman & Rusata, 2023).

To adapt to the changing circumstances introduced by the IKN, there are also other economic opportunities that locals have been interested in and are developing, such as tourism. In hopes of avoiding eviction, Pemaluan community members have discussed the possibility of turning their village into a tourist destination through the beauty of their natural surroundings:

“But maybe hopefully...it will help us to fix up Pemaluan by launching a “flower village” [program], a “fruit village” [program], a water pipeline system. Hopefully that can keep us here so that we don't get evicted by the construction of the IKN. Hopefully our village can become a model village, a tourist village like that, right?”

This is a primary example of how “the expansion of tourism and travel-oriented campaigns in the [Indonesian] archipelago... has also subtly reconfigured the ways in which local groups imagine themselves and their relationship to the nation” (Adams, 2018, p. 197). This sentiment of sharing local culture to national, or even international, audiences was also shared by another Paser community in a study conducted before the “Zero Point” celebration of Nusantara in 2022, where they “[had] very high hopes for performing the Paser cultural dance in front of state officials who come to visit at Zero Point” (Umasangaji et al., 2022). By anticipating the mass arrival of migrants to the IKN, the Pemaluan village members are attempting to reconfigure their identity to fit into the new national vision of the capital to ensure their survival and mitigate their displacement.

### 5.3. Paser and Balik

Commonly, the indigenous people of Borneo are referred to by the umbrella term, “Dayak,” though the label previously held a negative connotation of “contemptuous signification,” having a meaning similar to a “backwoodsman” (Schärer, 1963, p. 1). In East Kalimantan, there have been indigenous communities identified as native residents of the region as early as the 1800s. In fact, within the IKN development zone, dozens of those communities will be critically impacted by the capital relocation, such as the Paser and Balik peoples (Umasangaji et al., 2022). An example of these communities' early documentation can be found in *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries*, published in 1856, where the location “Pasir” is input as a term. The definition details a state on eastern Borneo where “several tribes of Dayaks” lived:

**PASIR**, probably Tanak-pasir, “sand-land,” is the name of a Malay state on the eastern side of Borneo, or that which fronts the south-western peninsula of Celebes. The principal town lying on a river, navigable only for small craft, the mouth of which is in south latitude  $1^{\circ} 44'$  and east longitude  $116^{\circ} 26' 30''$ , is about 45 miles up this stream. It was described to me in 1824, as containing about 400 native houses, but the banks of the river, along its whole course, as many as 4000; which, at the usual estimate, would give a total population of 20,000. The inhabitants consist of Malays; of Bugis settlers from Celebes, the most influential and enterprising part of the population; and of several tribes of Dayaks, or wild aborigines, the most numerous of which were described under the name of Madang. The products of this very rude and scantily-peopled tropical forest rather than country, consist of esculent swallows'-nests, bees'-wax, ratans, damar, and a little gold-dust, obtained from the wild inhabitants of the interior. The external trade is wholly conducted by the resident Bugis.

Figure 3. *Definition of the term “Pasir,” on p. 339*

The Balik people have also “resided in [the] Sepaku District region since [the] Dutch colonial area” (Goma et al., 2024, p. 68). In some cases, the Balik people are referred to as the Paser-Balik, indicating that they are a subgroup of the Paser people. This can be seen in its designation by the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago, where the “Paser Balik” tribe is listed as a part of 21 verified indigenous Indonesian communities (Umasangaji et al., 2022). Despite this label, the “members [of the Balik tribe] assert their distinction from Paser” (Goma et al., 2024, p. 68). With longstanding roots in the region, there is no doubt that Nusantara will fundamentally reshape the Paser and Balik way of life.

For instance, a major ongoing shift is occurring within the Paser and Balik languages, which reflects changes in Indonesian society that are subsequently influencing their culture. Language is more than just a form of communication; it symbolizes the “in-depth social and cultural standards, values, lifestyle, signs, symbols and directions related to a particular culture to reveal a separate cultural identity” (Parajuli, 2021, p.117). Padmani Perez, a scholar who conducted fieldwork with the indigenous Ngaju peoples of Baun Bango in Central Kalimantan, described how language is key to the indigenous identity:

“‘Time immemorial’ is usually invoked through stories and genealogies that have been passed on orally from generation to generation. These narratives are almost always tied to the

landscape. They tell us of how the ancestors altered the landscape, witnessed alterations in it, or are buried in it” (Perez, 2018, p.40).

This information, orally transmitted through language, vocabulary, and wisdom, is passed down through generations to powerfully sustain heritage. But with the introduction of the IKN, there will be concerning effects that the new capital could have on Paser and Balik culture through the acceleration of minority language erosion. Scholars have drawn attention to difficulties that arise with “...the retention of the minority language by its speakers when it is in constant contact with a majority language,” which is directly applicable to Indonesia (Alyami, 2023, p. 24). Namely, in Java, there has been an identification of a language shift away from the island’s heritage language of Krama to Bahasa Indonesia, with scholar Winarti believing that Krama is threatened with potential erasure in the future (Winarti, 2018, p. 299). In Kalimantan, increasingly frequent interaction with migrants who speak Indonesian could also pose greater challenges to indigenous languages. For example, the increase in Javanese migrants to East Kalimantan has already influenced “noticeable changes in grammar” in the Balik language. One Balik community member from the Sepaku District noted:

“The native Balik language is starting to falter due to the interactions with the Javanese. With the influx of other groups like the Bugis and Banjar, our language has begun to blend. Sometimes, the original language starts to vanish as we increasingly use Indonesian” (Goma et al., 2024, p 72).

This may have lasting effects on how Paser and Balik culture is memorialized, especially in a world where Nusantara commands Indonesia from the permanently altered landscape of East Kalimantan. For future generations, “the way indigenous children today learn, acquire, and articulate their identity will be very different from the ways in which their ancestors came to call themselves indigenous...” (Perez, 2018, p. 47).

## 6. Conclusion

The Indonesian capital relocation from Jakarta, Java to East Kalimantan, Borneo will undoubtedly reshape the environment, economy, and way of life for Indonesian citizens, especially those who currently live within the new capital's boundaries in North Penajam Paser Regency and Kutai Kartanegara Regency, which include the indigenous Paser and Balik peoples. Demonstrated through thorough literature review, archival research, and qualitative focus group discussion analysis, there are a number of controversies surrounding Nusantara, ranging from land rights and environmental concerns to economic changes and cultural preservation. As the capital progresses into its final form, the political, historical, and cultural context that shaped its development will, in turn, be fundamentally reshaped by it.

## 7. Areas of Future Research

The data collection for this literature review was conducted within a six-week period, so time was a constraint for the depth of research for this paper. However, this research is still ongoing and will continue to be extensively studied through summer 2025, where fieldwork will be conducted in East Kalimantan.

It is also important to note that the community focus group discussions were transcribed by native Indonesian speakers and then translated into English by the same Indonesian assistants with the help of Google Translate. This process leaves room for error through mistranscription and/or mistranslation.

As the IKN is cemented into reality, there are several facets of its impact on humans, animals, and the environment that should continue to be monitored and analyzed over the long-term. One such facet pertains to biocultural species that are important to Paser and Balik communities' (located in Pemaluan and Mentawir) ecology and culture. The list includes the Bornean gibbon, ashy tailorbird, Bornean yellow muntjac, and more. Many of these species are currently endangered or vulnerable,

according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and their populations will suffer from the development of the new capital within their natural habitats.

To deepen the understanding of human-environment relationships, further study on the impact of the IKN on these biocultural species' populations, health, and survival would prove beneficial to observing how changes in these species influence changes in the Paser and Balik. Would ancestral knowledge on these species, passed down from the pre-IKN generation, become lost or obsolete in a post-IKN context? If this knowledge were to be lost, how might that impact future Paser and Balik communities' beliefs, traditions, and interactions with the land and animals? Acoustically, if certain species were key contributors to the East Kalimantan soundscape, will their sound be forgotten—or replaced?

These questions are closely intertwined with the children's book project that I am working on in collaboration with our Paser and Balik community partners. Centered on preserving local knowledge on biocultural species and their acoustic contributions to soundscapes, this book is projected to be in print by summer 2025 and will serve as a useful tool in studying the transformation of East Kalimantan's ecology and retention of indigenous wisdom in Nusantara.

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