Unity in diversity: sculpting nusantara's city identity

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Article Info	Abstract
	This study examines the development of urban identity in Indonesia's new capital, IKN Nusantara, addressing challenges in environmental sustainability, Indigenous rights, and policy implementation. The research assesses how the city's planning reflects Indonesia's cultural and ecological diversity through a qualitative analysis of government reports, academic studies, and news articles. Findings identify three core themes—identity, mobility, and inclusivity—as critical to fostering collective belonging. The study concludes that integrating these elements through participatory governance can establish Nusantara as a model of sustainable urbanism, recommending that the IKN Authority adopt proactive branding strategies to address equity concerns.

INTRODUCTION

The announcement that a country intends to construct a new national capital—a world-class city serving as a global superhub, all modern by international standards and featuring effective and efficient governance—was a sensational news story around the world. Based on the original schedule, the inauguration and showcase of Nusantara (IKN) as Indonesia's new capital city are scheduled for the first half of 2024 (Salya, 2022, p. 151), coinciding with Indonesia's national day celebrations in August (Berawi, 2022, p. 690). However, disseminating information on the new capital's development programs is not a continuous and intensive process (Waluyo & Syarifuddin, 2022, p. 7). Although Nusantara is the leading public issue in 2022, as the relocation project is audacious, ambitious, and controversial, the positioning of the new state capital remains unclear in the minds of the Indonesian people. The unstable state will be speculative in the midst of many urban areas worldwide that are developing branding strategies by building strong competitive identities (Acuti, Mazzoli, Donvito, & Chan, 2018, p. 186), concerning the

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growing competition among cities due to globalisation.

Indonesians have several key considerations underlying the decision to relocate the country's capital city from Jakarta to East Kalimantan. The discussion centres on the selection criteria, with some concerns about the impact on Indigenous communities and the environment, as well as whether Nusantara will eventually evolve into a diversified metropolis that values local culture and bridges the gap between native-born individuals and immigrants (Salya, 2022, p. 152). People also considered the government's invitation for citizens to utilise crowdsourcing in contributing to the development of the state capital (Septiani, Anggraeni, & Saraswati, 2022, p. 246).

The discussion and intention to relocate the nation's capital have been ongoing in Indonesia for a long time, dating back to Soekarno's presidency (Baniargi, Larasati, & Yuniningsih, 2022, p. 27400; Mustaqim, 2022). The government's social attention gap between Java and the rest of Indonesia has repeatedly created friction and misperceptions. Javanese centrality (Java-centricity) triggered some physical rebellions, hampering Indonesia's negative regional growth and equity (Salya, 2022, p. 152). Hence, President Joko Widodo (popularly known as Jokowi) sought to provide an Indonesia-centric, rather than a Java-centric, equitable development (Mustaqim, 2022).

The authorities expect the decision to close the capital city to eastern Indonesia to reduce tensions. Social justice is the foundation of capital relocation development and a milestone in accelerating uniform and equitable development in Indonesia. Not only symbolically centralising the government, but Nusantara's establishment also extends the power of true diversity in realising sustainable development in Indonesia, creating a new capital city that reflects national identity within a social context.

The city's development will incorporate the cultural values that have evolved throughout the archipelago, while also respecting the environment, history, and culture of the people of Kalimantan. The name "Nusantara" reflects the country's identity as an archipelagic state, as it means "archipelago." It originates from the Old Javanese words 'Nusa', meaning 'island', and 'antara', meaning 'outer'. From the Java Island perspective, the approximate translation is "the outer islands." The authorities chose East Kalimantan as the site for the IKN. They named the state capital "Nusantara" to represent Indonesia's archipelagic vision, known as "Wawasan Nusantara," which embodies the country's rich diversity. Being widely recognised for a long time and easily introduced, the city's name would become iconic internationally, reflecting Indonesia's geographical and cultural

diversity. The capital's name is 'Nusantara,' which reflects the spirit of solid unity despite diverse cultures, languages, and religions.

Nusantara represents the richness of Indonesia's diverse heritage as a unitary concept. Its location on the east coast of Borneo, the world's third-largest island, enables it to embody this reality. The government strategically located the state capital city in the administrative areas of North Penajam Paser (PPU) Regency and Kutai Kartanegara (Kukar) Regency in East Kalimantan Province. The location has high accessibility, as it is close to Balikpapan and Samarinda, the two major cities (Baniargi et al., 2022, p. 27403), and has an average distance of approximately 893 km to all provinces in Indonesia.

The three main objectives of Nusantara's vision are to create a city that embodies a nation's identity, social character, unity, and greatness. Due to that, Nusantara brings hope that Indonesia will have a state capital city development as a symbol that represents the national identity, mirroring the 1945 Constitution, an appreciation of Pancasila values, and diversity (Berawi, 2022). Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency estimates that Nusantara's population will be 1.9 million by 2045. As a superhub that combines the concept of national identity, Nusantara will shift its development focus to be more Indonesian-centric.

From a communication perspective, Nusantara's identity-building process exemplifies the interplay of symbolic narratives, participatory discourse, and mediated representations. The principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika ("Unity in Diversity") functions not merely as a political slogan but as a communicative framework that negotiates Indonesia's pluralism through shared symbols (e.g., the Garuda Pancasila emblem) and inclusive policymaking.

For instance, Takariani, Sari, and Dirgahayu (2023) emphasise that Nusantara's branding must adopt strategic communication models to reconcile top-down state narratives with grassroots cultural expressions, particularly through digital platforms. Similarly, Hairunnisa and Syaka's (2022) analysis of political communication in East Kalimantan highlights how participatory dialogues with Indigenous communities can mitigate tensions over land rights and cultural preservation.

However, as Mustaqim (2022) notes, the rhetorical construction of Nusantara as an "Indonesia-centric" capital risks perpetuating Java-centric biases if communication strategies fail to decentralise power structures. Herwindo, Murtiningsih, and Juliadi (2023) further demonstrate this tension through their study of Twitter discourse, where netizens criticised the government's "one-way communication" about relocation, arguing it

sidelined local voices. These findings underscore the need for multimodal communication—integrating oral traditions, social media, and policy consultations—to ensure Bhinneka Tunggal Ika translates into equitable urban identity formation.

Indonesians are raising many pros and cons about the nation's capital city's relocation to Nusantara (Baniargi, Larasati, & Yuniningsih, 2022; Herwindo, Murtiningsih, & Juliadi, 2023, p. 113; Waluyo & Syarifuddin, 2022, p. 3), and some even generated hoax issues (Takariani et al., 2023). At the same time, for capital relocation, some scholars have already done studies on technological innovations (Berawi, 2022), environmental impact (Adinugroho, Prasetyo, Kusmana, & Krisnawati, 2022), successful conditions (Herdiana, 2020), strategic intelligence (Salya, 2022), as well as prospects and challenges (Nugroho & Adrianto, 2022).

Meanwhile, no research has started to focus on Nusantara's city branding. Thus, the study's objective addresses the 'city branding' flaw in recent studies on the proposed capital city. While existing studies on city branding predominantly analyze established urban centers in Europe and North America (Acuti et al., 2018; Kalandides, 2012), Nusantara presents a unique case of nation-building through urban design, where urban planners prioritize inclusivity and national identity from the outset. Unlike Brasília or Canberra, which primarily focused on architectural symbolism, Nusantara integrates Bhinneka Tunggal Ika into its mobility and governance frameworks—a novel approach underexplored in post-colonial capital cities (Takariani et al., 2023). This study fills this gap by examining how a new capital's branding can simultaneously address equity, ecological sustainability, and cultural pluralism, offering a model for urbanism in the Global South.

Furthermore, while prior studies on Nusantara have examined technological innovations (Berawi, 2022), environmental impacts (Adinugroho et al., 2022), and governance challenges (Nugroho & Adrianto, 2022), no work has yet applied a communication lens to analyse how Bhinneka Tunggal Ika shapes urban identity in a nascent capital city. Unlike generic city branding frameworks (Acuti et al., 2018), the study approach centres on participatory communication as a mechanism to reconcile national unity rhetoric with Indigenous land rights (Hairunnisa & Syaka, 2022), offering a novel model for postcolonial capital cities grappling with diversity.

The study attempted to explain how Nusantara reflects and represents the national identity in the early stages of city branding. Although it is still too early to assess its

reputation, the study approach provides an overview of the new capital city's identity, image, and branding. Accordingly, this study aims to establish a distinct city identity and image for the new state capital city. The study examines how the strategic communication approach views the early stages of a nation's capital, yet its approach to place branding has yet to find practical application. The concept of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika transcends mere political rhetoric; it operates as a symbolic communication framework that negotiates Indonesia's diversity through shared linguistic practices, specifically Bahasa Indonesia, and participatory policy-making. However, as Nusantara's branding evolves, media narratives risk centralising Java-centric discourses unless balanced by inclusive communication strategies that integrate Indigenous voices. This study adopts an intercultural communication lens to analyse how Nusantara's identity is both constructed through top-down narratives and contested in grassroots dialogues, reflecting the tension between unity and diversity in urban branding.

This study aimed to dig deeper into its city implementation. As the relevant communication strategy maker, it would be helpful for the Communication Department of the IKN Authority to have clear steps and suggestions for making more informed decisions by interpreting the city's image and developing and implementing city branding initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

City Identity

Identity is the core concept of a place, and the multifaceted idea of place identity (Kalandides, 2012) is a common theme. It is considered a distinctive feature of any place; place identity is distinct from the brand identity of a product, service, or organization. Klage (1991) defines city identity similarly to corporate identity as "the sum of its characteristic features and activities that differentiate it from other entities" (Acuti et al., 2018, p. 189). Recalling Läpple's (1991, pp. 196–197) idea, the place has four essential characteristics that constitute a complete classification (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015, pp. 1373–1374).

The first element, materiality, refers to the material-physical substrate as the material external form of social space. The substrate comprises both place-bounded artifacts and the human body. It also functions as a crystallised history and materialises collective memory. Secondly, practices that constitute the place are social interaction structures related to the material substrate. The practices include producing, using, and appropriating materiality, as

well as differentiating class and other divisions. Thirdly, institutions refer to a standardised and normative regulatory system as the mediator between the material substrate of social space and the social practice of its production, appropriation, and use. This regulatory system encompasses various forms of property, power, and control relations, as well as legal regulations, planning guidelines, and social and aesthetic norms. The fourth element is representation. These are the spatial systems "of signs, symbols, and representations linked to the material substrate" (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015, pp. 1373–1374). These include the formal conceptions of place, such as place names, maps, and plans, and extend to all structures and elements that intentionally convey meaning related to the place.
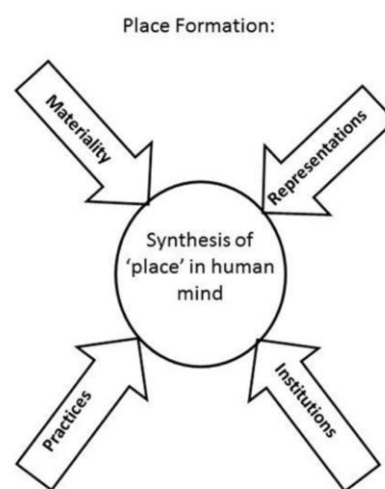
Place Formation:

Figure 1: Constituents of a Place
(Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015)

Nusantara's city identity reflects national identity, particularly by embodying the principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, which emphasises unity in diversity. While Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) emphasise materiality and representation, national capital projects like Nusantara require an additional layer: symbolic alignment with constitutional values. For instance, Mustaqim (2022) argues that Nusantara's branding as an "Indonesia-centric" capital is a rhetorical strategy to decentralise Java-centric power structures, reflecting the Pancasila ideal of equitable development. Herwindo et al. (2023) further demonstrate how public scepticism about relocation on Twitter underscores the need for inclusive communication to reconcile top-down narratives with grassroots concerns.

City Branding

City branding, as a subfield of place branding (Acuti et al., 2018, p. 186), is a tactic that can influence how people perceive a place—a spatial unit—and its representations, including symbols and artefacts (Kalandides, 2012, p. 3). In city branding, the identity and

image of a particular destination play a crucial role in making a city unique among its alternatives.

City branding is identity-driven, and the concepts of identity and image are central to it (Boisen, Terlouw, Groote, & Couwenberg, 2018, p. 7). Lu et al. (2017) defined city branding strategy as conveying the brand or symbolic essence of a nation, region, or city to target audiences to enhance one's fame and reputation, or to obtain a strategic gain. City branding is identity-driven. It should represent an inside-out approach to expressing selected values and narratives of the place in question (Boisen et al., 2018, p. 7). The city should have a well-defined identity and image to do that. City branding in Nusantara is not merely a place promotion; it is a nation-building project that operationalizes Bhinneka Tunggal Ika through urban design. Similar to Gulf states like Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which leveraged free economic zones and knowledge hubs to transition toward post-oil economies, Nusantara's branding must strategically integrate industrial diversification with environmental stewardship to attract global investment and foster innovation (De Jong, Hoppe, & Noori, 2019, p. 2).

Takariani et al. (2023) suggest that Nusantara's branding should adopt strategic communication models to balance state narratives (e.g., "sustainable capital"), potentially incorporating Indigenous cultural expressions, such as Dayak oral traditions. This dual approach aligns with Hairunnisa and Syaka's (2022) findings on participatory governance in East Kalimantan, where involving local communities in policymaking has helped mitigate land rights conflicts and strengthen collective identity. Thus, Nusantara's branding is not just about attracting investment, but also about embodying Indonesia's constitutional ethos through inclusive spatial practices. Nusantara's branding is not just about attracting investment, but also about embodying Indonesia's constitutional ethos through inclusive spatial practices. As Ma, de Jong, Hoppe, and de Bruijne (2021) emphasize, city branding transcends economic objectives, functioning as a strategic and participatory governance tool that demands sustained collaboration between policymakers, stakeholders, and citizens to drive transformative urban change (p. 4). Keskin, Akgun, Zehir, and Ayar (2016) emphasize that storytelling bridges the gap between internal governance priorities and external perceptions, creating a cohesive bond between policymakers and citizens through shared narratives (p. 31). Additionally, Kasapi and Cela (2017) note that city branding serves dual objectives: fostering competitive advantage for economic growth while reinforcing local identity and community cohesion (p. 137).

Traditional city branding frameworks emphasise economic competitiveness and tourism (Boisen et al., 2018). However, Nusantara's context necessitates a nation-building lens that reconciles Java-centric historical biases (Mustaqim, 2022) with Indigenous land rights (Hairunnisa & Syaka, 2022). Such an approach aligns with Pedeliento and Kavaratzis' (2019) call for participatory place branding, yet extends it by prioritising constitutional values like Bhinneka Tunggal Ika over market-driven goals—a departure from conventional models.

National Identity and City Branding

The development of Nusantara as a new capital represents a deliberate reimagining of Indonesian identity through urban form. Unlike Jakarta, which inherited colonial spatial hierarchies, Nusantara's planners explicitly link its design to the 1945 Constitution's mandate for equitable development. Berawi (2022) notes that the "World Class City for All" vision aims to materialise Pancasila's social justice principle by prioritising green infrastructure and universal accessibility. However, as Zulaikha, Maella, and Farida (2022) caution, such projects risk tokenism unless branding strategies integrate marginalised voices. For example, the government's "10-minute city" concept, while promoting walkability, must address displacement fears raised by Indigenous communities (Adinugroho et al., 2022). As observed in Dubai's Masdar City, top-down sustainability branding often risks overshadowing grassroots participation, a tension Nusantara must mitigate by embedding Indigenous communities in policymaking to ensure fidelity between rhetoric and practice (De Jong et al., 2019, p. 2).

Thus, Nusantara's branding is inherently political, serving as both a spatial and symbolic corrective to Indonesia's developmental asymmetries. Unlike top-down promotional campaigns, effective city branding, as Ma et al. (2021) argue, necessitates active stakeholder co-creation, particularly from Indigenous communities, to ensure policies reflect grassroots realities rather than centralized narratives (p. 3). Keskin et al. (2016) argue that a city's core story must harmonize its aspirational identity with grassroots community experiences—a balance critical for Nusantara to transcend Java-centric historical legacies (p. 35). Furthermore, unlike corporate branding, city branding faces unique challenges in reconciling diverse identities; as Kasapi and Cela (2017) observe, projecting a unified identity in urban contexts is often fraught with complexity due to competing stakeholder interests (p. 137).

METHODS

Given the significance of city branding management, which has been enhanced by practitioners and academics, this research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to identify and interpret a city's identity as the core of its branding. The study utilises a structured literature review methodology, adhering to the framework for knowledge synthesis. Source selection criteria were rigorously applied: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus or Sinta with relevance to city identity, capital relocation, or Indonesian multiculturalism; (2) government policy documents (e.g., UU IKN 2022, Bappenas reports) directly addressing Nusantara's development; (3) news articles from reputable Indonesian outlets (Kompas, Tempo) published between 2020-2023; and (4) theoretical works on place branding published post-2015 to ensure contemporary relevance. This quadripartite criterion ensured disciplinary breadth while maintaining focus on Nusantara's unique context.

Data collection involved three-phase document retrieval: first, keyword searches ("Nusantara city identity," "IKN branding") across academic databases; second, snowball sampling from reference lists of key papers like Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015), Herwindo et al. (2023), and Takariani et al. (2023); third, manual curation of government publications from the IKN Authority portal.

For data analysis, the study adopted a thematic analysis framework. After initial open coding of source materials, axial coding grouped emerging patterns into three a priori themes aligned with Kavaratzis and Kalandides' (2015) place identity model: materiality, practices, and representations. Subthemes such as "walkability as social equity" and "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika in city design" were developed iteratively through constant comparison across different data types. The study achieved triangulation by juxtaposing policy rhetoric (e.g., UU IKN's inclusivity clauses) with media narratives, as analyzed by Herwindo et al. (2023) on Twitter, and academic critiques (Mustaqim, 2022). This abductive approach enabled the reconciliation of theoretical constructs with empirical observations of Nusantara's evolving identity discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sculpting Nusantara's Identity: "Unity in Diversity"

The recent relocation of the capital city from Java to Kalimantan signifies a significant shift in urban development as a new city emerges in the region. The newly erected city

sign symbolises the revitalisation of the capital city, embodying the dynamic political landscape and the emergence of a contemporary hub for human activity. The archipelago's capital, Jakarta, which serves as the hub of the Indonesian government, has emerged as a representation of the intricate nature of politics and public discourse. Nusantara is a municipality characterised by its autonomous nature and comprehensive ecological system.

However, as Kalandides (2012) suggested, Nusantara's identity tries to put humans at the centre of defining a city's identity. The definition explores how people can create social products that reflect the city's identity, thereby achieving unity in diversity. In many ways, a location reveals its distinct identity through its infrastructure, architecture, city amenities, and sentimental ties to the local population, culture, politics, and economy. Firstly, the materiality of Nusantara constructs the city's identity. Nusantara's infrastructure, architecture, and facilities are the result of creating social space.

The material external form of the new capital city is the realisation of the fulfillment of citizens' rights, such as the creation of a public space where every citizen of the town with various social backgrounds can participate in planning for the development, as well as the construction imbued with a plurality and egalitarian spirit (Nugoho, 2023, p. 6). This material-physical substrate aligns with Kavaratzis and Kalandrides' (2015) conceptualisation of materiality as the crystallised history of social space. The prioritisation of egalitarian infrastructure, such as walkable green spaces and mixed-use zones, embodies their assertion that materiality mediates collective memory. However, as Pedeliento and Kavaratzis (2019) caution, top-down material interventions risk overshadowing grassroots spatial practices unless paired with participatory design approaches. The "10-minute City" model, while innovative, must reconcile its modernist aesthetics with Indigenous land-use traditions to avoid replicating Jakarta's exclusionary urbanism. While prioritizing the fulfillment of fundamental citizen rights can increase a sense of concern for all life processes in the city, it can also foster a sense of nationalism. Ultimately, the city will become a safe and resilient city that can protect all citizens (Itriyati, 2023, p. 428).

The new city's development prioritises the rights of its citizens. Ensuring these rights is essential for allowing individuals to freely access the city's various resources (Nugoho, 2023, p. 5). Following the geographical conditions, people should have access to roads, bridges, water supply, sanitation, housing, and other essential services (Berawi,

2022, p. 691). The conditions impact the life structure of people living in areas with such natural features, affecting communication, social, cultural, and economic sectors.

People should be able to connect social interaction through the infrastructure at each social spot, which has developed into several zones that span across the city core area in North Penajam, where the location of the capital city is precise, and in the hinterland areas in the surrounding regencies with direct borders, namely Kutai Kartanegara Regency, Kutai Barat Regency, and Balikpapan City (Adinugroho et al., 2022, p. 2). Residents will connect and see how the city can genuinely become livable and humane through its physical development, and will consider how the city's materiality promotes cohesiveness among its citizens and fosters interactions between them.

People's walkability by the facilities in the K-IKN area, an expansion area surrounding the Central Government Core Area (KIPP), sustains social interaction across the integrated area consisting of office areas, residential areas for employees, economic areas, industrial areas, sports and green park areas for recreation, and other facilities (Baniargi et al., 2022, p. 27404), an adaptive concept for the times (Salya, 2022, p. 151), through a smart city in which the architecture concept of Nusantara is biomimicry architecture.

The material-physical substrate of social relations in a city can serve as a crystallized history, materializing collective memory (Kalandides, 2012). As a new city is "supposed to be built," the excellent infrastructure is expected to shape a collective memory (Akhari & Abad, 2015, p. 967). People will remember Nusantara as Indonesia's milestone, a superhub that will become a world-class benchmark for a sustainable city and a transformative chapter in its history.

The second element is practice. Citizens would utilise many renewable resources, from green energy to urban air mobility, and live in a city that has the potential to be carbon neutral, absorbing more CO_2 than it emits. Citizens would fulfil their future needs and improve their quality of life by maintaining the ongoing viability of resources and ensuring a sustainable approach. The city could utilise natural resources more efficiently, make public transportation more attractive, and provide data to decision-makers for the appropriate allocation of resources by establishing a smart city.

The well-being of societies, particularly in the context of the new model of social growth and urban challenges, depends on the significant role of technological development and innovation in creating a more modern and sustainable capital city. The city's master plan, One Map, One Planning, and One Policy (1 MPP), would focus on innovation and

creating an ecosystem that reflects the structure of social interactions, as represented by advancements in citizens' quality of life, utilising the most recent state-of-the-art technology. Citizens with disabilities and special needs utilise mobility services, including autonomous and electric vehicles, as a mode of public transportation (Berawi, 2022, p. 690).

The third element is the standardised and normative regulatory system that supports the second city principle in the eight principles of Nusantara development. According to the legal basis of Law Number 3 of 2022 on Capital City (UU IKN) Chapter IV (Yosita, Nurcahya, & Mardiana, 2022), the Basic Principles of Social Development of Nusantara acknowledge the diversity of communities, both residents and newcomers. While UU IKN's inclusivity clauses align with Kalandides' (2012) institutional regulatory systems, Mustaqim (2022) critiques their Java-centric rhetorical framing. This tension mirrors a scholar's analysis of Brasília, where constitutional ideals clashed with on-the-ground marginalisation. To avoid tokenism, Nusantara's institutions must integrate Dayak adat councils into policymaking, as Hairunnisa and Syaka (2022) advocate in their participatory governance model. Since the second of eight principles, development is inclusive of all people. The city's development policy prioritises social and cultural issues in East Kalimantan, including preserving the social and cultural values of the local community while valuing and embracing local wisdom.

The community integration of locals and newcomers with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds will foster a commitment to Pancasila and the principle of "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (unity in diversity). The nearby communities may benefit from Nusantara's growth in urban planning and development. It will contribute to the Nusantara by integrating communication activities, economic development, and spatial strategies, thereby providing benefits to both the existing community and those that will emerge after the Nusantara is established (Hariati & Saputri, 2022, p. 22). This city's identity element supports the PPU Regency's vision to empower the people of North Penajam Paser Regency to achieve prosperity, qualification, and independence in a peaceful, just, and religious life. Consequently, the government needs to establish a universal moral framework to prevent social conflicts from arising due to moral ambiguity (Nugoho, 2023, p. 6).

The fourth is a spatial system of signs, symbols, and representations. Ground Zero (Indonesian: 'Titik Nol') as the public space, a sign in the form of a circle design with the sign "Nusantara's Ground Zero Point" (Indonesian: Titik Nol Nusantara) and a forest

background, becomes the administrative center of the new capital city. The authority built the Ground Zero monument (Indonesian: Titik Nol). Education Town, and others, laid down the Nationality Axis (Indonesian: "Sumbu Kebangsaan") at the Presidential Palace. These symbolic artefacts function as fantasy themes in Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory, uniting stakeholders around a shared vision of "archipelagic unity." However, such representations risk reducing Bhinneka Tunggal Ika to aestheticised motifs unless paired with equitable resource distribution. The monument's success hinges on its fidelity to Indigenous spatial epistemologies, not just state-mandated iconography.

These elements then shape how people perceive the city's identity. The authorities remain committed to preserving the existing environment and local culture. Maintaining cultural diversity in the Nusantara region can yield positive benefits for the development of Nusantara. The authorities have pitched Nusantara as a model for inclusive and sustainable growth and transformation by utilising digital infrastructure and implementing a green economy.

Capital city relocation is not only about physically building a new city and relocating its location, but also about reorienting people's mindsets and establishing a new culture of living and governing among citizens, as the Indonesian president emphasised (Nugroho & Adrianto, 2022). This relocation notion aligns with Kalandides' (2012) concept of place (or city) identity. Humans are central to understanding the world and are the actors and beneficiaries of place development.

Nusantara's Promising "Inclusive Capital City"

Nusantara (IKN) will be built with the vision of a "World Class City for All," which has three main objectives: (1) being the most sustainable city in the world, (2) being a symbol of national identity, and (3) being an economic driver for Indonesia in the future. The new national capital aims to foster inclusivity, adopt innovative urban principles, and promote an environmentally friendly approach, while also encouraging private sector innovation and investment.

Eight principles guide the realisation of the "World Class City for All" objectives and serve as fundamental foundations. These principles include fulfilling food needs, ensuring air quality, enhancing quality of life, promoting accessibility, and creating economic opportunities. One of Nusantara's eight city principles refers to unity in diversity. There are eight principles stated for the development of the new capital: 1) designing according to natural conditions; 2) the value of unity in diversity; 3) connected-

active accessibility; 4) low carbon emissions; 5) circular and resilient; 6) safe and affordable; 7) comfortable and efficient living through technology; and 8) economic opportunities for all (Yosita et al., 2022, p. 189).

The eight principles of the new capital city projects provide a glimpse of Nusantara's aspirations by showcasing the Indonesian nation's national identity, socio-cultural character, unity, and greatness. Implementing a policy or program to integrate citizens and sojourners strengthens this idea. It is also an effort to change the construction paradigm to be Indonesia-centric, to construct the capital city, and to fulfil Golden Indonesia's goal by realising Indonesia's 2045 Vision by building with the notion of national identity. Indonesian-centricity has become a key indicator of the national identity pillar in city development. Hence, Nusantara combines the region's myriad differences in the social welfare dimensions of city performance by establishing a social foundation to enhance the equal distribution of people's well-being (Hairunnisa & Syaka, 2022, p. 1).

The Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) has defined the stages of the capital's relocation. As stated in the blueprint issued, it will go through four stages: (i) the relocating of the core administrative functions, including the President's office (2022-2024); (ii) the development of a solid or integrated capital city area (2025-2035); (iii) the development of the entire infrastructure and socio-economic ecosystem of the three cities (Banjarmasin, Balikpapan, and Nusantara) to accelerate the development of East Kalimantan (2035-2045); and finally establish and strengthen its reputation as the "World City for All" (Indonesian: "Kota Untuk Semua") (Nugroho & Adrianto, 2022, p. 5).

Involving the local community is crucial for ensuring the equitable distribution of economic benefits resulting from the development of the new capital. The involvement supports Pedeliento and Kavaratzis's (2019, p. 46) suggestion that establishing a branding strategy is crucial to recognise regional and situational factors appropriately. Its objectives are not merely a top-down endeavour but involve local stakeholders and the citizenry. The process combines place elements and place-based associations to form a place brand.

Once the identity of a place is recognised, it becomes a promise, an expectation, and an image. How a place is perceived can define its image. A strong image exists when a majority shares similar associations, whereas a positive image exists when those associations are perceived as favourable in a specific context (Boisen et al., 2018, p. 7). City branding is one of the city's efforts to project its image of values regionally and

globally (Satyagraha & Mahatmi, 2018). The relocation of the capital city to Nusantara builds a national identity and positions the national capital in the centre of the Indonesian map, which is Indonesia-centric. Kalandides (2012) explained that place image, in the form of reputation, is one of the elements of brand identity other than materiality, institutions (law, regulation, organisation), relations (power, class, gender), and society and culture (tradition, everyday life) (Zulaikha et al., 2022, p. 18).

Promise 1: "Connectivity"

Equipping civil servants with an understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of the local population is essential for early-stage residents to benefit from the city's development, as this knowledge is crucial (Hairunnisa & Syaka, 2022, p. 9). The development of an inclusive new city is an ideal aspiration where all citizens are involved and participate in the development process, including marginalised communities who are socially, politically, and economically marginalised, so that the city becomes a home for everyone, both immigrants and residents (Itriyati, 2023, p. 426).

The splendid public transportation (Berawi, 2022, p. 691) will be relevant to the mandate of "economic opportunity for all" by achieving equal access to modern urban facilities in the new capital. Smart Mobility and Transportation (mobility transformation) is a transit-based capital that prioritises the fast, efficient, and healthy movement of city residents, supported by 80% of public transportation, such as trains, buses, and public transit, a conducive climate for pedestrians, and the adoption of Smart Transport and Autonomous Systems. The emphasis on smart mobility reflects Boisen et al.'s (2018) identity-driven branding, where infrastructural practices signal a city's values to global audiences. However, Herwindo et al. (2023) reveal a disconnect between technocratic "smart city" narratives and public scepticism on social media, underscoring Fisher's narrative fidelity principle. For Nusantara's mobility policies to achieve coherence, they must address grassroots concerns about displacement, akin to the resistance observed in Brasília's modernist planning.

For the sustainability of an environmentally friendly city, transportation planning needs to be planned from the start and not planned later after the city and its population have overgrown, especially since a large number of investors will make predictions that the future population in the city will proliferate, not only residents of origin but also people who migrate as migrants (Yosita et al., 2022, p. 190).

Table 1. Principles of "Unity and Diversity" and KPIs of the Capital City of Nusantara in the Spatial Planning Strategy at Nusantara Expansion Region (KP-IKN)

Development Principle: Unity in Diversity	
Mobility and Connectivity: All layers and groups of people can access it by public transportation.	*Social*: Integration of local wisdom values and community livelihoods in the embodiment of space
Key Performance Indicator: 100% integration of local and immigrant residents	
Spatial Planning Strategy	
Mobility and connectivity: 1) Develop a road network that will provide access to all new activity centres and local residential areas 2) Develop transportation nodes for rail and road-based public transportation within the Nusantara Capital Region (K-IKN) and Nusantara Expansion Region (KP-IKN) areas. 3) The development of rail and road-based public transportation within the Nusantara Capital Region (K-IKN) and the Nusantara Expansion Region (KP-IKN), along with their feeder transport systems, aims to enhance connectivity and accessibility throughout the area. 4) Develop areas around transit nodes with inclusive principles.	*Social:* 1) Provide space to accommodate local cultures by developing cultural centres, traditional halls, museums, or monuments. 2) Using style, vernacular architecture, or symbols traditionally fitting with customary territory 3) Using toponymy (the naming of geographical features) reflects wisdom in the selection of street names, village names, locations of important buildings, public open spaces, and other features. 4) Identify and guarantee the existence of a customary legal society. 5) Integrate existing settlements into planning rooms. 6) Promote strong integration of locations that possess cultural values, knowledge, and a rich history by developing a comprehensive area plan.

Source: Presidential Decree Number 63 of 2022 on Capital City (UU IKN), Chapter IV (Yosita et al., 2022)

Furthermore, the population's openness and equal access to information make the city heterogeneous, with a high number of migrants. The city would foster social cohesion and humanistic interactions among residents, which is essential for its heterogeneous population structure, allowing for cultural integration and conducive commerce. The sociological approach to urban space influences how people perceive life and their community, taking into account the diverse social backgrounds of individuals, thereby preventing the reproduction of stigma, stereotypes, segregation, and prejudice that have previously affected the way people view one another (Itriyati, 2023, p. 427). As many

societal levels embrace relocating the capital city, the new capital will feature predominantly Indonesian-centric local activities. The existing community structure in Central and East Kalimantan provinces is quite heterogeneous and diverse due to the mixing and social integration between the indigenous and immigrant populations. Cultural acculturation has occurred through various cultural processes, social interactions, and population migration, forming substantial ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism. This process cultivates a 'local genius' that enables the people of Borneo to more easily respond to and accept outside cultures, allowing them to coexist with other tribes. Integrating locals and immigrants would add social and cultural diversity to the residents (Baniargi et al., 2022, p. 27405).

Integration is a multifaceted process in which immigrants assimilate into society both as individuals and as cohesive social units. The process entails reciprocal adjustment between migrants and the host society. The objective of integration is to achieve complete integration of residents, encompassing both local inhabitants and immigrants, facilitated by promoting mobility, connectivity, and social inclusion. The commitment implies that every individual residing within a given community should have equitable access to various services, amenities, and opportunities, regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics. Achieving this objective requires the active participation of multiple stakeholders, including immigrants themselves, the host government, institutions, and local communities. The integration process entails reciprocal transformation, in which both immigrants and the host society change. Enabling full societal participation for all people is intricate and continuous, necessitating persistent endeavours.

Promise 2: "Walkability"

In "Ten-Minute City," citizens can reach destinations by moving from one point or area to another and accessing all community core services, green recreational sites, and public and social facilities. Citizens' daily needs would be met in an acceptable amount of time and effort, such as walking comfortably within a 10-minute stroll or riding public transit in the green metropolis. A duration of 5 to 10 minutes is required to cover a convenient walking distance of 365 to 610 meters (Khabiri, Pourjafar, & Izadi, 2020, p. 60). The city aims for 80 percent of the population to use autonomous vehicles and public transport hubs for environmentally friendly transportation. Urban planners prioritise pedestrians, recognising that facilitating their movement in urban spaces enhances social

quality and transforms areas into walk-oriented environments (Akhari & Abad, 2015, p. 954). Cyclists and public transportation commuters also receive priority.

A well-designed layout for local services and amenities, with locations within walkable distances, and the creation of high-quality pedestrian spaces with adequate lighting, fosters a sense of safety among users. The enjoyable experience of walking in the pathways by building green spaces demonstrates that walkability encompasses proximity, safety, and environmental desirability, which enhances citizens' visual delight. Regular cleaning would further strengthen neighbourhood attachment. This positive psychological bond encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects, offering benefits for both the individual and the community, including social capital, residential stability, and social unity (Khabiri et al., 2020, p. 67).

Table 2: Principles of "Unity and Diversity" and KPIs of the Capital City of Nusantara in the Spatial Planning Strategy at Nusantara Expansion Region (KP-IKN)

Development Principle: Unity in Diversity
Social: Provision of easily accessible social services following applicable standards
Key Performance Indicator: 100% citizen access to social or community service within 10 minutes
Spatial Planning Strategy:
1. All levels of society can access parks and public spaces, which serve as forums for fostering positive integration among residents. These public spaces may include places of worship, markets, schools, and health facilities at various environmental levels, such as neighbourhoods (RT), hamlets (RW), sub-districts/villages, and sub-districts. 2. Providing regional and national scale public spaces oriented towards national unity (squares, national parks, museums, and others), with the location of public spaces that will strengthen diversity 3. Preserving and registering cultural assets as cultural heritage 4. Providing mixed-use community space to support the integration of community activities 5. Provide learning spaces and training, both formal and informal, to support ongoing professional development.

Source: Presidential Decree Number 63 of 2022 on Capital City (UU IKN) Chapter IV (Yosita et al., 2022)

The walkability supports the city's prioritisation in national and cultural life through a shared symbolic space to celebrate the unity and diversity of Nusantara, contributing to the success of the nation's smart transformation and cultural development. The prioritisation may be through planning parks, public spaces, or cultural heritage buildings. It can be applied to public buildings, such as commercial or educational facilities, to support strong local conventions and cultural sustainability (Yosita et al., 2022, p. 190). Heritage plays a

crucial role in sustainable development, contributing to social cohesion, well-being, creativity, economic appeal, and fostering understanding between communities.

Public parks are the centre of public life and are an essential part of our urban environment. Parks offer the community various physical and mental health benefits, provide a space for social gathering and recreation, and foster a sense of unity and belonging among community members. Hence, public parks must be inclusive regarding equal access and decision-making authority regarding the design and management of these parks. As urban populations rise and density increases, access to quality green spaces and the mental and physical benefits that accompany them will continue to diminish for marginalized communities, further widening the disparities in access to parks and public spaces and the accompanying public health implications.

Achieving universal citizen access to social or community services within a 10-minute timeframe, made possible by walkability, entails ensuring that everyone, regardless of their location, has convenient proximity to social and community resources within a reasonable distance. The concept of walkability emphasises designing the built environment to encourage walking. Achieving this goal requires providing safe and easily accessible walkways and pedestrian crossings, along with amenities such as benches, shade, and public art. The successful implementation of walkable environments depends on the active participation of several stakeholders, including urban planners, policymakers, and community organisations. Researchers have extensively studied the concept of walkability, identifying numerous advantages, including increased physical activity, reduced air pollution, and improved mental well-being. The "10-minute promise" concept ensures that individuals have convenient access to a park or green space within a 10-minute walking distance and enjoys widespread endorsement from the general populace. In summary, ensuring that all citizens have convenient access to social or community services within a 10-minute walk is crucial in establishing a city's identity, characterized by inclusivity, sustainability, and responsiveness to its residents' diverse needs and experiences.

Promise 3: 'Inclusiveness'

Inclusiveness catalyses the advancement of civilisation and fosters the development of a thriving community by embracing all levels of society. The city development concept ensures that 'no one is left behind' in the urban development and accommodates the interests of all communities, including residents, women, and other minority groups (Itriyati, 2023, pp. 427–428), such as ethnic minorities young people, the disabled

community, and people with special needs, and sexual and gender-diverse people. Nusantara strives for inclusion in public spaces, utilising principles of universal access, local wisdom, and gender-responsive design (also referred to as barrier-free design) for national-scale programs and activities, as illustrated in Figure 3. Public spaces are built with local wisdom and incorporate elements and symbols that represent the entirety of Indonesian culture. Public places that also adhere to the principle of inclusive and universal access will demonstrate unity in diversity in the city's development. All groups have easy access to public spaces, following universal design principles, thereby gaining the rights they own and the opportunity to benefit from the facilities provided by the authority (Zulpiani & Rusyani, 2023).

Table 3. Spatial Planning Strategy for Unity in Diversity: City Development Principles for Public Places

Social: The realisation of a strong and inclusive node between local, regional, and national public spaces
Key Performance Indicators: 100% of all public places are designed based on the principles of universal access, local wisdom, and inclusive design
Spatial Planning Strategy:
Designing public spaces with equal and dignified access for all groups, including persons with disabilities, children and youth, older people, women, and people from different cultural backgrounds.

Source: Law Number 3 of 2022 on Capital City (UU IKN) Chapter IV (Yosita et al., 2022)

Ensuring inclusive programs under the characteristics of the population and region is also crucial in building a sustainable, gender-inclusive city. A gender-inclusive city is a safe and comfortable city where people are free from anxiety, do not experience rape or harassment, have no difficulty accessing public services, and are involved in decision-making. Awareness and consistency in efforts to build gender-inclusive cities will have a lasting impact on the sense of security of all residents and facilitate integration among citizens from diverse backgrounds (Itriyati, 2023, pp. 426–427). In developing inclusive cities, those that successfully build sensitivity to inclusion can foster social cohesion and citizen trust, enhance a sense of belonging, and stimulate innovation and creativity. An inclusive city respects all people and their needs, providing space for every individual and community to contribute and participate in decision-making regarding urban policies (Itriyati, 2023, pp. 426–427). A city's inclusivity means it is open to locals, young people,

investors, manufacturers, researchers, thinkers, and supporters of innovation, allowing them to develop city ecosystems that are green, inclusive, smart, resilient, and sustainable (Berawi, 2022, p. 691). The involvement of residents in the city's development from the project's inception will foster cultural public participation. Suppose planning involves a lot of external residents from outside the island of Kalimantan. In this case, considering local rules from a national perspective remains necessary to ensure that the principles of local wisdom are sustainable and can inform urban planning (Yosita et al., 2022, p. 181).

The promise that "one hundred per cent of all public places are designed based on the principles of universal access, local wisdom, and inclusive design, supported by inclusivity" aims to ensure that all public spaces are fully accessible, both physically and socially, while being inclusive of everyone. Inclusive design implies that the built environment should be designed based on the principles of universal access, ensuring that places and experiences are open to all people, regardless of age, disability, or background. Inclusive, universal design makes places accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability, or circumstance.

Designers create better and more beneficial public spaces when they consider the needs of the broadest range of people. Incorporating local wisdom, such as the community's culture, history, and values, into public place design enhances the quality and relevance of those spaces. The design can create a sense of place and identity, which is vital for creating a positive city identity. Inclusivity insinuates that all residents should have equal access to services, amenities, and opportunities, regardless of background. Achieving this goal requires the involvement of many actors, including urban planners, policymakers, and community organisations.

Designing public places based on the principles of universal access, local wisdom, and inclusive design, supported by inclusivity, implies that all public spaces should be fully accessible, both physically and socially, while being inclusive of everyone. This approach operationalises Kavaratzis and Kalandides' (2015) representational systems, where vernacular architecture and toponymy encode cultural meaning. However, Berawi's (2022) "World Class City" vision prioritises global investor appeal over hyperlocal narratives, creating a tension between a scholar's creative city paradigm and Indigenous placemaking. Resolving this requires adopting the Communication Infrastructure Theory (CIT) framework for communication infrastructure, where traditional storytelling networks coexist with state branding. The inclusion process involves multiple stakeholders and can

help create a positive city identity that reflects the needs and experiences of all its residents. Ma et al. (2021) posit that city branding 'plays a central role in urban planning and governance processes, integrating visions for long-term urban transformation'—a principle evident in Nusantara's participatory frameworks for equitable design (p. 3). Keskin et al. (2016) posit that 'conflict produces the dynamics of a good story,' suggesting Nusantara's participatory frameworks must openly address tensions between central planning and Indigenous land rights to authentically express its inclusive values (p. 38).

CONCLUSION

As it benefits society, Nusantara city development will act as the engine for social welfare growth in Indonesia. The authority should strategise city branding, first defining the city's identity and then articulating it to the key stakeholders to communicate its image. The Nusantara City Authority is the specific agency responsible for managing and governing the city of Nusantara, including the oversight of Nusantara City's branding. The highly selective process of Nusantara's city branding could represent the national identity and convey the image of a liveable and lovable city, one that is inclusive and features public policy innovations that protect all citizens without exception. This research recommends that the Nusantara Capital City Authority emphasise the fundamental elements of inclusivity through unity and diversity in their digital communication strategy to achieve city branding. City identity, including inclusion, walkability, and open connections, may contribute to the city's image components, which can help construct the city's image of Nusantara.

The development of Nusantara's city branding extends beyond local governance; it represents a nation-building project that operationalises Bhinneka Tunggal Ika through urban design and communication strategies. Globally, Nusantara's emphasis on inclusive mobility and decentralised governance positions it as a counterpoint to authoritarian capital relocations, such as Naypyidaw, Myanmar, offering a replicable model for postcolonial nations. The "10-minute city" principle, when paired with universal design, signals Indonesia's commitment to equitable urbanisation—a critical differentiator in attracting ESG-aligned investments.

The '10-minute city' principle, when paired with universal design, signals Indonesia's commitment to equitable urbanisation—a critical differentiator in attracting ESG-aligned investments. Only cities with mature economies and diversified sectors can

fully realize branding's transformative potential, highlighting Nusantara's unique position as a nascent capital designed to operationalize inclusivity from inception. Also, successful city branding synthesizes tangible infrastructure with intangible emotional resonance—a principle reflected in Nusantara's walkable spaces designed to foster collective memory. However, sustaining this reputation requires proactive engagement with transnational media to reframe narratives away from "resource extraction" tropes toward Nusantara's role as a multicultural innovation hub.

By integrating mobility, connectedness, walkability, and inclusion, it is possible to realise a city identity that embodies the unity of variety. Several strategies are available for integrating these notions. First and foremost, enhancing an area's walkability is a crucial element in establishing an inclusive and diverse urban identity. Establishing safe and easily accessible sidewalks, the strategic design of pedestrian-friendly streets, and incorporating amenities such as benches, trees, and public art are just a few ways to enhance the walkability of urban areas. The concept of the 15-minute city model exemplifies an urban design approach that prioritises walkability and aims to ensure equal access to services and amenities within a 15-minute walking or biking distance.

This study advances the field of urban communication by demonstrating how national identity frameworks, such as Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, can operationalise inclusivity in city branding. While prior research on new capitals (e.g., Brasília, Naypyidaw) focused on authoritarian spatial politics, the study findings reveal that Nusantara's identity-building process uniquely combines top-down symbolic narratives (e.g., 'World Class City for All') with bottom-up participatory design. This dual approach challenges the Eurocentric 'creative city' paradigm by foregrounding Indigenous epistemologies in urban planning, offering a replicable model for Global South nations navigating multicultural urbanisation.

Additionally, enhancing connectedness among various areas of the urban environment has the potential to augment mobility and inclusivity. Enhancing connections can be achieved through several measures, such as investing in public transportation, establishing bike lanes and bike-sharing programs, and improving pedestrian crossings. By offering diverse transportation options, a municipality may effectively provide equitable access to essential services and amenities for all its inhabitants.

Furthermore, prioritising inclusivity in public places and infrastructure is crucial to establishing a city's identity that embraces and respects variety. The integration of universal design principles, which include the provision of wheelchair ramps and

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accessible seating, along with consultations with various communities to address their specific needs effectively, can lead to the development of inclusive design. Ultimately, embracing and acknowledging the significance of variety is imperative. The recognition and appreciation of diversity, as well as the facilitation of cultural exchange, can hold significant value in shaping a city's identity. One can achieve a notable level of diversity by organising cultural events, creating public art pieces that embody the city's diverse characteristics, and supporting local community organisations that promote inclusivity.

It is imperative to incorporate critical elements, such as integration, walkability, and inclusion, to establish a city identity that encapsulates the concept of unity amidst diversity. These components foster a sense of togetherness and cohesion within the urban fabric. The promotion of walkability, the enhancement of connectivity, the application of inclusive design principles, and the appreciation of the various qualities inherent to the city can all contribute to shaping a city's identity. By implementing these strategies, a municipality can build a comprehensive and inclusive identity that emphasises the needs and experiences of its entire populace. There is considerable discourse surrounding the ramifications of economic inclusion and equity. However, providing a more precise and thorough definition of inclusion, along with a supported assertion emphasising its impact on social fairness, is crucial. Future research could investigate the initial phases of individuals' cognitive representations of Nusantara to inform the development of a genuinely inclusive capital city for the region.

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