

Relocating the Indonesian Capital: Diverse Discourses, Contradictory Expectations and Tangible Implications

Panel Conveners:

Michaela Haug, University of Freiburg & The Forest City Project Collective, Utrecht University

Since the Widodo administration's initial decision to move Indonesia's seat of government to East Kalimantan was announced in August 2019, it has been the subject of lively debates, high hopes and severe concerns as it is accompanied by ambitious urban planning, mega infrastructure projects, land speculation and protest by environmentalists and indigenous people's representatives. While the relocation is commonly associated with promises to alleviate Jakarta's worsening social and environmental problems and to decentralise development opportunities, it is at the same time criticized for rather turning away from Jakarta's problems than solving them while causing land conflicts, social inequality and ecological damage in East Kalimantan. A specific criticism that is furthermore often heard in East Kalimantan, is the lack of public consultation and public participation in the policies concerning the new Capital. Although Nusantra, as the new Capital has been called, is imagined as a smart, green, high-tech metropolis, environmental organisations express concerns as the construction of the city will require a considerable amount of natural resources and is thus likely to further extractivism in the area. In addition, the energy needs of Nusantara are to be covered by hydroelectric power plants in the hinterlands of East Kalimantan, the construction of which is already causing concerns about displacement and loss of land among the population in the upstream areas.

The aim of this panel is to explore the diverse dynamics emanating from Indonesia's new Capital, to document the ambivalent and diverse discourses that it gives rise to, to understand the partly contradictory aspirations and expectations that it engenders and to point out its already palpable tangible implications by inviting papers that provide current insights from research on Nusantra through the lens of various disciplines.