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The Fault Lines of Modernity: A Mixed-Methods Autopsy of State Power, Social Resistance, and Identity Dialectics in Indonesia's New Capital Project

Amir Serikova^{1*}, Henry Clifford², Muhammad Faiz³

¹Department of Cultural and Heritage Preservation, Emeritus Research Center, Skopje, North Macedonia

²Department of Civil Law, Valencia Legal Institute, Coro, Venezuela

³Department of Administrative Law, Seine Legal Institute, Manado, Indonesia

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*Corresponding author:

Amir Serikova

E-mail address:

amir.serikova@enigma.or.id

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ABSTRACT

The state-led relocation of Indonesia's capital to Nusantara (IKN) is a monumental project framed as a leap into a sustainable future. However, this top-down imposition of modernity is creating deep social fissures on the ground. This study conducts a sociological autopsy of the IKN development, dissecting the intricate mechanisms of resistance, displacement, and identity formation among affected communities. We employed a concurrent embedded mixed-methods design in North Penajam Paser, East Kalimantan (Jan 2024–Mar 2025). A structured survey was administered to 500 households, selected via a multi-stage sampling process, to quantify displacement anxieties and resistance participation. This was triangulated with 50 in-depth interviews with community leaders, displaced residents, and officials. Quantitative data were analyzed using t-tests and a Negative Binomial regression model to identify predictors of resistance, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Survey data revealed profound anxiety, with indigenous communities reporting significantly higher distress levels ($t(498) = 10.2$, $p < 0.001$). The Negative Binomial regression identified indigenous status ($IRR=3.45$, $p<0.001$), reliance on agro-forestry ($IRR=2.88$, $p<0.001$), and higher anxiety scores ($IRR=1.12$, $p<0.001$) as significant predictors of increased participation in resistance activities. Qualitative findings uncovered a sophisticated "tripartite arsenal" of resistance (symbolic, material, legal) and documented the emergence of a "Janus-faced" state, perceived as both coercively present and procedurally absent. In conclusion, the IKN project is a site of intense social struggle where competing modernities collide. State-led development, without genuine participation, engenders resilient and adaptive forms of social resistance and catalyzes a dialectical process of identity politicization. We argue that IKN risks becoming a landscape of exclusionary modernity unless a fundamental shift towards rights-based development is enacted.

1. Introduction

The relocation of a nation's capital is one of the most definitive and disruptive acts of statecraft, a physical and symbolic remaking of the national narrative. It is far more than a logistical transfer of administrative infrastructure; it is a profound declaration of intent, a re-scripting of collective

identity, and a radical reordering of space, power, and society. In 2019, when Indonesia announced its decision to move its capital from Jakarta—a sinking, gridlocked megacity—to a vast forested expanse in East Kalimantan designated "Nusantara" (IKN), it was presented as a panacea. The official discourse framed this monumental undertaking as a visionary leap



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towards a "smart, green, and beautiful" future, engineered to de-center development from the long-dominant island of Java and to herald a new, equitable Indonesian modernity.¹⁻³

This state-sanctioned narrative of progress, however, deliberately obscures a more complex, contentious, and painful reality unfolding on the ground. The chosen territory for IKN is not a *tabula rasa*, an empty slate awaiting the architect's pen. It is a complex social-ecological palimpsest, a landscape inhabited for generations by indigenous Paser and Balik communities, long-term transmigrant settlements, and a fragile ecosystem already scarred by the extractive frontiers of coal mining and palm oil plantations. For these communities, the arrival of the IKN mega-project is not the dawn of a promised utopia but an existential threat that jeopardizes their lands, livelihoods, and ancestral cosmologies. The project has catalyzed extensive land acquisition, leading to the displacement of thousands, the razing of ancestral forests and farms, and the violent disruption of deeply entrenched social and cultural fabrics.^{4,5}

The IKN project serves as a critical, high-stakes contemporary case study of Development-Induced Displacement and Resistance (DIDR), a persistent and defining feature of the post-colonial developmental trajectory across the Global South. An extensive body of literature has documented the impoverishment risks, human rights violations, and profound psychological trauma associated with such large-scale, state-driven projects. Similarly, scholarship on new capital cities, from Brasilia to Naypyidaw, has typically focused on the geopolitical rationales, architectural ambitions, and macroeconomic consequences, often critiquing the creation of sterile, socially segregated urban enclaves.⁶⁻⁸

However, a significant lacuna persists in our understanding of the granular, dynamic, and adaptive mechanisms through which affected communities actively contest and negotiate these top-down modernizing projects. Resistance is too often depicted

as a monolithic, reactive spasm of defiance against dispossession, rather than as a sophisticated, multi-layered process involving a repertoire of symbolic, material, and political strategies. As James C. Scott's seminal work on the "arts of resistance" argues, the political life of subordinate groups is far richer and more complex than a simple binary of quiescence or open revolt; it encompasses a spectrum of "hidden transcripts" and "weapons of the weak". Furthermore, there is a pressing need for a more nuanced examination of how the crucible of displacement and resistance becomes a generative social field that forges new, often politicized, forms of social and political identity.^{9,10}

This study seeks to fill these critical gaps by conducting a "sociological autopsy" of the IKN project. We employ the term "autopsy" deliberately to signify a deep, incisive, and multi-layered examination of a social body experiencing the trauma of radical transformation. Our approach moves beyond a mere accounting of impacts to dissect the underlying causal mechanisms, power dynamics, and social pathologies that characterize the project's implementation. We investigate not only what is being lost—land, livelihoods, cultural heritage—but also what is being created in its place: novel strategies of resistance, new forms of social organization, and complex, often fractured, community identities.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrated analytical framework, which connects the macro-politics of authoritarian state-led development with the micro-sociology of community-level response, adaptation, and contention. By employing a robust mixed-methods design, we aim to quantify the scale of displacement anxieties and identify key predictors of resistance, while simultaneously providing rich qualitative depth to the lived experiences of struggle and identity formation. We analyze how state power is experienced and contested, drawing on Foucault's concept of governmentality to understand the state's dual function as both a coercive and a pastoral force.



Therefore, the central aim of this study is to dissect and analyze the socio-political mechanisms of resistance, displacement, and identity formation among communities impacted by the development of IKN. Specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the key socio-demographic and psychological predictors of community participation in resistance activities against the IKN project?; (2) What are the specific strategies and tactics—symbolic, material, and legal—that communities employ to contest their dispossession?; (3) How do communities experience and navigate the exercise of state power during the development process?; (4) In what ways does the shared struggle against displacement catalyze the reformulation and politicization of social and cultural identities? Ultimately, this research challenges the homogenizing, state-centric narrative of modernity. It provides a granular, evidence-based account of its profound, multifaceted, and often violent human consequences, revealing the fault lines where official blueprints for the future collide with the lived realities of the people they seek to govern.

2. Methods

This study employed a concurrent embedded mixed-methods research design. Within this framework, the qualitative strand was the primary method for in-depth exploration of the mechanisms of resistance and identity formation, while the quantitative strand served a secondary, embedded role to measure the prevalence of key attitudes and identify statistical predictors of behaviors across a larger sample. This design was chosen for its capacity to achieve both breadth and depth, allowing for the triangulation and mutual enrichment of findings.

The research was conducted over a 15-month period, from January 2024 to March 2025, within the officially designated Core Government Area and its immediate surrounding buffer zones in the North Penajam Paser Regency, East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

This geographical area was selected as it represents the epicenter of land acquisition, intensive construction, and consequent social disruption related to the IKN project. The study population was diverse, encompassing members of indigenous Paser and Balik communities, who hold ancestral claims to the land; long-term transmigrant settlers (primarily of Javanese and Bugis ethnicity) relocated to the area by previous government programs; and newly arrived populations of construction workers and administrative personnel.

A multi-stage sampling strategy was utilized to ensure comprehensive data collection. For the quantitative survey, a two-stage process was employed. (1) Stage 1: Purposive Village Selection. We first purposively selected five villages (*desa*) located entirely or partially within the KIPP and its immediate buffer zone. These villages were chosen because they were documented in government and NGO reports as facing the most extensive land clearing and infrastructure development¹⁵. This selection was justified to ensure the sample was composed of the most directly affected populations. The five villages were selected to represent a cross-section of the area's demographic profile: two were predominantly indigenous Paser, two were mixed transmigrant-indigenous communities, and one was primarily a transmigrant settlement.; (2) Stage 2: Systematic Random Household Sampling. Within these five villages, a systematic random sampling technique was applied. Using official village population registers obtained from the local authorities, every third household was approached for participation. This method was chosen as a practical and effective quasi-random technique to reduce selection bias at the household level. We reviewed the registers for any obvious non-random ordering (e.g., by economic status) and found none, thus mitigating the risk of periodicity bias. The total number of households across the five villages was approximately 2,450, from which our sample was drawn. The sample size of 500 households was determined *a priori* to achieve a 95%



confidence level with a margin of error of 5%, ensuring sufficient statistical power for the planned regression analyses.

For the qualitative component, a purposive and snowball sampling strategy was used to recruit 50 key informants who could provide deep insights into the research questions. The purposive selection was stratified to ensure a diversity of perspectives: (a) 15 indigenous elders and customary leaders (*tokoh adat*); (b) 15 heads of households facing imminent displacement from their primary land holdings; (c) 10 government officials from the IKN Authority and the local land agency (BPN); (d) 5 representatives from local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in community advocacy; and (e) 5 project managers from state-owned construction companies. Following initial interviews, snowball sampling was employed, whereby informants recommended other individuals central to community mobilization and resistance efforts, allowing us to access key nodes within the social networks.

A structured questionnaire was developed, translated into Bahasa Indonesia, and pre-tested on 30 households in a non-sampled village to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and reliability. The survey was administered face-to-face by a team of trained local enumerators. It comprised four sections: (1) Socio-Demographic Information: Age, gender, ethnicity, education level, household size, and primary livelihood; (2) Perceptions of IKN: 5-point Likert scale questions assessing attitudes towards the project, perceived risks, and expected benefits; (3) Displacement and Livelihood Anxiety Scale (DLAS): A 10-item scale developed for this study to measure anxiety related to land tenure security, future uncertainty, and loss of income. Items included statements such as, "I worry constantly about being forced to leave my land," and "I am uncertain how my family will earn a living in the next five years." The scale demonstrated high internal consistency in the final sample, with a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$; (4)

Participation in Resistance Checklist: A checklist of 8 specific resistance activities, developed based on preliminary fieldwork and NGO reports. Activities included: attending community meetings/protests, signing petitions, reporting grievances to authorities, participating in peaceful demonstrations, joining land patrols, participating in land blockades, engaging in ritual-based protests, and seeking legal aid from NGOs.

The primary qualitative method was in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, and, with explicit informed consent, was audio-recorded. The interview guide was flexible but structured around key themes: personal and ancestral connection to the land, experiences with land acquisition processes, forms and motivations of resistance, changes in community social cohesion, and future aspirations. In addition to interviews, participant observation was conducted in over 20 community meetings, public consultation events, and cultural rituals. This allowed for a contextualized understanding of social dynamics and power relations that might not be captured in interviews alone. Detailed field notes were transcribed and analyzed alongside the interview data.

Survey data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 28. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize socio-demographic characteristics and key scale scores. To compare anxiety scores between indigenous and non-indigenous respondents, an independent samples t-test was employed. Prior to the test, assumptions of normality were checked using Shapiro-Wilk tests, and homogeneity of variances was assessed using Levene's test. Both assumptions were met, validating the use of the t-test.

To identify predictors of resistance, we modeled the "Resistance Score." This dependent variable was constructed by summing the number of activities a respondent participated in from the 8-item checklist,



creating a count variable ranging from 0 to 8. Initial analysis revealed the score was non-normally distributed and overdispersed (Mean = 2.15, Variance = 4.38), making Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) linear regression inappropriate. A Poisson model was also unsuitable due to the overdispersion. Therefore, a Negative Binomial regression model was chosen as the most statistically robust approach for this type of count data.

The model was specified as follows, with independent variables selected based on established literature on social resistance:

$$\log(\text{Resistance Score}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Indigenous Status}) + \beta_2(\text{Livelihood Type}) + \beta_3(\text{Education Level}) + \beta_4(\text{Anxiety Score}) + \varepsilon$$

Indigenous Status (1=Paser/Balik, 0=Other) and Livelihood Type (1=Agro-forestry/Agriculture, 0=Other) were dummy-coded. Education Level was treated as a categorical variable with four levels ("No Formal," "Primary," "Secondary," "Tertiary"), with "No Formal" as the reference category, to avoid the problematic assumption of linearity. The model's diagnostics, including a check for multicollinearity via Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores (all < 2.5), confirmed its validity.

Qualitative data were analyzed using a rigorous thematic analysis approach, guided by the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke; (1) Familiarization: All interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English. The research team repeatedly read the transcripts and field notes to achieve deep immersion; (2) Initial Coding: Data were systematically coded line-by-line using NVivo software to identify salient concepts; (3) Searching for Themes: Codes were collated and grouped into potential themes and sub-themes; (4) Reviewing Themes: Themes were reviewed and refined against the coded data and the entire dataset to ensure they were coherent and accurately represented the data; (5) Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme was clearly defined, named, and its scope and essence were articulated; (6) Producing

the Report: A detailed narrative analysis was written, weaving together the thematic analysis with compelling verbatim quotes from participants. To ensure rigor and credibility, we employed investigator triangulation (multiple researchers coded and discussed the data) and member checking (preliminary findings were shared with a subset of 10 participants for feedback and validation).

The study protocol received full ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board of CMHC Research Center, Indonesia. All participants were provided with a detailed information sheet in Bahasa Indonesia explaining the research purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained from every participant before any data collection. To protect anonymity, all names and identifying details have been replaced with pseudonyms in all research outputs. Given the politically sensitive nature of resistance activities, special protocols were in place to ensure data security and to avoid exposing participants to any additional risks from their participation.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, we detail the quantitative results regarding community perceptions, anxiety levels, and the statistical predictors of resistance. Second, we present the thematic analysis from the in-depth interviews, which elucidates the mechanisms of resistance and identity formation. The socio-demographic profile of the 500 survey respondents is presented in Table 1. The sample reflects the demographic landscape of the core project area, with a significant proportion of indigenous Paser individuals (42.0%) and a majority of households (65.4%) relying on land-based livelihoods such as agriculture and agro-forestry.

Perceptions of the IKN project were overwhelmingly negative. A striking 84.4% of respondents reported



negative sentiment, expressing concerns about land dispossession, environmental destruction, and cultural marginalization. The Displacement and Livelihood Anxiety Scale (DLAS) revealed high levels of psychological distress, with a mean score of 38.5 (SD = 7.2) out of a maximum of 5021.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare anxiety scores between indigenous (Paser and Balik) and non-indigenous (Javanese, Bugis, Other) respondents. The assumption of homogeneity

of variances was met, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($F = 2.12, p = 0.146$). The results showed that indigenous respondents reported statistically significant higher anxiety scores ($M = 42.1, SD = 5.8$) compared to non-indigenous respondents ($M = 35.9, SD = 7.1$), with $t(498) = 10.2, p < 0.001$. This highlights the disproportionate psychological burden borne by communities with deep ancestral ties to the land.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

CHARACTERISTIC	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Gender	Male	280	56.0
	Female	220	44.0
Age (Years)	18-30	110	22.0
	31-45	195	39.0
	46-60	145	29.0
	>60	50	10.0
Ethnicity	Paser	210	42.0
	Balik	40	8.0
	Javanese	150	30.0
	Bugis	75	15.0
	Other	25	5.0
Education Level	No Formal	60	12.0
	Primary	215	43.0
	Secondary	180	36.0
	Tertiary	45	9.0
Primary Livelihood	Agro-forestry	180	36.0
	Agriculture	147	29.4
	Fishing	50	10.0
	Small Business	73	14.6
	Salaried/Other	50	10.0



Community Perception and Anxiety Levels

A visual summary of survey findings on sentiment towards the IKN project and the psychological distress experienced by affected communities.

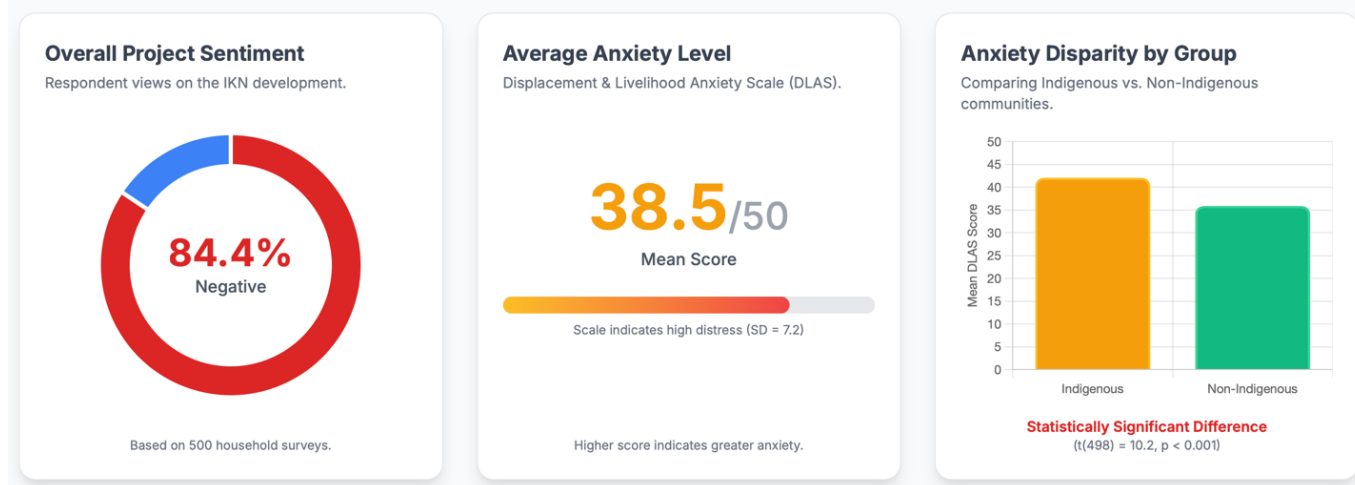


Figure 1. Community perception and anxiety levels.

To identify the factors predicting engagement in resistance, a Negative Binomial regression was performed. The dependent variable was the "Resistance Score," a count of the number of resistance activities each respondent participated in. The full model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(6) = 168.4, p < 0.001$), indicating it provided a better fit than a null model. The results, summarized in Table 2, are presented as Incidence Rate Ratios (IRRs), which represent the factor by which the expected count of resistance activities changes for a one-unit change in the predictor.

The thematic analysis of 50 in-depth interviews yielded a rich, nuanced understanding of the social dynamics at play. Four primary themes emerged: (1) The Tripartite Arsenal of Resistance; (2) Fractured Modernity and Disrupted Social Cohesion; (3) The Janus-Faced State: Simultaneously Absent and Oppressive; and (4) The Dialectical Recalibration of Identity.

Theme 1: The tripartite arsenal of resistance

Community resistance was not a single act but a sophisticated, adaptive strategy employing symbolic, material, and legal tactics simultaneously.

Symbolic Resistance: For indigenous communities, resistance was inextricably linked to their spiritual and cultural worldview. Elders consistently invoked customary law (*hukum adat*) and ancestral narratives to fundamentally challenge the legitimacy of state-issued land certificates. Rituals of "cleansing the land" (*membersihkan tanah*) were performed on construction sites, acting as powerful public declarations of enduring spiritual ownership. One Paser elder articulated this worldview clash:

"They come with their maps and their decrees from Jakarta. But our map is written in the names of the rivers, the hills, and the graves of our ancestors. We perform the rituals not for them, but for the spirits of this land, to tell them we have not abandoned them. This is our true legal basis." (Interview with *tokoh adat*, male, 68 years).



Table 2. Negative Binomial Regression Predicting Participation in Resistance

PREDICTOR VARIABLE	COEFFICIENT (B)	STD. ERROR	P-VALUE	IRR ⓘ	95% CI FOR IRR ⓘ
Main Predictors					
Indigenous Status (1=Yes)	1.24	0.15	<0.001	3.45	[2.57, 4.63]
Livelihood (1=Agro-forestry)	1.06	0.14	<0.001	2.88	[2.19, 3.79]
Anxiety Score (DLAS)	0.11	0.02	<0.001	1.12	[1.08, 1.16]
Education Level (Reference: No Formal Education)					
Primary Education	-0.15	0.18	0.404	0.86	[0.60, 1.23]
Secondary Education	-0.45	0.20	0.024	0.64	[0.43, 0.95]
Tertiary Education	-0.62	0.25	0.013	0.54	[0.33, 0.88]

Key Findings & Interpretation

Indigenous Status

3.45x More Likely

Being from an indigenous community is the strongest predictor. An indigenous respondent participates in, on average, 3.45 times more resistance activities than a non-indigenous one, highlighting the deep-seated cultural and ancestral stakes in the conflict.

Agro-forestry Livelihood

2.88x More Likely

Dependence on the land for livelihood is a major driver of resistance. Those practicing agro-forestry are nearly three times more likely to participate in resistance, as the project directly threatens their material survival.

Education Level

Up to 46% Less Likely

Counterintuitively, higher education (Secondary/Tertiary) is linked to lower participation in the measured activities. This suggests a shift in resistance tactics among the more educated, from direct action to legal or institutional strategies not captured by the survey checklist.

Model Fit Statistics

Log-likelihood: -945.7 | AIC: 1905.4 | Alpha (Dispersion): 0.89 (p < 0.001)

These statistics confirm the Negative Binomial model is a good fit for the data.

Material Resistance: This involved direct physical contestation over land and resources. Communities self-organized patrols to monitor and document illegal land clearing by contractors. In several documented cases, villagers engaged in "reclamation planting," collectively replanting cassava and fruit trees on land that had been recently bulldozed, an act of both practical livelihood preservation and profound symbolic defiance. The most persistent form of material resistance was "land occupation," where families simply refused to vacate their homes, creating physical and political obstacles to the project's

advance. A farmer explained the logic:

"If we leave, we become ghosts. We will be a statistic in their report. But if we stay, we are a problem they cannot ignore. Every day we remain on our land is a small victory. It forces them to see us, to talk to us, not just about us." (Interview with displaced farmer, male, 45 years).

Legal and Institutional Resistance: Recognizing the asymmetry of power, communities increasingly engaged in formal legal and political channels, often in coalition with NGOs. This involved filing lawsuits challenging the legality of land acquisition permits and



the inadequacy of environmental impact assessments. A young activist captured this strategic shift:

"We fight on the land, but we must also fight on paper. We have learned to use their language—the language of law, of rights, of procedure. We record everything, we report everything. We are turning their bureaucracy against itself." (Interview with NGO Activist, Female, 28 years).

Theme 2: Fractured modernity and disrupted social cohesion

The IKN project's promise of shared prosperity was experienced on the ground as a force of social fragmentation. The influx of thousands of construction workers, military personnel, and government officials created deep social cleavages and strained local resources. Economic opportunities were scarce and unevenly distributed, breeding resentment as a few locals secured precarious, low-wage jobs while the majority were excluded. The large, poorly integrated worker camps became flashpoints for conflict over water, road access, and petty crime. The social fabric of villages, once built on trust and mutual support, began to unravel under the pressure of compensation politics. A village head lamented:

"They say this project is for Indonesia, but it feels like an occupation. Our village is now filled with strangers... We used to be a close-knit community. Now, we are suspicious of each other. Some families have taken the compensation money and are seen as traitors; others who resist are called troublemakers by the government." (Interview with village head, male, 52 years).

Theme 3: The Janus-faced state: absent and oppressive

Participants' experiences of the state were defined by a profound paradox: it was felt as both an overwhelmingly coercive force and an utterly absent or neglectful one. The oppressive face of the state was hyper-visible. It manifested in the deployment of

soldiers and police to "secure" land surveys, the use of intimidation tactics to pressure residents into selling their land, and the swift demolition of homes. This was the state as a raw instrument of power, efficient in its primary task of expropriation. The absent face of the state was experienced in its procedural and welfare functions. Reliable information about timelines, compensation rates, and resettlement plans was virtually non-existent. Public consultations were widely derided as "socialization ceremonies"—one-way announcements of predetermined plans, not forums for genuine dialogue. This deliberate withholding of information created an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety, undermining the community's ability to negotiate collectively. A community leader powerfully described this duality:

"They come with soldiers and police for 'security'. They measure our land without our consent. But when we ask for a clear map, for a timeline, for a fair price, they say, 'We are still waiting for instructions from the center'. The state is a fist when it wants our land, but it is a ghost when we ask for our rights." (Interview with community leader, female, 48 years).

Theme 4: The dialectical recalibration of identity

The intense pressure of displacement and resistance acted as a powerful catalyst for the reformulation of social identities in a dialectical process.

Reinforcement of indigenous identity: For the Paser and Balik communities, the existential threat to their ancestral lands served to sharpen and politicize their ethnic identity. The shared struggle fostered a pan-indigenous solidarity that often transcended previous clan or village divisions, creating a more unified political front.

"Before IKN, I was a man from my village. Now, I am a Paser fighting for our collective survival. We are connecting with other indigenous groups across Kalimantan. This disaster has, in a strange way, made us more aware of who we are and what we must



protect." (Interview with Indigenous youth leader, male, 31 years).

Emergence of a situational identity: For transmigrant communities, the experience created a complex identity crisis. Stripped of the land that had defined their lives for decades, they were in a liminal state—no longer connected to their ancestral homes in Java, but not recognized by the state or indigenous groups as "original" inhabitants with customary rights. In response, a new, strategic, and situational identity emerged: victims of IKN. This identity became a powerful basis for political mobilization and claims-making, allowing them to forge alliances with indigenous groups based on a shared experience of marginalization, even while tensions over land history remained.

The findings of this sociological autopsy provide a granular, multi-dimensional view of the social transformations being wrought by the IKN project. Our analysis moves beyond a simple impact assessment to elucidate the complex mechanisms through which state-led modernization is contested, negotiated, and co-produced by the very communities it aims to govern and reshape. This discussion is organized around three core mechanisms that emerged from the synthesis of our quantitative and qualitative data: the strategic diversification of resistance, the dual-functionality of state power, and the dialectical process of identity formation.

Our quantitative results established a clear demographic profile of resistance: it is most intense among indigenous communities and those whose livelihoods are directly tied to the land and forests being cleared. The regression analysis powerfully demonstrates that ontological connection (indigeneity) and material dependence (agro-forestry) are the primary drivers of contention. However, the qualitative data reveal that this resistance is not a uniform response. Instead, we identify a sophisticated and strategic "tripartite arsenal," where communities dynamically deploy symbolic, material, and legal

tactics. This extends Scott's concept of "weapons of the weak" by showing a conscious, strategic escalation and diversification of tactics, moving from the localized and symbolic to the confrontational and, ultimately, to the institutionalized.^{11,12}

The most sociologically compelling finding, however, emerges from the integration of our quantitative and qualitative datasets regarding the role of education. The regression model produced a seemingly counterintuitive result: higher levels of education were associated with lower participation in the counted resistance activities. This finding could be misinterpreted as evidence that education fosters compliance or co-optation. However, our qualitative analysis provides a much more nuanced explanation, revealing a mechanism of strategic stratification in resistance tactics. The activities on our survey checklist—protests, blockades, patrols—are forms of direct, often embodied, and high-risk contention. The qualitative data clearly show a third, parallel track of resistance: a legal and institutional struggle fought in courtrooms, through media advocacy, and in bureaucratic channels.¹³⁻¹⁵ This form of resistance requires literacy, legal knowledge, and social capital—resources more available to educated community members and their NGO allies.

Therefore, we argue that education does not diminish the propensity for resistance; it alters its form. While less-educated residents may be more engaged in direct, physical opposition on the front lines, more educated individuals are channeling their efforts into the "paper fight"—turning the state's own tools of legal and bureaucratic rationality against itself.^{16,17} This demonstrates a sophisticated division of labor within the resistance movement, where different groups leverage different forms of capital to fight on multiple fronts simultaneously. This finding is a crucial contribution, highlighting how a purely quantitative approach could lead to misleading conclusions and demonstrating the explanatory power of a well-integrated mixed-methods design.



Our findings reveal a profound contradiction in how the state is experienced: it is at once hyper-present and brutally efficient in its coercive capacity, yet simultaneously absent and neglectful in its procedural and welfare functions.¹⁸ This is not a mere failure of governance but a core mechanism of what can be termed authoritarian developmentalism. We conceptualize this as the operation of a "Janus-Faced State," which employs two distinct but complementary technologies of power. The first face is the sovereign face of the state: raw, coercive, and absolute. This is the power to "take land and let live," manifested through the visible apparatus of the military and police, the use of intimidation, and the physical act of dispossession. This face is highly effective at achieving the state's primary instrumental goal: clearing land for construction.

The second face is the governmental face of the state, in the Foucauldian sense. This is the power that seeks to "conduct the conduct" of the population. In the IKN context, however, this power operates through its deliberate withdrawal.¹⁹ The lack of clear information, the performative and hollow nature of public consultations, and the absence of effective grievance mechanisms are not accidental bureaucratic flaws. They function as a deliberate political technology to demobilize, disorient, and atomize the affected population. By creating an atmosphere of radical uncertainty and frustration, the state makes collective action extraordinarily difficult, forcing individuals into isolated negotiations for whatever compensation they can get. The high anxiety scores captured by our survey are the direct psychological toll of this mechanism; anxiety is driven not just by the certainty of loss, but by the maddening uncertainty of the process itself. This dual-pronged strategy—coercion for the land, neglect for the people—is a highly effective, if cynical, mechanism for advancing the state's developmental agenda while minimizing organized political opposition.

Finally, this study uncovers a powerful dialectical mechanism of identity formation. The immense pressure of the IKN project, which seeks to impose a singular, state-defined national modernity onto the landscape, has paradoxically strengthened and politicized pre-existing sub-national identities while also creating the conditions for new, cross-cutting solidarities to emerge. This process follows a classic dialectical pattern: (1) Thesis: The homogenizing state project. The state advances the IKN project as a national endeavor for all Indonesians, effectively seeking to erase local histories and identities in favor of a universal, modern identity; (2) Antithesis: Reactive Ethnogenesis. In direct reaction to this threat of erasure, indigenous identity becomes a potent political resource. As our qualitative findings show, the struggle catalyzes a powerful re-articulation of what it means to be "Paser," transforming a cultural identity into a political one forged in the fight for rights and recognition⁶⁰. This process of "reactive ethnogenesis" is a well-documented feature on frontiers of dispossession, where identity becomes a critical tool for mobilization and claims-making; (3) Synthesis: new solidarity and situational identity. The shared experience of being victimized by the state creates the material and symbolic ground for a new, broader solidarity to emerge. The identity of "*korban IKN*" (IKN victim) is a prime example of this synthesis. It is a situational and strategic identity that transcends ethnic and historical divisions, allowing indigenous communities and long-term transmigrants—groups with potentially competing historical claims to the land—to find common cause against a common adversary. This dialectical mechanism is crucial because it demonstrates that while the IKN project is undeniably destructive to existing social orders, it is also a generative political force. It is inadvertently creating new political subjects and unforeseen alliances that will continue to shape the social and political landscape of East Kalimantan for decades to come, ensuring that the "contested modernity" of the



title remains an ongoing process, not a settled outcome.

While this study employed a rigorous design, we acknowledge its limitations. First, our research is geographically focused on the central government area and its immediate buffer zones. The experiences of communities in the wider development area may differ, limiting the generalizability of our specific findings. Second, the quantitative data are cross-sectional, capturing a snapshot in time. This design allows us to identify strong correlations and predictors but precludes definitive claims of causality. A longitudinal study would be necessary to track the evolution of resistance and identity over the project's lifespan. Finally, given the sensitive nature of the topic, social desirability bias may have influenced some survey responses, although our use of local enumerators and triangulation with qualitative data helped mitigate this risk.

4. Conclusion

This sociological autopsy of the IKN project reveals that the construction of Indonesia's new capital is profoundly more than a feat of engineering and urban planning. It is a deeply contested social process, a crucible in which competing visions of the future, the nation, and modernity itself collide. The official narrative of a seamless transition to a "green" and "smart" future is a dangerous fiction that masks the project's immense social costs: the pervasive anxiety of displacement, the fragmentation of communities, the erosion of cultural heritage, and the violent imposition of a top-down, exclusionary developmentalist vision.

This study has demonstrated, through a robust synthesis of quantitative and qualitative evidence, that affected communities are not passive victims in this process. They are active political agents who are resisting their dispossession through a sophisticated and diverse repertoire of strategies. They are contesting the state's legitimacy not only on their

ancestral lands but also in the courts, in the media, and in the potent realm of cultural symbolism. In doing so, they are not merely rejecting modernity; they are demanding a different kind of modernity—one that is inclusive, just, and participatory. The struggle over IKN is thus a struggle over which version of Indonesia's future will prevail.

Our findings have urgent policy implications. The Indonesian government and the IKN Authority must fundamentally shift from their current paradigm of coercive land acquisition and tokenistic consultation. A genuine commitment to equitable development necessitates the establishment of transparent, accountable, and truly participatory mechanisms for land governance and community engagement. Crucially, the rights of indigenous communities to their ancestral lands must be formally recognized and protected, in accordance with international human rights standards and Indonesia's own Constitutional Court rulings. A failure to do so will not only perpetuate a grave injustice but will also sow the seeds of intractable, long-term social conflict, ultimately undermining the very stability and national pride that the new capital is intended to embody. The future of Nusantara hangs in the balance, a future that will be defined not by the height of its towers but by the justice of its foundation.

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