



Islamic Urban Governance and Its Relevance to the Development of Indonesia's New Capital City (IKN): Insights from Classical Islamic Texts

Moh Mukri^{1*}, Wahyu Iryana², Fatih Fuadi³, Anas Malik⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author, Email: moh.mukri@radenintan.ac.id

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Abstract: The development of Indonesia's New Capital City (Ibu Kota Nusantara/IKN) requires an urban governance framework that extends beyond technocratic efficiency to incorporate social justice, ethical spatial order, and long-term civilizational sustainability. Within Islamic intellectual tradition, urban governance is not articulated as a standalone technical discipline but is embedded in classical works on political jurisprudence (*fiqh al-siyāsah*), *hisbah*, public finance, and theories of civilization. This study aims to examine the foundational principles of urban governance in Islamic civilization as articulated in classical Islamic texts and to assess their relevance to the contemporary development of IKN. Employing a qualitative, library-based methodology with a historical, conceptual and normative-analytical approach, the study analyzes key texts, including *al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyyah* by al-Māwardī and Abū Ya'la, *Nihāyat al-Rutbah* by Ibn al-Shayzarī, *Ma'ālim al-Qurbah* by Ibn al-Ukhuwwah and *al-Muqaddimah* by Ibn Khaldūn. The findings indicate that Islamic urban governance is grounded in principles of social justice, protection of public interest (*maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*), orderly management of public spaces, and ethical supervision through the institution of *hisbah*. Cities are conceptualized as centers of civilization where economic, social, and moral dimensions must remain in balance. These principles demonstrate strong conceptual relevance to the development of IKN, particularly in relation to public space management, urban economic regulation, housing affordability, and the protection of vulnerable groups. The study argues that integrating Islamic urban governance values can enrich the normative framework of IKN development, ensuring that the new capital evolves not only as a sustainable physical environment but also as a socially just and ethically grounded urban civilization.

Keywords: *hisbah*; Islamic urban governance; Islamic civilization; Nusantara capital city; urban policy.

Introduction

Urban development across regions increasingly reveals a persistent paradox. On the one hand, cities function as engines of economic growth, innovation, and service provision. On the other hand, accelerated infrastructure expansion and urban policy reforms often generate new pressures on social welfare, including rising living costs, unequal access to basic services, population displacement, spatial fragmentation, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups. These dynamics suggest that urban development is not merely a technical exercise in spatial planning and infrastructure provision, but a governance challenge that fundamentally involves questions of social justice, ethical spatial order, and the management of public interest.

Contemporary urban and regional economics literature emphasizes the role of infrastructure in reshaping economic incentives through improved connectivity, reduced transport costs, and spatial reallocation of productive activities. Such transformations affect land values, settlement patterns, and the distribution of welfare across social groups (Allen & Arkolakis, 2022; Gertler et al., 2024). However, empirical studies increasingly indicate that infrastructure-led development tends to produce uneven welfare outcomes. While aggregate economic indicators may improve, distributional consequences often reveal concentrated gains alongside social adjustment costs borne disproportionately by low-income households, including rising housing rents, increased daily mobility burdens, and the erosion of social networks that sustain livelihoods (Maddaloni et al., 2025; Zahnnow, 2024).

Indonesia's New Capital City (Ibu Kota Nusantara/IKN) provides a contemporary and analytically significant case for examining these dynamics. Conceived as a transformative national project, IKN integrates large-scale infrastructure development, new spatial planning regimes, institutional restructuring, and normative visions of a forest city and smart city. Yet, the development of IKN does not occur in isolation. Its impacts extend into surrounding urban and peri-urban areas that are functionally connected as labor markets, residential zones, service providers, and logistical hubs. National studies have highlighted the potential for socio-spatial redistribution arising from the relocation of political authority and investment flows, warning that without inclusive governance, such transformations may exacerbate spatial inequalities and social exclusion (Mahaswa et al., 2024). Despite the growing body of policy-oriented and technical research on IKN, existing studies largely frame the project through modern planning, economic, or institutional lenses. Relatively little attention has been paid to normative frameworks capable of addressing the ethical and distributive dimensions of urban transformation. In this regard, Islamic civilization offers a rich but underutilized intellectual tradition for conceptualizing urban governance. Classical Islamic thought does not treat the city as a purely technical construct; rather, urban space is understood as a moral and social arena governed by principles of *maṣlaḥah ʿammah* (public interest), justice, and balanced social order.

Classical Islamic texts demonstrate sustained engagement with urban governance. Works such as *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* by al-Māwardī and Abū Yaʿlā articulate state responsibilities in regulating markets, public spaces, and communal infrastructure. *Hisbah* literature, including Ibn al-Shayzārī's *Nihāyat al-Rutbah* and Ibn al-Ukhuwwah's *Maʿālim al-Qurbah*, provides operational frameworks for ethical oversight of economic and social life in urban settings. Ibn Khaldūn's *al-Muqaddimah* further conceptualizes cities as centers of civilization whose sustainability depends on justice, social cohesion, and effective governance (Ibn al-Shayzārī, 1300). However, these classical insights remain insufficiently integrated into contemporary discussions of urban development, particularly in the context of large-scale state-led projects such as IKN.

A key knowledge gap therefore lies in the absence of a systematic analytical bridge between classical Islamic principles of urban governance and the practical challenges of developing Indonesia's new capital city. Much of the existing literature treats IKN either as a national policy object or as a physical megaproject, while the surrounding urban regions where social welfare impacts are often most immediately felt remain analytically peripheral. Moreover, dominant approaches in urban economics and megaproject management tend to prioritize aggregate performance, institutional complexity, or stakeholder coordination, offering limited normative guidance on distributive justice and the protection of vulnerable communities in rapidly transforming urban spaces (Allen & Arkolakis, 2022; Esposito & Terlizzi, 2023).

This article seeks to address this gap by examining the principles of urban governance embedded in classical Islamic texts and assessing their relevance to the development of Ibu Kota Nusantara. Using a qualitative, library-based methodology with a historical-conceptual and normative-analytical approach, the study aims to contribute a value-based perspective to the discourse on IKN. By foregrounding Islamic principles of social justice, ethical public space management, and the protection of public interest, the article argues that classical Islamic urban governance can offer a complementary normative framework for shaping IKN as not only a sustainable and technologically advanced capital, but also a socially just and ethically grounded urban civilization.

Building on these conditions, this study examines infrastructure development and urban policy around Indonesia's New Capital City (Ibu Kota Nusantara/IKN) through the lens of social welfare and just urban governance. The analysis focuses on how spatial transformation and policy interventions associated with IKN affect the welfare of communities in surrounding urban and peri-urban areas. These objectives are operationalized by tracing impact mechanisms, including changes in access to employment and public services, housing affordability dynamics, residential environmental quality, and shifts in social cohesion and perceived security. This approach positions social welfare not merely as a by-product of economic growth, but as a central indicator of successful urban governance oriented toward the public interest.

The core argument advanced is that infrastructure development and urban policy in the vicinity of IKN produce uneven welfare outcomes across territories and social groups. Such unevenness reflects a disconnect between physical development achievements and the equitable distribution of social benefits. Accordingly, evaluations of IKN's development performance must move beyond assessments based on project outputs toward measures that capture the fairness of benefit distribution. This shift resonates with the principle of public interest (*maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*) and social justice embedded in Islamic urban governance, which emphasizes the ethical responsibility of authorities to safeguard collective welfare. Within this framework, stakeholder engagement and co-production mechanisms play a critical role in urban governance. These mechanisms facilitate meaningful articulation of community interests, strengthen institutional learning, and enhance policy responsiveness to residents' lived experiences rather than narrowly defined technocratic targets (Aaltonen et al., 2024; Mortensen et al., 2025). This perspective aligns with the ethical oversight function articulated in classical *hisbah* literature, which assigns urban authorities a proactive role in protecting public interest and preventing social harm in the management of urban space.

The urgency of this research is both practical and scholarly. Practically, urban and peri-urban areas surrounding IKN are undergoing rapid and multidimensional transitions, requiring local governments, the IKN Authority, and development actors to rely on empirically informed and normatively grounded frameworks when designing interventions. Such interventions are needed to safeguard housing affordability, protect vulnerable groups, and prevent social polarization that may undermine policy legitimacy. Scholarly, the study contributes to the literature on urban social welfare and megaprojects by framing IKN as a site of distributional and normative transformation rather than merely a large-scale physical development. Recent research underscores that megaprojects function not only as infrastructural assets but also as arenas of meaning-making and legitimacy contestation, shaping public acceptance of spatial transformation (Hassink et al., 2025). Accordingly, this study seeks to enrich the discourse on Ibu Kota Nusantara by integrating social welfare analysis, urban governance perspectives, and insights from classical Islamic urban thought. Such integration is essential to ensuring that the spatial transformation surrounding IKN produces not exclusive progress, but urban development that is socially just, inclusive, and sustainable.

Urban social welfare is commonly understood as a condition in which urban residents' material and non-material needs are fulfilled through the interaction of individual resources, public services, the quality of the built environment, and social relations that enable people to live safely, healthily, productively, and meaningfully. Contemporary literature highlights a significant shift from income-based measures toward multidimensional approaches that incorporate housing quality, access to basic services, mobility affordability, perceived safety, employment opportunities, environmental quality, and residents' subjective experiences of urban life. This multidimensional orientation is particularly relevant for urban and peri-urban areas surrounding Indonesia's New Capital City (Ibu Kota Nusantara, IKN), where infrastructure development and urban policy transformations reshape not only economic indicators but also social networks, spatial access, living costs, and residents' sense of belonging to an emerging urban space.

This multidimensional understanding resonates with classical Islamic urban thought, which conceptualizes the city as a moral, social, and political space rather than a purely physical or economic entity. Al-Fārābī, in *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*, frames the city as an ethical community oriented toward the attainment of *sa'ādah* (collective well-being). Urban organization, leadership, and spatial arrangements are thus evaluated based on their capacity to promote justice, social harmony, and the fulfillment of human needs. This normative perspective provides an

important foundation for interpreting IKN not merely as a large-scale infrastructure project, but as a process of urban formation that should be assessed in terms of its social welfare outcomes.

Contemporary urban studies further emphasize the importance of subjective dimensions of welfare, as rapid urban change often generates welfare paradoxes. Improvements in accessibility and employment opportunities may coincide with psychological stress, spatial conflicts, and anxieties related to relocation or rising land and housing prices. Research on urban form and subjective well-being demonstrates that spatial structures shape daily experiences, social interaction intensity, and activity opportunities, thereby influencing overall welfare (Samuelsson, 2021). This insight parallels Ibn Khaldūn's analysis in *al-Muqaddimah*, which argues that urban growth and physical development can enhance prosperity while simultaneously weakening social cohesion (*‘aṣabiyyah*) and increasing urban burdens if distributive justice and social balance are not maintained. In the context of IKN, these perspectives suggest that welfare impacts cannot be inferred solely from infrastructure outputs but must be examined through changes in everyday life, mobility patterns, and social relations.

Beyond subjective experiences, institutional arrangements and urban governance play a decisive role in shaping welfare outcomes. Urban governance literature consistently finds that cross-sectoral coordination, civic participation, and institutional capacity are positively associated with population health, welfare, and equity (Mesa-Vieira et al., 2023). A comparable emphasis is found in al-Māwardī's *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, which defines the state's responsibility as safeguarding *al-maṣāliḥ al-‘āmmah* (public interests), including spatial regulation, service provision, and protection of vulnerable groups. Applied to IKN, this framework underscores the importance of institutional design and intergovernmental coordination in determining whether development benefits are broadly shared or disproportionately captured by specific actors.

Critical scholarship on IKN within the Indonesian context highlights that new capital development inevitably reproduces spatial power relations and redistributes resources. From a critical geography perspective, processes of land capitalization, shifts in land tenure, and functional reconfiguration of space may marginalize local communities if social protection and rights to urban space are insufficiently safeguarded (Mahaswa et al., 2024). This concern aligns with the Islamic *ḥisbah* tradition, articulated by scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Ukhuwwah, which emphasizes market supervision, fair pricing, and the prevention of exploitative practices as integral to urban welfare (Ibn al-Ukhuwwah, 1300). The ethical principle *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* (no harm and no reciprocal harm) offers a normative lens for assessing whether infrastructure-led development around IKN generates excessive social costs, such as housing unaffordability, land speculation, or displacement.

Urban economics and regional development literature identify several key mechanisms through which infrastructure affects welfare, including reductions in transport costs and travel time, productivity gains, expanded labor market access, and improved public services. However, net welfare effects depend on the balance between accessibility benefits and rising living costs, particularly housing and land prices. Empirical evidence from Indonesia confirms this dual mechanism. Studies on road maintenance demonstrate that improved road quality increases employment and labor incomes while simultaneously contributing to higher housing prices, yielding an estimated household welfare elasticity of approximately 0.1 and favorable benefit–cost ratios for infrastructure investment (Gertler et al., 2024). For areas surrounding IKN, these findings indicate that connectivity improvements may undermine welfare for low-income households if not accompanied by housing and social protection policies.

Modern spatial economics further emphasizes that transport infrastructure reshapes welfare distribution across regions through changes in factor prices, labor reallocation, and spatial concentration of economic activity. Consequently, welfare evaluation must address distributional effects rather than aggregate gains alone, as benefits are often unevenly distributed across social groups and locations (Allen & Arkolakis, 2022). In parallel, urban transport studies warn of *transit-induced gentrification*, whereby improved accessibility leads to rising rents, property values, and social displacement in the absence of regulatory safeguards (Kandt et al., 2025). These risks are particularly salient for IKN's surrounding urban areas, which are expected to experience rapid urbanization and intensified land market pressures.

Environmental dimensions further complicate the welfare implications of infrastructure

development. Green infrastructure planning is widely promoted as a strategy to mitigate flooding, heat stress, and disaster risks while enhancing quality of life. Nevertheless, policy evaluations reveal that many green infrastructure initiatives fail to operationalize equity principles and may reproduce inequality through green gentrification if inclusivity is not explicitly addressed (Grabowski et al., 2023). This insight is directly relevant to IKN's forest city and sustainability agenda. In this regard, the Islamic principle of *mīzān* (balance) reinforces the argument that environmental sustainability and social justice must be pursued simultaneously in urban development.

Taken together, the literature can be grouped into four major streams: quantitative analyses of infrastructure and welfare, studies of urban governance and equity, research on gentrification and spatial injustice, and scholarship specifically addressing IKN as a megaproject. While these strands provide valuable insights, few studies integrate infrastructure development, urban policy, and social welfare within a single analytical framework that captures both empirical outcomes and normative considerations. This study addresses this gap by examining social welfare in urban and peri-urban areas surrounding IKN through a multidimensional and distributive lens, while drawing on both contemporary urban scholarship and classical Islamic urban thought that emphasizes justice, public interest, and sustainability.

Method

This study adopts a **sequential explanatory mixed-methods design** that integrates spatial quantitative analysis, qualitative policy inquiry, and a socio-economic historical approach grounded in Islamic historiography. The integration of these approaches enables a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of infrastructure development and urban policy surrounding Indonesia's new capital, Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), by situating contemporary welfare outcomes within broader historical trajectories of urban governance, economic distribution, and social justice. In this framework, IKN is examined not merely as a modern infrastructure megaproject, but as a process of spatial transformation whose social consequences resonate with long-standing historical experiences of city-making and welfare provision.

The first stage of the research employs quantitative methods to estimate the effects of IKN-related infrastructure development on social welfare in surrounding urban and peri-urban areas. A spatial panel econometric approach is applied to explicitly account for spatial dependence and interregional spillover effects that characterize interconnected urban systems such as the IKN development corridor. The units of analysis comprise cities and regencies functioning as key buffer zones of IKN, namely Balikpapan, Samarinda, Penajam Paser Utara, and Kutai Kartanegara, observed over an annual panel from 2018 to 2027. This temporal horizon captures the pre-development phase, the construction period, and the early stage of IKN's operationalization, thereby enabling the identification of welfare changes associated with major policy decisions and infrastructure investments.

Social welfare is operationalized through a multidimensional composite measure referred to as the **Nusantara Urban Welfare Index**, which adapts capability-based and multidimensional deprivation frameworks to the Indonesian urban context. The index encompasses indicators of access to basic services, housing and neighborhood quality, employment opportunities and economic participation, social cohesion, and environmental resilience. The primary treatment variables represent infrastructure intensity and regional connectivity, including strategic road networks, transport accessibility, and key public facilities along the IKN corridor. Urban policy variables that may mediate or moderate infrastructure effects are systematically coded from official planning documents on spatial development, housing, transport, social protection, and environmental management into a policy interaction score compatible with econometric estimation.

The main identification strategy relies on a **Spatial Durbin Model with fixed effects**, using spatial weight matrices derived from geographic proximity and transport network connectivity. This specification allows for the decomposition of direct and indirect effects, thereby facilitating an explicit assessment of the distribution of welfare gains across regions. Spatial diagnostics are conducted using global Moran's I and local indicators of spatial association (LISA) to verify model adequacy and to identify significant spatial clusters. As a robustness check and cross-validation

strategy, the study also applies staggered **difference-in-differences** estimators that account for variation in the timing of infrastructure and policy implementation and mitigate potential biases arising from heterogeneous treatment effects.

The second stage of the research consists of a qualitative inquiry aimed at interpreting and contextualizing the causal mechanisms identified in the quantitative analysis. Qualitative data are collected through elite interviews with local government officials and relevant authorities, focus group discussions with affected communities, and systematic examination of urban planning documents and policy processes. Thematic analysis is employed to link observed welfare changes to institutional capacity, cross-sectoral coordination, and residents' lived experiences of spatial restructuring, mobility shifts, and cost-of-living pressures associated with IKN-related development. This stage functions as an interpretive bridge between statistical outcomes and the social realities of communities undergoing rapid urban transformation.

To strengthen analytical depth and extend interpretive horizons, the study incorporates a **socio economic historical method rooted in Islamic historiography**. Islamic historiography is employed not as a normative theological framework, but as a historical social science approach that reconstructs relationships between urban form, economic organization, and social welfare in Islamic civilizations. This historical perspective draws on classical texts that discuss cities, markets, and public authority, including Ibn Khaldūn's *al-Muqaddimah*, al-Māwardī's *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, al-Fārābī's *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*, and *ḥisbah* treatises by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Ukhuwwah. These works are treated as historical records of socio-economic governance rather than prescriptive doctrines (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1300).

The historiographical analysis involves contextual interpretation and source criticism to situate these texts within their socio-political and economic settings. Core concepts such as *'umrān* (urban civilization), *al-maṣlaḥah al-'āmmah* (public welfare), *'adl* (distributive justice), and *ḥisbah* (market and social regulation) are analyzed as historically grounded analytical categories that address urban inequality, market failures, and social cohesion. These concepts provide a comparative lens through which contemporary patterns of infrastructure-led development and welfare distribution around IKN can be interpreted. Findings from the historical analysis are synthesized with quantitative and qualitative results to evaluate whether current infrastructure development and urban policy around IKN tend to reproduce historically observed patterns of unequal benefit distribution and social exclusion, or whether they align with principles of equity, protection of vulnerable groups, and social cohesion evident in historical urban governance practices. Through this integrated methodological approach, the study moves beyond measuring aggregate welfare outcomes to critically assess the social quality and distributive justice of urban transformation around IKN, thereby contributing to broader debates on inclusive and sustainable development in the context of large-scale urban megaprojects.

Results and Discussion

The quantitative findings presented in the results section reveal that infrastructure development and urban policy interventions associated with Indonesia's Ibu Kota Nusantara have been accompanied by improvements in several indicators of social welfare and economic performance across the surrounding urban areas. However, these improvements are unevenly distributed across space, indicating that urban welfare outcomes are not determined solely by the scale of physical investment. Rather, they are shaped by governance arrangements, social relations, and the normative frameworks that guide urban transformation. Accordingly, the discussion of these findings extends beyond contemporary urban economics and development studies by incorporating an Islamic historiographical perspective to interrogate the broader meaning of welfare in urban development.

Within Islamic historiography, the city is not conceived merely as a physical settlement or a growth pole for economic accumulation, but as a socio-moral space tasked with securing the public good (*maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*). Classical texts such as al-Māwardī's *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*, and the *ḥisbah* treatises of al-Shayzarī and Ibn Taymiyyah articulate a vision of urban governance in which social welfare, distributive justice, and the protection of vulnerable groups constitute central obligations of the state. In this tradition, infrastructure and

economic expansion are considered legitimate and desirable insofar as they enhance equitable access to resources, sustain social cohesion, and prevent the concentration of benefits among privileged groups (Al-Māwardī, 1058).

An Islamic historiographical approach thus provides an interpretive lens through which the empirical findings of this study can be critically assessed, particularly in evaluating the extent to which the development of the IKN and its surrounding cities aligns with principles of social justice and equitable welfare. By situating contemporary socio-economic dynamics within long-standing Islamic conceptions of urban order, prosperity, and state responsibility, the discussion examines whether the ongoing urban transformation around the IKN contributes to collective well-being or risks reproducing structural inequalities. This framework also offers a normative foundation for urban policy formulation, emphasizing that sustainable and inclusive development requires not only economic efficiency but also ethical commitments to justice, balance, and social responsibility.

Interpreting the Findings through an Islamic Historiographical Perspective: Social Justice, *Maslahah*, and Urban Governance

The empirical findings on the variation of social welfare and economic growth across the buffer regions of Indonesia's new capital, Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), can be interpreted more deeply through an Islamic historiographical perspective, particularly by drawing on the normative concepts of social justice (*al-'adl*), public interest (*maslahah 'ammah*), and urban governance in the Islamic civilizational tradition. In classical Islamic cities, infrastructure development and spatial planning were not conceived merely as instruments of economic expansion, but as mechanisms to balance material prosperity, social cohesion, and the protection of vulnerable groups. Accordingly, improvements in aggregate indicators such as GDP per capita and the Human Development Index observed in Balikpapan and Samarinda should not be assessed solely in terms of economic efficiency, but also in relation to their distributive consequences and their capacity to prevent the concentration of benefits among already advantaged groups (Ahmad et al., 2016).

Within Islamic political and social thought, social welfare is understood as the fulfillment of both material and non-material needs, accompanied by the preservation of social harmony between individuals, communities, and public authority. Historical accounts of Islamic governance emphasize the moral and institutional responsibility of the state to ensure equitable access to urban resources, including housing, markets, transportation networks, and public spaces. From this perspective, the observed reductions in poverty and unemployment in the IKN surrounding regions indicate a movement toward *maslahah*, yet the uneven trajectories of the Gini ratio signal potential deviations from distributive justicean issue that has long occupied a central place in Islamic historiography on public policy and social order (El-Kholei, 2019).

The heterogeneous economic trajectories of Penajam Paser Utara and Kutai Kartanegara further resonate with historical patterns identified in Islamic urban history, particularly regarding frontier cities and rapidly transforming peripheral regions. Historical evidence suggests that areas experiencing rapid, project-driven economic growth often face tensions between short-term output expansion and the long-term sustainability of social welfare. In the case of Penajam Paser Utara, the sharp rise in GDP per capita followed by stabilization may reflect an early-stage investment effect linked to IKN-related construction activities. From a historiographical standpoint, such phases typically require deliberate policy intervention to transform temporary economic stimuli into a diversified and socially embedded economic base. Without institutional strengthening and social protection, growth driven by large-scale projects risks remaining transient and unevenly distributed (Ahn & Juraev, 2024).

Kutai Kartanegara exhibits a contrasting pattern, characterized by pronounced fluctuations in GDP per capita and indications of rising inequality. In Islamic historiographical analyses, similar patterns have often been associated with rent concentration and unequal control over productive resources. Classical discussions on fiscal justice and land governance underscore the necessity of state oversight to prevent the accumulation of wealth within narrow segments of society. In the contemporary context of the IKN buffer regions, these findings reinforce the argument that development outcomes should not be evaluated exclusively through output growth, but rather through their effects on household welfare, livelihood security, and social cohesion (Husain et al., 2026).

By integrating quantitative evidence with an Islamic historiographical framework, this study strengthens the conclusion that infrastructure development and urban policy around Ibu Kota Nusantara should be oriented toward achieving inclusive and sustainable *maslahah*. Such an approach positions social welfare not as a by-product of economic growth, but as the normative core of urban development and governance. The historical perspective offered by Islamic historiography thus provides both ethical grounding and analytical depth for assessing spatial inequality and guiding policy design, ensuring that the transformation of the IKN and its surrounding urban areas fosters equitable, inclusive, and socially legitimate development rather than exclusive forms of progress (Janiah, 2025).

Interpreting the Impact of IKN Infrastructure Development on Urban Welfare: An Empirical and Islamic Historiographical Perspective

The increase in the Human Development Index (HDI) and the decline in open unemployment rates across the IKN buffer regions can be interpreted as early signals of strengthened labor markets and improved access to basic services driven by infrastructure expansion and the intensification of economic activities associated with the new capital development. From an urban economics perspective, large-scale infrastructure projects and the concentration of construction and supporting service activities generate both direct and indirect labor demand, expand employment opportunities, and contribute to rising household incomes. However, the literature consistently highlights that such mechanisms are rarely distribution-neutral. Infrastructure-led growth often coincides with rising land prices and housing rents, leading to asymmetric welfare gains. This pattern is well documented in various national contexts, including Indonesia, and is particularly relevant for the IKN corridor, where improved accessibility has rapidly increased demand for strategic urban space (Gertler et al., 2024).

In Balikpapan, the relatively consistent increase in per capita GRDP alongside declining poverty and unemployment rates suggests the city's emerging role as a service, logistics, and residential hub supporting IKN-related activities. Nevertheless, the relative stability of the Gini ratio should not be interpreted as the absence of distributional pressures. Instead, it likely reflects the coexistence of two countervailing processes: broad-based job creation in construction and services, and rising living and housing costs that disproportionately burden low-income households. In the Indonesian context, the increasing financialization of housing markets enables rising demand to be quickly translated into price escalation, allowing growth benefits to be captured more readily by asset owners than by households without land or property ownership (Rahmawati & Rukmana, 2022).

In Samarinda, reductions in unemployment and poverty have occurred alongside rising per capita GRDP, indicating a relatively inclusive expansion of economic activity at an early stage. However, fluctuations in the Gini ratio particularly the unusually low value recorded in 2023 should be interpreted cautiously, as they may reflect measurement variation or unstable income distribution dynamics. As an administrative and commercial center, Samarinda is likely to experience dual development effects: the expansion of formal economic activity on the one hand, and accelerated urbanization and labor migration on the other. In the absence of effective affordable housing policies and controls on speculative practices, improvements in average welfare indicators may coexist with increasing cost-of-living pressures on vulnerable groups (Rahmawati & Rukmana, 2026).

Penajam Paser Utara exhibits a sharp rise in per capita GRDP through 2023 followed by relative stabilization in 2024, reflecting the effects of construction phases, investment inflows, and enhanced connectivity in the region closest to the IKN core. Spatial proximity to the capital, however, also renders the area particularly vulnerable to land price inflation, rapid land-use transformation, and distributive conflicts. Studies on land governance around IKN emphasize that without strong participatory mechanisms and social protection frameworks, development trajectories risk marginalizing local communities and undermining long-term welfare sustainability (Syaban & Appiah-Opoku, 2024). Kutai Kartanegara presents a contrasting pattern, characterized by high volatility in per capita GRDP and a tendency toward rising inequality in 2024. This reflects the region's sensitivity to a commodity-based and extractive economic structure. In such contexts, infrastructure investment may enhance aggregate output, yet the distribution of benefits often

remains concentrated in specific sectors or income groups. The literature on pro-poor urban growth underscores that poverty reduction does not necessarily coincide with declining inequality when growth disproportionately benefits middle- and upper-income groups or asset holders (Cai et al., 2024).

These empirical tendencies closely correspond with classical Islamic perspectives on urban development and collective welfare. In the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that the prosperity of an urban society cannot be assessed solely through physical expansion, investment, or economic growth. Sustainable urban development also depends on maintaining distributive justice, social cohesion, and balanced relations among social groups. From this perspective, development that disproportionately concentrates resources among political or economic elites may gradually weaken *'asabiyyah*, understood as the social solidarity that sustains collective life and institutional stability. The patterns observed in the regions surrounding Indonesia's new capital reflect a similar tension between aggregate economic improvement and growing distributional pressures. Economic growth may generate measurable improvements in welfare while simultaneously producing unequal access to housing, employment, infrastructure, and economic opportunities. Thus, the Indonesian experience reinforces Ibn Khaldun's insight that development without distributive balance may generate economic progress that remains socially vulnerable and difficult to sustain in the long term.

The normative political theories of Al-Mawardi in *Al-Ahkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* and Al-Fārābī in *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* further enrich this interpretation by offering early frameworks on urban governance and public welfare. Al-Mawardi emphasizes the obligation of rulers to safeguard public interest (*maṣlaḥah 'ammah*) (Al-Māwardī, 1058), including the protection of vulnerable groups and the regulation of urban space to prevent injustice. Al-Fārābī conceptualizes the city as a collaborative space aimed at achieving both material prosperity and ethical well-being. Within the contemporary IKN context, the observed interregional variation in welfare outcomes underscores that the success of urban policy depends not merely on investment scale or construction speed, but on the extent to which principles of equity, participation, and social protection are operationalized within urban governance. Integrating empirical welfare analysis with Islamic historiographical perspectives thus provides a richer interpretive framework for understanding the impacts of IKN development (Sani & Utami, 2026). This approach emphasizes that urban and regional transformation should not be assessed solely through physical outputs or aggregate growth indicators, but through their capacity to generate just, inclusive, and sustainable welfare outcomes. In this sense, the IKN project represents not only a modern infrastructure initiative, but also a contemporary test of long-standing principles of urban justice articulated within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Distributional Trade-offs of Megaprojects and the Risk of Social Exclusion: An Empirical and Islamic Historiographical Perspective

The findings of this study support the prevailing argument in development literature that large-scale infrastructure investment can enhance average welfare through job creation, improved access to basic services, and increased regional productivity. However, the results also highlight a critical dimension that is often marginalized in dominant megaproject narratives, namely the presence of distributional trade-offs and the risk of social exclusion. Research on capital relocation and large infrastructure projects demonstrates that such initiatives operate not only through formal economic mechanisms, but also through regulatory frameworks, legitimizing development discourses, land-market dynamics, and coercive practices that collectively reshape access to space and livelihoods for local communities (Syafi'i et al., 2025)

In this respect, the findings align with the gentrification literature, which emphasizes that improvements in amenities and accessibility particularly transport infrastructure can trigger rising land values, rent inflation, and indirect displacement of vulnerable groups. Recent reviews on transport-induced gentrification show that these effects are cyclical and evolve throughout the megaproject life cycle, from announcement and construction to operational phases, with profound implications for housing affordability and urban social composition (Bardaka, 2024). Importantly, the exclusionary impacts of such processes extend beyond material deprivation. Studies at the intersection of gentrification and public health underscore that marginalized groups may experience

welfare losses through pathways such as chronic stress, housing insecurity, erosion of social networks, and a diminished sense of belonging, even as macroeconomic indicators improve (Anguelovski et al., 2021). While recent systematic reviews suggest that health impacts of gentrification are mixed, they also stress that measurement challenges and group heterogeneity require policy caution, as low-income households consistently face heightened risks (Hernandez et al., 2024).

These empirical patterns become more analytically salient when interpreted through the lens of Islamic historiography. Ibn Khaldun, in the *Muqaddimah*, conceptualized urban growth (*‘umrān*) as inherently ambivalent: while expansion and infrastructural intensification can generate collective prosperity, they also risk concentrating surplus and spatial control among political and economic elites. He warned that when accumulation becomes excessive and uneven, *‘asabiyyah* the social cohesion underpinning urban sustainability deteriorates. In the context of the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) megaproject, the coexistence of rising average welfare indicators with increasing distributional pressures reflects a classical dilemma already identified by Ibn Khaldun, namely that physical development without distributive governance produces socially fragile progress (Noor et al., 2025).

This perspective is reinforced by Al-Mawardi’s *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, which frames the protection of vulnerable groups and the regulation of access to public resources as core responsibilities of political authority. Al-Mawardi cautioned that state failure to manage inequality and exclusion undermines political legitimacy and social stability. Read in contemporary terms, weak affordable housing policies, limited tenant protection, and inadequate control over land speculation in areas surrounding IKN can be interpreted as failures of distributional governance, whereby economic growth does not translate into equitable social welfare. Similarly, Al-Farabi’s *Ārā’ Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* conceptualizes the city as a cooperative space designed to enable all citizens to attain both material and ethical well-being. A city that advances materially while excluding segments of its population risks degenerating into what Al-Farabi termed *al-madīnah al-jāhilah* a city that prospers economically but lacks justice (Al-Fārābī, 950). This framework is particularly relevant for understanding the risks of social exclusion around IKN, where spatial modernization and rising economic value do not automatically ensure inclusive urban outcomes for coastal communities, indigenous groups, and informal workers.

From the standpoint of contemporary governance, the findings indicate that urban policy should be regarded not simply as a contextual condition but as a critical determinant of distributive outcomes. The effectiveness of economic growth in improving citizens’ welfare depends substantially on the institutional capacity of governments to regulate housing markets and protect vulnerable groups. When affordable housing programs, rental regulation, and measures to prevent speculative practices remain inadequate, increases in GDP per capita may be accompanied by higher living expenses and greater socioeconomic inequality. Evidence from the Indonesian context further demonstrates that housing policy outcomes are influenced by the configuration of policy actors, institutional arrangements, and administrative capacity. Consequently, substantial discrepancies may emerge between the objectives formulated in policy documents and their actual distributional consequences. These conditions highlight the importance of strengthening governance mechanisms, improving coordination among stakeholders, and ensuring that urban development policies incorporate equity, accessibility, and social protection as integral components of sustainable urban development (Rahmawati & Rukmana, 2026)

Taken together, the integration of empirical analysis and Islamic historiographical thought demonstrates that distributional trade-offs in megaproject development are not anomalies, but structural phenomena long recognized in classical urban theory. Megaprojects such as IKN may function as engines of collective welfare, yet without robust distributive governance they also risk reproducing social exclusion in new and institutionalized forms. This perspective underscores that evaluating the success of a new capital city cannot be confined to physical achievements and average indicators alone, but must assess the extent to which development sustains social cohesion, equitable access, and long-term urban well-being across social groups.

Recommendations

Building on the empirical findings, theoretical discussion, and insights drawn from Islamic historiography on urban governance and social justice, this study proposes a set of interrelated recommendations that integrate technical, institutional, and normative dimensions of policy. In classical Islamic thought, as articulated by scholars such as al-Māwardī, Ibn Khaldūn, and Ibn Taymiyyah, urban development is considered legitimate and sustainable only insofar as it safeguards *maṣlaḥah ‘ammah* (public interest) and prevents the excessive concentration of benefits among specific social groups. This normative framework remains highly relevant for reorienting development policies surrounding Indonesia’s new capital (IKN), where improvements in average welfare indicators must be accompanied by mechanisms that ensure distributive justice and protection for vulnerable populations.

First, future research should pursue a more granular analysis of spatial heterogeneity by employing smaller units of observation such as sub-districts, villages, or satellite-based spatial grids to identify welfare clusters and pockets of vulnerability that may be obscured by aggregate regional indicators. This approach resonates with Ibn Khaldūn’s conception of *‘umrān*, which emphasizes differentiated social capacities and positional inequalities within urban structures, and aligns with contemporary evidence showing that the impacts of megaprojects are highly localized and uneven. Fine-grained spatial mapping would enable local governments and the IKN authority to design more targeted interventions, particularly in areas experiencing land price escalation, livelihood displacement, or land-use conflicts.

Second, housing and cost-of-living indicators should be explicitly integrated into welfare assessments, including rental prices, housing values, housing backlog, residential density, and the share of household expenditure devoted to housing and transportation. In classical Islamic governance, the institution of *ḥisbah* assigns the state a central role in market supervision to prevent distortions that harm the broader community, including speculative practices and unjust pricing. Translated into the IKN context, this principle underscores the importance of affordable housing policies, land speculation controls, and tenant protection schemes, ensuring that reductions in unemployment and poverty are not offset by rising living costs that disproportionately burden low-income households.

Third, qualitative research should deepen process-tracing analyses of policy implementation to examine how spatial planning, housing, transportation, and social protection policies are translated into operational decisions, including land acquisition, resettlement, and settlement restructuring. From the perspective of Islamic historiography, the relationship between policy and welfare is shaped not merely by formal regulations but by how authority is exercised and negotiated in practice. Al-Māwardī emphasizes that failures in implementing just policies can erode political legitimacy and generate social tension. Accordingly, process-oriented analysis is crucial for explaining why welfare impacts associated with IKN development vary across regions and social groups.

Fourth, the interaction between urban policy and green development initiatives warrants systematic examination. While green infrastructure and enhanced urban amenities are frequently promoted as pathways to improved quality of life, they also carry the risk of *green gentrification* if not accompanied by robust social safeguards. Islamic ethical perspectives frame environmental stewardship as a collective trust (*amānah*) that must not undermine the subsistence and security of vulnerable communities. Policy evaluations should therefore account for the timing of project announcements, construction, and operation, as well as their effects on land values, housing access, and community continuity.

Fifth, welfare measurement frameworks should incorporate more robust indicators of social cohesion and civic participation. Islamic urban thought places strong emphasis on social solidarity (*ta’āwun*) and a shared sense of belonging as foundations of long-term urban stability and prosperity. In the IKN context, indicators such as participation in local planning forums, recorded land conflicts, community network resilience, and levels of social trust can capture non-material dimensions of urban welfare that are often overlooked in purely economic evaluations. Taken together, these recommendations highlight that the success of IKN and its surrounding regions cannot be assessed solely through infrastructure provision or economic growth metrics. Rather,

sustainable urban development depends on the capacity of urban policy to manage distributive trade-offs and prevent social exclusion. By integrating empirical analysis with insights from Islamic historiography, this study reinforces the argument that genuinely sustainable development is socially just, spatially inclusive, and grounded in normative commitments that balance material progress with collective well-being.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the development of Indonesia's New Capital City (IKN) cannot be understood merely as an infrastructure or economic growth project but must be approached as a holistic urban transformation requiring a comprehensive urban governance framework. Insights from Islamic historiography indicate that classical principles of urban governance such as social justice (*al-'adl*), public interest (*maṣlaḥah 'ammah*), ethical management of public spaces through *hisbah*, and socio-ecological balance (*mīzān*) provide a normative foundation relevant to evaluating the success of a new capital city. While infrastructure development and urban policies in IKN's buffer zones, including Balikpapan, Samarinda, Penajam Paser Utara, and Kutai Kartanegara, have improved economic and welfare indicators, the distribution of benefits remains uneven, creating risks of inequality, land speculation, and marginalization of vulnerable groups. By integrating quantitative, qualitative, and historical analyses of classical texts such as *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, *Nihāyat al-Rutbah*, *Ma'ālim al-Qurbah*, and *al-Muqaddimah*, this study shows that the sustainable success of IKN depends on embedding distributive justice and protection for vulnerable populations into planning and policy implementation. This includes measures such as affordable housing provision, rent control, public space management, and participatory decision-making mechanisms. The findings underscore that social welfare should not be considered a by-product of economic growth but a core indicator of successful urban governance. Islamic principles offer a normative framework emphasizing the ethical responsibility of city authorities to ensure equitable distribution of benefits, maintain social cohesion, and integrate physical development with moral and social well-being. Accordingly, IKN should be developed not only as a physically and technologically advanced capital but also as a city that is environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, and distributively just.

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