

Contested Urban Futures: Spatial Politics and Urban Redevelopment in Jakarta, 2012-2022

Tomy Wijaya, Syafruddin Yusuf

History Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Sriwijaya University

Email: tomywijaya808@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the political dynamics and contentious aspects of urban redevelopment in Jakarta from 2012 to 2022. The research aims to analyze the production, negotiation, and contestation of the city's spatial future by various actors, including the state, capital, and citizens, through regulatory planning, extensive infrastructure initiatives, and quotidian resistance practices. This study employs historical methods and urban historical analysis, utilizing primary sources including provincial spatial planning documents (RTRW, RPJMD), gubernatorial regulations, media archives, and court rulings concerning eviction disputes. Source criticism and interpretation were utilized to elucidate the interaction of modernization narratives, capital accumulation strategies, and community rights. The findings indicate that Jakarta's urban transformation has been propelled by a confluence of top-down governmental policies and the real estate shift facilitating capital accumulation via Transit-Oriented Development projects, reclamation, and mega-infrastructure, alongside grassroots citizen resistance manifested through litigation, advocacy, and the co-production of alternative spaces. These processes generate a spatial arrangement marked by modernization and exacerbating socio-spatial inequality. The study concludes that Jakarta exemplifies contested urbanism, wherein the city functions not merely as a neutral vessel for development but as a political arena influenced by continuous conflicts, negotiations, and compromises. This research enhances global urban studies by providing a nuanced comprehension of spatial politics in the Global South and emphasizing the necessity for inclusive, participatory planning to guarantee that future urban transformations reconcile economic growth with social justice.

Keywords: *Contested Urbanism, Spatial Politics, Jakarta Redevelopment, Urban Inequality, Right to the City*

Introduction

In recent decades, cities in the Global South have emerged as significant sites of urban transformation, characterized by rapid urbanization, population growth, and the influx of global capital. These dynamics present new challenges for urban governance and planning, which now extend beyond the provision of basic infrastructure to encompass the future trajectory of cities as global economic hubs.¹ In contrast to cities in the Global North, which are frequently used as planning

¹ Jennifer Robinson, "Thinking Cities through Elsewhere: Comparative Tactics for a More Global Urban Studies," *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 1 (2016): 3–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132515598025>.

benchmarks, cities in the Global South exhibit distinct complexities, including informality, economic dualism, and conflicts among the interests of state actors, capital, and ordinary citizens.²

The complexity of cities renders them a battleground of perpetual contention, shaped by interactions, conflicts, and negotiations of interests. The essential inquiry of "who possesses the authority to define the character and significance of the city" encompasses not only formal entities like the state, with its policy legitimacy, and capital, with its accumulation potential, but also includes urban residents who assert their existence through claims to the right to inhabit, access public spaces, and secure daily livelihoods. Consequently, urban space should be perceived as a political arena imbued with interests, rather than merely a neutral vessel accommodating developmental interventions. From this perspective, space serves as a conduit for the exercise of power through regulation, planning, and investment, while simultaneously embodying the outcomes of these power dynamics, which are manifested in both the material and symbolic aspects of the city. Eviction, gentrification, and revitalization projects should not be regarded merely as technical spatial planning policies, but rather as tangible expressions of the conflict between differing interpretations of modernity, social justice, and urban rights.³

The framework of contested urbanism has emerged in global urban studies as a significant analytical lens for comprehending cities not merely as physical spaces, but also as arenas where the meaning, legitimacy, and future vision of urban areas are disputed. This perspective highlights that urban development is not solely driven by state policy or capital investment but also by the everyday actions of citizens, acts of resistance, and negotiations that occur at the local level.⁴ Consequently, urban contestation does not solely manifest as overt, confrontational conflict; it is frequently expressed through hybrid processes such as compromise, adaptation, and the co-production of space among various stakeholders. Cities can be perceived as the outcome of perpetual dynamics, wherein spatial claims are incessantly negotiated and redefined by the state, capital, and citizens, rendering the future of urban areas perpetually susceptible to new interpretations and interventions.

Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia and a prominent megacity in Southeast Asia, serves as a significant case study for analyzing contested urbanism. Over the last

² Vanessa Watson, "'The Planned City Sweeps the Poor Away...': Urban Planning and 21st Century Urbanisation," *Progress in Planning* 72, no. 3 (2009): 151–93, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2009.06.002>.

³ Loretta Lees, "The Urban Injustices of New Labour's 'New Urban Renewal': The Case of the Aylesbury Estate in London," *Antipode* 46, no. 4 (2014): 921–47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12020>.

⁴ John Pløger, "Contested Urbanism: Struggles about Representations," *Space and Polity* 14, no. 2 (2010): 143–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2010.505791>.

decade, specifically from 2012 to 2022, Jakarta has undergone significant advancements in strategic infrastructure, including the MRT, transit-oriented development (TOD) initiatives, river normalization and naturalization, residential complexes, and proposals for the reclamation of the northern coastline.⁵ This period was also marked by the leadership of three different governors: Joko Widodo, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, and Anies Baswedan, each of whom brought a distinct vision for urban development while also demonstrating how urban politics is intertwined with national and global agendas. This era was characterized by the governance of three distinct leaders: Joko Widodo, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, and Anies Baswedan, each presenting a unique vision for urban development and illustrating the interconnection between urban politics and national as well as global agendas.⁶

This transformation has been tumultuous, as every urban development initiative invariably generates intricate social ramifications. Numerous development projects have led to significant spatial conflicts, particularly those involving the displacement of informal settlements along riverbanks, in urban centers, and other critical locations. Instances like Kampung Pulo, Bukit Duri, and Kampung Aquarium exemplify the conflict between the modernization agenda advocated by the state under the guise of urban planning, flood mitigation, and aesthetic improvement, and the residents' rights to housing, social connections, and livelihoods that have been entrenched in these areas for an extended period.⁷ Moreover, Jakarta's evolution in the last decade has demonstrated the growing influence of both local and transnational capital in shaping urban development. Extensive property developments, including superblocks, shopping centers, and upscale residential zones, have transformed the city's physical landscape and altered the dynamics of space ownership, shifting it towards commodification.⁸ In this context, urban space is regarded as an investment asset instead of a communal living area, thereby exacerbating the marginalization of the urban poor's access.

Prior studies have demonstrated the range of urban conflict in Jakarta. Leitner and Sheppard (2018) assert that the expulsion of villages constitutes an aspect of contested capital accumulation; however, inhabitants persist in their active

⁵ Sulfikar Amir et al., "Experimenting Collaborative Urbanism: The Experience of Megacity Jakarta," *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability* 0, no. 0 (2024): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2024.2401824>.

⁶ Anggun Yulia Ningsih, "Perbedaan Gaya Kepemimpinan Mantan Gubernur DKI Jakarta: Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) vs Anies Baswedan," *Jurnal Kepemimpinan Dan Pengurusan Sekolah* 8, no. 3 (2023): 188–194, <https://doi.org/10.34125/jkps.v8i3.12>.

⁷ Kim Dovey, Brian Cook, and Amanda Achmadi, "Contested Riverscapes in Jakarta: Flooding, Forced Eviction and Urban Image," *Space and Polity* 23, no. 3 (2019): 265–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2019.1667764>.

⁸ Jo Santoso, "Memahami Transformasi Urban Di Asia: Belajar Dari Kasus Jakarta," *TATALOKA* 15, no. 2 (2013): 102–15, <https://doi.org/10.14710/tataloka.15.2.102-115>.

resistance via legal action and communal practices.⁹ Betteridge et al. (2019) illustrate that residents' resistance is not solely adversarial but also expressed through daily resilience and adaptation to endure the pressures of development.¹⁰ Putri (2024) presents a theoretical viewpoint, conceptualizing kampungs as political centers that cultivate novel interpretations of citizenship and urban rights.¹¹ These three studies confirm that Jakarta's future is influenced by multi-actor negotiations among the state, capital, and residents, with kampungs being pivotal in the dynamics of contested urbanism.

Despite significant contributions from prior research to understanding urban contestation in Jakarta, limitations persist that warrant additional analysis. This study presents a novel viewpoint by synthesizing the concepts of contested urbanism and spatial politics to examine the transformation of Jakarta from 2012 to 2022, a period marked by rapid development through river normalization, reclamation, and mega-infrastructure initiatives. This study emphasizes the dialectical process by which the city's future vision is produced, contested, and negotiated by various actors, rather than merely highlighting eviction conflicts. This approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of spatial politics in the Global South and enhances the global urban studies literature.

Method

This research employs historical methods and an urban historical analysis approach to investigate the dynamics of spatial politics and the redevelopment of Jakarta from 2012 to 2022.¹² The choice of historical methods is grounded in the recognition that urban contestation is not solely a modern occurrence but rather a component of a historical continuum involving the state, capital, and citizens. The phases of historical research encompass four heuristic stages: source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.¹³ The preliminary phase of the research involved heuristics, specifically the gathering of diverse primary sources, including government policy documents (RTRW, RPJMD, and reclamation and normalization

⁹ Helga Leitner and Eric Sheppard, "From Kampungs to Condos? Contested Accumulations through Displacement in Jakarta," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 50, no. 2 (2018): 437–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X17709279>.

¹⁰ Brittany Betteridge and Sophie Webber, "Everyday Resilience, Reworking, and Resistance in North Jakarta's Kampungs," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 2, no. 4 (2019): 944–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848619853985>.

¹¹ Prathiwi Widyatmi Putri, "The Political: A View from Jakarta's Kampungs," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 56, no. 3 (2024): 979–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X231203479>.

¹² Charles Tilly, "What Good Is Urban History?," *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 6 (1996): 702–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009614429602200603>.

¹³ Dedi Irwanto and Alian Sair, *Metodologi Dan Historiografi Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Eja Publisher, 2014).

project documents), print and digital media archives, and judicial rulings about eviction disputes.

The subsequent phase is source criticism, encompassing both external and internal criticism. External criticism assesses the authenticity and credibility of the source, whereas internal criticism examines the biases and interests present within the document. Government policies frequently underscore the narrative of modernization and urban aesthetics, whereas community residents prioritize their right to habitation and sustenance. The critique process is essential to prevent the research from stagnating in a singular discourse and to facilitate a multifaceted analysis. Subsequently, analysis is conducted through the lens of contested urbanism and spatial politics to elucidate the interactions among the state, capital, and citizens in the creation and appropriation of urban space.

The concluding phase is historiography, which involves creating an analytical historical narrative that reconstructs events while interpreting their political significance. In this context, occurrences such as the eviction of Kampung Pulo, Bukit Duri, and Kampung Aquarium, alongside the Jakarta Bay reclamation project and the construction of the MRT/LRT, are interpreted as arenas of multi-actor contention. The composition employs an analytical-argumentative style typical of urban historical studies, ensuring that the research findings extend beyond mere event description to illustrate how Jakarta's future vision is generated, contested, and negotiated. The research aims to provide novel insights into global urban studies, specifically regarding the spatial politics in cities of the Global South.

Results and Discussions

Jakarta and the Contest for the City's Future, 2012-2022

The decade from 2012 to 2022 was characterized by significant spatial reconfiguration in Jakarta, as the provincial regulatory framework integrated with extensive infrastructure initiatives, resulting in a revised landscape of urban interests. The modernization agenda was propelled by a confluence of provincial spatial planning policies, development priorities (RPJMD), private investments in real estate and infrastructure, and discourses on environmental risk mitigation, collectively rendering the city's future a subject of dispute among the state, capital, and citizens. DKI Jakarta Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2012 regarding the 2030 Spatial Plan (RTRW) serves as the principal framework for urban development, governing the structure and spatial configurations of Jakarta's land, water, and air resources.¹⁴ This document aims to reconcile development, environmental conservation, and public safety, while facilitating private investment and risk

¹⁴ Perda DKI Jakarta, "Peraturan Daerah DKI Jakarta No. 1 Tahun 2012."

management discussions, thereby transforming the city's future into a platform for competing urban ideologies and legitimacy.

Concurrently, the 2017-2022 Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), instituted via Local Regulation No. 1 of 2018, consolidates Jakarta's developmental trajectory by highlighting three principal priorities that will shape the city's character over the past decade, including: The establishment of mass transportation corridors, including the MRT, LRT, and BRT, is anticipated to address Jakarta's persistent traffic congestion while simultaneously advancing the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) model, which merges public transportation with commercial and residential property development.¹⁵ This strategy, as articulated by Shatkin (2017), signifies a shift in Asian urban politics regarding real estate, wherein public transportation functions both as mobility infrastructure and as a catalyst for land-based capital accumulation.¹⁶

The enhancement of Jakarta's northern coastline, historically a pivotal area for industry and affluent residences, has been bolstered by a reclamation and coastal development initiative. The Jakarta Bay reclamation project is envisioned as a representation of the city's modernization and global competitiveness; however, it has incited significant opposition from traditional fishermen and civil society organizations, who emphasize its ecological and social repercussions.¹⁷ This policy illustrates how coastal areas are framed as a new frontier for capital accumulation and a site of resistance for citizens against marginalization within the realm of contested urbanism.

Third, flood control initiatives that integrate river normalization and naturalization illustrate the state's ambivalent stance towards urban environmental hazards. River normalization, typically achieved through dredging and the expansion of riverbanks, frequently leads to the displacement of informal settlements, whereas naturalization is advocated as a more ecologically sound strategy that incorporates the principles of green infrastructure. Padawangi & Douglass (2015) assert that flood control measures in Jakarta have consistently been intertwined with issues of legitimacy, spatial access, and overarching political-economic interests, rather than being purely technocratic.¹⁸

At the operational level, multiple Governor Regulations (Pergub) were promulgated to elucidate the implementation strategies for spatial policies

¹⁵ Perda DKI Jakarta, "Peraturan Daerah DKI Jakarta No. 1 Tahun 2018."

¹⁶ G Shatkin, *Cities for Profit: The Real Estate Turn in Asia's Urban Politics* (Cornell University Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Muhammad Astar Paradise and Sahrudin Lubis, "Peran Walhi Jakarta Sebagai Civil Society Organization Dalam Dinamika Kebijakan Reklamasi Teluk Jakarta," *Ilmu Dan Budaya* 46, no. 1 (2025): 32–44.

¹⁸ Rita Padawangi and Mike Douglass, "Water, Water Everywhere: Toward Participatory Solutions to Chronic Urban Flooding in Jakarta," *Pacific Affairs* 88, no. 3 (2015): 517–50, <https://doi.org/10.5509/2015883517>.

previously delineated in the RTRW and RPJMD, thereby functioning as both technical and political instruments in directing urban transformation. Pergub No. 44/2017 on Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Pergub No. 140/2017, which designates PT MRT Jakarta as the TOD manager, underscore the integration of public transportation systems with the development of commercial, residential, and public spaces in the vicinity.^{19,20} In this context, TOD is perceived not merely as a mobility strategy but also as an urban growth mechanism that facilitates partnerships between local governments and the private sector in enhancing land value and generating profit-oriented urban environments.²¹

This method corresponds with the global trend recognized by Shatkin (2017) as the real estate turn, wherein the establishment of mass transportation infrastructure in Asian cities frequently acts as a catalyst for the proliferation of property capital.²² The gubernatorial regulation on TOD serves not only as a technocratic mechanism for enhancing connectivity but also as a legal instrument that redefines the interests among the state, corporations, and urban residents. The execution of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in Jakarta has facilitated the advancement of key regions such as Dukuh Atas, Lebak Bulus, and Fatmawati, resulting in an increase in land values and a process of gentrification.²³

The establishment of mass transportation infrastructure, comprising the MRT (Phase I inaugurated on March 24, 2019) and the LRT (commenced commercial operations on December 1, 2019), has expedited the land revaluation process along transit corridors. Authentic TOD policies (the Governor's Regulation on TOD) facilitate the integration of transportation and real estate functions, enhancing land values and prospects for capital accumulation near stations. The outcome is enhanced public accessibility, but it also incites pressure for land conversion, escalates rents, and potentially marginalizes low-income residents in key corridors. MRT inauguration; LRT operational documentation; Governor's Regulation on Transit-Oriented Development (TOD).

Conversely, the legal-administrative framework in Jakarta's spatial planning is also apparent in regulations about coastal area management and flood mitigation. Gubernatorial Regulation No. 121/2012 was a pivotal development, as it governed the spatial planning for the reclamation of Jakarta's North Coast. This project has historically been contentious among the government, property developers, and coastal communities. This regulation conferred formal legitimacy for the

¹⁹ Pergub DKI Jakarta, "Peraturan Gubernur Provinsi DKI Jakarta No. 44 Tahun 2017."

²⁰ Pergub DKI Jakarta, "Peraturan Gubernur Provinsi DKI Jakarta No. 140 Tahun 2017."

²¹ Alireza Farahani, "Urban Growth Machine," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, no. March 2017 (2017): 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118430873.est0545>.

²² Shatkin, *Cities for Profit: The Real Estate Turn in Asia's Urban Politics*.

²³ Miguel Padeiro, Ana Louro, and Nuno Marques da Costa, "Transit-Oriented Development and Gentrification: A Systematic Review," *Transport Reviews* 39, no. 6 (2019): 733–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01441647.2019.1649316>.

establishment of 17 artificial islands in Jakarta Bay, aimed at fostering economic growth, generating new residential and commercial zones, and advancing the waterfront city initiative.²⁴ Nonetheless, beneath the discourse of modernization and economic advancement, the reclamation has elicited significant criticism concerning its ecological repercussions on marine ecosystems, dangers to traditional fishermen, and the consolidation of private capital's supremacy over urban space.

In the realm of flood control, Gubernatorial Regulation No. 141/2019 established a river naturalization strategy, advocated as a substitute for the previously utilized concreting normalization model.²⁵ The naturalization strategy prioritizes the amalgamation of the river's ecological role with urban spatial planning, exemplified by the creation of green open spaces, retention ponds, and the rehabilitation of riverbanks to enhance environmental sustainability. The distinction in orientation between normalization and naturalization signifies not merely a technical transition but also exposes the political aspect of urban environmental governance, wherein water and flood policies emerge as a battleground among the state's technocratic perspective, developer interests, and residents' entitlements to riverbank settlements.²⁶

The North Jakarta Coast reclamation project, regulated by Gubernatorial Regulation No. 121 of 2012 and supported by various Jakarta Governor's Decrees regarding permits and concessions for reclaimed islands, exemplifies the capitalist-state coalition in the reconfiguration of urban space. This policy redefines Jakarta's coastline, transforming it from an ecological space and a source of traditional livelihoods for fishermen into a global investment zone. The allocation of concessions to prominent property developers for the construction of 17 artificial islands in Jakarta Bay exemplifies the utilization of the coastline as a mechanism for capital accumulation, wherein formerly communal public spaces are converted into exclusive commodities for commercial interests and the upper-middle class.²⁷

Nonetheless, the reclamation project encountered opposition. Initially, it incited legal disputes, public advocacy, and civil society mobilization, encompassing traditional fishing organizations, environmental NGOs, and a consortium of scholars condemning its socio-ecological repercussions. A primary concern in the reclamation discourse was ecological susceptibility associated with the depletion of coastal ecosystems, heightened risk of tidal inundation, and the

²⁴ Pergub DKI Jakarta, "Peraturan Gubernur Provinsi DKI Jakarta No. 121 Tahun 2012."

²⁵ Pergub DKI Jakarta, "Peraturan Gubernur Provinsi DKI Jakarta No. 141 Tahun 2019."

²⁶ Jörgen Hellman, "Living with Floods and Coping with Vulnerability," *Disaster Prevention and Management* 24, no. 4 (2015): 468–83, <https://doi.org/10.1108/DPM-04-2014-0061>.

²⁷ Yoppie Christian, Arif Satria, and Satyawan Sunito, "Ekonomi Politik Konflik Agraria Pulau Kecil: Studi Kasus Di Pulau Pari, Kepulauan Seribu, DKI Jakarta," *Jurnal Sosiologi Pedesaan* 6, no. 1 (2018): 71–78, <https://doi.org/10.22500/sodality.v6i1.21210>.

deterioration of Jakarta Bay's water quality.²⁸ Moreover, the matter of public access to the coastline and coastal sovereignty emerged as a pivotal argument, as reclamation was viewed as transferring the rights of city residents to the sea and coast to the exclusive ownership of capital proprietors. This conflict emerged both legally, via litigation, and politically, as the transition in gubernatorial leadership brought new dynamics to reclamation policy.²⁹

The immediate effects of this agenda are most apparent in riverside and coastal villages: evictions, relocations, and the reconfiguration of living spaces have elicited varied community responses. Specific communities have engaged in litigation and advocacy, as demonstrated by judicial rulings on residents' lawsuits. In contrast, others have cultivated resilience and adaptive strategies for survival, such as modifying housing infrastructure and local economic systems. Examples of co-production in post-eviction housing initiatives include the conversion into a flat model, exemplified by the Aquarium Flats, which illustrate the potential for negotiation among the state, community architecture, and local capital. This co-production model prompts inquiries regarding the equity of benefit allocation, the stability of livelihoods, and the political viability of community engagement.

The State and the Spatial Politics: Modernization, Aesthetics, and Regulation

The state is pivotal in directing urban development via spatial regulations outlined in planning documents, including the Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW), the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), and Regional Regulations (Perda) pertaining to reclamation, zoning, and land use. These documents serve not only as technocratic maps but also as political tools that allocate spatial functions, establish infrastructure development priorities, and guide investment in strategic sectors identified as catalysts for economic growth. Consequently, spatial regulations serve as a mechanism for the state to establish dominance in urban spatial governance. The formulation of these policies is predominantly top-down, with public participation being procedural and restricted, leading to criticism about the social exclusion and marginalization of vulnerable groups in the urban planning process.³⁰

²⁸ Sahliah Dita Arzikah and Yudha Arya Permana, "Kontroversi Reklamasi Pantai Ancol: Manfaat Ekonomi vs Kerusakan Lingkungan," *Journal of Citizenship* 2, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.37950/joc.v2i2.425>.

²⁹ Hikmah Hikmah, Armen Zulham, and Zahri Nasution, "Reklamasi Di Teluk Jakarta Dan Perubahan Sosial Pada Masyarakat Nelayan Di Cilincing Jakarta Utara," *Jurnal Kebijakan Sosial Ekonomi Kelautan Dan Perikanan* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.15578/jksekp.v8i1.6849>.

³⁰ Ratnia Solihah, Siti Witianti, and Hendra, "Partisipasi Publik Dalam Penataan Ruang Kawasan Perkotaan Di Indonesia," *CosmoGov: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 04, no. 02 (2019): 145–59, <https://doi.org/10.24198/cosmogov.v4i2.16086>.

Moreover, the urban development model embraced by local authorities is frequently framed within a narrative of modernization centered on the notion of a sustainable eco-city, which prioritizes the amalgamation of economic advancement, environmental conservation, and social well-being.³¹ This approach necessitates settlement planning that incorporates transparent licensing, participatory environmental impact assessments (AMDAL), and alignment with community aspirations as a measure of spatial justice. Consequently, urban development encompasses not only the pursuit of aesthetics and global image but also ensures equitable access to space for all city residents, particularly the urban poor, who are frequently most affected by spatial planning initiatives.

The narrative of urban modernization in Jakarta is situated within the discourse of "Jakarta as a global city," a spatial political concept that seeks to position Jakarta on par with other global cities regarding economic competitiveness, infrastructure, and urban aesthetics.³² The state, via the local government, consistently promotes the development of urban landmarks such as the MRT, LRT, Jakarta International Stadium, and the Jakarta Bay reclamation project as embodiments of progress and symbols of Jakarta's successful integration into the global economic framework. Urban spatial planning aims not only to establish transportation infrastructure and public spaces but also to cultivate an image of a modern, clean, orderly, and investment-friendly city to attract both foreign and domestic capital.³³

Nevertheless, numerous critical analyses indicate that this narrative frequently overlooks the aspect of spatial inclusivity. Infrastructure initiatives and strategic spatial planning frequently lead to the displacement of informal settlements and coerced relocation, thereby exacerbating socio-economic disparities.³⁴ Public engagement in planning frequently serves a symbolic or procedural role, providing formal legitimacy rather than facilitating meaningful participation in shaping the future of urban environments.³⁵ Consequently, urban modernization poses a risk of fostering an urban bias: cities are refined for

³¹ F.C. Susila Adiyanta, "Hukum Dan Rencana Tata Ruang Kota: Urgensi Kebijakan Pembangunan Kawasan Perkotaan Berbasis Sustainable Eco City," *Masalah-Masalah Hukum* 48, no. 2 (2019): 137–46, <https://doi.org/10.14710/mmh.48.2.2019.137-146>.

³² Aviliani, Jonathan Ersten Herawan, and Firman Sihol Parningotan, "Eventonomics Sebagai Model Pertumbuhan Ekonomi Baru Jakarta Sebagai Kota Global," *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Kebijakan Pembangunan* 14, no. 1 (2025): 83–94, <https://doi.org/10.29244/jekp.14.1.2025.83-94>.

³³ Hooman Ghahremani et al., "Transformation of Urban Spaces within Cities in the Context of Globalization and Urban Competitiveness," *Journal of Urban Planning and Development* 147, no. 3 (2021).

³⁴ Ratna Artha Windari and Wahyudi Arimbawa, "Kota Inklusif Dalam Bingkai Regulasi Di Indonesia," in *CITY FOR ALL: Tantangan Pengembangan Smart City Dalam Membangun Kota Budaya* (Universitas Hindu Indonesia, 2020), 109–24.

³⁵ Delik Hudalah and Tommy Firman, "Beyond Property: Industrial Estates and Post-Suburban Transformation in Jakarta Metropolitan Region," *Cities* 29, no. 1 (2012): 40–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2011.07.003>.

economic advancement and global perception, yet the spatial rights of marginalized populations, including informal laborers, riverbank inhabitants, and low-income communities, are ignored.

The state employs eviction of informal settlements and river normalization programs as technocratic tools for spatial planning to achieve the vision of a modern city. River normalization refers to a technical intervention that alters the morphology of a river by straightening its course, fortifying its banks with concrete, and expanding its width to enhance water flow and mitigate flood risk. This approach frequently overlooks the social aspect, especially the rights of residents residing along riverbanks. Relocations frequently transpire without sufficient housing strategies, resulting in issues such as loss of livelihoods, diminished access to urban amenities, and potential social discord at the relocation sites.³⁶

The normalization project of the Pesanggrahan River serves as a tangible illustration. This project aims to augment river discharge from 50 m³/s to 115 m³/s via dredging, dam construction, and channel widening. Nonetheless, its execution incited opposition from residents due to perceived inequitable compensation for land and structures, resulting in friction between the government and local communities. This scenario illustrates that infrastructure projects are not solely technical but also politically contentious, as they dictate who possesses the entitlement to inhabit urban areas and who must be relocated for developmental objectives.³⁷

In reaction to critiques of river normalization deemed excessively engineering-focused, the Jakarta Provincial Government implemented a river naturalization policy via DKI Jakarta Gubernatorial Regulation No. 31 of 2019.³⁸ This methodology prioritizes the rehabilitation of river ecological functions through the restoration of natural channels, enhancement of water quality, establishment of riparian vegetation, and the creation of green open spaces that are harmoniously integrated with adjacent communities. Naturalization is regarded as a more sustainable and ecologically sound solution, as it facilitates harmonious interactions between ecosystems and human activities. Research indicates that the construction and long-term maintenance expenses of this method are comparatively greater than those of concrete canals, and it encounters challenges related to administration and inter-agency coordination.³⁹ Consequently, although naturalization presents a

³⁶ Dovey, Cook, and Achmadi, "Contested Riverscapes in Jakarta: Flooding, Forced Eviction and Urban Image."

³⁷ Mwangi Mwaura and Mary Lawhon, "Infrastructure in Formation: The Politics and Practices of Making Progress with Infrastructure," *Urban Geography* 46, no. 3 (2025): 568–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2024.2387992>.

³⁸ Pergub DKI Jakarta, "Peraturan Gubernur Provinsi DKI Jakarta No. 31 Tahun 2019."

³⁹ Reza Nurfadhil and Alinda Fitriany Malik Zain, "Evaluasi Ketersediaan Ruang Terbuka Hijau Dan Penerapan Konsep Kota Hijau Di Provinsi DKI Jakarta," *Journal of Regional and Rural*

novel, more inclusive, and ecological framework, its efficacy is contingent upon the government's institutional capacity and sustained policy coherence.

Capital and the Accumulation of Urban Space

Capital significantly influences the urban spatial configuration, converting cities into entities for both habitation and capital accumulation and expansion. In Jakarta, the preeminence of the capital is manifested through the participation of local entities, such as major developer consortia, and international actors who inject global capital to fund strategic initiatives. The most tangible examples are evident in the Jakarta Bay reclamation project, the establishment of integrated superblocks like Central Park and Kota Kasablanka, the advancement of the Sudirman-Thamrin central business district, and the execution of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in conjunction with mass transportation infrastructure such as the MRT, LRT, and KRL. These projects aim to enhance connectivity and stimulate the city's economic development by establishing new, exclusive areas that adhere to international standards and prioritize the upper-middle class and investors spatially.⁴⁰

This phenomenon exemplifies the treatment of land and space as strategic commodities subject to trade, exploitation, and monetization within the framework of urban political economy. Urban space is now perceived not merely as a public asset for communal benefit but as a tool for capital accumulation within a market framework. The outcome is the rise of spatial polarization: urban centers transform into zones characterized by high-value developments, while low-income populations are progressively displaced to the peripheries due to escalating land prices and living expenses.⁴¹

Capital dominance is evident not only in the physical development of urban areas but also shapes state policy through the establishment of political-economic coalitions among property developers, political elites, and governmental bureaucracies. This coalition establishes a policy framework that facilitates capital accumulation through diverse mechanisms, including the streamlining of development permits, the provision of tax incentives, the enhancement of public infrastructure to bolster property values, and the modification of spatial planning regulations to align with the interests of strategic investors.⁴² In essence, spatial

Deveelopment Planning (Jurnal Perencanaan Pembangunan Wilayah Dan Perdesaan) 8, no. 1 (2024): 76–95, <https://doi.org/10.29244/jp2wd.2024.8.1.76-95>.

⁴⁰ Dimitar Anguelov, “Financializing Urban Infrastructure? The Speculative State-Spaces of ‘Public-Public Partnerships’ in Jakarta,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 55, no. 2 (2023): 445–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X221135823>.

⁴¹ David Madden, “Beyond the Limits of Rentability: Revalorizing Urban Space in Late Neoliberalism,” *Environment and Planning F* 4, no. 3 (2025): 374–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/26349825241241316>.

⁴² Gertjan Wijburg and Richard Waldron, “Cities under State Capitalism,” *Urban Studies* 62, no. 10 (2024): 2154–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980241303832>.

planning policy results from a political-economic compromise that favors investment growth over equitable spatial allocation.

In numerous instances, the state has transitioned from merely regulating to actively facilitating capital expansion. This stance is apparent in initiatives like the reclamation of Jakarta Bay and the establishment of government-supported superblocks, despite objections from civil society organizations regarding the potential jeopardization of low-income communities' access to housing.⁴³ This process illustrates the transformation of city policy into an urban growth apparatus, wherein the state, developers, and investors collaborate to optimize land value enhancement and economic expansion.⁴⁴

This configuration strengthens the inclinations of urban neoliberalism, wherein market logic serves as the principal catalyst for development, and state intervention aims to foster a favorable investment environment. As a result, the impoverished population's right to the city is frequently sidelined, with the value of space assessed based on its prospective economic advantages rather than its social utility. This results in heightened spatial inequality, social polarization, and diminished access for marginalized groups to economic hubs, educational institutions, and public services.⁴⁵ Consequently, urban policies influenced by political-economic coalitions may perpetuate structural injustice unless they are complemented by mechanisms for citizen engagement and the safeguarding of their rights.

Gentrification in Jakarta exemplifies the tangible effects of capital accumulation. The transformation of neighborhoods such as Kemang, Menteng, and Tanah Abang illustrates the transition from low-income residential zones to upscale residential areas, commercial hubs, and lifestyle venues. Gentrification escalates land and rental costs, compelling low-income populations to relocate to suburban areas. This process indicates a transformation in the city's social and spatial framework, with downtown regions becoming progressively exclusive and unaffordable for the majority of residents.⁴⁶

Consequently, capital accumulation in Jakarta not only fosters modern and productive urban environments but also exacerbates social inequality and instigates

⁴³ Gideon Baffoe, "Neoliberal Urban Development and the Polarization of Urban Governance," *Cities* 143 (2023): 104570, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2023.104570>.

⁴⁴ Jovanna Rosen and Luis F. Alvarez León, "The Digital Growth Machine: Urban Change and the Ideology of Technology," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 112, no. 8 (2022): 2248–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2022.2052008>.

⁴⁵ Xing Su, "Building New Cities in the Global South: Neoliberal Planning and Its Adverse Consequences," *Urban Governance* 3, no. 1 (2023): 67–75, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ugj.2022.11.002>.

⁴⁶ Santy Paulla Dewi, "Gentrification and the Vulnerability of Betawi Community," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 158, no. 1 (2018): 012009, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/158/1/012009>.

spatial exclusion. Initiatives like superblocks, reclamation projects, and commercial centers promote gentrification, compelling low-income residents to relocate to suburban areas. This exacerbates social segregation, restricts impoverished groups' access to public spaces and municipal services, and may incite conflict among the government, developers, and impacted communities. Consequently, capital accumulation should be perceived as a political-economic process that delineates who is privileged to reap the benefits of the city and who is marginalized from the centers of growth.

Multi-actor Dispute and the Creation of Space

The creation of urban space is not a neutral technical process; it is a complex dialectical arena where interactions and conflicts among various actors dynamically influence the city's character. The state serves as the principal architect via spatial planning regulations, the provision of strategic infrastructure, and investment policies designed to facilitate modernization and the integration of cities into global economic networks.⁴⁷ The formulation of Regional Spatial Plans (RTRW) and Regional Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMD) functions as a mechanism for allocating spatial roles, guiding developmental priorities, and designating strategic economic zones.

Capital, derived from either local or transnational entities, is a pivotal factor that profoundly impacts spatial production. Capital propels the transformation of cities into areas increasingly focused on land commodification and profit accumulation through extensive property initiatives such as superblocks, business centers, reclamation zones, and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). This process frequently establishes exclusive areas for affluent groups, consequently marginalizing impoverished communities from the city's economic hubs.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, urban residents, particularly the economically disadvantaged, should not be regarded solely as passive subjects of governmental policies and capital growth. They actively participate in the creation of space through diverse methods of resistance, negotiation, and social innovation. Occurrences such as land occupations, protests against evictions, and the establishment of advocacy networks illustrate that urban residents are endeavoring to assert their right to the city and foster the development of more inclusive alternative spaces.⁴⁹ The creation of urban

⁴⁷ Mojtaba Lorzangeneh, "The Role of Spatial Political Economy in Shaping Urban Design," *DIMENSI (Journal of Architecture and Built Environment)* 51, no. 2 (2024): 83–92, <https://doi.org/10.9744/dimensi.51.2.83-92>.

⁴⁸ Ilia Farahani, "Capitalist Urbanization in the Post-Neoliberal and de-Globalizing World Economy: A Minor Critical Engagement with VIP-Urbanism Literature," *Human Geography* 17, no. 3 (2024): 353–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/19427786241259435>.

⁴⁹ Morgana G Martins Krieger, Marlei Pozzebon, and Lauro Gonzalez, "When Social Movements Collaborate with the State towards the Right to the City: Unveiling Compromises and

space is a political process that is perpetually contested, resulting in an inequitable compromise among the interests of the state, capital, and citizens.

This process engenders intricate spatial contention, wherein conflict, negotiation, and compromise concurrently mold the urban landscape and dictate the entitlement to access and utilize that space. Public space, ideally a communal asset, frequently transforms into a battleground between commercial interests such as shopping center development, tourism infrastructure, or the privatization of public areas, and the citizens' demands for inclusive and freely accessible open spaces.⁵⁰ This dispute indicates that space is not merely a physical construct but also a political domain that embodies power dynamics and foundational development ideologies.

Events like protests against the displacement of urban villages, community efforts to safeguard housing and local identity, and legal actions against the Jakarta Bay reclamation project clearly demonstrate that urban residents actively contest the supremacy of the state and capital. These acts of resistance are not solely opposition; they also represent endeavors to assert the right to the city, specifically the collective entitlement to influence developmental trajectories, spatial allocation, and the utilization of urban resources.⁵¹

Consequently, Jakarta exemplifies contested urbanism, wherein urban space is generated through conflict, negotiation, and compromise among the state, capital, and citizens. Instances like the eviction of urban villages, the denial of Jakarta Bay reclamation, and opposition to river normalization illustrate that space serves as a battleground for perpetually contested power dynamics. Despite the predominance of state policies and capital interests, citizens actively defend their urban rights through advocacy, litigation, and the establishment of alternative spaces. Consequently, Jakarta's spatial transformation is dynamic and embodies the interaction of economic, political, and social interests.

Conclusion

This study verifies that the spatial transformation of Jakarta from 2012 to 2022 resulted from a dialectical interaction among the state, capital, and urban residents, rendering the city a site of ongoing contestation. Spatial planning policies and strategic infrastructure initiatives like the MRT, LRT, and TOD, along with reclamation and flood control agendas, functioned not merely as technocratic

Conflicts,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 53, no. 5 (2021): 1115–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X20981616>.

⁵⁰ Trimurti Ningtyas and Siti Amanah, “Privatization of Public Space: Stakeholder Analysis in Shifting the Function of Public Space Case Study in Kediri City, Indonesia,” *Management and Entrepreneurship: Trends of Development* 1, no. 19 (2022): 8–19, <https://doi.org/10.26661/2522-1566/2022-1/19-01>.

⁵¹ Benjamin H Bradlow, “Urban Social Movements and Local State Capacity,” *World Development* 173 (2024): 106415, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2023.106415>.

measures but also as political tools that generated a novel landscape of interests. The state functions as both a regulator and facilitator of investment; capital seizes opportunities to enhance land value through extensive property developments. At the same time, citizens react with resistance, negotiation, and even co-production of alternative spaces. Consequently, the contemporary visage of Jakarta embodies contentious urbanism, wherein modernization, urban aesthetics, and economic advancement are invariably accompanied by evictions, gentrification, and civic opposition advocating for the right to the city.

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