



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL AND POLICY IN TABALONG REGENCY AS A SUPPORTING REGION FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

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Abstract

The relocation of Indonesia's capital city is a strategic governmental initiative aimed at improving urban governance and promoting equitable national development. Geographically, the new capital located in the central region of Indonesia, specifically in Penajam Paser Utara (PPU) and Kutai Kartanegara (KuKar) Regencies is expected to accelerate economic distribution, particularly in the eastern part of the country. Infrastructure development associated with this relocation will also significantly impact surrounding regions, including South Kalimantan, which is projected to serve as a supporting area for the new capital. Tabalong Regency, situated strategically in South Kalimantan, has formulated various strategies and policies to anticipate and align with the development of the new capital, positioning itself as the southern gateway to Nusantara. Using a qualitative research approach, this study reveals that Tabalong possesses multiple strengths, including natural resources, a strategic location, infrastructure, tourism potential, and cultural diversity. In preparation for the capital relocation, the local government is implementing key policies focused on infrastructure enhancement, economic and industrial development, community empowerment, environmental management, digital connectivity, and the creative economy.

Keywords: New Capital City, Policy Strategy, Regional Development Potential, Tabalong.

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure development plays a strategic role in supporting economic growth at both national and regional levels. It contributes significantly to reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty, and improving overall societal welfare. Reliable infrastructure is a critical foundation for economic advancement and private sector investment (World Bank, 2020). In line with this, the Indonesian government remains committed to enhancing infrastructure development as a key priority in its national development agenda (Pusat Komunikasi Publik, 2022).

Infrastructure encompasses more than just transportation networks such as roads and bridges; it also includes essential services in sectors such as education, health, energy, and telecommunications. Improving the quantity and quality of infrastructure—through expanding transport networks, increasing equitable access to education and healthcare, and building electricity, water, and digital communication systems can significantly boost regional productivity and inclusive economic growth. This aligns with findings by Anggiani et al. (2021), who emphasize that equitable infrastructure distribution accelerates regional development and improves access to public services.

One of the Indonesian government's monumental initiatives to promote balanced national development is the relocation of the national capital (Ibu Kota Negara/IKN) from Jakarta to East Kalimantan. This strategic move is not only symbolic of modern and efficient governance reform but also part of a broader long-term vision to reduce regional inequality across the archipelago (Tolkach et al., 2023; Bappenas, 2020). The IKN project is listed as a strategic national priority in the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), with an estimated funding requirement of IDR 466 trillion, as stated in the Appendix II of the IKN Law (2022).

In his national address on August 26, 2019, President Joko Widodo officially announced the relocation of the capital city to the regencies of Penajam Paser Utara (PPU) and Kutai Kartanegara (KuKar) in East Kalimantan Province. According to studies by the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), this relocation is expected to foster new economic growth centers and accelerate development in eastern Indonesia, which has historically lagged behind the western regions (Bappenas, 2020). The central geographical location of the new capital is seen as strategic for achieving justice and equity in national development.

The new capital city, Nusantara, is guided by five core visions: (1) to serve as a symbol of national identity; (2) to be a green, smart, beautiful, and sustainable city; (3) to become a modern city of international standards; (4) to implement efficient and effective governance; and (5) to act as a catalyst for economic growth in eastern Indonesia (Perubahan RPJMD, 2021). The success of this national project, however, depends not only on East Kalimantan's internal readiness but also on the preparedness and contributions of neighboring supporting regions.

Tabalong Regency, located in South Kalimantan Province, holds strategic potential as one of the supporting regions for the new capital. With its advantageous geographical position, improving infrastructure, and direct access to Kalimantan's main economic corridors, Tabalong is well-positioned to serve as a southern gateway to the IKN. The local government of Tabalong has initiated a set of strategic policies to align with the IKN development, including improvements in basic infrastructure, regional connectivity, and the development of key sectors such as energy, tourism, and the creative economy. These initiatives are essential to ensure that the benefits of IKN development extend beyond its core area and support inclusive and sustainable growth across the surrounding regions (Sihombing, 2021; Haryanto, 2022).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with an analytical method. This approach is suitable for exploring social phenomena and public policy within local contexts in a detailed and holistic manner. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasize that qualitative research focuses on meaning, lived experiences, and the interpretation of social actors in their natural settings.

The descriptive method is applied to systematically and factually describe the potential and policy of infrastructure development in Tabalong Regency as a supporting region for the National Capital (IKN). This method is widely used in policy studies to allow for contextual analysis of regional governance dynamics (Neuman, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Location and Time

The research was conducted in Tabalong Regency, South Kalimantan Province, a region strategically located along the main economic corridors of Kalimantan and designated as one of the buffer zones for the future capital. Data collection is scheduled for November 2024.

Data Sources and Types

This study utilizes two main types of data:

- 1) Primary data, obtained directly through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and field documentation.
- 2) Secondary data, gathered from official government documents such as the Regional Development Plan (RPJMD), spatial plans (RTRW), and institutional reports.

To strengthen the credibility of findings, source triangulation was applied (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection Techniques

The following techniques were used to gather data:

- 1) In-depth interviews with officials from Tabalong Government, Bappeda, Public Works Department (PUPR), and local academics and community leaders.
- 2) Direct observations at key infrastructure development sites.
- 3) Document analysis of relevant policy and planning documents.

Research Informants

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals with expertise or direct involvement in infrastructure and regional development. This method is appropriate for qualitative policy research that requires detailed narratives from key stakeholders (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of:

- 1) Data reduction: selecting and filtering relevant information from interviews and field notes.
- 2) Data display: organizing data into narrative descriptions, tables, and diagrams.
- 3) Conclusion drawing and verification: interpreting data patterns to answer research questions.

To ensure validity, technique and source triangulation were conducted along with member checking to confirm interpretations with key informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Potential of Tabalong Regency as a Supporting Region for IKN

Tabalong possesses fertile agricultural land, production forest areas, and extractive resources such as coal and oil, managed by major companies including Adaro and Pertamina (Indonesia Business Post, 2024). This potential is further strengthened by the development of the Seradang Industrial Zone, projected to become a “Smart Industrial Park” equipped with adequate logistics facilities (Indonesia Business Post, 2024).

Simultaneous road and bridge development has been proven to have a significant positive impact on local economic growth ($p = 0.020$), although road development partially shows a negative effect due to maintenance issues (Andrianto et al., 2024). Over the past two decades, the length of local roads has increased from 885.7 km in 2002 to 904.13 km in 2024, while bridge construction, although statistically insignificant, still positively contributes to improving connectivity (Andrianto et al., 2024).

The mobilization of local labor with technical skills also supports industrial area transformation and the implementation of the smart city concept (Indonesia Business Post, 2024).

Infrastructure development policies are formulated through the Regional Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPD), Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), and annual development plans, with priority given to integrated road and bridge construction under the National Strategic Project (PSN) framework (Andrianto et al., 2024). Additionally, Tabalong has designed digital transformation policies and smart city development programs as part of its strategic role as a supporting region for the new capital city (IKN) (Diskominfo Tabalong, 2023).

Table 1. Policy patterns and strategic implications

Strategic Focus	Details
Regional connectivity	Strategic location along the Trans-Kalimantan route supports IKN logistics distribution.
Local industry	Development of the seradang industrial zone with a smart industrial park and research facilities.
Creative economy	Support for tourism villages and MSMEs with high economic multiplier effects.
Macroeconomic targets	Economic growth $\geq 5\%$, controlled inflation, and improvement of the human development index (HDI).
Governance & digitalization	Integrated public services, detailed spatial plan (DRTR), smart city development, and investment-friendly climate.

Infrastructure Development Policy

The infrastructure development policy in Tabalong is aligned with the national policy framework through National Strategic Projects (PSN) and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) schemes. The local government actively encourages investment in environmentally friendly technology-based industrial zones and provides incentives for investors (Pramesti & Basuki, 2025). Furthermore, infrastructure development policies are directed toward supporting the distribution of goods and services in the agricultural, industrial, and tourism sectors, thereby creating a multiplier effect on the local economy (Andrianto et al., 2024).

Agricultural and Plantation Potential

Tabalong possesses extensive land resources that support agriculture and plantation sectors. The main commodities include rice, corn, palm oil, rubber, and various horticultural products.

According to Diskominfo Tabalong (2023), palm oil and rubber plantations are key sectors contributing to regional exports. Additionally, the agricultural sector plays a crucial role in supplying food for the new capital city (IKN), thus strengthening food security and reducing dependency on imported food supplies from other regions.

Tourism Potential

Tabalong also has significant natural and cultural tourism potential. Ecotourism destinations and tourism villages, such as Riam Bidadari, have shown a considerable economic multiplier effect on local community income. Izzati (2023) found that the tourism sector's multiplier effect in Tabalong increases household income and creates new business opportunities in the creative economy. With proper management, the tourism sector can serve as an alternative economic driver beyond the mining industry.

Strategic Location and Connectivity

Geographically, Tabalong is located along the vital Trans-Kalimantan route that connects South Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and East Kalimantan. This strategic location makes it an essential gateway for logistics distribution to IKN. Its proximity to IKN approximately 200 km positions Tabalong as a crucial transit hub for goods, services, and labor. Rifani (2021) emphasized that this connectivity will accelerate the flow of goods and strengthen Tabalong's function as a primary supporting region for IKN.

Seradang Industrial Zone

The planned development of the Seradang Industrial Zone is one of the Tabalong Regency Government's strategic steps to reinforce its role as a supporting region for IKN. Covering more than 3,000 hectares, this area is designed as a Smart Industrial Park that integrates environmentally friendly technology, logistics infrastructure, and research centers. According to Indonesia Business Post (2024), the zone is expected to become a new investment hub that utilizes local natural resources, creates job opportunities, and increases the added value of Tabalong's products.

Strengthening Leading Sectors and Their Multiplier Effect on Regional Economy

The development of leading sectors in Tabalong Regency, such as mining, agriculture, and tourism, has significantly contributed to regional economic growth. Although the mining sector particularly coal remains the primary contributor to regional revenue, excessive dependence on extractive industries poses a long-term economic sustainability risk. Thus, economic diversification through the development of non-mining sectors has become a crucial strategy to ensure more stable and inclusive growth (Rosyadi & Sobari, 2020).

The tourism sector in Tabalong demonstrates a substantial multiplier effect on the local economy. Ecotourism and cultural tourism activities have stimulated the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), created new employment opportunities, and increased household income. Wibowo and Haryanto (2021) argue that rural-based tourism development in Kalimantan has enhanced local income distribution by increasing the demand for local products, handicrafts, and transportation services, which directly benefits community-based enterprises.

In addition to tourism, agriculture and plantations play a strategic role in supporting the food security of the new capital city (IKN) and strengthening the regional economy. According to Saptana and Ashari (2021), supporting regions around IKN must enhance agro-industrial

development based on local commodities to build an efficient supply chain and expand access to export markets. In Tabalong, the increased production of palm oil, rubber, and horticultural products is not only important for food security but also serves as a vital source of raw materials for the IKN's industrial development.

Furthermore, the diversification of the regional economy significantly contributes to improving human development indicators. Suharto, Pramudiana, and Firdaus (2022) found that regions with a balanced combination of extractive and non-extractive sectors tend to experience faster Human Development Index (HDI) growth compared to resource-dependent regions. Therefore, promoting sustainable agriculture, community-based tourism, and MSME empowerment is essential for Tabalong to build a resilient and adaptive economy while fulfilling its role as a strategic supporting region for IKN Nusantara.

Strengthening Governance and Policy Framework

The Tabalong Regency Government has formulated a Regional Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPD) and a Detailed Spatial Plan (RDTR) to ensure integrated development that aligns with Indonesia's national development agenda. These strategic planning instruments aim to optimize land use, enhance infrastructure connectivity, and support Tabalong's role as a strategic supporting region for the new capital city (IKN) Nusantara.

In addition to spatial and infrastructure planning, local development policies have been directed toward strengthening public service delivery through digital-based governance (smart city initiatives). The implementation of digital systems in public administration is designed to improve bureaucratic efficiency, transparency, and the overall investment climate. This approach is consistent with the findings of Nugroho and Pratama (2022), who argue that smart city initiatives in regional governments significantly enhance investor confidence and regional competitiveness by streamlining licensing processes and improving service quality.

Infrastructure development policies, particularly in the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, have also played a crucial role in boosting regional economic growth. Andrianto et al. (2024) emphasized that well-connected transportation networks have facilitated the mobility of goods and labor, reduced logistical costs, and attracted private investments into the agriculture, mining, and industrial sectors. Similarly, Putra and Santoso (2021) highlight that integrated infrastructure development in resource-based regions strengthens regional supply chains and supports economic diversification efforts.

The combination of strategic spatial planning, digital governance reforms, and infrastructure development illustrates Tabalong's proactive approach to positioning itself as a resilient and competitive supporting region for IKN Nusantara. Strengthening governance and policy frameworks will be key to ensuring sustainable regional economic transformation.

CONCLUSION

Tabalong Regency holds a strategic position as a supporting region for the development of the new capital city (IKN) Nusantara in East Kalimantan. The regency's abundant natural resources, including significant coal reserves, oil and natural gas fields, as well as potential for renewable energy development, make it a key contributor to the energy supply chain for IKN. In addition, its vast agricultural and plantation areas—producing rice, corn, palm oil, rubber, and horticultural commodities—support regional food security and provide raw materials for industrial needs in the IKN area.

The development of the Seradang Industrial Zone as a Smart Industrial Park, along with the integration of sustainable and environmentally friendly technology, reflects the regional

government's commitment to supporting IKN's green development agenda. Furthermore, Tabalong's tourism potential, particularly in eco-tourism and cultural destinations, has demonstrated a significant multiplier effect on the local economy by boosting small and medium-sized enterprises and creating new job opportunities. Tabalong's strategic geographical location on the Trans-Kalimantan route enhances its role as a logistics and trade hub, facilitating the distribution of goods and services to IKN. The local government has also strengthened its development policies through long-term regional planning (RPJPD), detailed spatial planning (RDTR), and the implementation of a digital-based smart city system to improve public services and investment climate.

Overall, optimizing Tabalong's economic, infrastructural, and socio-cultural potentials, supported by sustainable development policies, will not only strengthen its role as a supporting region for IKN but also contribute significantly to regional economic growth and Indonesia's long-term development goals.

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