

10 March 2025

English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names
2025 session**

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda *

**Culture, heritage and language recognition: Geographical names as culture,
heritage and identity****Urgency of developing a representative toponymy model in the
Nusantara Capital City as a reflection of cultural and national
identity**

Submitted by Indonesia **

Summary:

On January 17, 2022, the Government of Indonesia officially announced *Nusantara* as the name of the new capital city of the Republic of Indonesia, replacing *Jakarta* (hereinafter referred to as *The Nusantara Capital City* or *IKN*). In line with the increasingly intensive development of physical structures and infrastructure in *IKN*, a comprehensive toponymy system is essential to assign distinctive identifiers to various spaces and locations. The construction of *IKN* necessitates naming practices that appropriately designate every object within the area (such as building complexes, transportation facilities, residential areas, office spaces, tourist attractions, and public open spaces). These naming conventions must align with the vision and mission of *Nusantara* as the capital city and comply with all applicable laws and government regulations.

This article discusses recommendations for developing a representative toponymy model in *IKN* that reflects cultural and national identity. To establish an effective model, it is crucial to examine similar place-naming practices. Historically, during the Dutch colonial period, Indonesia demonstrated systematic and structured practices in capital city development, including naming places. In the early 20th century, the Dutch prepared *Bandung* (currently the country's second-largest and second-most populous metropolitan areas) as the capital of the Dutch East Indies, replacing *Batavia* (now *Jakarta*), which was deemed unsuitable due to its many deficiencies and outbreaks of disease. In addition to carefully designing the city and initiating urban development, the Dutch Colonial Government established a Place Naming Commission through the City Council to ensure that the naming of places and streets in *Bandung* was systematic and culturally aligned with local social and cultural groups.

Developing a toponymy model for the new capital city requires the following steps:

*GEGN.2/20215/1

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1. **Conducting Exploratory Research:** This involves reviewing academic literature, legal documents governing place-naming in Indonesia, and interviewing key community figures and academics.
2. **Creating a Toponymy Model:** Based on the collected data, categories and naming themes are developed. Once the model, including detailed place names, is drafted, a review panel should evaluate it to gather feedback from local government representatives and experts.
3. **Proposal and Evaluation:** If approved, the model can serve as a policy under The IKN Authority, representing the Government. The policy would then be implemented in the naming of all targeted locations.

Finally, to measure the success of this toponymy model, an evaluation study involving multiple stakeholders and communities should be conducted. This ensures a comprehensive and refined model. A validated toponymy model tailored to the direction of *IKN* would strengthen Indonesia's identity and that of its capital city, reflecting the interplay of local and national identities. If successful, this model could serve as a reference for other nations planning to establish new capitals.

Urgency of developing a representative toponymy model in the Nusantara Capital City as a reflection of cultural and national identity

1. Introduction

On January 17, 2022, the Indonesian government officially announced *Nusantara* as the name of the new capital city of the Republic of Indonesia, to replace *Jakarta*. The relocation of the capital is not merely a matter of infrastructural expansion but also has significant implications for sociocultural transformation. The relocation of the capital to East Kalimantan was legitimized through Law No. 3 of 2022 on the National Capital, which officially designates it as *the National Capital of Nusantara (IKN)*. Establishing IKN requires not only the development of infrastructure and its supporting environment but also an assessment of the readiness of both the local population and incoming residents. Sutanto (2022) highlights potential socio-cultural transformations resulting from the capital relocation, including large-scale urbanization, the emergence of new cultural practices, and social disparities between local inhabitants and newcomers.

As a city constructed from scratch, Nusantara must prepare hundreds, if not thousands, of place names for buildings, streets, parks, and other locations. The naming of locations within IKN is fundamentally a linguistic issue and is closely related to the languages spoken by local communities. Therefore, the naming process should consider the existence of local languages. Recognizing local languages as the basis for place names can serve as a cultural acknowledgment for the communities that have historically inhabited the area. This approach may help mitigate potential conflicts in the future (Katubi, 2024 [in Sucipto, 2024]).

The selection of "Nusantara" as the capital's name was conducted with careful consideration. Therefore, it is also essential to establish a concept and national symbolism through toponymy. The conceptualization and symbolism of Nusantara as the capital will serve as a foundation for developing a toponymic model and generating a list of place names within IKN. These names will encompass artificial and natural spaces within the Core Government Center (KIPP), including transportation facilities, offices, residential areas, and public spaces. Proper place naming can reduce the likelihood of horizontal social conflicts by ensuring that the chosen names represent the diverse social groups residing in and around IKN and, more broadly, the Indonesian population.

2. The History of Capital City Development: Bandung and the Yogyakarta Palace

In the early 20th century, the Dutch colonial administration had planned to designate Bandung (now one of Indonesia's major cities) as the capital of the Dutch East Indies, replacing Batavia, due to its unsuitability and frequent outbreaks of disease. Beyond designing and constructing the city, the Dutch colonial government established a Naming Commission through the City Council to ensure a systematic and culturally appropriate approach to naming places and streets in Bandung (Kurnia, 2021). As a result, the following toponymic models, still in use today, emerged (Erikha, 2023):

Table 1. Street Name Themes in Bandung in Colonial Era

No	Theme	Subtheme
	Personal names	Colonial
		Nusantara
		Eastern Foreign
		Fiction
	Place names	Colonial
		Nusantara
	Oronyms	Mountains in West Java and Lampung
	Hydronyms	Rivers in West Java, Central Java, East Java, Other Water Bodies
	Flora	Trees
		Flowers
		Medical Plants
	Fauna	Fish
		Birds
	Word classes	Adjectives
		Verbs
	Landforms	Ravines
		Hills
	Technology	Telecommunications
		Transportation
		Waste Management
	Professions	Security Chiefs
		Prosecutors
		Writers
		Carpenters
		Air Force Army
	Directions	East
	Social groups	Dutch
		Sunda

Another example is the development of the Yogyakarta Palace, which, before Indonesia's independence, was considered an independent kingdom/state. The palace's construction adhered to three fundamental aspects of Javanese philosophy: (1) individuals must understand their origins and ultimate purpose in life (*Sangkan Paraning Dumadi*) and follow the cycle of existence; (2) humans must maintain harmony with God, other people, and nature (*Hamemayu Hayuning Bawono*); and (3) the deep connection between humans and God creates an impression of unity between the servant and the Creator (*Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*) (Priyono et al., 2015). Notably, the names assigned to monuments, building complexes, significant rooms, fields, and streets within the palace hold symbolic meanings related to these three philosophical principles (Erikha & Lauder, 2022). This philosophical heritage was recognized as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage in 2023.

3. Exploring Toponymy in IKN

Several studies have investigated toponymy within the IKN context. One of the pioneering studies on the subject was conducted by Taqyuddin et al. (2019) under the title *Toponomastics: The Place-Naming Model of IKN (Sepaku – Penajam Paser Utara and Surroundings)*. This research explored potential names for the national capital and proposed "Mahakam" as one possible name. Additionally, it examined the linguistic patterns (semantic and morphological themes) in the names of sub-districts in East Kalimantan.

Following the official naming of Nusantara, further toponymic studies emerged. Darheni et al. (2023) examined administrative place names within IKN, emphasizing cultural heritage preservation to strengthen national identity. This study documented administrative place names (subdistrict names) in Penajam Paser Utara and Kutai Kartanegara, incorporating a critical toponymy perspective that analyzed public perceptions, place-making, and underlying power relations (Darheni et al., in preparation).

Another study by Yulius et al. (2023) documented natural and artificial toponyms within IKN, analyzing their sociocultural background. This research identified 406 natural and artificial toponyms in IKN's buffer zone, contributing to the understanding of local cultural heritage and sustainable development efforts. The findings serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and local communities.

Further research by Darheni et al. (2024) examined the construction of hydronyms for bodies of water within IKN, including seas, rivers, reservoirs, canals, springs, lakes, straits, and coastal areas. The study aimed to preserve the collective memory of maritime civilizations in East Kalimantan and reinforce Indonesia's identity as a maritime nation. Notably, certain water bodies have known local names that remain undocumented, being recognized only by elders and some residents. Additionally, former mining sites and newly constructed reservoirs have potential for eco-tourism development.

Most existing studies on toponymy in IKN focus on existing toponyms that predate the establishment of the capital. These studies primarily emphasize documentation, naming histories, and sociocultural dynamics. However, research on "potential toponyms"—new place names created for IKN's development—remains limited. Given the urgency of constructing an inclusive and representative toponymic model, this study proposes a comprehensive toponymic framework for IKN, ensuring that place names reflect both local and national identities.

Upon closer examination, research on toponyms in the IKN area has primarily focused on place names that existed long before the establishment of IKN (hereinafter referred to as existing toponyms). These studies mainly document toponyms, their naming backgrounds, and the general dynamics surrounding these named locations. In contrast, research on potential toponyms—new place names to be created as part of IKN's development—remains extremely limited. Thus far, it has been observed that new toponyms have emerged within the past year, such as the names of two main roads in the heart of Nusantara: *Jalan Sumbu Kebangsaan Sisi Timur* (East Axis of Nationality Road) and *Jalan Sumbu Kebangsaan Barat* (West Axis of Nationality Road).

The existing studies on IKN-related toponyms predominantly focus on place names that had already been established long before IKN was officially designated by the government. Their findings often highlight the urgency of preserving the collective memory of local communities and the cultural values represented through place names. However, research specifically dedicated to toponyms that have been or will be created (potential toponyms) remains scarce. At the same time, the need to establish well-considered toponyms that accurately represent the identity of IKN can no longer be postponed. Therefore, designing a toponymic model for IKN has become an urgent necessity, aiming to reflect Indonesia's unique composition, shaped by both local and national identities.

Based on this premise, this study aims to address three main objectives:

1. To develop a comprehensive toponymic model for IKN that reflects both cultural identity and national identity;
2. To propose a toponymic model that can be implemented by the IKN Authority;
3. To evaluate the implementation of the toponymic model applied within the Nusantara capital area.

The achievement of these objectives necessitates a practical yet academically grounded approach, encompassing the design, implementation, and evaluation of toponym assignments in the core area of IKN. As the primary beneficiary of this research, the IKN Authority can actively participate throughout the entire process, from the initial stages to the final approval of the model. This involvement will enhance their sense of ownership over the model, ensuring its long-term maintenance and eventual transmission as a legacy for future generations.

In designing, proposing, and evaluating the toponymic model after its implementation, at least five key phases can be undertaken by the IKN Authority: exploratory research, model development, proposal and advocacy, implementation, and evaluation.

4. Model Design Phases

4.1. Phase 1: Exploratory Research

Exploratory research aims to gather relevant information about the target subject. Since this activity revolves around two key concepts—toponymy (place naming) and the Capital City of Nusantara (IKN)—it is necessary to conduct an in-depth literature review and collect insights from relevant stakeholders.

Literature Review

At this stage, model designers must examine existing research on toponymy in general, toponymy and nationalism, toponymy and culture, and urban naming practices. The essence of place naming is the assignment of a linguistic symbol (name) to a location (place), transforming it into a meaningful space.

Additionally, a review of place-naming policies and frameworks from other countries—particularly those that have recently established or relocated their capital cities (e.g., Canberra, Brasília)—is essential.

Stakeholder Consultation

This stage involves identifying key stakeholders, including representatives from the government (the IKN Authority and the National Names Agency/NNA) and expert groups from various fields such as linguists, cultural scholars, historians, and local community leaders. Structured interviews and focused group discussions with stakeholders should be conducted to gather insights into their expectations and preferences regarding place naming in IKN. Involving the NNA ensures that the initial model aligns with Government Regulation No. 2 of 2021 on Geographical Names Management.

Government Regulation No. 2 outlines various natural and artificial geographic features and establishes principles for naming them. These principles include: the use of the Indonesian language; conditional use of local or foreign languages; the use of the Roman alphabet; the "one name per feature" policy; respect for ethnic, religious, racial, and societal diversity; a maximum of three words per name; avoidance of living persons' names (except for individuals deceased for at least five years); exclusion of institution or organization names; avoidance of names conflicting with national interests; and adherence to geographical naming and spatial rules.

4.2. Phase 2: Model Development

After gathering comprehensive information on toponymy studies, urban and capital city development, and stakeholder perspectives, the next step is to extract key findings and formulate an appropriate model for place naming in IKN. This toponymic model will generally consist of two main components:

1. The model's vision and mission, which must align with IKN's vision and mission as well as Indonesia's cultural and national values;
2. A thematic naming system based on a set of place-naming criteria.

Establishing Naming Criteria

This stage defines the thematic naming criteria derived from the toponymic model's vision and mission. These criteria may be conceptually grounded in principles such as nationalism, inclusivity, and the representation of cultural values, Indonesia's natural wealth, and its related aspects. For example, nationalism could be expressed through various concepts such as unity and integrity, patriotism, Indonesian nationality, popular sovereignty, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism.

Thematic Naming System

Based on the conceptual framework above, a hierarchical structure or thematic naming system can be developed. For instance, nationalism as a naming principle could be further categorized into names of historical figures who contributed to Indonesia's development and independence. To ensure systematic representation, this categorization could begin with national heroes and extend to regional heroes. Additionally, gender balance can be maintained by classifying male and female figures separately (see

Figure 1).

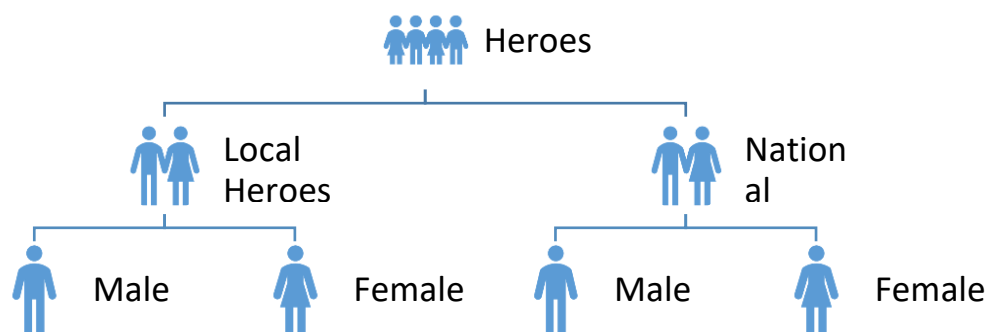


Figure 1. Thematic Naming System Based on National/Local Hero Names.

As a reference for this naming system, Indonesia has an official list of national heroes designated by the government. To receive this title, individuals must have made significant contributions to the country and left a lasting, exemplary legacy for future generations.

A study by Erikha (2023) on street naming in Bandung—once planned as the capital of the Dutch East Indies in the early 20th century—found that out of 402 street names in the city, the majority followed two main naming criteria: historical figures (152 streets) and locations (128 streets). This finding suggests that, at least historically, personal names have played a crucial role in toponymy.

Public Consultation

Once the initial model is complete, it must undergo a review process involving experts and the general public. The expert review should reconvene the same stakeholders consulted in the exploratory phase to assess whether the initial model aligns with their perspectives and aspirations. Public input should be collected through online surveys to refine the proposed model based on community feedback. This feedback can include public perception (emotional resonance with the model and its naming system), attitudes (agree, conditionally agree, or disagree), preferences (inclination toward specific name proposals), and constructive suggestions to ensure the model aligns with Indonesia's fundamental values. The results from these reviews and surveys will inform modifications and refinements to the model.

4.3. Phase 3: Proposal Submission and Advocacy

Once the initial model is finalized, the next step is to submit it to the IKN Authority for advocacy and eventual official adoption. The approval process may not always proceed smoothly—there could be objections or demands for the inclusion of certain names that may not comply with government regulations.

One potential challenge is the influence of powerful stakeholders, such as those with financial or spatial interests, who may push for naming proposals that do not align with official guidelines. A possible solution is to regulate naming rights through specific policies that consider commercial naming agreements, such as allowing brand or investor names in designated contexts while maintaining compliance with official regulations. The formalization of the model can be enacted through authority-issued regulations or circular letters from the leadership of the IKN Authority.

4.4. Phase 4: Implementation

Model implementation marks the phase where selected toponyms are officially integrated into IKN's landscape. Before full-scale implementation, a partial rollout should be conducted in a designated area, such as the surroundings of the Presidential Palace and its central axis. This initial phase serves as a pilot

project, allowing for testing and adjustments before broader application. If any discrepancies or unforeseen issues arise, they can be addressed before the model is fully deployed.

Subsequently, the toponymic model should be implemented comprehensively across the IKN landscape. During this process, continuous monitoring is necessary to ensure that all planned details align with on-the-ground application.

4.5. Phase 5: Evaluation

Following the successful completion of the pilot phase and resolution of any emerging issues, a final assessment must be conducted. This evaluation will include an online survey to gauge public reception, sense of ownership, ease of use and recall, attitudes toward the changes, and overall satisfaction with the toponymic model's implementation.

The evaluation should assess the model's alignment with principles of nationalism, diversity, cultural representation, and contemporary strategic concerns that may have emerged during implementation.

If the survey results indicate significant issues requiring revision, the model should be adjusted accordingly to achieve an optimal outcome. Finally, a policy brief summarizing the IKN Toponymic Model should be prepared and disseminated to the public. This initiative serves both as an acknowledgment of the contributions made by experts and the community and as a means of communicating the successful development of IKN's toponymic system.

5. Conclusion

The design of a Toponymic Model for IKN is a crucial undertaking. Historically, Indonesia can reflect on past experiences demonstrating that this effort is not unprecedented. Similar initiatives were carried out by the colonial Dutch East Indies government when planning to relocate its capital from Batavia to Bandung, as well as in the development of the Yogyakarta Palace's central capital, where toponymy was deeply embedded with philosophy and cultural meaning.

If successfully implemented, the IKN Toponymic Model is expected to represent both cultural and national identity. Additionally, it serves as an example of place-naming practices that adhere to Indonesia's established toponymic regulations. Beyond its application in IKN, this model could set a best-practice precedent—potentially referenced at the national level by regional governments establishing new provincial or municipal capitals, and even at the international level by countries planning to relocate or build new capital cities.

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