



Ear to Asia podcast

- Title:** Winners and losers in Indonesia's plans for a new capital city
- Description:** Indonesian President Joko Widodo is forging ahead with his grand plans to replace Jakarta with a new capital on the island of Borneo, but beyond the upbeat political rhetoric, many questions remain. How open and transparent has the design process been? Have the needs of the local people been considered? Who will be the real winners in this immensely costly project? Dr Amanda Achmadi and Dr Wawan Mas'udi join presenter Ali Moore to discuss this seemingly herculean undertaking. An Asia Institute podcast.
- Listen:** <https://player.whooshkaa.com/episode?id=648410>
- Voiceover:** The Ear to Asia podcast is made available on the Jakarta Post platform under agreement between the Jakarta Post and the University of Melbourne.
- Ali Moore:** Hello. I'm Ali Moore. This is Ear to Asia.
- Amanda Achmadi:** Let's talk about how will this new capital city bring the region to the fore. We should move on from this capital city as a new brand of the nation. That is one thing. But if the intention is to bring the periphery to the centre of economic development, let's talk about the periphery.
- Wawan Mas'udi:** The only blueprint from the government side up to now is moving people to this new area. But economic development, the social aspect of this city, how to integrate with the community with the city surrounding this area. How then to sustain the financial aspect is still not yet on the table.
- Ali Moore:** In this episode, the winners and losers in Indonesia's grand plans to create a new capital from scratch. Ear to Asia is the podcast from Asia Institute, the Asia research specialist at the University of Melbourne.

In August 2019, Indonesian president Joko Widodo announced plans for a brand-new national capital. It's not the first time a new capital has been mooted, but this time, the president is determined. The chosen site is the once remote and still sparsely developed province of East Kalimantan on the Island of Borneo, some 1,300 kilometres away from the current capital Jakarta, which is labouring under increasing congestion and environmental problems. The new capital is slated to eventually be home to as many as 7 million people, 10 times the size of Washington, DC. President Jokowi and the project's backers promise a green city, featuring the best work in energy efficiency and environmentally friendly innovation.



But, as is so often the case, with hugely ambitious national projects anywhere, the devil may well be in the detail. How open and transparent a process has the selection and design of the new city been? What are the interests of the local people in East Kalimantan, and have they been listened to? Is national governance likely to get any better in a new capital? Who are likely to be the real winners in a project valued at tens of billions of US dollars in just its initial stages?

Joining us to discuss the capital's move and its manifold implications are Dr. Amanda Achmadi from the Melbourne School of Design at the University of Melbourne, an expert on architecture and urbanism in Asia; and Dr. Wawan Mas'udi, a lecturer in politics and government from Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia. Welcome, Amanda; and welcome, Wawan.

Wawan Mas'udi: Thank you.

Amanda Achmadi: Thank you.

Ali Moore: Let's start with the very big question. Will this actually happen, Wawan?

Wawan Mas'udi: It will happen soon according to the government plan, but for sure, there will be a lot of thing that's still to be discussed, not only in term of the technical aspect, but also social and political things. Something that really not seriously discussed in Indonesia at this moment.

Ali Moore: So, lots of challenges, but you think there will be a new capital?

Wawan Mas'udi: From my own perspective it will, but will be a lot of challenge, and will be not really clear who will lead this kind of a project because the government, up to now, not yet decided which minister, for example, who will lead the project. Also financing aspect is still a big problem. Social acceptance, still big question as well. Yeah.

Ali Moore: Lots of challenges that we'll explore. But Amanda, that big picture question, do you think it's going to happen?

Amanda Achmadi: I think the question now is when and how it will be realised, and the question how I think is far more important. For me going through the process, the development of the whole idea of the capital cities and the participation, public participation in discussing the prospect of having a new capital city indicate that we already accepted that we will have a new capital city. But what kind of capital city, and what is the real objective? That is for me the key issues that we need to discuss and we need to interrogate.



- Ali Moore: Well, let's have a look at some of those key issues. But first, a little bit of history. I asked the question of whether this will actually happen because, Wawan, when you look back in history, a new capital is not a new idea.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah, indeed. The new capital is not a new idea. The first idea is even started during the Sukarno era back in 1960s. Even at that time, Sukarno already invited the Russia as a counterpart to help Indonesia to fill up this new capital city. But not in East Kalimantan, in Palankaraya in central Kalimantan. During the Suharto era, there was also a plan as well to move the city to a place called Jonggol, not that far away from Jakarta. By now, President Jokowi tried to make all these plan to be implemented even though with all the challenge that I already mentioned before.
- Ali Moore: So, why did those earlier plans in the '60s, under Sukarno and under Suharto, why did they fall by the wayside?
- Wawan Mas'udi: First of all, before Sukarno realised his plan, the big regime changes happen in 1965. So that's why all planned and everything from Sukarno era, it's something bad in the eyes of the new governor at that time. While during the Suharto era, it seemed that some financial aspect as well affected the plan. So, that's why the plan is just getting a delay at that time. After that, Indonesia get a big blow because of economic crisis in 1990s. We all know what they went.
- Ali Moore: There was no money.
- Wawan Mas'udi: No money, no money. Money, it's really important to put something. Yeah.
- Ali Moore: Absolutely. One would say it is core. Amanda, how do you see today the driving force for Jokowi?
- Amanda Achmadi: I think Jokowi has created a path through his first term by focusing the development of the country on infrastructural development in regional Indonesia. So, the reason why the idea of relocating the capital city gained some traction now is because he's already setting up that path. In the last five to 10 years, Indonesian population and the society are so used to this idea of developing a new satellite cities. This idea of creating a new urban environments is nothing like here in Australia, where even when you want to densify a suburb, it's actually a very long process. In Indonesia, we are quite used of it because population growth, urban expansion, it was so extensive. Their point of view is just going to be part of the new normal.
- I think one of the driving force for Jokowi, I think, is also the response from the professional community, from the urban planner, urban design, architectural, professional communities. They all respond when he declared his intention to move the capital city.



- Ali Moore: When he did that, what reasons did he give publicly? I mean we all know how challenged Jakarta is, but what did he refer to?
- Amanda Achmadi: Yeah. Well, the first announcement in his Twitter account, he identified that Jakarta couldn't go on carrying the dual burden of being the financial centre and political centre of the nation. Secondly, and I think it's more importantly, that we need to continue to follow up, is his intention to bring the regional Indonesia to the centre of the governance of the country.
- Ali Moore: Wawan, does it make sense, those reasons? I suppose the environmental reason and also the political reason. From an environmental perspective, you'd have to move a lot of people, wouldn't you, to reduce the pressure on Jakarta. Is that what it's about, or is it more about future expansion trying to contain Jakarta at the point it's at now?
- Wawan Mas'udi: As long as I know or from the government perspective is how to develop something symbolic for the future of Indonesia. So that's why all the discourse, all the idea behind this new capital is not only kind of a capital as a symbolic city on the nation, but also leapfrogging on the nation. So, that's why all plan is talking about the smart city. It's about how to build the city in a more environmentally friendly to make sure that the city will be centre for all the best Indonesian people to be there. Something like that. This is the discourse from government. Even though for sure from the more critical perspective, it's something doesn't make any sense, giving the situation of the Indonesian current, for example, population structure or something like that. For me, it's still important to see this new capital as a symbol of what exactly Indonesia is.
- Ali Moore: The question is who's going to form the answer to that question?
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah, exactly.
- Ali Moore: Is it going to be answered by people at the elite level or whether it will take into consideration the voice of regional Indonesia.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Indeed. That's the real problem. Who is actually behind all this plan? It's coming from the technocratic side. I mean by technocratic side, it's professional using the Amandla language or it's also involving the people, not only the people in this area, in East Kalimantan, but the people in Indonesia as a general because as an idea, this is still very elitist idea, and the public in general don't know yet what exactly the plan and how the city will be built, who will be there except only, except only, okay, all the public official must move over there. Every-
- Ali Moore: So, all the arms of government are meant to be moving.



- Wawan Mas'udi: Yes.
- Ali Moore: Before we look at what it means for the people of Kalimantan, which is so essential and indeed the process, Amanda, what's the plan as it stands? Wawan has referred to the fact we actually don't know a huge amount, but how far is that development process?
- Amanda Achmadi: Towards the end of 2019, the Ministry of Public Work and Public Housing hosted this national open competition for conceptual master plan of the new capital city. The competition was publicised, widely publicised. There's a website accessible for everyone. There are specific terms of reference. There's around 750 original participants in the competition. The final entries were around 290. From that 290 ideas, five schemes have been chosen as the best. So, they've already announced the winner of that competition.
- This is a conceptual master plan. I think we can discuss what is that competition trying to achieve. I think we need to evaluate the outcome of that competition within the ambition set by the design competition. There's a lot that we can discuss there.
- Ali Moore: Wait, if you've got five winners. What's the idea? That each will be the overlay for a particular part of the city or?
- Amanda Achmadi: Apparently, there is no commitment whether the best three schemes will be realised. What I read on the announcement is that the three winners of that competition will work together. So the best part of each schemes will be taken into consideration. Only yesterday, I read that the another ministry will host a different competition. It's going to be an international design competition again for the design of the capital city. So, I think they are still formulating what they want to see as the model or as a plan, but the process in a sense have been made quite public. At the same time, how much are we able to unpick the outcome is remained to be seen, and we do need to really critically analyse those design ideas, what that actually means.
- Ali Moore: I guess, just in terms of timeline, I understood that building was meant to start in 2020. The first bureaucrats would move there in 2024. It seems rather ambitious. Of course, that would mark the end of Jokowi's second and final term, but that seems rather ambitious if the design's not actually ready.
- Wawan Mas'udi: From my perspective, government building is easy thing. I mean as long as you have money, you have land, then you can build something. Even forcing the people, especially the government people into this new area will be very easy because there will be incentive and disincentive over there. If you didn't want to move, then you have to get retired or something like that. But for me, the question is not in that sense only, but also the acceptance of this



all new plan in the perspective of Indonesian people and also for the East Kalimantan people.

All aspect of design, all aspect of competition, how to develop the city, for me, it's still something very professional, something very... only-

- Ali Moore: It's the architects, the urban planners, the designers
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yes. Only few people who understand-
- Amanda Achmadi: It's an imagination.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Imagination. In general, how then people in Indonesia, for example, and do you think this new capita will be something that make you proud of our nation or not? It will be different or-
- Amanda Achmadi: Or make you feel like you're a part of the nation.
- Wawan Mas'udi: It's your own city. It will be something in a big question. That's why for me, having a public competition is one thing, but to make sure that this idea itself, getting deliberated to all people in Indonesia.
- Ali Moore: Not just all people in Indonesia, but the people of Kalimantan is.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Of Kalimantan even, yeah.
- Amanda Achmadi: Yes, specifically.
- Ali Moore: Can we just backtrack for a minute, Amanda, and why this particular site, given that Java is actually home to, I think, 60% of the Indonesian population? why this site?
- Amanda Achmadi: I think one of the consideration is the fact that there is much lower risk for natural disaster to occur in Kalimantan. Java has how many of active volcanoes. We have earthquake-
- Wawan Mas'udi: Earthquake, flooding.
- Amanda Achmadi: ... now over development of the region, which lead to this chronic flooding occurrence. Kalimantan is much more stable geologically. Of course it's less populated, very low population density. In a sense, there is room to move there.
- Ali Moore: Indeed the chosen site is currently forest, is that it?
- Amanda Achmadi: Correct. Yeah, the majority of the two regencies, the Penajam-



- Wawan Mas'udi: Paser Utara.
- Amanda Achmadi: ... Paser Utara and Kutai Kartanegara.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Kutai Kartanegara. It's part of Kutai Kartanegara.
- Amanda Achmadi: Yeah. I think the majority of the area is either natural forest or industrial plantation forest. I think the area is almost 10 times the size of Jakarta.
- Wawan Mas'udi: 10 times, yeah, of Jakarta.
- Amanda Achmadi: With a population of around 150,000 to 200,000. So, you have a room to move in a sense in this new location.
- Ali Moore: Are the people who are currently there, is their voice being heard?
- Wawan Mas'udi: Last year in December, Jokowi have a meeting with some key person in East Kalimantan. For sure, this key person is coming from the elite community leaders or something like that. During the discussion, they all agree if the new capital will be built in this area simply because of we'll give something new in this area. But in term of population, in general, I think it's still a big question. Even though it seemed that there is some enthusiasm as well over there, but what the impact of this new capital city to their life. It is not something come up in the public discussion.
- So already some kind of a discussion between Jokowi and the central government with the people in East Kalimantan. But up to now, as long as I know, it's more on the elite and at leadership level. How these leaders then communicate all these thing to member of community is still something that we don't know yet.
- Ali Moore: Would it be a positive for the local community? I understand there are also huge environmental challenges. But first of all, from the point of view of jobs, for example.
- Amanda Achmadi: Yeah. If I go back to this design competition, that was completed end of last year. If you see the three criteria set up in that competition, there's little space for any design schemes to address the actual local issues, local problems. There's not enough opportunity to identify what is the problem, what is the real problem of East Kalimantan? How can a new capital city actually improve their living conditions?
- So, there are three design criteria to reflect the national identity, to ensure sustainability in terms of environmental, social economy, and to create smart cities. All these remain very abstract if it's not contextualised. If you



see the design schemes, there is no contextualization beyond an identification of geographical profile of the site.

There's no recognition of the existence of local economy, social mobility. I don't hear the voice of the local in those design, is the creation of a city for this new population, 1.5 million population. My question is where will the local sit in this city? How are they going to be positioned in this new built environment?

Ali Moore: Because they will come whether they're invited or not.

Amanda Achmadi: Yes, exactly.

Wawan Mas'udi: Yes.

Amanda Achmadi: We want to avoid marginalising the local population further by this new urban population that will come from Java.

Ali Moore: So, is there an imperative on the government to have those discussions or not? Who owns this land at the moment?

Wawan Mas'udi: This is government land. It's a forest and also some industrial forest. That means, officially, own by state. So, there have been no issue of, for example, the eviction or something like that.

Ali Moore: So, they don't need to negotiate with the land owners.

Amanda Achmadi: [inaudible 00:17:30].

Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah. In that sense, there have been no negotiation. The problem is then how to integrate this new area of capital city with other cities surrounding this area in [Gudding] Balikpapan, Samarinda and also some small village over there because this is not really empty land. Already, some community living there, even though not that many, as Amanda said.

Ali Moore: When we were talking earlier about the size of this new city, and I said in the introduction, there's many as 7 million people. Wawan, is the plan that the bureaucrats move, but also business will follow because that hasn't always happened when you look at previous countries that have built... I mean, Australia, for example, we have Canberra, which is certainly not a business hub. You've got Naypyidaw in Myanmar, and there are other examples.

Wawan Mas'udi: The only blueprint from the government side up to now is moving this bureaucrat people to this new area. But how then the blueprint on the economic development, the social aspect of the city, how to integrate with the community, with the city surrounding this area, the blueprint on how



then to sustain this city in term of the financial aspect, or even in other aspect of environment is still not yet on the table as long as I know. Maybe there are already some discussion, but a very kind of hidden discussion or secret policy process.

Ali Moore: In fact, Amanda, you've made the point elsewhere that Canberra to Sydney in the Australian context is a one-hour flight. It's quite easy to be in front of the bureaucrats. It won't be so easy with Indonesia. Jakarta to Kalimantan will be what? A three, three and a half hour flight.

Amanda Achmadi: Yes, about four hours flight. I think it's even more challenging to move from a more immediate surrounding region because there's basic infrastructure such as roads are very limited in connection to the surrounding. So, obviously, sea island is also quite limited. So, in terms of mobility within the region, it's quite challenging.

Ali Moore: You're listening to Ear to Asia from Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne. I'm Ali Moore. I'm joined by Dr. Wawan Madr Waylon Mas'udi of Gadjah Mada University; and Dr. Amanda Achmadi of the Melbourne School of Design. We're talking about Indonesia's grand plans for a new capital city. The questions that those plans raise.

Ali Moore: Amanda, you pointed to this in your previous answers, but the fact that this new capital is being envisioned as an entirely new entity, do you see that as the core problem, that there's no urban or cultural or historical context to it? It's going to be slammed down in the middle of a forest?

Amanda Achmadi: Yep. That seems to me is contradicting that second objective that Jokowi declare when he first announced this plan. It's about bringing the region, the periphery to the centre. I think a genuine consideration of what kind of city this new capital's going to be should build on the existing social and economic realities.

The question is, we have a city of Balikpapan and Samarinda. Both city has a population of around 600,000, and think about having a new capital, thoroughly, new entity with a specific border around it nearby in between these two existing regional cities with a much larger population.

My question is how will this impact the operation of these regional cities? Will it weaken? Will it turn the cities into degenerating urban settlements because there is new, more powerful, with stronger infrastructure, then population will leave this town?

Ali Moore: Or it could go the other way. It could become simply part of the urban sprawl of the new capital.



- Amanda Achmadi: Yes, yes, yes. If you're thinking about sustainable development, building a new city, this is perhaps the most energy-consuming type of production. We need to think about what is it new that we need to bring into this region instead of ignoring what is already there, and instead of weakening the existing condition. Any livable cities in the world grow through times. If you create a city as if it is done in the space of five years, there are so many precedents in history such as Brasilia. It is not the most livable city in the world, and it's not the most loved city within their immediate cultural context.
- Ali Moore: So, do you feel that the time frame is simply unrealistic? I mean, there seems to be this imperative to, at least, get some fairly solid starting blocks down under Jokowi. Can it be done given where they're up to in the planning process?
- Amanda Achmadi: New satellite town constructed throughout Java in a space of two, three years with capacity of around 500,000 inhabitants.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Inhabitant.
- Ali Moore: So, it can be done?
- Amanda Achmadi: Yeah, it can be done, and it can be done in a variety of ways. So, which way is going to be for the new capital city is the big question. Any blending of a city should start with problem statement. Planning of city is trying to solve existing problem. At the moment, I think the waiting of creation of the capital city as a symbolical capital, as the new branding of the nation outweighed the consideration of how do we solve social environmental problem in this Kalimantan.
- Ali Moore: Do you agree with that, Wawan, that there needs to be more of that?
- Wawan Mas'udi: First of all, outside Java, Kalimantan is one of the most cosmopolitan province in terms of the structure of population. 60% population in this Kalimantan, actually the Javanese background is coming from Java, the rest is from Banjar, also from Sulawesi, and the rest of Indonesia. So, I mean it's already kind of plural provinces in term of the Indonesian structure of a society. So, I mean, base on this, this new capital city will also, or should also accommodate this plurality of the people as well with the [crosstalk 00:23:35].
- Ali Moore: Which actually goes to the heart of one of the reasons, reflection of national identity. So, how clear is the Indonesian national identity?
- Wawan Mas'udi: It's something still in the process of the building of the identity itself, but-



- Amanda Achmadi: It's an unfinished project.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Unfinished project. People say it's unfinished project. But the most important thing is the city should accommodate the plurality, not only in term of the ethnic background, but also in the way of life of the people. This is something that seemed missing so much.
- Ali Moore: The detail, Amanda, is what's missing.
- Wawan Mas'udi: The detail.
- Amanda Achmadi: Yes, definitely.
- Ali Moore: The other part of this, of course, is the environmental part. This is a region where, in fact, one of the very few in the world where orang utans still live in their natural habitat. How much concern and how much attention is being paid to the environmental impact?
- Amanda Achmadi: That's why we should interrogate further what it means that the new city promotes sustainable development. I think East Kalimantan is a region that has suffered a lot. We know very little of it, but it doesn't mean that it hasn't suffered a lot the last 50 years of exploitation of natural resources and such as-
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah. Especially for the coal mining.
- Amanda Achmadi: Coal mining, oil drilling.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Oil drilling.
- Amanda Achmadi: And then palm oil plantation.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yep, palm oil.
- Amanda Achmadi: So, in a sense that the environment – natural landscape – has been transformed quite significantly. Most of the unique fauna in this region such as what you said orangutan, but also pesut. This is the typical dolphin, river dolphin, and then also flora has been significantly impacted by the development that has occurred there. Imagine a city of 1.5 or up to 7 million people, it's a major conversion of the land even further. How will it impact the Mahakam River stream, which is just north of the site? How will it impact the water system? This is a very complex... You need to go into detail what it means to build a sustainable city in that context.



- Ali Moore: I know there's, certainly, lots of slogans. I read a couple of them out in the introduction. I mean, is there a commitment, Wawan, to do these sorts of environmental studies?
- Wawan Mas'udi: I'm not sure, is there any sustainable studies of this kind of thing, but one of the plan that is tried to put in the plan, how the city then will provide the water for the community. It's still something to be discussed. Kalimantan has a specific environment issue with regard to the peatland area. By peatland, that's mean the quality of water is not as good as, for example, in Java. You need to do something in order to make the water consumable, for example. So, it's another issue as well.
- Ali Moore: So, how do they provide water for a new city of millions of people?
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah. It's just a fairly simple question. How you provide water? From where the water can come? A fairly basic question. Yeah.
- Ali Moore: With no doubt, a very complicated answer.
- Amanda Achmadi: Yes.
- Ali Moore: Let's go to that issue that we raised at the beginning of the conversation. That really is, I guess, in many ways the bottom line, money. Wawan, you can't build it if you haven't got the money. Jokowi himself says that moving the capital will cost 466 trillion rupiah around \$32 billion, \$33 billion. Where is that coming from?
- Wawan Mas'udi: The government will only pay or will only provide for the development of the government complex. That's mean the building for the ministerial office, the building for the House of Representative, and also including, for sure, for the Palace of the President were coming from the government side.
- Ali Moore: So, that's about 20%, like that.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yes, only about-
- Ali Moore: That's still a lot of money for the government to fund.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah, indeed. That's a lot of money. So, that's why the government need to find from where this money come from, including selling some assets in Jakarta and also other places of Indonesia owned by the government in order to finance this one. By selling this asset, that's mean, who can buy this asset? Only the big capital.
- The financing aspect from the government itself, it's already a big equation. But when we come to other zone of the city, for example, in the business



district, or even the basic services for the education or something else, or even how to provide the transportation system, I think, it will not coming from the government. So that's why then-

Amanda Achmadi: Yes.

Ali Moore: So, they're relying on foreign investors.

Wawan Mas'udi: So, that's why Jokowi invite, for example, the investor from UAE and the crown prince of-

Ali Moore: The United Arab Emirates.

Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah, United Emirate Arab, as a kind of advisor of this new capital city. So, that's why Jokowi invite the SoftBank manager to Indonesia as part of the adviser. So, that's why President invite the [inaudible] player in order to convince the international community to come to Indonesia and to invest some money in this area.

Ali Moore: Amanda, is there any sense of whether that money will be forthcoming? Is that new capital a bankable project from the point of view of other national investors?

Amanda Achmadi: I'm not sure I'm the right person to answer that question. My concern is if 80% of the-

Wawan Mas'udi: Of the budget.

Amanda Achmadi: ... budget is coming from the private sector from foreign investor, what is the prospect of public interests in all that?

Ali Moore: Are the public having a voice?

Wawan Mas'udi: Yes.

Amanda Achmadi: Yes. If the government will only look at public funding for the governmental building and complex, then the rest of the city will be determined by the investor.

Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah. But then who having this money for sure. As long as I know, the government will loan a scheme, kind of a PPP, a public private partnership.

Amanda Achmadi: Yeah, public private partnership.

Wawan Mas'udi: So, it could be BOT, Building, Operation and Transfer, to the government. It will be a long-term contract as well, not only five years or 10 years. It could



be 30 years or even more. After the three years, that means the city need to be renew again in so many aspects. So still-

- Amanda Achmadi: We need to learn from experience of any cities in the world where new urban development relies so much on private enterprises because at the end of day, their interest is quite different from the interest of the public.
- Wawan Mas'udi: For sure. For sure. Yeah.
- Ali Moore: So that then raises the question of governance, I guess. I mean, it's no secret that when you've got major projects in a country like Indonesia, you've often got lack of transparency, you've got issues of corruption, you've got issues of delay. Is there any confidence in Indonesia that this project is going to be any different? Indeed, can you have confidence when there are so many unknowns as you've both been referring to? Amanda?
- Amanda Achmadi: When Jokowi first announced the idea, I do think the whole possibilities of having a central of the government outside Java is a noble conversation to have.
- Ali Moore: A good conversation to have.
- Amanda Achmadi: A good conversation to have. Whether it's going to happen? Basic infrastructure development's going to start, I think, in second half of 2020.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yes., second half of 2020.
- Amanda Achmadi: It has to start somewhere to start engaging and bringing economic activities to the region-
- Ali Moore: They have to avoid the mistakes that have been made in cities like Jakarta, don't they?
- Amanda Achmadi: Yes, yes. So, whether the lessons have been learned, one of the most stubborn issues of Jakarta is inability to deal with water and its inability to deal with population growth. So, the city is sinking because people rely on underground aquifers.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Underwater, yeah, underground water. Yeah.
- Amanda Achmadi: The master plan, the conceptual design ideas coming out of that competition, I don't think it offer further thinking of how will we deal with this issue. So, I have doubt whether lessons have been learned.



- Ali Moore: So what do Indonesians think of this plan? I mean you've talked about a broad acceptance. But is it because it's more an idea at the moment than a reality? What's the general-
- Wawan Mas'udi: The question during the survey, for example, is only something very silo? Do you know the plan of the city? Do you agreed if we have this new capital as a new brand of the nation? For sure, people will say, "Yeah, that will be good for the nation." But people, again, don't have any sufficient knowledge in order to give their opinion. There is no serious deliberative process in order to make all the people understand what exactly this plan is about and what is the benefit for the nation in the future. So that's why then the people just say, "Okay, that will be a good thing," but they don't know why it's good or why it's bad.
- Ali Moore: Amanda, do you think that's likely to change once there is more detail, once the amount of money is more obvious?
- Amanda Achmadi: When there is more money, I find that it become more dangerous because then if money's there, then we will go full speed in the production of the capital city as urban spectacle. I think the most important is to have a critical discussion to really ask what it actually means. Who is involved? On whose behalf?
- The question is what is common in Indonesia is population migration between region. The new capital city, however it will be, will trigger movement of people from the region into that because the development in Indonesia is not equally spread throughout. Then this is the issues of any cities in Java is how do we deal with rural migrations, which will outpace master planning, formal development of a city. It will outpace immediately. Infrastructure development will always be outpaced with the amount.
- Ali Moore: As we said, they'll come whether they're invited or not.
- Amanda Achmadi: Yes.
- Ali Moore: Are you optimistic, those conversations, if they're not being held now, that they will be held?
- Amanda Achmadi: Yes. I think if we continue to engage the government and all the professional communities involved with the second objective that Jokowi himself has declared. Let's talk about how will this new capital city bring the region to the fore. We should move on from this capital city as a new brand of the nation. That is one thing. But if the intention is to bring the periphery to the centre of economic development, let's talk about the periphery. Who are they? What is their aspiration? What is it that they need?



- Ali Moore: How do we design a capital for them as well?
- Amanda Achmadi: Yeah.
- Ali Moore: So, what is the risk, do you think, that given the complexities, given this is Jokowi's baby, and he only has until 2024, what risk that the next president will walk away as has happened in the past?
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah, for sure. There is a lot of infrastructure development in Indonesia that ended in a fair situation. I mean, it is not completely developed. Then after that, the new government-
- Ali Moore: They start, they don't finish.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yeah, they start, but not finish, like Hambalang and there are so many project in the regional part of Indonesia. In that sense, why then Jokowi always saying that the first move to this new capital must occur before his term, 2024.
- Ali Moore: 2024.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Just to make sure that this project is finished even though for sure it will unfinished project even after Jokowi finish his term. Learning from Canberra, for example, need more than 50, 60 years. Learning from Brasilia, more than 70 years. So, I myself not really optimistic that the city will be so perfect just in the coming five years or even 10 years. Will be a lot of problem there. First move, maybe, will be implemented before 2024. But to be an effective city, and a full-operated city as a symbol of the nation, maybe need more time than that.
- Ali Moore: Amanda?
- Amanda Achmadi: If we are able to improve our understanding of the social capital in East Kalimantan, if we are able to use this opportunity to understand what is going on in regional Indonesia all this time, the whole exercise of let's design a new capital city will be worthwhile. I think one of the national principle of Indonesia, the Pancasila, the fifth verse is social justice.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Social justice, yeah.
- Amanda Achmadi: I think if we really true want to achieve that stage, we do need to engage with regional Indonesia. I think if Jokowi is consistent with that goal, it's a pathway towards a more equitable Indonesia.
- Wawan Mas'udi: Yep, hopefully.



Ali Moore: I would love to have this conversation with you both, again. In fact, we could do it annually for the next 20 to 30 years, which is exactly the development of this new city.

Wawan Mas'udi: [crosstalk 00:36:16].

Amanda Achmadi: Yes, definitely.

Ali Moore: Thank you so much for talking to Ear to Asia. Thank you so much for your insights, Amanda and Wawan.

Amanda Achmadi: My pleasure. Thank you.

Wawan Mas'udi: Thank you very much. My pleasure, Amanda.

Ali Moore: Our guests have been Dr. Amanda Achmadi of the Melbourne School of Design at the University of Melbourne; and Dr. Wawan Mas'udi of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

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