

From Batavia to Jakarta: The Capital's Transformation in the Shadow of Colonialism and Independence

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A. Executive Summary

The development of Jakarta's public infrastructure reflects significant changes from the colonial era to the modern period. During the colonial period, Batavia was built with canals and fortifications to support Dutch interests, but its infrastructure was exclusive to the colonials. After independence, Jakarta underwent major modernization under Sukarno and Soeharto, with the construction of the National Monument, highways and transportation networks. Major challenges, such as flooding and congestion, continue to be faced, mainly due to rapid urbanization and economic growth. Recent efforts include MRT, LRT projects, as well as the development of modern drainage to address transportation and environmental issues. Despite these efforts, long-term sustainable solutions are needed. With a focus on smart technology, green spaces, and better water management, Jakarta can face the challenges of climate change and become a more hospitable city for its residents.

B. Introduction

Jakarta's journey from Batavia to the capital of the Republic of Indonesia reflects significant changes, especially in terms of infrastructure. During the colonial period, Batavia was designed according to European urban planning patterns, where Dutch colonial rulers built forts, canals and roads to support their administration (Cribb, 2000). This infrastructure served to strengthen Dutch control over trade and colonial administration in Southeast Asia. One form of early infrastructure was a network of canals inspired by the Dutch model. These canals were originally built to cope with flooding and connect economic centers with ports (Nas, 1993). Although considered

innovative in the early days, the canals gradually became less effective due to sedimentation and pollution problems (Colombijn, 2002).

In addition to canals, the construction of forts also characterized colonial Batavia. Batavia Fort, built around 1619, became the center of defense and political power in the Dutch East Indies (Abeyasekere, 1989). The structure of the fort shows how defense infrastructure functioned as a symbol of colonial power. Around the fort, roads and government buildings such as VOC buildings began to develop. However, this infrastructure was very exclusive and only served the colonial elite, while the natives did not have equal access (Carey, 1980). This inequity in access to infrastructure became one of the factors that caused social tensions that eventually triggered the movement towards independence (Ricklefs, 1991).

Entering the 20th century, especially during the reign of Governor-General Herman Willem Daendels, infrastructure in Batavia began to expand with the construction of the Anyer-Panarukan highway that connected various regions in Java (Reid, 1993). This road was not only used for military mobility, but also to facilitate the distribution of goods and commodities. However, the construction of this road claimed the lives of many indigenous workers (Silver, 2008). At the same time, Batavia also began to adopt the development of modern transportation technology such as railways, which accelerated urbanization in the city (Firman, 2014). The city's population growth accelerated towards the end of the colonial period, which prompted the need to build more public infrastructure such as bridges, markets and train stations (Dharmapatni & Firman, 1995).

After Indonesian independence in 1945, Batavia was officially renamed Jakarta. Under Sukarno's administration, Jakarta underwent a massive transformation with the development of modern infrastructure that reflected its new identity as the capital of an independent nation (Kusno, 2000). One ambitious project was the construction of the National Monument (Monas), which was designed to be a symbol of national pride (Kusuma, 2011). In addition, Jakarta began to develop a modern road network and transportation infrastructure such as buses and railways to connect strategic areas across the city (Railways and Jakarta Development, 2020). The construction of housing and

office buildings also increased, in line with the economic and political modernization promoted by the Indonesian government (Firman, 2014).

Jakarta's infrastructure transformation continued into the modern era, with the construction of toll roads, shopping malls and skyscrapers (Suryadinata, 2006). These modernization efforts aim to make Jakarta a regional center of economy and trade. However, challenges such as congestion, air pollution and flooding continue to be major problems for urban infrastructure (Silver, 2008). Nonetheless, various infrastructure projects such as the MRT and LRT built in the 2010s were important steps in dealing with transportation issues (Firman, 2014). Overall, the journey of Batavia to Jakarta reflects the evolution of infrastructure from the exclusive colonial era to the more inclusive modern era, although it still faces many challenges (Kusno, 2000).

C. Discussion

The development of Jakarta's public infrastructure has undergone a significant transformation from the colonial period to the modern era. During Batavia's time under Dutch rule, public infrastructure focused on the construction of canals, forts and main roads for colonial economic and defense purposes. These canals were designed to resemble Amsterdam's city planning and aimed to control flooding and facilitate the transportation of commodities from the port to the city center (Cribb, 2000). However, this infrastructure tended to be exclusive and not reserved for indigenous communities, who were often marginalized in urban development policies (Abeyasekere, 1989).

One of the main challenges during the colonial period was flooding and poor sanitation. Although the canals were built with the aim of controlling flooding, the system was not designed for the scale of the growing population and eventually became the main cause of flooding in Batavia due to sedimentation and pollution (Nas, 1993). At the time, the proposed solution was to build more canals, but without an adequate water management system in place, flooding remained a major challenge. In addition, poor sanitation due to canal pollution worsened the quality of life of the city's residents, especially the indigenous people living in slums (Colombijn, 2002).

Entering the 20th century, public infrastructure began to expand with the construction of highways, bridges and railway stations. The construction of the

Anyer-Panarukan road during the time of Governor-General Herman Willem Daendels was one of the major infrastructure projects that connected various regions in Java, including Batavia (Reid, 1993). The road facilitated commodity distribution and accelerated Dutch military mobility. However, it also faced major challenges, such as the high death toll of indigenous workers who were employed under poor conditions (Silver, 2008). To overcome these challenges, in later times, infrastructure projects focused more on the construction of railroads, which were considered more efficient and could reduce the burden on roads.

After Indonesia's independence in 1945, Jakarta experienced a phase of rapid infrastructure modernization under Sukarno. The construction of government buildings, highways, and monumental projects such as the National Monument (Monas) were prioritized to reflect the identity of the newly independent capital city (Kusno, 2000). The challenges faced during this period were budgetary and technological limitations, which meant that some infrastructure projects could not be completed on time. As a solution, the government began to cooperate with foreign countries, especially the Soviet Union, to fund strategic infrastructure development in Jakarta (Kusuma, 2011).

Entering the New Order era under Soeharto's leadership, the focus of Jakarta's public infrastructure development shifted to accommodating rapid population growth and urbanization. During this period, toll roads, airports and shopping centers were built to support economic and trade activities (Suryadinata, 2006). One of the major challenges in this era was the worsening traffic congestion due to the surge in the number of private vehicles and the lack of adequate mass transportation (Firman, 2014). The government responded to this challenge by building a new toll road network and expanding public transportation lines, although these solutions have not fully resolved the congestion problem in Jakarta.

In the early 21st century, Jakarta began to face more complex infrastructure challenges, particularly related to air pollution, worsening congestion, and persistent annual flooding (Silver, 2008). Modernization projects such as the construction of the MRT and LRT began in the 2010s in an effort to reduce congestion and provide more environmentally friendly mass transportation solutions (Railways and Jakarta Development, 2020). However, challenges such as land acquisition and funding remain

major obstacles to the completion of these projects. The DKI Jakarta government has also started to think about long-term solutions, such as the development of new drainage systems and better urban spatial arrangements to reduce the risk of flooding (Firman, 2014).

Going forward, Jakarta's public infrastructure development will increasingly focus on sustainability and green technology. As the impacts of climate change become more severe, the Jakarta government plans to build more green spaces and strengthen water management infrastructure to reduce flood risks (Nas, 1993). In addition, the use of smart technology in transportation management and urban planning will also be an important solution to meet the challenges of population growth and future infrastructure needs (Dharmapatni & Firman, 1995). The transformation of Jakarta's infrastructure from the colonial period to the modern day shows a long journey full of challenges, but also with solutions that continue to evolve in line with the needs of the times.

D. Closing

The development of Jakarta's public infrastructure from colonial to modern times has shown significant transformation in line with the changing needs of the city and the challenges it faced. During the colonial period, infrastructure was built with the aim of reinforcing Dutch economic and military dominance, which negatively impacted indigenous communities. With independence, the focus of Jakarta's infrastructure shifted to serve the entire population, reflecting a new national identity. Challenges such as flooding, congestion and air pollution remain major issues faced by the government. However, various efforts, such as the construction of the MRT, LRT, as well as improvements to the drainage system, have been made to overcome these problems.

According to the author, infrastructure development in Jakarta needs to focus more on sustainability and adaptation to climate change. The government should accelerate the development of green spaces, strengthen water management systems, and apply smart technology in transportation management and urban planning. In addition, there is a need for synergy between the central and local governments to accelerate the completion of infrastructure projects, including land acquisition and funding, which often

become obstacles. With a more inclusive and neighborhood-based approach, Jakarta can evolve into a more livable and resilient city to face future challenges.

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