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ARTICLE

The Digital Phantasm of the National Future: Simulation and Sacralization in the Jagat Nusantara Metaverse

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Abstract

The development of Ibu Kota Nusantara (Indonesia's new capital/IKN), is not merely a material project but also a symbolic construction of the nation's future produced through digital space. This article examines how the Jagat Nusantara metaverse constructs IKN's imagined future and how this simulation contributes to a process of sacralization. The study draws primarily on Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulation, simulacra, and hyperreality, alongside Durkheim's sociological conception of the sacred. Data were collected through qualitative digital observation and document analysis of Jagat Nusantara, official IKN documents, promotional materials, and relevant media reports. The findings show that Jagat Nusantara constructs a coherent image of the future capital through signs of national unity, technological progress, environmental harmony, cultural continuity, and collective participation. These signs do more than idealize IKN: they are symbolically separated from contradictory material realities, invested with exceptional collective meaning, and positioned as objects of shared aspiration. This process operates through selective visibility, whereby land disputes, environmental concerns, development uncertainties, and the experiences of affected indigenous communities receive limited representation within the virtual simulation. The article argues that simulation and sacralization are analytically distinct yet interconnected: simulation produces a hyperreal symbolic environment, while sacralization elevates selected signs into an exceptional, normative vision of the national future. The implication is that the sociology of religion can be extended into digital and political domains by showing how sacralizing processes may operate beyond explicitly religious institutions through symbolic separation and the collective valuation of imagined national futures.
Keywords: Digital Phantasm; Hyperreality; Sacralization; Simulation

Pembangunan Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) tidak hanya berlangsung sebagai proyek material, tetapi juga sebagai konstruksi simbolik mengenai masa depan Indonesia yang diproduksi melalui ruang digital. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana masa depan IKN dikonstruksi melalui metaverse Jagat Nusantara dan bagaimana simulasi tersebut berkontribusi terhadap proses sakralisasi. Penelitian menggunakan konsep Jean Baudrillard tentang simulasi, simulakra, dan hiperrealitas sebagai kerangka utama, serta konsepsi sosiologis Durkheim mengenai yang sakral. Data diperoleh melalui observasi digital kualitatif dan analisis dokumen terhadap Jagat Nusantara, dokumen resmi IKN, materi promosi, serta pemberitaan media yang relevan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Jagat Nusantara membangun gambaran koheren mengenai ibu kota masa depan melalui tanda-tanda persatuan nasional, kemajuan teknologi, harmoni lingkungan, keberlanjutan budaya, dan partisipasi kolektif. Tanda-tanda tersebut tidak hanya mengidealkan IKN, tetapi juga dipisahkan secara simbolik dari realitas material yang kontradiktif, diberi makna kolektif yang istimewa, dan ditempatkan sebagai objek aspirasi bersama. Proses ini berlangsung melalui visibilitas selektif, ketika konflik pertanahan, persoalan lingkungan, ketidakpastian pembangunan, dan pengalaman masyarakat adat memperoleh ruang terbatas dalam simulasi virtual. Artikel ini menegaskan bahwa simulasi menghasilkan lingkungan simbolik hiperreal, sedangkan sakralisasi menjelaskan pengangkatan tanda-tanda tertentu menjadi visi normatif dan istimewa mengenai masa depan nasional. Implikasinya, kajian ini memperluas sosiologi agama ke ruang digital dan politik dengan menunjukkan bahwa proses sakralisasi dapat berlangsung di luar institusi keagamaan melalui pemisahan simbolik dan pemberian nilai kolektif terhadap masa depan nasional.

A. INTRODUCTION

Relocating Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan is one of the most ambitious political and development projects in Indonesia's contemporary history. The government frames the Nusantara Capital City (IKN) as a solution to Jakarta's ecological and demographic burdens, a way to promote regional equity, and a strategic toward Indonesia's 2045 development vision (Ayundari 2022; Taufiq 2017). IKN is consequently presented not merely as a new administrative center but as a symbol of national progress, sustainability, modernity, unity, and a new national identity. Yet this vision remains contested. Environmental concerns over forest destruction and biodiversity, potential agrarian conflicts involving customary and communal land, and questions concerning the state's fiscal burden have generated substantial public criticism (BBC News 2020, 2022; Narasi Newsroom 2021; Silalahi 2019; Walhi 2019). IKN is therefore simultaneously a material development project and a symbolic struggle over the meaning of national progress and the future of Indonesia.

Within this contested context, the government introduced Jagat Nusantara, a metaverse platform designed as a virtual representation of IKN. Through the platform, users can explore urban spaces, participate in events, and engage in social interaction within a digitally constructed capital city (CNN-Indonesia 2022; Finaka 2022; Sekretariat Kabinet RI 2022; Wibowo 2022). Thus, Jagat Nusantara does more than communicate information about IKN. It gives an unfinished and contested future an experiential presence by transforming it into a virtual environment that can already be seen, explored, and imagined. The platform consequently becomes a symbolic space in which a particular image of the future capital and the future nation is constructed through the organization and circulation of signs.

This phenomenon can be understood through Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation and hyperreality (Baudrillard 1980, 1983, 1993, 1994). In a regime of simulation, signs and representations no longer simply reflect reality but participate in producing reality itself. The virtual IKN presented by Jagat Nusantara does not correspond to East Kalimantan's material conditions, its forests, customary territories, political contestations, and unfinished construction. Instead, it constructs a futuristic and idealized urban reality in which conflict and contradiction are selectively displaced. National symbols, historical references, cultural traditions, architectural forms, and signs resonant with religious and collective values can likewise be detached from their material contexts and reorganized within this hyperreal environment.

This symbolic elevation, however, should not be understood simply as idealization or symbolic glorification. It is particularly relevant to the concept of sacralization, understood in this study as a symbolic process through which selected signs of the national future are set apart from ordinary and contested reality, invested with exceptional collective meaning, and positioned as normative objects of collective aspiration. Sacralization in this sense does not mean transforming IKN into a religious object, nor does it imply that the virtual capital becomes a form of religion. Rather, the concept draws on the sociological understanding of the sacred as something symbolically set apart and invested with special collective significance (Durkheim 1912, 1915, 2016, 2025). This understanding also resonates with later sociological discussions of civil religion and modern resacralization, in which secular national symbols, collective projects, and institutions may acquire sacred significance without becoming religious objects in a conventional sense (Aguiluz-Ibargüen and Beriain 2025; Bellah 1974; Beriain 2016; Friedland 2001). What makes the process analytically different from idealization is therefore not simply that the future is represented as desirable, but that

particular signs and meanings are given an exceptional status within the collective imagination. What makes the process analytically different from idealization is therefore not simply that the future is constructed as desirable, but that particular signs and meanings are given an exceptional status within the collective imagination.

Through simulation, political aspirations may consequently acquire an aura of coherence, exceptionality, and desirability that exceeds their material referents. Simulation and sacralization are therefore treated in this study as analytically distinct but interconnected processes. Simulation produces the hyperreal symbolic environment in which signs can be detached from their material referents and reorganized into a coherent simulation of the future. Sacralization describes the subsequent symbolic elevation of selected meanings within that environment, through which national unity, technological progress, environmental harmony, cultural continuity, and collective participation can acquire exceptional and normative significance (Aguiluz-Ibargüen and Beriain 2025; Bellah 1974; Beriain 2016; Durkheim 1912). Power therefore operates not only through direct political authority but also through digital simulation's capacity to organize what can be seen, imagined, experienced, and desired. In this sense, the relationship between national symbolism and power also corresponds to broader sociological discussions of collective representation and the symbolic constitution of the nation-state (Friedland 2001).

Although studies of IKN have extensively examined environmental issues (Pandit 2019; Walhi 2019), the political-economic aspects of development (Hasibuan and Aisa 2020; Pribadi and Utomo 2021; Saputra and Halkis 2021; Silalahi 2019; Taufiq 2017), and its impact on local communities (Ayunda 2022; Nugroho 2022; Sujana 2019), its virtual and symbolic dimension remains underexplored. Similarly, existing metaverse studies tend to emphasize technological, social, and cultural

transformation (Ball 2022; Hemmati 2022; Indarta et al. 2022; Park and Kim 2022; Wisnu Buana 2023), with limited attention to state-sponsored metaverse platforms as systems of simulation. This gap is significant because Jagat Nusantara does not simply reproduce an existing city; it constructs an imagined future through a system of signs whose material realization remains incomplete and contested.

This study therefore examines Jagat Nusantara as a national digital phantasm through a Baudrillardian lens. It asks: (1) How does Jagat Nusantara simulate the image of the new state capital through its system of signs? and (2) Through what symbolic processes does this simulation contribute to the sacralization of the imagined national future? By placing sacralization within the broader logic of simulation rather than treating it as a separate theoretical framework, this study develops an analytical connection between Baudrillard's concepts of simulation, simulacra, and hyperreality and the sociological understanding of the sacred. It contributes to the sociology of religion and digital culture by demonstrating how national, cultural, historical, and religiously resonant signs can be reorganized into a hyperreal construction of collective futures and acquire exceptional collective significance. It also highlights how a capital city is constructed occurs simultaneously in material, digital, symbolic, and imaginative realms, revealing an evolving relationship between state power, technology, culture, religion, and society in the digital era.

B. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, critical-interpretive approach to examine how signs and narratives within Jagat Nusantara construct meanings of Indonesia's future capital through simulation. Data were collected through digital observation and document analysis from the launch of Jagat Nusantara on 28 October 2022 to the end of May 2023.

Digital observation involved direct and repeated exploration of Jagat Nusantara throughout this period, focusing on its spatial arrangements, visual signs, narratives, features, and symbolic elements. The observation was conducted systematically by documenting recurring signs, features, and patterns relevant constructing of the future capital. Document analysis covered official government publications and IKN related documents, Jagat Nusantara promotional materials, and relevant mass and social media content, including reports and public discussions from national media such as Tempo and CNN. Materials were selected based on their direct relevance to the simulation of IKN in Jagat Nusantara, particularly those containing spatial, visual, narrative, cultural, historical, technological, environmental, national, or religiously resonant signs and narratives. We examined these sources as complementary empirical material to identify the signs and narratives through which future capital is constructed and circulated.

Data analysis proceeded iteratively from empirical identification to interpretation and pattern identification. First, spatial, visual, narrative, and symbolic elements, including national, cultural, historical, technological, environmental, and religiously resonant signs were identified and systematically documented from the digital observations and documentary materials. Second, recurring patterns, relationships, repetitions, absences, and contrasts across the materials were examined to understand how particular signs were selected, organized, emphasized, or detached from material and social referents. Third, the identified patterns were interpreted in relation to the conceptual framework developed in this study, particularly concerning the production of simulation, the transformation of signs, and the symbolic elevation of selected meanings. This process allowed the analysis to move from descriptive observations of the platform and documentary materials to interpreting of broader patterns in the construction of the imagined national future.

The interpretation related recurring patterns across the observed platform features and documentary materials rather than treating individual signs as isolated evidence. Convergence between digital observations, official documents, promotional materials, and media representations was used to strengthen the interpretation of recurring symbolic patterns. At the same time, contradictions between the virtual simulation and the material, political, environmental, and social conditions surrounding IKN were retained in the analysis rather than treated as analytical noise. This procedure enabled the study to examine not only which signs and meanings Jagat Nusantara makes visible and prominent, but also how its system of simulation organizes what becomes more visible, desirable, and imaginable and what receives comparatively less visibility within the construction of the national future.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation, particularly his concepts of simulation, simulacra, and hyperreality. Baudrillard provides a framework for understanding how signs and models no longer merely refer to an existing reality but help produce a reality that can become increasingly detached from its material referents (Baudrillard 1980, 1983, 1993, 1994, 2006a).

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard (1983, 1994) argues that simulation is a process through which signs and models produce an appearance of reality rather than imitate an existing reality. Through successive processes of simulation, signs may become increasingly autonomous from their original referents. The simulacrum, consequently, refers to a sign or model that no longer depends on an identifiable original but acquires its own reality and meaning. Hyperreality emerges when such signs circulate and are experienced as reality, making the distinction between the real and the simulated increasingly unstable. Reality is

consequently encountered through a system of signs in which the conventional distinction between original and copy loses its significance.

This perspective is particularly relevant for examining how national, cultural, historical, technological, environmental, and religiously resonant meanings are reorganized within systems of simulation. Their significance is not s inherent in the signs themselves but is produced through their selection, arrangement, circulation, and relationships with other signs. The analysis therefore focuses on how signs are detached from their material and social contexts and reorganized within Jagat Nusantara to construct an imagined future capital.

To further examine the symbolic elevation of particular signs within this simulated environment, this study draws on Durkheim's (1912, 1915, 2016, 2025) sociological conception of the sacred. For Durkheim, the sacred is constituted through symbolic distinction and collective investment, in whichy particular objects, symbols, representations, or ideas are set apart from the ordinary and associated with shared collective significance. This perspective helps explain how secular objects and collective representations, including those associated with the nation, can acquire an exceptional symbolic status. Subsequent discussions of civil religion and modern resacralization similarly demonstrate how national symbols, collective representations, and secular institutions may become invested with meanings that transcend their immediate instrumental or material functions (Bellah 1974; Beriain 2016; Friedland 2001).

In this study, sacralization refers to the process through which selected signs and meanings are symbolically set apart and invested with exceptional collective significance within a system of simulation. Sacralization is not treated as an independent theoretical framework or as a claim that a particular object is inherently sacred. Instead, it offers an analytical lens for examining how particular cultural, national, historical, or religiously resonant signs acquire elevated symbolic status within the

imagined national future. In this sense, sacralization differs from idealization: it concerns not merely the construction of something as desirable, but its symbolic elevation as an exceptional and collectively significant object of aspiration.

The relationship between simulation and sacralization is therefore complementary but analytically distinct. Baudrillard's framework explains how simulation selects, reorganizes, and detaches sign from their material referents through simulation, producing a hyperreal environment in which the future capital becomes visible and experienceable. Durkheim's conception of the sacred, meanwhile, explains how selected signs within this environment acquire exceptional collective significance. The empirical analysis consequently examines how signs within Jagat Nusantara are constructed through simulation and how some are simultaneously elevated as symbols of national unity, technological progress, environmental harmony, cultural continuity, and the imagined future of Indonesia. The theoretical framework thus establishes the analytical relationship between signs, simulation, simulacra, hyperreality, symbolic elevation, and sacralization.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Simulating Simulating the New State Capital: The Production of Signs in Jagat Nusantara

The simulation of the new state capital in Jagat Nusantara begins with the production and organization of signs that make the future city visible and experienceable. The platform was introduced as a virtual environment through which the public could encounter the future capital before its material realization. Users could explore urban spaces, attend events, participate in virtual activities, and encounter signs of the capital as a technologically advanced and environmentally sustainable city. The virtual environment therefore does not simply provide information about

IKN but organizes a particular set of signs through which the future city becomes imaginable.

The same process appears in the city's visual simulation. Futuristic architecture, green spaces, advanced transportation, government buildings, and technologically mediated forms of urban life are combined into a coherent image of the future capital. These elements function as signs through which particular meanings of progress, modernity, sustainability, and national development are communicated. Consequently, the virtual city appears not as a collection of unrelated digital objects but as an integrated model of what the future capital is expected to become.

The simulation of IKN is also constructed through a contrast between Jakarta and Nusantara. Jakarta is repeatedly associated with congestion, flooding, pollution, and the accumulated burdens of the existing capital, whereas Nusantara is simulated through images of order, greenery, technological advancement, and a new beginning. This contrast establishes a symbolic distinction between an undesirable present and an idealized future. Within the logic of simulation, however, the significance of this contrast lies not simply in whether these signs are factually complete but in how they organize the signs through which the future becomes intelligible and desirable.

Thus, Jagat Nusantara constructs the image of the new state capital through an organized system of signs. National identity, historical continuity, technological progress, environmental sustainability, and urban modernity are brought together within a single virtual simulation. These signs provide the material through which the simulation of the future capital is produced. The virtual experience offered by Jagat Nusantara makes the IKN project appear tangible and experiential to the public, even though its material realization remains in development. In this sense, Jagat Nusantara does not simply reproduce an existing city but

constructs a model of the future capital through which that future can be encountered virtually before it is fully realized materially. This condition can be understood through Baudrillard's (1983, 1994) concept of simulation, in which signs and models do not merely reflect an existing reality but participate in producing a particular reality through their circulation and organization.

The simulation therefore does not function simply as a reflection of the material IKN. Rather, it constructs a coherent image of the capital through which the future city can be encountered as an already intelligible reality. In this process, the relationship between the virtual simulated city and its material referent becomes increasingly unstable. The physical IKN remains a development project under construction, while Jagat Nusantara provides a relatively complete visual and experiential form of the city. Thus, the simulated model precedes the city's material realization: the image of the future can be encountered, circulated, and experienced before the physical city is fully completed. This illustrates the movement from representation to simulation, in which the virtual image does not merely describe what IKN is, but help establish what IKN is imagined to be.

Through Jagat Nusantara, the state presents a hyperreal version of the national capital. In the virtual world, the national capital appears as a coherent and highly ordered environment: neatly arranged government buildings, expansive green spaces, environmentally oriented transportation, and advanced technology that supports city life. These elements are presented as an interconnected urban reality that can already be explored and experienced. However, the material development of the national capital remains subject to processes of construction, political debate, environmental concerns, and social negotiation. The significance of this contrast lies not simply in the difference between the virtual and material city, but in the simulation’s capacity to make a particular version of the future appear coherent, tangible, and experienceable. In

Baudrillard's (1994) terms, the issue is therefore not merely that the virtual image differs from material reality, but that the system of signs becomes a significant means through which the future capital is apprehended.

Despite being promoted as an inclusive space, Jagat Nusantara provides limited visibility of the social realities of communities surrounding the development of the new capital city. The digital version gives comparatively less visibility to indigenous communities, agrarian conflicts, or the environmental consequences associated with the city's construction. Large-scale development projects may affect indigenous communities whose lands and livelihoods are connected to the development process. In the simulation examined in Jagat Nusantara, however, indigenous communities appear primarily through cultural and visual signs rather than through the social and political contestations surrounding their presence.

Relocating of the capital city has implications for local groups whose land and livelihoods are affected by the development process (Ayunda 2022; Nugroho 2022). However, these dimensions receive limited visibility in Jagat Nusantara's simulation. Rather than incorporating the full range of social relations surrounding the production of urban space, the platform emphasizes a particular configuration of space characterized by technological advancement, environmental sustainability, cultural continuity, and national development. This condition relates to an understanding of the space production, in which space is not merely a physical container but is produced through social practices and relations of power. Jagat Nusantara can therefore be understood as a simulated space through which the meaning of the new capital is constructed and circulated.

This selective organization of signs demonstrates that the simulation of IKN is not simply a neutral reproduction of the material development project. In Jagat Nusantara, a particular configuration of

future capital become visible, while alternative experiences and interpretations receive less visibility. The virtual environment privileges images of modernity, technological sophistication, environmental harmony, cultural continuity, and national development. The issue is not simply that some realities are absent, but that the organization of signs establishes a hierarchy of visibility, making some aspects of the future more prominent than others.

The cultural signs presented within Jagat Nusantara therefore do not necessarily correspond to the lived experiences of indigenous peoples or other local communities. Once incorporated into the simulation, these signs become elements within a broader system through which diversity, cultural continuity, and national identity are articulated. Jagat Nusantara consequently functions as a space where the future can be imagined collectively, but this imagination occurs within an already organized symbolic environment.

The possibilities of imagination within this environment are consequently shaped by the logic of simulation. The dominant image is that of a modern, sophisticated, sustainable, and harmonious city, while alternative development trajectories, social conflicts, and critical perspectives receive comparatively less visibility. Rather than describing this process simply as censorship, it is more appropriate to understand it as a selective organization of visibility. Jagat Nusantara constructs an imaginary space in which particular possibilities of the future become more readily available for perception and imagination than others. In this context, the platform can be understood as a cultural-symbolic project that translates the vision of the future capital into a digital environment and incorporates it into the collective imagination.

2. From Simulation to Sacralization: Constructing the Imagined National Future

The simulation identified in Jagat Nusantara does not merely construct an image of the future capital. It also organizes particular signs into an elevated symbolic order through which the imagined future acquires exceptional meaning. National, historical, cultural, and, where present, religiously resonant signs are incorporated into the simulation of IKN and positioned within a broader narrative of national progress and collective aspiration.

Digital observation shows that the virtual environment combines futuristic governmental architecture, green spaces, technological infrastructure, cultural references, national symbols, and collective activities. Users can move through virtual public spaces and participate in activities such as flag ceremonies and other collective events. The future capital is therefore constructed not simply as an architectural environment but as a symbolic environment in which particular meanings of national progress, technological advancement, environmental harmony, and collective identity are brought together.

The first symbolic process is the elevation of individual signs into a coherent symbolic order. The significance of Jagat Nusantara lies not in any single sign but in the relationships among different signs. Traditional architectural references are positioned alongside futuristic buildings; environmental imagery is combined with technological infrastructure; national symbols appear within the simulated capital; and collective activities take place within the imagined future city. Through this arrangement, tradition, modernity, technology, sustainability, and national identity appear mutually compatible. The future is consequently constructed through a particular symbolic grammar in which these values converge within a single imagined national horizon.

This symbolic elevation occurs when signs acquire meanings beyond their immediate material functions. A green space becomes associated with environmental harmony; futuristic architecture signifies technological progress; traditional architectural forms evoke historical continuity; and national symbols signify collective belonging. These meanings are not treated as isolated elements but are assembled within the simulation into a coherent image of the future. The simulation thus provides the condition through which selected signs can acquire meanings that extend beyond their immediate material referents.

This process can be understood as sacralization. Following Durkheim (Durkheim 1912, 1915, 2016, 2025), the sacred is constituted through the symbolic distinction and collective elevation of particular objects, ideas, and representations, which are set apart from the ordinary and invested with collective significance. In this study, sacralization does not mean that IKN becomes a religious object. Rather, it refers to the process through which selected signs within the simulation acquire an exceptional symbolic status and become associated with values that transcend their immediate material or instrumental functions. Simulation produces the imagined reality of the future capital, while sacralization concerns the symbolic elevation of selected elements within that reality.

The name "Nusantara" offers a clear example of this symbolic elevation. It functions as more than a geographical designation. Within the simulation of the new capital, Nusantara is associated with the Indonesian archipelago, national unity, cultural diversity, and historical continuity, while simultaneously becoming attached to the image of a technologically advanced future capital. The sign therefore connects an imagined national past with an imagined national future. Traditional architectural elements similarly appear alongside advanced technology, futuristic buildings, and green urban spaces, producing an image in which technological modernity is constructed as compatible with cultural continuity. The future thus

appears not as a rupture with the past but as its continuation and fulfillment.

Through this symbolic construction, Jagat Nusantara transforms the future capital from an administrative development project into a broader national symbol. National unity, cultural identity, technological progress, environmental sustainability, and historical continuity converge within the imagined capital. The future therefore acquires an exceptional symbolic position: it is presented not merely as one possible outcome of a political and development process, but as an elevated horizon of collective aspiration.

Sacralization is further reinforced through symbolic participation. Jagat Nusantara not only lets users see the imagined future; it also let them enter virtual public spaces and participate in activities such as flag ceremonies and other collective events. The user is therefore positioned as a participant within the simulated national future. The flag ceremony, for example, connects a familiar national ritual with the imagined future capital, allowing national identity to be performed within the simulated environment. The future city thus becomes a space where collective identity is symbolically enacted rather than merely observed.

This process brings the imagined future into the present before its material realization. Users encounter a virtual city in which technological progress, environmental sustainability, national unity, and urban order appear simultaneously available. The significance of this condition for sacralization lies in how collective meanings attach to an experienceable future. The national future is not only imagined as an abstract idea but is given spatial, visual, and interactive form within the simulation. In this sense, simulation provides the environment through which people can encounter and enact the elevated meanings of the future.

Sacralization, however, also involves selectively organizing visibility. Jagat Nusantara emphasizes technological progress, aesthetic

harmony, environmental sustainability, national identity, and collective participation, while material conflicts surrounding IKN, including land disputes, environmental concerns, development costs, and the experiences of affected indigenous communities, receive comparatively limited visibility. The simulation may include cultural elements associated with local communities, while their political voices and material struggles receive less symbolic space. The contrast indicates that the elevation of particular meanings is accompanied by the relative marginalization of signs that could disrupt the coherence of the imagined future.

The symbolic elevation of the future therefore operates through both presence and absence. Signs of progress, unity, sustainability, cultural continuity, and technological modernity are repeatedly brought together, while conflict, uncertainty, displacement, and contestation remain comparatively peripheral. The result is a purified symbolic configuration of the future capital. Its coherence is produced not only through what the simulation makes visible but also through what it gives less visibility. Consequently, the imagined national future becomes easier to perceive as harmonious, unified, and desirable.

The findings show that simulation and sacralization are related but analytically distinct processes. Simulation constructs a hyperreal image of the future capital through the organization and circulation of signs, making an unfinished city appear spatially present and experienceable. By contrast, sacralization, occurs when selected signs within this simulated reality are elevated and invested with exceptional collective significance. National unity, historical continuity, cultural identity, technological progress, environmental harmony, and collective aspiration thereby become associated with the imagined capital.

The contribution of this process to the sociology of religion lies precisely in this distinction. The study does not argue that Jagat Nusantara is a religious metaverse or that IKN is explicitly constructed through

religious doctrine. Rather, it demonstrates how a secular technological project can acquire a sacred dimension through the symbolic elevation of particular signs and their association with collective values that transcend immediate material functions. In this sense, the sacred lies not in explicit religious content but in the exceptional symbolic status assigned to the imagined national future.

Jagat Nusantara therefore does more than simulate an unfinished urban project. Through the organization, elevation, and experiential enactment of selected signs, it constructs a future that appears not only possible but collectively meaningful. Simulation makes this future becomes visible and experienceable, while sacralization gives selected elements within that future an exceptional symbolic value. The imagined capital consequently becomes an elevated national horizon in which technological progress, cultural continuity, environmental harmony, and national unity are assembled as shared meanings of the future.

D. CONCLUSION

This study finds that Jagat Nusantara constructs a hyperreal image of Indonesia's future capital by organizing national symbols, cultural references, futuristic architecture, environmental imagery, technological progress, and collective activities into a coherent digital environment. Through this simulation, an unfinished and contested material project becomes experientially present and symbolically detached from its immediate referents. Selected signs of national unity, historical continuity, technological advancement, environmental harmony, and collective aspiration are subsequently invested with exceptional collective meaning and positioned as desirable representations of the national future. This process of sacralization is reinforced through selective visibility, as land disputes, environmental contestation, development uncertainty, and the

experiences of affected communities receive comparatively limited representation within the virtual environment.

Sociologically, these findings show that simulation and sacralization are analytically distinct but interconnected processes. Baudrillard's framework explains how signs become reorganized into a hyperreal environment increasingly autonomous from material reality, while the sociological conception of the sacred helps explain how particular signs are symbolically set apart and endowed with exceptional collective value. Sacralization here therefore does not mean transforming IKN into a religious object. Rather, it refers to the symbolic process through which an imagined national future is elevated beyond an ordinary political-development project and constituted as a normative object of collective aspiration. Jagat Nusantara consequently demonstrates how digital representation can organize not only how society imagines the future, but also which versions of that future become meaningful, desirable, and collectively privileged.

The implication of this study is that sacralizing processes can operate beyond explicitly religious institutions, including within digital, political, and technological imaginaries. However, the study is limited to qualitative digital observation and document-based analysis of Jagat Nusantara and related representations; it therefore cannot establish how users actually interpret, negotiate, accept, or resist these symbolic constructions. Future research should examine user experiences, indigenous and local perspectives, and competing digital narratives to determine whether the sacralized national future produced within Jagat Nusantara is reproduced, contested, or reinterpreted in everyday social life.

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