

CRISIS ECOLOGICAL EXISTENTIALISM: RELOCATE CAPITAL CITY NUSANTARA AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

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Abstract

In August 2019, Indonesia's President Joko Widodo announced that East Kalimantan would replace Jakarta as the new capital city. This decision has a direct impact on the indigenous people of the Nusantara region, raising questions about the sustainability of living in the area due to the relocation scheme. Existential phenomenology is one technique for understanding the challenges faced by indigenous people in their native territories. This method combines historical, social, and material knowledge to illuminate their struggles. A study conducted on the Balik Tribe in Five Villages in East Kalimantan found that the connection between indigenous peoples and their natural surroundings is a significant aspect of their cultural identity. Indigenous people see themselves as an integral part of nature, and their cultural roots are intertwined with their sense that to overcome the challenges they face, they should embrace ecological existentialism by building connectivity in the face of uncertainty.

Keywords: ecological; existentialism; capital city relocation, phenomenology

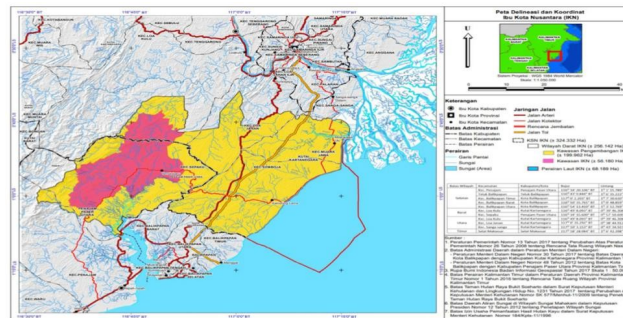
1. Introduction

The Nusantara development project is relocating the old capital city in Jakarta, Java Island, to the new capital city on the island of East Kalimantan. The relocation of the capital city to East Kalimantan, initiated during President Joko Widodo's administration in his second term, gave rise to various opinions and debates among academics, public officials, and the public. The formative reason for moving to the capital city was that Jakarta was no longer suitable as the national and government capital. Apart from that, Indonesia government also mentioned Java-centric issue as one of the reasons for uneven development in other regions (BAPPENAS, 2021). In just 43 days, laws passed, and decisions made about the Nusantara project. The decisions contrast the study of moving capital to other countries worldwide, which took ten years to prepare. Despite the many warnings thrown around the risk of failure, also occurs in countries that have failed to move their capital cities (Da Costa, 2010; Latifah & Aziz, 2020). As a public decision, the process ignores the voices and rights of indigenous and local communities. The hasty Nusantara project demonstrates that the government should facilitate specific interests to allow indigenous peoples or native peoples to own their customary forest areas.

Overlapping concerns about survival, unfinished dealing with the destruction of nature because of deforestation by several corporations that have seized customary land for the extractive industry, both mining and industrial forest plantations, which has destroyed nature, for example, the destruction of rivers that serve as a source of clean water because rivers experience pollution, siltation, and sedimentation, one cannot imagine daily life without clean water. Indigenous peoples are currently having to deal with the increasingly widespread destruction of nature because of the Nusantara project and dealing with evictions from customary lands that have been inhabited for several centuries before.

The Regional Government of East Kalimantan claims that the Nusantara project area is uninhabited or empty¹. The government does not recognize the problem of customary deep in the middle of conversion forests, so indigenous peoples do not get land certificates for their customary territories. The government regards the land as vacant since the land certificate is not on file. This condition makes indigenous peoples unable to access their customary lands, which also contain ancestral sites, water sources, and forest products. If indigenous peoples encroach on the forest to make ends meet, it is considered a criminal act.

Figure 1: Map of The Nusantara Capital City



Caption: The area of the Nusantara project is 256,142 hectares, which is three times the area of the city of Jakarta, 66,270 hectares (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2022)

This research focuses on ecological existentialism between nature and indigenous peoples affected by the Nusantara project. Can the relocation of the national capital be a savior for ecological existentialism between nature and indigenous peoples, or vice versa, add to the list of new socio-ecological damage and trigger the collapse of indigenous peoples' lives?

To understand the crisis of ecological existentialism, the questions is why understand existentially oriented ecology? That saves the relevance of environmental concern's urgency and draws on the broader sources of existentialist thinking. Although existential philosophy constantly debated, don't forget that the philosophy of existentialism is closely related to the existence of individual humans and human consciousness, which is not simple. Sam Mickey (2022) explains ecological existentialism or co-existentialism, which is a development of 21st-century existentialism thinking that focuses on relationality and interconnectivity between humans and non-humans in dealing with natural changes, natural damage, as well as challenges of uncertainty and extinction processes that occur in the earth in the current period (Mickey, 2022).

Ecological existentialism is a critical approach, and existentialism is highly relevant to contemporary environmental moments. The Anthropocene Age makes uncertainty and breakdown an everyday part of it. The shift towards uncertainty and the change towards connectedness impacts increasing anxiety and awareness related to extinction, ultimately changing how we understand the "being" of existence. An Australian anthropologist, Deborah Bird Rose (2011), explains that in ecological existentialism, there are two most important things: connectivity and uncertainty. Every living thing responds to environmental changes and tries to change itself with sustainable arrangements. Ecological existentialism instructs us to live in a dynamic of uncertainty and destruction by pouring our love into this unstable and uncertain earth (Rose, 2011).

How do People live? Existentialist philosophers formulate how humans live as humans themselves (Cogswell, 2008). Existentialism is understood by exploring subjectivity awareness. Existence is "I" which means that I am the whole, the whole of humanity, which implies the

existence of humans is "I" (Riyanto, 2018). Indigenous peoples' absolute existence depends on traditional groups and their nature. For example, someone who believes that a cosmic universe is related to life will have a different moral and ethical outlook from someone who doesn't believe in it. Indigenous peoples believe that survival means living in a community, studying ecology, and caring for nature to survive with various species of plants and animals. So, environmental preservation is part of their strategy to survive and live an existential daily life.

The study of existentialism is debating the way of life and human rights within the structure of existentialism. Discusses misery and human actions to achieve their goals (Priyadharshini et al., 2022). Heidegger's thought in his book *Being and Time* says that living in authenticity and non-authenticity is a mode of "*Dasein*" (Germany) related to existence and its world (Daigle, 2011). *Dasein* has a unique deep meaning and is a source of richness of structure and narrative, which Heidegger calls *Existenz* (Germany), in English; Existence (Heidegger, 1996).

In essence, existentialism is about human nature, and because of that, it cannot stand alone; it is part of a single entity in other areas. Therefore, existentialism cannot stand alone and requires a thorough understanding of it, which is the contextual basis for the existential concept (Susen, 2022). Because it is closely related to experience, the essence of the human entity, existentialism always involves other areas, such as the body, religiosity, and intelligence. It includes natural life, all the resources in it, such as animals, plants, water, air, the contents of the earth, and so on. Because they have a strong relationship with their environment, involvement in these areas becomes directed and has implications that cannot be separated because it is a strong relationship bond with their environment.

This study responds to previous studies aimed at seeing how a social phenomenon is rooted in a historical system of relations and social structures in a society. Indigenous peoples are indigenous entities within their customary territories, not only as the legal owners of land and natural resources but also as owners of traditional culture that shape the daily life of the indigenous peoples and surrounding communities living outside their customary territories. Accordingly, this study answers three questions: *First*, statistical facts that describe the vast expanse of the Nusantara project area, meaning that the wider the Nusantara project, the broader and more significant the risks and impacts, especially the threat of loss of civilization of indigenous peoples and the sustainability of natural resources and their contents. *Second*, the social context with ecological existentialism becomes an ontological element in dismantling ethical and moral problems in the relationship between humans and nature. *Third*, deepening of what happened amidst the splendor of the Nusantara project. The government's policy regarding the Nusantara project has become a "tool" that uproots the natural continuity of indigenous people's lives, animal and plant life, and other organisms: forest, air, soil, and river. From the study, it appears that development. However, it offers the concept of a *forest city*, is still "*an Imitation forest*," and the development process has resulted in the expulsion or extinction of natural life. This means the damage is compounded, and the extinction is starting.

Analysis of the ecological existentialism crisis of nature and indigenous peoples due to the Nusantara project is based on the argument that a phenomenon has historical roots and develops dynamically. What is happening in indigenous peoples can be seen as an iceberg problem, a phenomenon resulting from the capital city relocation project. Thus, the existence of indigenous peoples has the right to the freedom of living space and the choice of civilization to live in an ethical ecological existentialism of their life choices.

2. Research Method

This study is based on qualitative research using a phenomenological perspective. Husserl said that the phenomenological method is a way of getting clarity and harmony about beliefs

(intuition) that lead to something authentic (Sanchez, 2007). The philosopher Immanuel Kant explained that the subject is an irreducible concept and explains human existence in three dimensions: knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics (Froegel, 2010). From Kant's thinking about the original subject, a concept developed to explain the human life-world (*Lebenswelt*) and their ethical commitment led to this concept that Edmund Husserl emphasized with phenomenology. The importance of phenomenology brings us to a world that seems invisible due to its objective nature but contains a subjectively apparent phenomenon reality (Liliweri, 2018; Peoples, 2020).

Using the phenomenological method is the right way to dismantle ecological existentialism awareness ontologically. This was chosen because ontology can be a frame of mind that represents natural existentialism and human existentialism, so it becomes a new point of view in dismantling the relationship between humans and nature.

This study was chosen as the unit of analysis to obtain the ecological and social facts of indigenous peoples intended to unravel the impact of the Nusantara project. Previous studies on capital relocation conducted by other countries found that the Nusantara project is vital for research. In this way, representative cases are obtained to be studied and represent the characteristics of the phenomenon under study.

Focus on the subjective experience of indigenous peoples affected by the Nusantara project. Using the closeness of living directly with the subject is the right way to clarify phenomena directly with the suitable sources. This also clarifies knowledge of deviations and errors in concluding. Researchers in March 2022 for one month of life together as indigenous peoples do every day and do it in 2023 and 2024. This experience is significant because it gives an accurate and thorough structural picture of the subject. In addition, this experience reduces unfounded prejudice, error, and ambiguity about the researcher's knowledge and methods of collecting data.

Data was collected from the indigenous people of the Balik tribe and significant others (NGOs, Local Government) who live in five villages in East Kalimantan: Sepaku, Bumi Harapan, Pamaluan, Mentawir, and Maridan. These villages are in the core area and administrative center of the Nusantara. In addition, secondary data obtained from various statistical sources and research reports help broaden understanding. In the end, this article concludes in a systematic, simultaneous, and interpretive manner, using multiple relevant information to improve research results.

3. Result

a. Social Ecological Statistics Facts

Statistical facts describe the scope and intensity of natural conditions and indigenous peoples living in the Nusantara project area. The findings of the conditions and the resulting consequences confirm how great the threat of damage and extinction is being faced. In this section, the researcher describes the threats from forest destruction, mining, and damage to clean water sources, as well as a picture of the life of indigenous peoples.

Description of Natural Damage

The natural area affected by the Nusantara project is as wide as the government's plan to build a capital city. The wider the territory of the Nusantara project, the broader and more significant the exploitation and resulting damage. The Nusantara project area is divided into a land area of 256,142 hectares and a sea area of 68,189 hectares (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2022). Reports of geologists stating the geological structure of the soil said the geological condition of the soil in the Nusantara project area is clay soil with a conical soil of less than 10 kg/cm², which means it is included in the soft category, which can cause liquefaction (Bachtiar, 2022; Benny Arianto, 2020).

Global Forest Watch 2020 shows data that the four largest countries are carrying out deforestation, namely Brazil, Congo, and Bolivia, and the fourth is Indonesia. (Weisse & Goldman,

2020). The IPBES 2018 data reported by the National Walhi stated that Indonesia loses 680 thousand hectares of forest every year, the largest in Southeast Asia. (Walhi, 2021). At least 41,493 hectares of forest have been destroyed in the Nusantara project (Febrian & Saubani, 2022).

The customary forest area has been confiscated and then converted into an Industrial Plantation Forest area by PT. International Timber Corporation Indonesia Kartika Utama (PT. IKU) and PT. International Timber Corporation Indonesia Hutani Manunggal (PT. IHM), each with an area of 6,000 hectares. This area is customary land to the indigenous people of the Suku Balik in Sepaku, East Kalimantan (Johansyah, 2022). The extent of the impact of deforestation illustrates that Widodo's government is imposing its ambitions amid the efforts of the Indonesian people, who are committed to environmental issues and zero emissions by 2050. UNREDD² explained that by stopping deforestation, Indonesia's forests—the third largest forest in the world—could reduce CO₂ emissions by more than five giga tons per year. Considering the ongoing climate change, Indonesia's forests are not only a source of absorption of greenhouse gases but also contribute to stabilizing climate change worldwide. This forest can also function as a source of water, a source of wood from the trees, and preserve life on the land.

There are 193 mines (IUP mining business permits) in East Kalimantan, with an area of 154,945.51 hectares. Thirty-one mines are in the Nusantara's core area, eight in the Nusantara's central government area, and around 154 other mines are in the Nusantara's buffer zone. According to the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning, 73 thousand hectares of coal mines and 61 thousand hectares of oil and gas holdings are throughout the capital city area (Rikang et al., 2022). The data above shows that the vast area of the Nusantara project and the various socio-ecological crisis problems can be trapped in the trap of over-exploitation of environmental resources. This occurs assuming abundant natural resources will not run out in a few years or centuries.

Mine operators neglect reclamation responsibilities, which means closing unused pits and creating a green environment. This caused public unrest, and several people died because of it (Yovanda, 2019). In addition, the water from the mining pool is dangerous because it contains heavy metals, and the acidity level (pH. 3.00pH) is below the water quality standards and unsuitable for use (Kementrian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2017). In an unfit-for-use condition, the Minister of Environment and Forestry, Siti Nurbaya Bakar, provided a solution for the former mining pit to be used as a water source in the Nusantara project³. This policy is confusing because water is not suitable for use but forced to be consumed. The question arises of how an environmental impact analysis study should be carried out before deciding on the Nusantara project.

Mining and industrial timber plantations cause wells to dry up, making water more difficult to obtain, and river sedimentation impacts the quality of freshwater sources (Camacho-Valdez et al., 2022). In their daily life, they are forced to use dirty, muddy, and polluted river water. They will be luckier if they get clean water from rainwater reservoirs. Clean water is a vital resource for human damage to pollution and can impact the sustainability of human life and their livelihoods.

The statistical facts above show that the Nusantara project taking the rights of indigenous peoples' living space and biodiversity. Exploitation has caused damage to nature, and what is even more concerning is the occurrence of re-exploitation, which means re-exploitation in larger quantities. There are three essential things related to natural damage. *First*, the damage is worsening due to replacing natural forests with industrial plantation forests. This replacement causes the natural forest ecosystem to disappear, with hundreds of natural plant species that are lost and cannot be replanted. The protected step animal habitats are also lost, and the animal corridors, which are the animals' lifelines, are lost, so the animals must find other places that may

not be suitable for their current ecosystem. *Second*, many abandoned and uncovered mine pits in ex-mining land make it very dangerous. The question is, how will the life of the people of the Nusantara be if many former mines have not been reclaimed? *Thirdly*, the area of the Nusantara project is proportional to the damage that has been done and will be done. Because of the Nusantara project, indigenous peoples are becoming vulnerable and marginalized

Description of Indigenous Peoples

According to AMAN (National Indigenous Peoples Alliance) of East Kalimantan, there are seven indigenous tribes affected by the Nusantara project. The Balik tribe claimed to have lived in Sepaku hundreds of years ago, even before Indonesia became an independent country. The total population in each sub-district is 31,814 people in Sepaku District, 63,128 people in Samboja District, 37,867 people in Muara Jawa District, and 52,736 people in Loa Kulu District, according to data from the East Kalimantan Central Bureau of Statistics (Johansyah, 2022). The data shows that the Nusantara project area is not vacant; it has been inhabited and has concessions such as mines, industrial forest plantations, power plant plantations, and other businesses.

b. Existentialism: Ontology of Indigenous Peoples

Everyday Life

The paradigm of the existence of life that has been instilled in human culture and awareness has been shaped by everyday (everyday life) experiences with nature. Because the indigenous people get their source of life and the cultural values they adhere to every day, their relationship with nature is like that of their biological mother. It is the lifestyle of applying local wisdom that has shaped indigenous peoples to this day by retaining the characteristics of the way of life from their ancestors (ancestors) for hundreds of years and to this day. The long journey of history from hunting-gathering and transition to farming began around 11,000 years ago, then entered the age of metal and letter recognition 5,400 years ago (Diamond, 2013b). Many people around the world still follow traditional culture or follow local wisdom. The modern condition that indigenous peoples are currently facing is a condition that has just developed locally. In other words, every human being has lived in indigenous peoples.

With the long distance between indigenous people's lives, it is reasonable to believe that indigenous peoples are far more diverse in many respects of cultural practices than modern industrial societies. For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples have represented how to build the life of human civilization with the wisdom of natural resources by producing various solutions to problems that are different from modern times. For example, what was done by Mrs. Syamsiah, the Balik tribe, in Sepaku explained;

"..how they cured COVID-19 patients using traditional ingredients from the Sungkai plant found in the forest. This plant was boiled and then given to the sick person to drink until the symptoms of the illness disappeared, and the person was healthy again."

²www.un-redd.org

³<https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20220328174417-20-777129/menteri-lhk-ada-29-ribu-hektare-lubang-tambang-di-kawasan-ikn>

This shows that they solve everyday life problems using conventional methods, which are still being used today with precise results. Indigenous peoples can not only offer solutions for better living habits, but they can also teach people to appreciate the many advantages of nature.

Abandonment of Citizenship Rights: Signs of Benchmark Mean Signs Towards Extinction

The authorities have decided to relocate the capital to North Penajam Paser Regency, and the process of mapping the area and acquiring lands belonging to the Balik indigenous peoples has already commenced. Mrs. Rania complains one of the properties affected by this decision, causing her to express her frustration and sadness through tears and complaints:

"...We woke up to find a stake planted in our yard, with no explanation provided by the worker who was responsible for it. When I inquired about it, the worker stated they were uncertain and had been instructed to do so as part of their job. Although we have been living in the area for generations, predating both Indonesian independence and the arrival of Javanese migrants, they were not consulted or acknowledged. We are upset by this treatment and demand to know why our family was not respected and considered (Interview: Mrs. Rania).

The presence of a stake in the area, bearing the message: Boundaries of the Central Government Core Area. Do Not Destroy indicates that the land is part of the Nusantara Government's Core Area, earmarked for development as part of the Nusantara project. However, when Mrs. Rania inquired about the significance of the stake and its message, the worker responsible for placing it claimed ignorance, stating, *"We had only been instructed to care for it and ensured it remained undamaged."* This lack of information extends to the community, with neither Mrs. Rania nor the neighborhood chairman able to clarify the matter. From this, the coercion of taking over people's land without prior notification and discussion indicates that residents are not considered citizens with rights over their living area.

Indigenous peoples are considered a vulnerable second-class society because many of their rights have been ignored, they have been marginalized, and their land has been confiscated for development. However, the government realizes that land and forests are natural resources exploited and used by indigenous peoples to maintain their existence. There is no adequate protection of essential rights in social, economic, cultural, and customary life. This includes the right to use customary lands and forests with valuable natural resources.

Jared Diamond stated environmental damage that led to the collapse of past civilizations is still a pressing issue. Therefore, damaging nature and the environment is considered a moral crime or offense (Diamond, 2013a). The Nusantara projects don't always produce good, happy results; extinction always haunts them. Ironically, people who want to ask about the value of their lives have to face big trucks going back and forth in preparation for development, and on the other hand, face the ever-increasing destruction of nature. *How will our lives continue?* Is a question posed by the indigenous people of the Balik tribe.

Mr. Sibukdin (Head of the Balik Tribe) said.

"Here will we live later, our children and grandchildren. Our expertise can only be farming, not working as office workers in our homes and fields. Will we still be there after relocating the Nusantara? Are our cultural traditions only remain in a name?"

Feel the powerlessness of a significant Nusantara infrastructure project development that is promoted as sustainable. Still, in the context of indigenous peoples, the impact of this development undermines or uproots indigenous peoples from their existence in the real world, as well as from their constitutional rights to be recognized as a citizen.

In studying government policies regarding the status of indigenous peoples, one must use radical and critical thinking to prevent them from disappearing or being uprooted from their lives and nature. Awareness of the principle of decency, in which nature is a right for all creatures, is an element of Human Rights. The word "*being*" refers to the relationship between living things and each other and between living things and all the structures of the universe. Indigenous peoples who live in areas that are part of the Nusantara project are assertive in protecting nature, rivers, and forests. They make honest and direct efforts to save rivers and forests to survive against and face mining companies and industrial plantation forests. One of these efforts is to maintain the status of land ownership, which has been carried out for a long time. In ancient times, people agreed on land ownership based on natural boundaries such as rivers, trees, and locations, but today, these boundaries are not strong enough to indicate ownership status.

It became very ironic when the state, through the governor of East Kalimantan, claimed that the IKN area was empty land, as quoted in the YouTube video: Narasi Newsroom channel YouTube

"If you go there, you will only find forests because IKN belongs to the state and not the community (at 5:29) for the benefit of the nation and state... Only around 15% of community groups are there, and the state is not mandated to free the land. Specifically, since it is not a residential area, it is a forest (at 8:25), and nothing will be disturbed. No customary land is there, and none will be used to construct the capital city (10:32)."

(Interview with Mata Najwa, Irsan Noor, Governor of East Kalimantan)⁴

Responding to questions from the governor of East Kalimantan, Isran Noor, the head of the Balik Tribe, when interviewed, stated:

"feel heartbroken when the governor says this land is empty, then what are we? We are human beings, Indonesian citizens with rights as citizens. Even monkeys are protected." (Interview with Sibukdin, Chief of the Balik Tribe)

Mrs. Seting, who heads AMAN East Kalimantan, stated;

"Identifying the customary territories that indigenous peoples in the Nusantara area previously controlled is becoming increasingly difficult. This is because the natural boundaries traditionally used as the main markers of customary territory control have disappeared due to the issuance of company concession permits

and the government's claim that the land belongs to the state. These claims are legitimized through laws and regulations. This situation highlights a common problem faced by indigenous peoples and local communities worldwide, where their traditional lands and resources are often lost due to

government policies and corporate activities."

Identity as members of indigenous peoples is at stake in facing the Nusantara project. Foucault (1926–1984) discussed how power shapes citizen identity (Foucault, 1988). As expressed by Dahlia, an indigenous member of the Bumi Harapan Village, *later, we will be like the native Betawi peoples of Jakarta who end up being ondel-ondel puppets on the side of the road, beggars in our land.*" Even though the government is campaigning for development with the idea of a forest city and maintaining traditional culture, the phenomenon of the Nusantara project becomes a dazzling picture because the power of discourse is contrary to plans for eviction or relocation of indigenous peoples.

In other words, here is a conflicting point of view: indigenous peoples who have occupied the land and cultivated land in their customary areas are considered non-existent, and the land is considered empty and uninhabited, and no one owns it. Thus, the state's attitude towards indigenous peoples living in the Nusantara project area, which is part of the Indonesian state, is described as subordinated, backward, lowly, and marginal. The stigma of "the others (liyan)" or others becomes part of policy-making by the government (Palmer, 1977; Powell, 1998; Robert & Tobi, 2017). It can be concluded that the dialectical relations of the state and indigenous peoples should give rise to anthropological entities. The question is: who is referred to as an Indonesian citizen? The non-recognition of the existence of indigenous peoples can be concluded as a shift in anthropological propositions to become entirely political (Sartre, 1946). This means that individuals who subscribe to this philosophy have a heightened awareness of their existence and the world around them. On the other hand, Martin Heidegger's perspective argued that humans are not subjects but Dasein, which has a more profound meaning, including *Existenz* or Existence, as it is the source of a rich structure and narrative (Heidegger, 1996; Riyanto, 2017). They are considered subjects by existentialist consciousness because they are human beings with lives related to natural status, material status, historical status, experience, and the future.

Subject and Dasein Act are responsible for freely determining their destiny based on their historical experience and traditional culture. According to Sibukdin, the customary leader of the Balik Tribe, *the construction of the Nusantara project and its potential impact on the community's way of life was because the Balik people do not need multi-story buildings to live in, which following their cultural and traditions.*" This perspective aligns with the principles of authentic existential, positing that the individual self and cultural identity are intertwined and cannot be separated without compromising one's authenticity. In the case of the Balik Tribe, the personal and traditional culture or individual self are inseparable, reinforcing the other. Assuming this balance is disrupted or lost, the authentic existentialism of the community will be undermined.

Existential awareness reflects the relationship between "I" and "Subjective". In this context, the word "I" depicts "Indigenous peoples" living in their customary or indigenous communities. They share a biological and customary lineage to ancestral historical, cultural, and natural values that comprise one unit. In this context, the word "I" depicts every 'customary human self'. The phrase customary man refers to a single entity or *being-existence-in-the-world*, existing within its paradigm or worldview and being shaped by cultural and customary values integral to its existence. This unique worldview informs the individual's perception of reality, including spiritual and ethical aspects. For indigenous peoples, traditional culture is not simply an objective reality but a fundamental world aspect that coexists.

The indigenous people are profoundly aware of their subjectivity, which is intertwined

with their experience and knowledge. This awareness is so comprehensive that it can be called the absolute I. The awareness of "I" among indigenous peoples encompasses understanding their existence and actions. The Latin term "*Agere*" which means to act, is used interchangeably with "*Esse*" meaning to exist, in describing this awareness (Riyanto, 2018). Indigenous peoples' awareness of "I" manifests in their creative actions guided by their customary ethics, cultural.

4. Discussion

a. Indigenous Peoples' Subjective Relationality is Authentic Existentialism

Indigenous people's choice to live in awareness of their traditional culture is integral to existentialism. Existentialism, as defined by Sartre in the book entitled "Existentialism is Humanism" (1946), holds that "existentialism precedes essence" (Guillaume & de Dorlodot, 2016;

aesthetics, and transcendental religiosity. This awareness transcends any specific experience and is considered an authentic expression of existentialism. Freedom Part of the Existentialist

Being an existentialist must be a context to make it happen. This action is reflected in freedom, which allows a person to choose what is essential and valuable in their life. Sartre's philosophy of existentialism asserts that human consciousness is bound only by itself, with free will being a key component. Therefore, human freedom has no limits except those imposed by humans (Eshleman, 2011). the concreteness of human existence is closely linked to individuals' freedom and choices to express their existence (Sartre & Richmond, 2022). Existentialism ethics occurs when everyone is radically free and can go beyond themselves to choose survival because freedom is the basis of moral obligations (Beauvior, 2018). The above argument, freedom awareness is absolute and a communal choice for indigenous peoples regarding their customary and cultural lives.

Indigenous peoples have complete freedom to live within their cultural and customary paradigms and choose where they want to develop. According to the philosophy, making decisions and choosing is challenging for humans. People can choose "*how-they-live-in-the-world*" or "*how- they-are-in-it*". Indigenous people's choices are to explore, hunt, and collect in their customary forests, to follow local wisdom, for example, to use drugs that were taken from forest plants when the COVID-19 pandemic refused to seek treatment at the hospital. Sartre highlights the significance of historical praxis as an integral part of existential freedom, and for indigenous peoples, protecting nature is equivalent to safeguarding their history and its values (Matušík, 2002). By engaging in historical praxis, indigenous communities create a form of intersubjective projection that helps to prevent vulnerabilities and deficiencies and realizes the ethical intelligence of social freedom.

The conflict between the desire of indigenous peoples to preserve their customary forest territories from being confiscated by extractive industries and a new capital city construction and their concerns about the sustainability of their future generation's lives reflects a clash between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism principles. Meanwhile, humans strive to achieve the values of truth and freedom. Their actions must respond to the reality they face. This aligns with Sartre's

philosophy that "Humans are condemned to be free" (Cogswell, 2008). Marxists argue that material and social conditions shape human freedom, while economics aims to achieve greater and transcendental freedom (Shepherd, 2018). Indigenous peoples express a desire to continue to live socially, economically, culturally, and historically with a moral awareness of existential

freedom rather than industrial capital-based socio-economy life choices are conical in "*rational beings*" who always seek the values of truth and freedom in *living-together-in-the-world* philosophy that "Humans are condemned to be free" (Cogswell, 2008). Marxists argue that material and social conditions shape human freedom, while economics aims to achieve greater and transcendental freedom (Shepherd, 2018). Indigenous peoples express a desire to continue to live socially, economically, culturally, and historically with a moral awareness of existential freedom rather than industrial capital-based socio-economy life choices are conical in "*rational beings*" who always seek the values of truth and freedom in *living-together-in-the-world*.

b. Ecological Existentialism of Indigenous Peoples

How does the ecological-existentialism crisis explain the vulnerability of indigenous people's lives? Rene Descartes' philosophical concept of "*cogito ergo sum*," which translates to "I think, therefore I exist," expresses modern philosophy. "Cogito" in the context of indigenous peoples can be as "I live in an indigenous culture" that is interpreted as "I live in a traditional culture I exist". This can be simplified even more by the statement "I" as being aware of self-awareness, nature, and indigenous culture. Deborah Bird Rose, an anthropologist and environmental humanities based in Australia, introduced ecological existentialism, which draws on Emmanuel Levinas's thoughts on existential phenomenology, which argues that insights into shared ways of thinking to affirm irreducible and irreparable differences sustain one another (Rose, 2011). Indigenous peoples continue to undergo the process of becoming "*being-in-the-world*" amidst damage and uncertainty. They continue to respond to their changing awareness of the environment, or the destruction of nature, without being able to avoid or choose, live in the complexity of various environmental problems, experiment more, and create new things to survive. In the end, existentialist awareness of the importance of coexistence with nature, customary forests, and other resources is affected by the destruction of nature.

In the current crisis, the philosophy of ecological existentialism provides a perspective on living in a state of desolated nature. Listening to Kierkegaard's statement, "people don't need to rush to change the social reality of their living environment but must achieve identity first." (Hidya Tjaya, 2020). Indigenous peoples who live in the reality of culture by carrying out the three areas of existentialism (Aesthetic, Ethical, and Transcendental) have achieved identity, which means it is in line with Kierkegaard's thinking.

From the above study, two novelties were built: *First*, that absolute authentic existential stays, even though it changes, does connectivity, realize parallels with nature that damaged, lives in the dynamics of unstable natural destruction and uncertainty of life leading to extinction. *Second*, this concept at the same time refutes the theory of the Age of Enlightenment (Renaissance), which says that those who have the right to be called citizens are not economically poor, productive, or healthy; they have the right to have the status of citizens in the concept of the life of indigenous peoples who live in simplicity and at one with nature has been indisputable. Indigenous peoples, who can make their existential history, have created existential as a whole through awareness of exploitative social, economic, and ideological situations by bringing existential awareness to achieve clarity of citizen status and turn into subject identity in the eyes of the state.

5. Conclusion

The existentialism of indigenous peoples refers to the fact that indigenous peoples have a territory of existence towards their bodies and existence concerning nature, which is like a biological mother for Indigenous peoples who are separated, displaced, or evicted from their original territories and lose their fundamental right to life. Their customary forest is evicted and confiscated, local cultural values and wisdom are lost, and they are replaced by a foreign life. Indigenous people's lives are more complex than we see and learn; their existential lives must be more complex than we think. *Being existentialist* in the indigenous people of the Balik tribe means maintaining the past and living in the present despite facing many problems and even facing the threat of extinction from nature and their customary territories.

By creating productive life responsibilities in an authentic existential way, indigenous peoples can increase awareness of social, economic, and political changes and opportunities. The sustainability of indigenous peoples' existentialism can be achieved through *ecological existentialism*, in which individuals depend on one another to understand uncertain situations and damage to nature and discover subjective awareness.

"Who is called an Indonesian citizen?" Indigenous peoples are uprooted from their ancestral lands, causing two particular things: new poverty and loss of traditional identity. Development increases the domination and power of the state, while indigenous peoples lose their existence and constitutional rights to recognize their customs. The government can create citizens' identities, which means that identities are objects; if the identity of the object is human, then that object is alienated structurally oppressed, and freedom will be limited or lost altogether, and the individual will be considered subordinated, backward, low, or marginal. Therefore, anthropological entities emerge because of the state's and indigenous peoples' dialectical relationship. Still, in the Nusantara project, it can be concluded that anthropological propositions have turned into political propositions.

This study found two novelties. *First*, existential awareness has survived despite facing various threats of uncertainty and extinction. *Second*, refuting the medieval (renaissance) theory, which said that a capially productive society is what has the right to be called "citizens." This theory does not apply to indigenous peoples living with nature, in simplicity, and far from the productive value of capital.

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