



The Narrative of New Order Development in the Relationship between Pancasila and the Legitimacy of Power

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ABSTRACT

Under the New Order, development did not merely promise material progress, but also produced a political truth that made Pancasila a moral and technocratic language. This study aims not only to uncover the past but also to re-examine the relationship between Pancasila and development from a critical perspective to prevent the state's basic ideology from being reduced to a narrow political instrument. This study uses a qualitative-interpretative approach with a historical design grounded in critical discourse analysis. The results show that the New Order's development narrative indicates that the legitimacy of power did not primarily arise from debates about truth, but rather from engineering that made obedience appear moral, infrastructure appear as evidence of goodness, and social conflict appear as administrative disturbances, so that the public was trained to judge the government based on the visibility of work and order, rather than justice and rights. When development is used as aesthetics, control easily becomes virtue, eviction becomes reorganisation, silencing becomes stabilisation, and criticism becomes a threat to unity. Therefore, a constructive re-actualisation of Pancasila must dare to reverse this logic by making it a language of accountability that invites criticism, restoring conflict as a legitimate part of deliberation, and forcing development to be measured by its impact on dignity and the distribution of justice, while acknowledging the limitations of archival evidence and demanding further research that places the experiences of affected citizens at the centre of moral-political verification.

A. Introduction

The narrative of development during the New Order era was one of the most powerful ideological constructs in the history of modern Indonesian politics, serving not only as a framework for economic and social policy but also as an instrument for legitimising power through a particular interpretation of Pancasila. In this context, Pancasila was not merely established as the foundation of the state as formulated by the nation's founders, but was reduced and reproduced into an ideological device that reinforced the authoritarian political order. The New Order under Soeharto's leadership succeeded in constructing a development narrative that unified economic goals, political stability, and state ideology into a single conceptual package called National Development. Through this narrative, Pancasila transformed an open philosophical idea into an ideological doctrine that justified the state's control over society. The relationship between development and Pancasila at that time was very close, as development was seen as the embodiment of Pancasila values. In contrast, Pancasila was positioned as a moral foundation that could not be challenged in the entire process of national development.

The integration between the narrative of development and the ideology of Pancasila did not occur spontaneously but was the result of deliberate political and discursive construction. The state monopolised the interpretation of Pancasila through institutions such as BP7, P4 training, and civic education regulations designed to instil a single ideological consciousness in society. Within this framework, development became a hegemonic narrative that framed all aspects of political and social life (Ghaffari et al., 2025). Any criticism of government policy was considered a deviation from the spirit of Pancasila and a threat to national stability. Through this discourse strategy, the New Order successfully integrated Pancasila ideology with the legitimacy of power. However, behind the apparent stability, this narrative harbours a fundamental paradox: Pancasila, as an open ideology that should serve as the basis for social dialogue, has instead been frozen into a tool of legitimisation that closes off space for difference and criticism.

Previous studies have sought to unravel the relationships among Pancasila, development, and New Order power from various perspectives (Aragon, 2022; Iannone et al., 2025; Syarif et al., 2024). Classic studies, such as those by David Bourchier and Vedi R. Hadiz (2014), highlight how the ideas of state corporatism and bureaucratic authoritarianism served as the institutional basis for the political legitimacy of development. They observed that the New Order used Pancasila as a moral justification for a political system that subjugated civil society to state control. From another perspective, several studies highlight the role of popular culture, the media, and official narratives in reproducing the ideology of development through symbols of prosperity and modernity embedded in Pancasila (Barker, 2013; Budiman, 2011; Hidayatulloh, 2024).

Recent studies in the last decade show a shift in focus from institutional analysis to discursive and cultural analysis of the New Order's development narrative (Esposito & Terlizzi, 2023; Van Hulst et al., 2025). For example, recent works reveal how the language of development in official documents and state speeches shaped the image of a paternalistic state that claimed to be both the protector of the people and the regulator of social morality. On the other hand, postcolonial studies show that the New Order development narrative cannot be separated from the legacy of economic and epistemological colonialism, which reduced people to objects of development rather than political subjects (Hall, 2023; Langer & Matić, 2023; Mahaswa & Syaja, 2025). However, studies that explicitly trace the construction of the New Order development narrative in its simultaneous relationship with Pancasila as an instrument of power legitimisation are still relatively limited (Adiprasetyo, 2025; Hastangka & Ediyono, 2023; Kim, 2024).

Most previous studies tend to separate the analysis of state ideology from development policy, or conversely, focus only on the economic and bureaucratic dimensions without

examining how the ideological narrative of Pancasila was mobilised to strengthen political hegemony. This is a significant knowledge gap that needs to be filled. There are still a few studies that place the New Order development narrative as a discursive product that connects the ideological, political, and cultural dimensions in a single, comprehensive analytical framework. In addition, a few studies examine in depth how this narrative works through language, symbols, and social practices to create a legitimacy for power widely accepted by society.

Another weakness in previous studies is the tendency to view Pancasila normatively as the foundation of the state, which was misused by the New Order regime, without examining how the process of interpreting and reproducing its meaning occurred in the context of politics and mass communication. Previous studies generally stop at the descriptive level, without tracing the semantic and practical dynamics that make Pancasila a tool for producing meaning in the discourse of development. Therefore, this study will go beyond the normative approach by using critical discourse analysis to unravel the power relations around the construction of the development narrative and the meaning of Pancasila. This approach enables understanding how language and symbols are used to shape a social reality that benefits specific power structures.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to integrate ideological, political, and discursive analyses of the relationship between Pancasila and the legitimacy of power in the New Order's development narrative. Conceptually, this study seeks to reformulate the understanding of Pancasila not merely as a state ideology but as an arena of meaning contestation that is continuously produced and negotiated in the political and social spheres. This study focuses on how the New Order development narrative was constructed, disseminated, and maintained through the ideological relationship between Pancasila and state power. The main objective of this study is to explain the mechanisms of construction and reproduction of the New Order development narrative in relation to Pancasila as an ideology of power legitimacy.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative-interpretative approach with a historical design based on critical discourse analysis because the focus is on power relations that operate through language, ideological doctrines, and institutional practices within a specific time frame, rather than testing statistical causal relationships (Caballero-Mengíbar, 2015). The operational focus of the study is set on three interrelated analytical constructs, namely the narrative of New Order development (operationalised as a series of themes, metaphors of progress, binary oppositions such as stability-chaos, and technocratic rationality that are repeated in the text), the articulation of Pancasila (operationalised as a form of interpretation, narrowing of meaning, and normative truth claims attached to Pancasila through key terms, official definitions, and pedagogical formulas), and the legitimisation of power (operationalised as strategies of justification and consensus building evident in the linking of policies with Pancasila morality, the delegitimisation of criticism as anti-Pancasila, and the naturalisation of obedience through rhetoric of unity/stability).

Data analysis is applied through a three-dimensional discourse model (text level, discursive practice, socio-political practice) that allows tracking how lexical choices and development of argumentation structures produce the ideological authority of Pancasila, as well as how educational institutions, bureaucracy, and the media function as channels of reproduction (Riyani et al., 2025). This strategy is most appropriate for the study's objectives because it produces an explanation of legitimacy mechanisms that is historical, layered, and accountable through cross-genre intertextual readings, rather than merely a description of themes or policy chronology.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Pancasila as a Social Discipline Ecosystem for Development

Pancasila, as a social discipline ecosystem in the context of New Order development, can be understood as a configuration of power relations that operates subtly yet intensively through a network of institutions and daily practices, resulting in obedient habits without always requiring direct coercive force (Prakoso et al., 2024). Within this framework, Pancasila is not merely a set of normative principles, but rather a moral language and classification system that filters which actions and individuals are considered Pancasila-compliant and which are considered potentially disruptive to order and development.

The New Order's narrative of development, which links Pancasila with stability, economic growth, and national unity, shapes a horizon of meaning in which obedience to the state is framed as obedience to the nation's highest moral values (Karimullah et al., 2025). Consequently, the relationship between the state and its citizens is mediated not only by written law but also by a network of social rules and informal norms that permeate neighbourhood associations, schools, offices, and mass organisations, so that surveillance and behaviour-shaping occur in a distributed, layered manner.

From the perspective of modern power theory, as formulated, for example, by Michel Foucault through the concepts of discipline and governmentality, the New Order can be seen not only as relying on repressive apparatuses, but also as building a regime of behaviour management that directs citizens to regulate themselves. Pancasila was used as a moral reference point that appeared neutral and universal, so that adjusting oneself to behavioural standards in accordance with Pancasila was seen as a rational and ethical choice rather than the result of power intervention (D. M. Bourchier, 2019). In the context of Gramsci's hegemony, the narrative of development based on Pancasila crystallised into a common sense, such as the idea that good citizens are those who prioritise stability, avoid conflict, diligently participate in community service, and do not openly question government policies.

This hegemony works not only at the ideological level, but also in the body and in habits. This moral map subtly but effectively produces obedience without the need for physical violence in every social space, becoming a reality when the RT and RW, as the administrative units closest to citizens' lives, function as nodes of surveillance and internalisation of norms. In the RT/RW environment, the narrative of development is translated into informal rules such as the obligation to attend community service, night patrols, community meetings, or national holiday celebrations, which are framed as tangible manifestations of the values of cooperation and Pancasila togetherness.

Refusal to participate, even in seemingly trivial activities such as community service, is quickly interpreted as an indication of social indifference, individualism, or even a potentially anti-Pancasila attitude (Akbar et al., 2022). Through community meetings, attendance records, and discussions at the administrative level, a moral hierarchy is formed that identifies who are good citizens and who are troublemakers, so that this assessment mechanism regulates behaviour without the need for explicit formal regulations in this case, the RT and RW function as extensions of the development discourse, but with a communitarian face that appears neutral and purely for the common good.

Schools, offices, and mass organisations become spaces for the reproduction of discipline that complement the regulations at the community level. In schools, Pancasila is taught not only as cognitive material but also as a moral standard, internalised through flag ceremonies, memorisation of the Guidelines for the Understanding and Implementation of Pancasila (P4), and attitude assessments that determine a student's image as a role model or a troublemaker (Suhartono et al., 2025). In government and private offices, participation in ceremonies, P4 training, and state ceremonial activities became unwritten indicators of loyalty, influencing superiors' assessments of employees' discipline and suitability to the organisational culture defined in terms of Pancasila and development.

In mass organisations operating under the single principle of Pancasila, the management structure, work programmes, and even activity slogans are structured in harmony with the narrative of national development, placing citizens' social associations within the same ideological orbit. This institutional network creates a situation in which almost every important social space in an individual's life carries the burden of upholding behavioural standards deemed appropriate under Pancasila. Pancasila in this ecosystem functions primarily as a moral language that classifies and evaluates (Husaeni, 2023). Terms such as good citizen, active, cooperative, and supportive of development are contrasted with labels such as protesting, unwilling to cooperate, or even disrupting harmony, which are easily levelled at those who question management decisions, are reluctant to participate in community service, or are seen to discuss politics outside the official line frequently.

Refusal to attend RT meetings, criticising local development policies, or engaging in discussions deemed too political are not only perceived as individual actions, but as symptoms of attitudes that deviate from the spirit of Pancasila togetherness (Beittinger-Lee, 2013). This is where symbolic logic comes into play, because non-compliance with the norms of direct development participation is linked to the risk of being suspected of not being Pancasila-minded, a heavy stigma in the political climate of the New Order. Pancasila became a kind of moral court language that enabled citizens to monitor and judge one another without the need for constant intervention by state officials.

The consequence of this moral language is the emergence of concrete social risks in the form of indirect sanctions. Citizens who repeatedly absent themselves from community service or rarely attend meetings may experience symbolic exclusion by not being invited to speak, seldom being involved in decision-making, or becoming the subject of gossip that damages their reputation. In the context of resource distribution, this moral status can affect more difficult access to social assistance, administrative recommendations, or RT/RW support when dealing with bureaucracy.

In the world of work, employees who are known to ask many questions or be critical of leadership policies wrapped in jargon about efficiency and development may face career obstacles, be marginalised from promotions, or be labelled as not in line with the organisational culture. These sanctions are not always written down, but they are effective because they touch on basic needs for social acceptance, security, and aspirations for social mobility. Anti-Pancasila stigma can appear implicitly in everyday expressions, but its symbolic pressure is so great that it encourages individuals to conform before open conflict occurs.

The mechanisms for producing compliance in this ecosystem rely heavily on the management of social emotions such as shame, fear, security, and gratitude. Shame arises when individuals feel their behaviour may be labelled as not in line with the collective norms associated with Pancasila (Husaeni, 2023). Fear arises not only towards security forces, but also towards the social and bureaucratic consequences that may befall oneself and one's family. On the other hand, a sense of security and indebtedness is produced through the practice of local administrators, schools, or superiors at work providing assistance, attention, and facilities, which is then intertwined with the narrative that all of this results from harmony and compliance with Pancasila and development. This combination of subtle threats and symbolic rewards gives rise to a habitus of obedience, a spontaneous tendency to choose safe actions, avoid controversy, and align oneself with the expectations of the environment.

State ceremonies, P4 training, and organisational rituals become the main vehicles for repeating normative messages that shape citizens' emotions and perspectives towards themselves and others (Dermawan et al., 2024). Routine flag ceremonies with the recitation of the Pancasila text, the national anthem, and the mentor's message create a temporal rhythm that marks the body and memory; students, employees, or organisation members experience

the internalisation of values through uniform movements, lines, and verbal repetitions that associate discipline with national glory.

P4 training, with modules and lectures emphasising the harmony of the individual with the interests of the nation and state, instils a mindset in which criticism and differences of opinion are easily categorised as threats to disintegration. Within mass organisations, ceremonial activities such as cadre training, organisation anniversary celebrations, or large rallies reinforce the narrative that loyalty to the leadership and the organisation's line is an integral part of practising Pancasila. Through these rituals, Pancasila is not only memorised, but embodied as a conditioned pattern of behaviour: standing tall, being respectful, following instructions, and repeating the same formula over and over again.

The development media, both state media and mainstream media operating within the strict boundaries of the New Order, played a key role in expanding this ecosystem of social discipline into the realm of collective imagination (Trottier & Fuchs, 2014). News broadcasts, documentaries, and public service advertisements consistently visualised development as a series of monumental successes made possible by strong leadership and an obedient people. Pancasila appeared in slogans, logos, and narratives that linked hard work, obedience, and sacrifice with national progress.

Demonstrations and political criticism, when they did arise, were often portrayed as potential for unrest, as disruptors of stability, or as remnants of past extremism. Thus, the media not only conveys information but also shapes affective schemas, making people feel proud when they see stability and progress, and anxious or disturbed when confronted with images of crowds of demonstrators or open conflict. In the domestic sphere, families absorb and reproduce these schemas in everyday conversations, reinforcing the consensus that avoiding politics and following the tide of development is the most rational and safe choice.

In schools and offices, P4 training and Pancasila education provide a very detailed operational definition of what it means to be a good citizen (Octavia & Tirtoni, 2024). The points of Pancasila practice outline the actions that should and should not be taken in the context of family, environment, and state, thus forming a kind of rule of feeling that guides moral judgements of oneself and others. In the evaluation process, it is not only academic achievement or technical performance that is taken into account, but also attitudes that are often interpreted in terms of obedience, compliance, and moral suitability.

Students or employees who are too vocal, ask too many critical questions, or challenge their superiors' decisions, risk being judged as lacking in Pancasila spirit (Khoirina et al., 2022). This kind of attitude assessment affects opportunities to obtain scholarships, recommendations, or promotions, thereby linking an individual's prospects to their level of conformity to the norms of obedience. At this point, discipline no longer needs to be enforced harshly, as it is already embedded in each subject's daily logic.

The dimension of change in public attitudes and actions is evident in citizens' tendency to avoid demonstrations, view criticism as a source of conflict, and accept disciplinary measures as natural or even necessary. The New Order's strategy of depoliticisation, realised in part through the concept of the floating mass, had a social effect in a collective fear of any form of political involvement beyond official channels. Demonstrations, although a legitimate form of political participation in a democracy, were framed as actions that could disrupt development, disturb public order, and ultimately harm the people themselves (Jukari et al., 2023; Karimullah et al., 2023).

Open criticism of local development policies in RT/RW forums or in offices is often immediately mediated by calls to maintain harmony or not bring politics into the discussion, demonstrating how narratives of harmony and anti-conflict have become essential tools in maintaining compliance. In this paradigm, avoiding conflict and maintaining a surface of harmony become the benchmarks of good citizenship, even if it means allowing injustice or inequality to remain unquestioned.

The acceptance of control as usual is another manifestation of the success of the social discipline ecosystem of development in shaping citizens' views on the relationship between freedom and security (Prianto et al., 2024). Control measures, whether in the form of dispersing demonstrations, raids, or strict surveillance of political activities, are often accepted or at least understood in the name of maintaining stability, which is considered a prerequisite for development. At the community level, actions by neighbourhood association (RT/RW) officials who reprimand, scold, or exert social pressure on residents are rarely questioned, sometimes even supported as a necessary form of assertiveness. This shows that the logic of security and order has permeated the way citizens assess the actions of those in power, blurring the line between protection and restraint.

Security is perceived as a fragile public good, so that all forms of control are easily justified as long as they are linked to threats to order and development. However, reading Pancasila as a social discipline ecosystem does not mean assuming that all citizens are entirely passive and accept the official narrative. In specific spaces, there is what can be called a hidden transcript, consisting of complaints, jokes, and small acts of non-compliance that do not appear in public spaces but circulate among friends and family. Individuals may attend ceremonies and participate in community service, but privately question policies or express dissatisfaction. However, because the social and political risks of open expression are very high, these forms of resistance remain localised and rarely develop into organised collective solidarity.

2. Pancasila Transforms Physical Progress into Moral Evidence of Legitimacy of Power

Pancasila, as a visual politics of development in the context of the New Order, can be understood as a representational strategy that transforms physical progress into moral evidence and a source of legitimacy for power (Kim, 2024). In this strategy, development does not stop as an economic programme or administrative technique. Still, it is produced as a social landscape that can be seen, felt, and retold, presenting an impression of objectivity as if the country's success did not need to be proven through debates about justice, participation, or distribution of benefits, because the evidence was proper before our eyes in the form of roads, bridges, dams, schools, health centres, village offices, irrigation, and monuments. Pancasila, which conceptually embodies an ethical orientation towards humanity, justice, and deliberation, is often reduced in visual political practice to a moral framework that legitimises the state's visibility.

A relevant academic framework for interpreting this phenomenon can be constructed through a dialogue between hegemony theory, political aesthetics, and visual culture studies. From a hegemony perspective, development projects create consensus not only through arguments but also through sensory arrangements that direct what is considered reasonable and worthy of gratitude. Jacques Rancière (2009) refers to politics as a distribution that determines what is visible and invisible, what can be counted and what is ignored. The New Order operated such a distribution by highlighting the centrality of infrastructure to the state narrative, thereby pushing issues that were more difficult to visualise, such as inequality, repression, marginalisation, and the curtailment of freedom, to the margins of public consciousness. Here, the visualisation of development is not merely communication, but a technology of power.

Pancasila served as the language of legitimacy, binding this image to national morality, so that physical projects acquired symbolic status as the embodiment of noble values, and the power that managed them was perceived as legitimate. Infrastructure, in this visual political regime, had a dual function (Al Hamid et al., 2025; Hibbatulloh et al., 2025). On the one hand, it did indeed produce economic benefits, but on the other hand, which was more decisive for legitimacy, it functioned as a sign. This sign simplifies the complexity of governance into something easily recognisable. In other words, there are buildings, which means there is work,

which means there is concern, which means the state is moral and ethical, which means it is worthy of obedience.

This semiotic logic shifts the standard of political evaluation from the question of who benefits and who is sacrificed to the question of how visible the results are. It constructs an assessment mechanism based on visibility and sensory proximity, rather than on analysis of distribution and democratic procedures. For citizens, paved roads replacing muddy ground can be a concrete experience of improvement. This experience can then easily be used as evidence that the state is present and therefore trustworthy. In this context, infrastructure becomes not only a facility, but also a visual argument that silently claims moral truth.

The most distinctive feature of the New Order's visual politics of development was the architecture of signage that accompanied physical projects (Kong, 2007). Project inscriptions, programme nameplates, development monuments, village gates with slogans, and inauguration plaques formed an ecology of signs that attached themselves to the living space of citizens. The inscriptions not only announced when and who had inaugurated the project, but also affirmed the genealogical relationship between progress and power. Program nameplates displaying government logos and Pancasila slogans signify that the facilities are not merely the result of collective community work or fiscal mechanisms, but moral gifts from a state that operates in accordance with noble values.

Development monuments and village gates, often placed at entry points or busy centres, transform spaces into symbolic stages. Everyone who passes by is reminded that progress is under the umbrella of Pancasila and leadership that maintains stability. In this way, public spaces are filled with visual texts that direct how reality is interpreted, because physical progress is read as moral proof, while power is read as the sole driver of that progress.

The personification of development through photographs of leaders, coverage of inaugurations, and development exhibitions reinforces this mechanism by building an emotional bond between citizens and the state. Development exhibitions display data, project miniatures, before-and-after photographs, and testimonials of success that construct a linear narrative from backwardness to modernity under the guidance of the state. Coverage of project inaugurations, with images of leaders pressing buttons, cutting ribbons, or signing inscriptions, conveys the performative message that power is not merely about regulation but also about creation.

Photos of leaders displayed in village offices, schools, and even mass organisation meeting rooms become icons of a presence that both watches over and protects, giving development a clear face and source. In political psychology, this kind of personification facilitates the formation of affect, pride, gratitude, and a sense of indebtedness that flow not to abstract institutional mechanisms, but to visible figures and symbols of the state. This management of emotions is not merely a side effect, but the core of the visual politics of development. Affects work as a bridge between the material and the moral, citizens feel the benefit. Those positive emotions are directed towards reinforcing the normative conclusion that the government is good and therefore deserving. Within the framework of hegemony, such collective emotions close the space for critical questions, as criticism can be interpreted as ingratitude or a denial of the good that has been recognised. At the community level, citizens who question projects can be seen as undermining the atmosphere of pride, so that criticism is not only rejected on the grounds of argument but also effectively rejected. Pancasila becomes the moral language that justifies such reactions, so that criticising the way development is carried out can easily be turned into criticising Pancasila itself.

The epistemic consequence of the visualisation of development is a shift in the criteria for public assessment of the government. Evaluations that should involve substantive questions about distributive justice, citizen participation, protection of rights, and socio-ecological impacts shift towards evaluations based on the visibility of work and the spectacle of success. If the roads are paved, the village office stands majestically, and the city park looks

neat, the government is considered successful, even though some residents have lost their homes or experienced marginalisation. The centre of gravity of criticism has shifted from whether development is fair to why it is not visible in our region, which, in turn, reinforces the logic of competition between regions in competing for physical projects rather than in fighting for democratic mechanisms. In this regime, structural injustice can persist because it is not easily visualised, while physical projects remain stronger sensory evidence. Pancasila, which should open up discussion about social justice as the fifth principle, in the practice of visual politics, can be reduced to a moral certificate for everything that appears modern.

At the micro level, the visual politics of development works through the ritualisation of space and time. Project inaugurations become ceremonial moments that unite residents in a shared experience of gathering, watching, listening to speeches, applauding, and then capturing the moment in photographs. The presence of village officials, community leaders, and mass organisations at such events creates subtle social pressure for residents to participate in symbolic agreements. Inauguration speeches often combine the terms Pancasila, stability, and development in a single chain of meaning, so that those present do not merely see the building, but also learn how to interpret it. After the event, the inscription and project board remain as permanent reminders, while stories of success circulate in everyday conversation. Visual politics, thus, creates a collective memory attached to space. Such memories reinforce legitimacy because they make power present as a material trace that is difficult to deny.

The shift in public assessment from fairness to the visibility of work also results in changes in public action. In this kind of ecosystem, protests against development policies become difficult because development has been presented as a concrete moral good. Residents who are negatively affected often face a symbolic dilemma. Rejecting development means rejecting progress, and rejecting progress can easily be labelled as an attitude that does not support Pancasila or disturbs order.

Visual politics places citizens in a situation where the loss of living space can be disguised by the aesthetics of progress, with a tidier environment, wider roads, and a more beautiful city, so that certain sacrifices are presented as a reasonable price to pay for modernity. The logic of neatness, beauty and modernity becomes an aesthetic language that is also political, because it regulates what is acceptable and what must be removed. In many situations, displaced residents not only lose their homes but also lose the moral legitimacy to refuse, because refusal contradicts the mass-produced image of progress. This is where the direct relationship between the visual politics of development and public acceptance of evictions, relocations, and restrictions on living space becomes apparent. When physical progress is treated as a representation of Pancasila, the act of controlling space can be positioned as enforcing order for the sake of unity and the public interest.

Relocation can be presented as a rational, humane solution, while narratives about victims and distributional injustice can be muted through the language of organisation, improvement or control. Visual politics makes urban planning appear to be a moral project because a neat city reflects orderly citizens, orderly citizens reflect a living Pancasila, and a living Pancasila reflects a successful state (Romadhon & Lestari, 2024). This chain of meaning obscures the fact that tidiness is often achieved at the expense of certain groups, especially those who are most economically and politically vulnerable (Rembulan et al., 2025). The unphotogenic social impacts of losing social networks, increased living costs, and reduced access to work are often less visible than the image of wide roads and green parks.

The study of visual culture also helps us understand how development is positioned as a spectacle that regulates public attention. Spectacle, in Debord's sense, is not just entertainment but a way of organising society through images. Social reality is mediated by representations repeatedly produced and accepted as truths. The New Order shaped the spectacle of development through selective media coverage, exhibitions, slogans, and visual icons that focused attention on physical achievements. This spectacle produced a regime of

visibility that determined what was considered necessary in politics. Pancasila served as a symbolic legitimisation, elevating the spectacle to the level of national morality. As a result, citizens became accustomed to measuring government performance by how many projects were visible, how often leaders attended inauguration ceremonies, and how neat public spaces were, rather than by how fair policies were, how transparent decisions were, or how open participation was.

Sociologically, this mechanism shifts citizens' position from political subjects to spectators of progress. Citizens are invited to witness, celebrate, and be grateful for development, while the space to question policy design or its social impact is narrowed through stigma and social pressure (Weiss et al., 2023). Spectators, in the logic of spectacle, tend to be passive; they affirm what is visible, rather than changing the structures that produce it. However, this passivity is not natural because it is produced through habituation. When every physical advancement is inscribed and linked to Pancasila, citizens learn that the appropriate role is to appreciate, not to interrogate. When criticism is juxtaposed with the threat of conflict and instability, citizens know that questioning can carry social risks.

When tspace regulation is presented as an arrangement for the sake of beauty and modernity, citizens learn that sacrificing living space is accepted as a consequence of progress. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that the visual politics of development is not always entirely successful, as it can give rise to ambivalence. For some citizens, infrastructure provides tangible benefits while also causing experiences of loss or injustice. This ambivalence often does not appear in public spaces because the dominant language has established a safe way of speaking. Still, it can live on in whispers, private complaints, and community memories. However, because visual legitimacy is so strong, this ambivalence often lacks an effective channel for collective articulation.

3. Pancasila as the Language of Development Technocracy

Pancasila, as the language of development technocracy during the New Order era, can be understood as a discursive device that transformed social conflicts and political disputes into administrative issues that appeared neutral, rational, and inevitable (Thontowi et al., 2024). In this kind of discourse formation, Pancasila not only functions as a moral symbol but also acts as a stamp of legitimacy attached to technocratic policy choices, so that all state actions can be presented as the translation of Pancasila values into development management. Technocratic jargon such as control, guidance, normalisation, stabilisation, security, and consolidation became keywords that constructed a new logic of knowledge about society. With this framework, issues that should have been debated as political problems were redefined as procedural problems that could be addressed through bureaucracy, regulations, and administrative operations.

Theoretically, this mechanism can be explained through a combination of Foucault's concept of governmentality, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and the critique of depoliticisation in public policy studies. Governmentality emphasises that modern power works through the production of knowledge that regulates the population, not only through direct repression (Sutisna et al., 2025). The New Order produced knowledge of development that made citizens a variable to be managed, guided, controlled, or normalised. On the other hand, hegemony explains how power gains consent by creating a new common sense.

The idea that administrative order is an absolute prerequisite for progress. When Pancasila is combined with technocratic language, it produces procedural morality, in which the state's actions are good not because they are fair, but because they follow procedures and claim to be in the public interest (Karimullah, 2023). In other words, political legitimacy is transferred from the normative-argumentative realm to the administrative-technical realm. Policies do not need to be explained as debatable choices, but rather as professional steps that

the apparatus must carry out for the sake of development. At this point, Pancasila becomes a language that obscures politics with technique and obscures conflict with management.

The combination of Pancasila and technocratic jargon works through a naming strategy that obscures power relations (Adiprasetyo, 2025). The term order, for example, implies the existence of objective disorder that needs to be corrected. Guidance assumes that the party being guided is immature or incorrect. Normalisation means that there are reasonable, usual standards, and stabilisation positions instability as a common threat. When these terms are used to respond to labour resistance, strikes, student demonstrations, or land conflicts, the political meaning of these actions is diminished. Labour resistance is no longer seen as a struggle for fair wages and dignity at work, but rather as a disruption of production or industrial disorder that needs to be addressed.

Agrarian conflicts involving land grabbing or significant concessions are not read as inequality of ownership and structural injustice, but rather as problems of spatial planning, disorder in land administration, or the need for normalisation. Freedom of the press and media criticism are not seen as democratic rights, but rather as the need for information stabilisation, the securing of public opinion, or the regulation of the press to prevent unrest. In this way, technocratic language shifts the field of conflict from rights, justice, and participation to order, compliance, and procedure.

Pancasila adds a moral layer, making technocratic language appear not only technical but also ethical. When control is associated with the principle of unity, guidance is related to educational humanity, or stabilisation is associated with social justice as a development goal (Pertamawati et al., 2025; Wahyudi et al., 2025). Coercive actions can be framed as the implementation of Pancasila. The morality that is formed is not a deliberative morality that invites debate, but a paternalistic morality that demands compliance. The state appears as a rational and moral subject that knows what is good for society. In contrast, society is positioned as an object that needs to be directed to prevent deviation. In this kind of discourse structure, criticism is easily labelled as emotional, unproductive, or even anti-Pancasila because it is seen as disruptive to stability.

The transformation of conflict into an administrative problem does not only occur at the central rhetorical level. Still, it is produced through a systematic bureaucratic chain from the centre to the regions. This chain of language operates through instructions, circulars, organisational guidelines, apparatus training manuals, and report formats and performance indicators that require the apparatus to adopt specific technocratic vocabulary. The same language is repeated in planning documents, coordination meetings, and training sessions, so that officials at the provincial, district, sub-district, and village levels have a uniform repertoire of terms to describe social problems.

This language standardisation is a form of administrative discipline that homogenises the way reality is viewed. When a labour action occurs, officials' reports do not mention wage demands and working conditions, but rather disturbances to security and order, potential unrest, or the need for guidance. When land disputes occur, the issue is referred to as land clearing, restructuring, or control, rather than seizure or injustice. When the media criticises the government, the response often takes the form of clarification, refinement of reporting, or licensing control, rather than dialogue about freedom of expression. With such language, the apparatus not only implements policy but also produces reality. It determines what is considered a problem and what is considered a solution.

Circular letters and organisational guidelines function as a medium of transmission that locks in meaning. Central instructions usually include definitions of terms, the objectives of administrative measures, and indicators of success, all of which are formulated within the framework of development stability. Local officials then reproduce this framework in local communications, including in meetings with community leaders, mass organisations, and informal leaders. The technocratic language of development, labelled Pancasila, flows into the

public sphere through sub-district head speeches, neighbourhood announcements, RT/RW meetings, and local media. As a result, the public learns to adopt the same vocabulary when discussing conflict.

When residents witness the dispersal of demonstrations, they tend to refer to it as 'control' rather than 'repression'. When there are evictions, they tend to refer to it as restructuring rather than displacement. When an organisation is disbanded, they tend to view it as stabilisation rather than suppression of freedom of association. This process shows that language is not merely a means of communication, but a device for normalising ways of thinking, because the public not only accepts the state's actions but also borrows the state's words to interpret them. The main power of the language of development technocracy is its ability to present coercive actions as reasonable procedures in the public interest.

When restrictions on demonstrations are presented as safeguards of development or as measures to prevent disturbances to public order, they lose their political character as restrictions on the right of assembly. When the dissolution of organisations is packaged as the enforcement of principles or the guidance of community organisations, it appears to be a routine administrative measure akin to system restructuring, rather than an act of silencing opposition. When media silencing is justified through permit regulation or the stabilisation of information, the public easily believes that what is being done is not censorship but merely necessary administration. In this pattern, the public interest is reduced to the stability of development, and that stability becomes a justification for automatically closing debate. The public no longer judges the state's actions by principles of justice and rights, but rather by whether those actions appear to maintain order and protect development projects.

Changes in public attitudes and actions can be traced in the increasing tendency to support restrictions on demonstrations, the dissolution of organisations, and media silencing, all perceived as efforts to maintain development. This mechanism of change does not occur through a single indoctrination, but through the repetition of procedural narratives that link stability with prosperity. When development is understood as the highest collective goal, anything that could hinder it is considered a threat to the common interest. In this scheme, demonstrations are not seen as a means of policy correction, but as a source of conflict and insecurity that disrupts investment, production, and economic activity (Nurizka et al., 2025).

Independent organisations are not seen as pillars of civil society, but as a potential for disintegration if not nurtured. Critical media are not seen as watchdogs of power, but as sources of unrest if not stabilised. Public support for restrictive measures is not always because citizens favour authoritarianism, but because they have been led to see reality through a language that prioritises stability as the ultimate value. This is where Pancasila functions as moral legitimisation, as the values of unity and order are placed above those of freedom and participation.

The language of development technocracy also results in a rearrangement of moral categories regarding citizens. Obedient citizens who ask a few questions and support government programmes are portrayed as Pancasila-minded and constructive. Conversely, critical citizens, especially if they are involved in labour movements, land advocacy, or investigative journalism, can be positioned as disruptive, politically immature, or a threat to stability. These categories operate through social stigmas that are not always formal, but are powerful enough to make people suspect of being anti-Pancasila, considered troublemakers, or judged as not supporting the public interest. Because these stigmas can affect access to social and economic opportunities, many individuals choose to conform. This is an essential aspect of population management because the state regulates not only through the police and the law, but also through the production of norms and moral categories that make citizens regulate themselves (Karimullah, 2024).

Pancasila, as the language of technocracy, covers up this exercise of power by presenting it as moral guidance and reasonable administration (Nolte, 2023). From a critical

public policy perspective, this process can be called depoliticisation because social conflicts that should be debated as conflicts of interest and structural injustices are turned into technical problems that require managerial solutions. This kind of depoliticisation is often justified by the claim that politics is a source of turmoil, while development requires calm. Thus, technocratic language is not only a way of speaking but a way of regulating possible actions. If conflict is perceived as a technical disturbance, the solution is not equal political negotiation but administrative intervention, such as control, guidance, restrictions, and security measures. If demonstrations are perceived as a threat to stability, then restricting them is not a violation of rights but a safety measure. If the press is perceived as a source of unrest, then press control is not censorship, but information management. This chain of logic alters the structure of public space, narrowing the space for deliberation while expanding the space for administration. Decision-making becomes increasingly centralised in the hands of officials and experts, while citizens are encouraged to become recipients of policies designed to bring them into line.

D. Conclusion

If the narrative of New Order development is understood as a purely material project, then what is overlooked is the fact that it functioned primarily as a meaning-producing machine. Pancasila was used as a language that transformed obedience into virtue, physical success into moral arguments, and political conflict into administrative matters. In this machine, citizens were not so much forced as trained to judge themselves and others through indicators of order, visible work, and the jargon of stability. As a result, social exclusion, shame, indebtedness, and fear of anti-Pancasila stigma became an internal infrastructure as adequate as roads and dams. The novelty of this synthesis lies in the integrated reading that legitimacy is not only supported by apparatus and policy, but by a discourse ecology that binds rituals, spaces, documents, and emotions into political habits because the public learns to believe not because it is fair, but because it appears successful and feels orderly.

In terms of policy, the re-actualisation of Pancasila needs to be shifted from an ethic of compliance to an ethic of accountability, from control to the protection of rights, from the aesthetics of progress to distributive justice, and from false stability to deliberation that recognises conflict as a healthy symptom of democracy. The limitations of this study lie in the bias of the archives and the accessibility of the experiences of the most affected citizens, so that further research needs to combine oral history, memory ethnography, and regional comparisons to examine how the language of development still lives on in contemporary policy, but that is precisely where the challenge lies. If Pancasila continues to be used as a shield to silence questions, then the task of science and public praxis is to reclaim it as a legitimate language of criticism so that development once again becomes a matter of dignity, not merely a matter of appearance.

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