



The Power of Transportation that Perpetuates Structural Poverty : A Study of Pedicab Drivers at Bratang Terminal, Surabaya

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Abstract

Globalization brings changes in various fields, one of which is the transportation sector. Currently, there is a massive change in the transportation system in urban areas such as Surabaya. Modernization of transportation in Surabaya has occurred since 2021 through the policy of providing modern transportation such as Suroboyo Bus and Trans Semanggi. Both transportations have a big impact on the lives of pedicab drivers in Bratang Terminal. This research aims to analyze the form of transportation progress and how the power relations between the government and becak drivers in the context of structural poverty. Using a qualitative approach with observation, interview, and documentation techniques, as well as analysis of Michel Foucault's power relations theory, this study found that non-inclusive transportation policies have created a new form of domination that marginalizes informal worker groups, in this case becak drivers. The modernization has caused them to experience a significant decrease in income, loss of participation space, and increased socio-economic vulnerability of pedicab drivers. These findings suggest that efficiency-based policies without considering social sustainability can exacerbate inequality. Therefore, transportation policies that are not only environmentally friendly and efficient, but also socially just and participatory are needed to ensure that no group is excluded from the urban development process.

Keywords : modernization; structural poverty; power pelations; Surabaya

INTRODUCTION

Globalization brings many major changes in various fields such as advances in technology, communication, information, and transportation that facilitate human life. Those who are unable to keep up with these developments risk being left behind socially and economically (WIDIANTI 2022) . One important aspect that has undergone significant changes is transportation. Transportation is a central element in modern life. Due to globalization, means of transportation began to develop. One of the transportation that has experienced rapid development is land transportation. During the colonial era, land transportation in Indonesia was dominated by animal-drawn carts and rickshaws. With the progress of the times, this transportation slowly began to be abandoned and people switched to motorized vehicles because it was considered to be easier in the process of mobilization and urbanization (Trianah, Saputra, and Irnaningsih 2024) .

In recent decades, the transportation system in Indonesia has undergone significant changes, especially with the emergence of various innovations that focus on sustainability and efficiency. In the midst of global challenges such as climate change and advanced urbanization, the presence of modern transportation that is effective, efficient, and environmentally friendly will certainly be increasingly needed (Fiana et al. 2024) . The need for modern transportation services is needed by the community, especially people who live in urban areas. Modern transportation or commonly known as part of "Smart Mobility", must indeed be implemented in big cities so that traffic problems can be resolved (Septanto 2022) .

The development of the transportation sector can be carried out by the government, whether central, provincial or municipal. They can formulate policies in terms of providing, controlling, and supervising the implementation of transportation modes according to their level. Through its authority, the government can issue policies such as the establishment of transportation infrastructure networks and service support networks (Apriyani et al. 2024) . This has been implemented by the Jakarta City Government in the Jabodetabek area based on Presidential Regulation No. 55 of 2018 concerning the Urban Transportation Master Plan. The regulation then became a guideline for other cities in Indonesia in terms of transportation arrangements (Rohmah, Ramadhani, and Winarno 2024) . One of the cities that implemented this is Surabaya City.

Similar to Jakarta, Surabaya City Government also provides modern transportation modes that are effective, efficient, and integrated. Through the Surabaya City Transportation

Agency, the Surabaya City Government built a fast bus transportation system or commonly known as Suroboyo Bus. This transportation, inaugurated in 2018 to facilitate the people of Surabaya City in traveling (Kusuma 2020) . In its development, the Surabaya City Government began to launch similar modes of transportation that are modern and practical. As of November 2024, the Surabaya City Government has provided various transportation services that are easily accessible to the public at affordable prices. Public transportation that has been provided are 28 units of Suroboyo Bus, 102 units of Wira-Wiri, 17 units of Trans Semanggi, and 1 unit of electric Trans Semanggi Bus (Jaen 2024) . The procurement of public transportation is the city government's commitment to provide environmentally friendly, safe, and comfortable transportation services for the citizens of Surabaya.

With modern transportation provided by the city government, the policy of providing modern transportation also threatens the existence of traditional transportation such as becak. Modernization makes technology more developed, which in turn creates a challenge for becak drivers, which threatens the continuity of their profession and causes social changes in their lives. This change is felt by becak drivers in the area around Bratang Terminal Surabaya City. The condition experienced by pedicab drivers in Bratang Terminal is one illustration of how the economic conditions of urban communities are unable to compete with the existence of modern transportation in Surabaya City. Their helplessness is caused by the city government's policy in providing more modern public transportation services. The policy on the provision of modern transportation does have a positive impact on the residents of Surabaya City. They can feel the convenience in accessing effective and efficient public transportation. On the other hand, this policy has decreased the income of becak drivers. The absence of government efforts to maintain the existence of becak makes becak drivers reluctant to continue their profession, although some of them choose to stay afloat even though their income is uncertain.

The social reality they face is included in structural poverty. Structural poverty occurs due to weak government governance which can be seen from the performance of the bureaucracy, the independence of the bureaucracy, and the low partiality of public policies issued to create a conducive business climate (Pawit Fadila Rika Farisa et al. 2023) . Structural poverty is also exacerbated by social exclusion, where people are not involved in the development process (Elga Dimas et al. 2024) . This makes them feel socially discriminated against. Social exclusion occurs when the government issues a policy to carry out structural transformation. A structural transformation process can bring two consequences at once,

namely the positive side and the negative side. Positive transformation can be felt if structural improvement is followed by income distribution that occurs simultaneously (Kuncoro 2010 in Rinaldi, Erfit, and Rosmeli 2022)

The phenomenon of structural poverty experienced by pedicab drivers in Bratang Terminal, Surabaya reflects the complex dynamics between transportation modernization and socioeconomic inequality. In this context, the role of becak drivers as a marginalized group in the transportation ecosystem is increasingly marginalized along with the emergence of faster and more efficient modern transportation systems. The advancement of transportation, especially with the presence of technology-based modes of transportation, has indeed increased the mobility of society in general. However, this transformation often does not consider the sustainability of the livelihoods of traditional groups such as pedicab drivers. (Mohammad Maulana Iqbal 2023) shows that becak drivers in Bratang Terminal are often trapped in the poverty trap of a social system that does not favor them. In the context of competition with modern modes of transportation, they face increasing income and economic pressures. Transportation policies that facilitate technology-based modes of transportation often do not provide enough space for traditional workers such as becak drivers to survive.

In line with that, (Furqan and Nurlaili 2020) shows that the presence of online transportation has shifted people's preferences, resulting in the reduction of becak service users. This change clarifies the impact of transportation digitization which not only creates efficiency, but also increases the risk of exclusion for groups that are unable to keep up with technological developments. Meanwhile, research conducted by (Hanafi, Pujowati, and Muhtadi 2023) on sustainable transportation infrastructure development in Kalimantan illustrates that improvements in mobility and accessibility do not always accommodate the needs of marginalized groups. While such development is generally beneficial, the lack of attention to inclusivity can exacerbate social injustice in the community.

Furthermore, findings from (Viarum and Susilowati 2024) highlight that low education levels and high poverty are significant factors causing poverty in metropolitan areas such as Kedungsepur, Central Java. This is relevant in looking at the condition of becak drivers, who generally have limited education, making it difficult to adapt to changes in transportation systems that demand new skills and digital literacy. Furthermore, research from (Setiastuti et al. 2024) emphasizes the importance of developing a transportation system that is not only environmentally friendly, but also socially just. Transport development centered on efficiency

and environmental scarcity needs to be accompanied by the protection of traditional groups of workers from becoming victims of exclusionary modernization. Policies that ignore social justice dimensions have the potential to reinforce inequality and deepen existing structural poverty.

This research offers a different perspective, using Michel Foucault's power relations to analyze the structural poverty experienced by pedicab drivers. Unlike previous studies that emphasize aspects of transportation modernization, changes in community preferences, or educational limitations, this research highlights how power relations manifested in transportation policies create systematic structural inequality. The main focus of this research is the discourse in the form of government policies that indirectly marginalize the existence of pedicab drivers and reproduce conditions of poverty in a sustainable manner. Discourse is all acts of human communication on an action. Discourse always exists and is interrelated. Where there is knowledge and discourse, there is power, this idea was put forward by Foucault who in his research often connects power and knowledge (Siswadi 2024).

In this issue, Foucault emphasizes that discourse plays a central role in the production of truth, the legitimization of knowledge, and the normalization of public policy. In the context of structural poverty, this approach serves to create a space for exploration in the context of transportation and how this leads to marginalization. Based on this background, this research is focused on answering two main problems. First, how the forms of transportation that occur around Bratang Terminal, Surabaya. Second, what is the power relation between becak drivers and the government. Furthermore, this research also aims to identify the forms of public transportation progress, as well as analyze the power relations formed between becak drivers and the government

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach to provide an overview of social reality in a complex manner. Data collection techniques in this research are observation, interview, and documentation. Observation was conducted as the initial stage by directly observing the social conditions that occur in Bratang Terminal, Surabaya. After that, a direct interview was conducted with a pedicab driver who was hanging out at the location. The interview was conducted to explore complex information related to the reality of poverty experienced by pedicab drivers in Bratang Terminal, Surabaya City in the midst of modern transportation

transformation. Meanwhile, documentation is done by capturing images of conditions in the field and recording conversations in the interview process (Siyoto and Sodik 2015 in Mohammad Maulana Iqbal 2023) Data source is the subject where data is obtained or taken. Data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are obtained from the results of interviews. Meanwhile, secondary sources are obtained through previous literature reviews (Triannah et al. 2024).

The technique of taking informants is purposive sampling. This technique aims to obtain more accurate data by selecting informants according to the research criteria (Lenaini 2021). The research was conducted in Surabaya City, which not only represents the characteristics of urban society, but is also the second largest city after Jakarta. Surely,

Surabaya City is one of the destinations for urbanites to try their luck in finding sustenance. The main focus of this research is at Bratang Terminal, Surabaya. Bratang Terminal is one of the gathering places for becak (pedicab) riders who stop every day and look for passengers from the arrival of other transportation, such as electric buses, Wira-Wiri, and bemo. The becak riders come from various cities in East Java. In the past, there was a becak association with 100 members, but the association disbanded when Surabaya City entered the modernization phase of public transportation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transportation Transformation and Economic Landscape Change at Bratang Terminal

The transformation of the public transportation system in Surabaya City reflects a significant shift toward modernization, marked by the emergence of new modes such as the Suroboyo Bus and Wira-Wiri. These developments are part of an effort to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and integration of the city's transportation network. Public transportation in Surabaya is no longer merely a matter of getting from one place to another, but a strategic element in shaping urban mobility. The Suroboyo Bus, in particular, has been noted in previous research for its positive contribution to reducing traffic congestion. It also provides services that align with the expectations of modern urban dwellers—especially in terms of speed, comfort, and safety (Nurdiana and Wahyudi 2023).

Technological innovations have also played a critical role in supporting these transformations. The rise of digital platforms and transportation apps has allowed for real-time access to traffic updates and public transportation schedules, making urban travel more

predictable and user-friendly. This digitization has not only increased accessibility but also represents a broader trend in urban governance where smart city initiatives are increasingly central to infrastructure planning (Kharima and Fanida 2021).

Despite the many advantages of modern public transport modes, their rise has had unintended consequences for traditional forms of transportation—most notably the becak. Once a common and even iconic mode of mobility in Surabaya, becak now faces steady decline. This shift is particularly evident in areas like the Bratang Terminal, which was historically a hub for becak operators. The transition away from becak use is driven not only by the availability of faster alternatives but also by changing societal preferences that equate modernity with mechanized and technologically integrated systems.

Historically, becak served more than just a utilitarian function. They were part of a cultural and spatial arrangement that characterized urban life. There was even an operational distinction by time: blue becak for daytime service and white becak at night. This system reflected an organic integration of traditional transport with the rhythms of local life. However, as the city's transportation needs have evolved and the demand for rapid transit has increased, becak have gradually been marginalized. This displacement illustrates the often overlooked social costs of modernization, particularly when policies and planning processes prioritize efficiency over inclusivity (Kharima and Fanida 2021 in Widi Prasetyo 2024).

While Surabaya's current transportation trajectory underscores progress and adaptation to urban demands, it also reveals a tension between technological advancement and the preservation of local heritage. The case of becak suggests that modernization, if not handled inclusively, can lead to the erasure of community-based systems that once played a vital role in urban life. As cities continue to innovate, there remains a need to consider how to integrate traditional forms of transport into the future of mobility in ways that honor their historical significance and provide sustainable livelihoods for those who depend on them.

This change in preference has had a significant economic impact on becak drivers. It is known that their income has decreased sharply. Previously they could earn a daily income of around Rp150,000 - Rp200,000, but now their income has dropped drastically to less than Rp50,000 per day, depending on the number of passengers and the distance served. This condition makes it difficult for many becak drivers to make ends meet for their families. The changing landscape has had a serious impact on the sustainability of the livelihoods of people who depend on traditional transportation (Nurdiana and Wahyudi 2023).

"In the past, my income before 2020 was around Rp200,000 per day. But as it became less crowded, my income went down. In the past, after getting off the city bus, passengers would look for a becak to take them to their destination. They chose becak because in the past, around Bratang Terminal, there were many becak drivers who stoodby here. In fact, there used to be an association too. However, around mid-2021, the Bratang Pedicab Association was dissolved. The reason behind this dissolution was because of the decreasing income due to Covid-19. After covid, the economy did not improve, so this association was not re-formed. The economic condition of becak drivers here is increasingly uncertain. Sometimes, in fact, they don't get any income at all." (Interview, Mr. Banu, April 25, 2025).

The interview above shows that the income of becak drivers in the Bratang Terminal area has decreased since the arrival of a new transportation system service called "Trans Semanggi Suroboyo". This service was launched by the Surabaya City Government in 2021 as part of the urban transportation rejuvenation process. The purpose of this rejuvenation is to replace traditional modes of transportation such as becak with a more sophisticated, modern, and comfortable public transport system that is environmentally friendly.

The innovation launched by the city government happened during the Covid-19 pandemic. At that time, pedicab drivers had not fully recovered economically. There were pedicab drivers who were not able to pedal pedicabs again like before Covid-19. During the pandemic, pedicab drivers had difficulty in obtaining passengers because the arrival of out-of-town buses at Bratang Terminal was very rare. With the launch of the transportation system called "Trans Semanggi Surabaya", pedicab drivers do not have many opportunities to earn income because people during the pandemic, started to show an attitude of switching from traditional transportation to modern transportation.

This transition from traditional to modern not only affects the mobility pattern of the city, but also has an impact on the economic and social sectors. In conclusion, the transformation transition in the transportation sector can change the economic landscape of pedicab drivers, from previously earning enough income to support their families to drastically changing. This has forced them to find a way out as soon as possible. One of the ways they do this is by changing professions from previously making becak as their main job to a side job. Not infrequently, some of them also work in other fields. Everything is done so that their economy remains sufficient.

Structural Poverty as a System Resulting from Inclusive Policies

Structural poverty is a form of poverty that arises from systemic inequalities embedded in the social and economic structure of a society. It refers to conditions where certain groups—particularly those who are positioned in low socioeconomic strata—do not possess equal access to resources, opportunities, and institutional support necessary for social mobility and sustainable livelihoods. In the Indonesian context, structural poverty is becoming increasingly complex and layered, especially amid the rapid transformation driven by state-led development agendas. These agendas often prioritize efficiency, productivity, and economic growth, yet frequently do so at the expense of sustainability, equity, and the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized populations.

In many cases, development projects that are presented as progressive or modernizing actually reinforce existing hierarchies and deepen forms of exclusion. This research, which focuses on the area around Bratang Terminal in Surabaya, reveals such a dynamic. The policies of transportation modernization introduced by the Surabaya City Government—specifically, the procurement and deployment of services such as Suroboyo Bus and Wira-Wiri—are intended to build a more efficient, integrated, and technology-driven public transportation system. While these innovations have been positively received in terms of urban development benchmarks, they also bring unintended social consequences that are disproportionately borne by informal workers, particularly pedicab (becak) drivers.

These traditional transportation workers have long relied on operating becak as their primary, if not only, source of income. The modernization policies introduced by the government, however, do not include adequate safeguards or compensatory mechanisms to support those whose livelihoods are directly impacted by these changes. There is no comprehensive framework that addresses the socioeconomic fallout faced by individuals in informal sectors whose services are being systematically replaced. As a result, becak drivers in areas like Bratang Terminal have seen their incomes decline significantly, and many of them are effectively being pushed out of the urban transportation ecosystem (Patil et al. 2022 in Rifa'i and Listiono 2021).

The exclusion faced by becak drivers is not merely incidental—it is symptomatic of broader development policies that tend to be top-down, technocratic, and insufficiently participatory. These policies rarely incorporate the voices and perspectives of informal sector actors, despite their substantial contribution to the urban economy. Thus, transportation

modernization, when implemented without inclusion and transition planning, reinforces structural inequality. Instead of lifting people out of poverty, such policies often intensify deprivation for those already economically vulnerable.

This inequity is further worsened by the absence of robust social protection schemes. For example, in the case of rickshaw drivers, there are no significant government programs that facilitate re-skilling, alternative employment pathways, or financial assistance. Consequently, these individuals are not only left unemployed or underemployed but are also increasingly marginalized socially and spatially. Their visibility in the urban landscape diminishes, and so does their bargaining power in the public sphere. From the standpoint of sustainable development, such outcomes are deeply concerning. Governments that claim to prioritize inclusive urban development must ensure that notions of social justice are embedded within transportation policy. That includes ensuring that the basic needs, capabilities, functional roles, and freedom of choice of all citizens—regardless of their economic status—are treated as integral components of urban planning (Rianto and Chess Pambudi 2021).

Despite these challenges, some becak drivers have sought to resist the marginalization they face by organizing and engaging in collective action. In particular, groups of drivers have initiated mediations with the Surabaya City Council, hoping to bring attention to their plight and to advocate for policies that recognize their economic contributions and protect their livelihoods. However, according to the findings of this research, the response from government officials has largely been inadequate and dismissive. Rather than recognizing the structural vulnerabilities of the becak driver community, public officials tend to prioritize policy frameworks that enhance formality, standardization, and bureaucratic efficiency. This situation highlights a persistent bias within urban policy—one that favors structural order and economic optimization over social inclusion and equity (Li et al. 2023 in Liotta, Viguié, and Creutzig 2023).

The case of transportation modernization in Surabaya is thus emblematic of a larger issue: the widening of social inequality through exclusionary development. New transportation systems, while beneficial in aggregate, must be designed with sensitivity to the real-world impacts they have on low-income and informal workers. When affected groups are left out of the planning process, it results not only in material dispossession but also in symbolic violence—a denial of their role and identity in the fabric of the city. Many becak drivers in Bratang Terminal have expressed a sense of humiliation and social erasure, as they are

increasingly viewed as relics of a bygone era, incompatible with the image of a modern city. Their loss of income is compounded by the loss of dignity and recognition.

Furthermore, the actions undertaken by these communities—such as peaceful demonstrations, advocacy meetings, and internal organizing—signal a growing political consciousness. The poverty they experience is no longer internalized as personal failure but understood as a structural issue produced by an unfair and exclusionary system. In this regard, their resistance is not merely economic but also epistemic; it challenges dominant narratives that equate modernization with progress, and that neglect the human cost of development transitions. Such resistance draws upon collective solidarity and communal identity, demonstrating that association-based action can be a crucial counterweight to the isolating effects of poverty and marginalization (Pu et al. 2022 in Sharia, Ratodi, and Heryanti 2024).

Solidarity within associations of becak drivers thus emerges as a significant form of social resilience. It is a mechanism by which marginalized groups navigate structural violence, assert their rights, and demand recognition. While the state's development agenda continues to push toward formalization and efficiency, these communities provide a sobering reminder of the human dimension of urban life—one that must not be forgotten. Without a more inclusive and participatory approach to policymaking, the promise of sustainable urban development will remain hollow.

Power Relations and Practices of Government Domination of Rickshaw Riders

There are significant power relations dynamics in the implementation of transportation modernization policies by the city government. In this context, the power relations theory approach proposed by Michel Foucault is very relevant. Foucault states that "where there is knowledge, there is power", which shows that knowledge is not neutral, but can be an instrument of power. Surabaya City Government, through its mastery of technocratic knowledge and legal legitimacy, has the capacity to formulate transportation policies that are considered progressive. However, these policies do not always involve the full participation of various community groups, especially those in vulnerable positions such as the pedicab drivers' association (Numans et al. 2020) .

The policy is in line with Law No. 22/2009 on Road Traffic and Transportation which encourages the creation of a more efficient and environmentally friendly transportation system. In general, most people respond positively to this policy as it is considered capable of

improving urban convenience and mobility. However, there are also groups of people who show resistance, especially becak peddlers, who feel economically threatened by this policy (Sari, Nugroho, and Shalikhah 2023) .

The modernization of transportation marked by the presence of new modes of transportation indirectly shifts the existence of becak from urban spaces. This creates a situation of marginalization that can be seen as a form of structural domination from the government towards lower socio-economic groups. The technocratic knowledge on which policies are based tends to create a narrative of development that is not always inclusive. As such, the policies reflect power that directs social change without fully considering the impact on vulnerable groups (Wang et al. 2022) .

Furthermore, many becak drivers have had to switch to other jobs in the informal sector as their income has dropped dramatically. They feel they have no space to voice their aspirations or be involved in the policy formulation process. This reinforces the finding that modernization that is not accompanied by participatory approaches can deepen social inequality (Sari et al. 2023) .

"In the past, the pedicab associations in Bratang Terminal had voiced a demonstration at the Surabaya City Council building. I happened to be the coordinator of that demonstration.... We sat down with members of the Surabaya City Council and the East Java Regional Police to discuss an agreement between economic actors, namely pedicab drivers, and regional leaders.... We agreed that there should be legal protection and a clear market division between modern transportation players and becak drivers, especially in Bratang.... Honestly, transportation such as Suroboyo bus and Wira-Wiri have killed the livelihood of becak drivers like me. We feel excluded and confused by policies that do not favor the lower classes."

The power relations between the government and the community in this context reveal a significant imbalance. Public policies are often formulated based on data-driven development logic, which, although appearing objective and rational, frequently fails to fully capture the complexity and lived realities on the ground. The use of aggregate data and top-down analysis in the policy-making process tends to obscure the nuanced social dynamics experienced by vulnerable communities. As a result, many policies, while technically sound, end up producing unintended consequences that disproportionately impact marginalized groups.

According to Oaten et al. (2022), effective public policies must not rely solely on technical and statistical data, but must also be grounded in an awareness of their social implications, especially for those directly affected by them. This requires a shift in perspective: from seeing data as an end in itself, to viewing it as a tool that must be interpreted within broader social, cultural, and political frameworks. The disconnect between the state's vision of environmental sustainability and the day-to-day impact of its policies on poor and marginalized communities is a case in point. While policies may appear environmentally progressive, they can, in practice, exacerbate inequalities if they displace or disenfranchise those with limited resources or influence.

This disconnect underscores the importance of a power relations approach in policy analysis. It is not enough to assess whether a policy achieves its formal goals; we must also ask: who benefits, who loses, and who gets to decide? Foucault's theory of power and knowledge provides a valuable framework for understanding these dynamics. As Tasnim (2021) reminds us, knowledge can become a subtle yet pervasive instrument of domination when it is not accompanied by mechanisms of social accountability and meaningful participation. The production of knowledge—be it environmental impact assessments, development statistics, or economic forecasts—often reflects the interests and perspectives of dominant groups. When these forms of knowledge are used to legitimize policies without scrutiny, they risk silencing alternative voices and reinforcing structural inequalities.

Therefore, the formulation of socially just and equitable policies requires more than technocratic expertise. It must involve a genuine commitment to democratic inclusivity. This includes acknowledging the social and cultural context of the affected communities, as well as actively including them in decision-making processes. Birnbaum and Lütke (2023) stress that without the active participation of vulnerable groups, policies may unintentionally deepen existing forms of exclusion. Participatory mechanisms are not merely symbolic gestures—they are vital tools for ensuring that policies are responsive to the real needs of those at the margins.

In conclusion, addressing the imbalance of power in public policy requires an integrative approach that values both technical data and social experience. By incorporating power-sensitive frameworks and prioritizing inclusion, policy-making can move closer toward justice and sustainability for all groups—especially those most often left unheard.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the modernization of transportation in Surabaya City—particularly through the introduction of an integrated system known as "Trans Semanggi" and the provision of modern vehicles such as the "Suroboyo Bus" and "Wira-Wiri"—has had considerable economic and social impacts on becak (pedicab) drivers in the Bratang Terminal area. While these policies are officially designed to improve urban mobility by increasing efficiency and comfort for commuters, they also unintentionally create new layers of structural poverty for groups engaged in the informal economy, especially traditional transport workers like becak drivers. The rapid pace of change brought about by transportation modernization has placed significant pressure on these workers, who often lack the resources, training, or institutional support to transition into new forms of employment. As a result, becak drivers face not only economic marginalization but also a symbolic erasure from the city's transportation system. Their inability to adapt is not a reflection of personal failure, but rather a consequence of systemic exclusion embedded in state policy.

The transformation process that overlooks the needs of informal laborers highlights the asymmetry in power relations between the government, which acts as the policymaker and executor, and the becak drivers, who are among the most vulnerable to these changes. This imbalance is deeply relevant to the perspective of power relations, which underlines that public knowledge, planning, and policies—especially when controlled solely by authoritative institutions—can function as tools of domination. In this context, the government's reliance on modernization rhetoric and data-driven planning may unintentionally reproduce existing social inequalities. From a power relations standpoint, the study emphasizes that public policy should not be neutralized as a purely technical process. Instead, it should be critically examined as a political act that must account for the realities of all affected communities. Modernization, when implemented without inclusivity, not only undermines justice but also erodes the principles of democratic governance. Hence, it is imperative for the government to design more equitable, inclusive, and participatory transportation policies. A sustainable modernization process must integrate the voices of marginalized communities to ensure that progress does not come at the cost of social exclusion, but rather fosters meaningful inclusion for all urban residents.

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