

Political Arena: Construction and Legitimation of *Green Political Capital*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keyword:</p> <p>Political capital; Environmental politics; Political legitimacy; Political arena; Political trust</p>	<p>Environmental issues and green politics, once considered merely technical issues, have now become political capital that determines the direction of public support in power contests. This study aims to analyse how <i>Green Political Capital</i> is constructed, mobilised, and translated into political legitimacy and support through candidates' strategies, narratives, and communication practices. The method is qualitative, with a case study of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. Data collection through observation and documentation of campaign materials and public debates, analysed using NVivo 12 Plus and interpreted through Pierre Bourdieu's arena and capital theory framework. This study finds that the construction of <i>Green Political Capital</i> in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election is fragmented into three main models: normative transformative, instrumental developmentalist, and technocratic reformist, reflecting ideological differences in how environmental issues are positioned as a moral foundation, an instrument of economic growth, or part of governance reform. The effectiveness of converting <i>green capital</i> into public support is largely determined by the integration of three dimensions of legitimacy: symbolic, through narrative consistency and moral resonance; performance, through policy alignment and tangible impacts; and socio-relational, through civil society support and the reproduction of trust in social networks. In conclusion, <i>Green Political Capital</i> becomes an effective political resource only when it consistently combines ethical narratives, development rationality, and institutional capacity to gain authentic public recognition in the arena of power contestation.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have risen to prominence on the political agenda over the past decade (Cohen, 2019; Font, 2025; Puleo et al., 2025; Sertyesilisik & Ceylan, 2023), particularly in Indonesia's local context (Kurniawan, 2018). Issues such as flooding, the waste crisis, land conversion, and coastal degradation have made the environment no longer merely a technocratic issue, but a political one that influences public perceptions and choices (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2026; Cisneros et al., 2021; Deslatte et al., 2022; Tan, 2012; van Voorst, 2016). In this context, local politicians are required not only to present responsive policies but also to build an image and legitimacy based on ecological commitment (Younus et al., 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that environmental issues have become political resources that can be leveraged to gain public support and trust (Rekker & Harteveld, 2024; Remsö et al., 2025; Sivonen et al.,

2026). The concept of *Green Political Capital* helps explain how environmental agendas, symbols, and narratives are produced and reproduced as strategic capital in the local political arena.

However, few studies have specifically analysed how *Green Political Capital* is constructed, distributed, and converted into concrete political support at the local level. Important questions arise: are these environmental commitments based on policy substance or merely symbolic strategies to increase electability? How are green narratives framed in political communication, and to what extent do they contribute to the formation of public trust? Therefore, this research is crucial for examining the strategies, narratives, and dynamics of public support in the practice of *Green Political Capital* to understand the relationship between environmental politics, legitimacy, and power contestation at the local level.

Conceptually, *Green Political Capital* can be explained through Pierre Bourdieu's capital theory framework, which distinguishes between economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital in a power struggle (Baharuddin et al., 2023). From this perspective, the local political arena is a competitive space where actors attempt to accumulate and convert various forms of capital to gain a dominant position (Baharuddin et al., 2023; Doering, 2020; Spark et al., 2019). *Green Political Capital* can be understood as a hybrid form derived from symbolic capital and social capital, namely the accumulation of public recognition, legitimacy, and trust gained through commitment to environmental issues (Gibson, 2020; Yao et al., 2022). When a politician consistently promotes a sustainability agenda, demonstrates concern for the ecological crisis, and engages in environmental advocacy, they not only build an image but also a moral reputation recognised as positive by society (Oross et al., 2021; Ramos, 2021). This recognition, in Bourdieu's terminology, is called symbolic capital, a form of capital that operates through public perception, respect, and legitimacy (Spark et al., 2019).

Furthermore, *Green Political Capital* also intersects with social capital, in the sense of the network of relationships, trust, and solidarity formed between politicians and environmental communities. Support from civil society groups, activists, and local communities strengthens politicians' positions in the political arena by expanding their network base and increasing their credibility. This capital can then be converted into electoral gains and policy legitimacy. In this context, environmental issues function as symbolic resources that can be reproduced through narratives, policies, and political communication performances. However, according to Bourdieu's logic, the effectiveness of *Green Political Capital* depends heavily on collective recognition within the arena; without social legitimacy, claims of environmental concern will not accumulate as legitimate capital. Thus, *Green Political Capital* is not merely green rhetoric, but rather the result of the process of accumulation, conversion, and recognition of capital within the structure of local political power relations.

From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, the local political arena is a relatively autonomous space of struggle in which regional heads, legislators, political parties, and civil society groups compete for position, influence, and legitimacy (Baharuddin et al., 2023). Within this arena, each actor deploys various forms of capital to strengthen its position. Public support in the local political arena is ultimately determined by the extent to which these strategies and narratives gain social legitimacy. In Bourdieu's logic, capital is effective only when recognised and accumulated within existing relational structures (Bénil-Gbaffou & Katsaura, 2014; Christoforou, 2017). This means that *Green Political Capital* becomes crucial when the public perceives environmental commitments as credible, consistent, and relevant to their needs. This process involves the interaction of political communication, policy practices, and community responses as legitimators. Thus, the local political arena is not only a space of electoral competition but also a space for the production of meaning, where environmental strategies and narratives can be converted into concrete political support if they succeed in building trust and collective recognition.

This study aims to analyse how *Green Political Capital* is constructed, mobilised, and converted in the local political arena through strategies, narratives, and political communication practices, and to identify the extent to which this capital contributes to the formation of public support and trust. Specifically, this study seeks to explain the process of legitimacy accumulation in environmental issues, the forms of representation and framing used by political actors, and the

public’s response to claims of ecological commitment. Thus, this study not only tests the theoretical relevance of the concept of *Green Political Capital* but also evaluates its effectiveness as a political resource in the contestation and legitimation of power at the local level.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative case study approach, focusing on the dynamics of *Green Political Capital* in the context of the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the construction of meaning, narrative strategies, and political communication practices used by actors in articulating environmental issues. The research focuses on how ecological issues are produced, represented, and mobilised in the national political arena, impacting the configuration of public support.

Data collection techniques were conducted through observation and documentation. Observations were conducted of campaign activities, public debates, official statements, and political communications on social media and mass media that featured environmental issues. Meanwhile, documentation included campaign materials, candidate visions and missions, debate transcripts, online news, social media posts, and other political communication materials relevant to environmental narratives. The collected data were then systematically organised to identify patterns of strategies, message construction, and public responses to these issues.

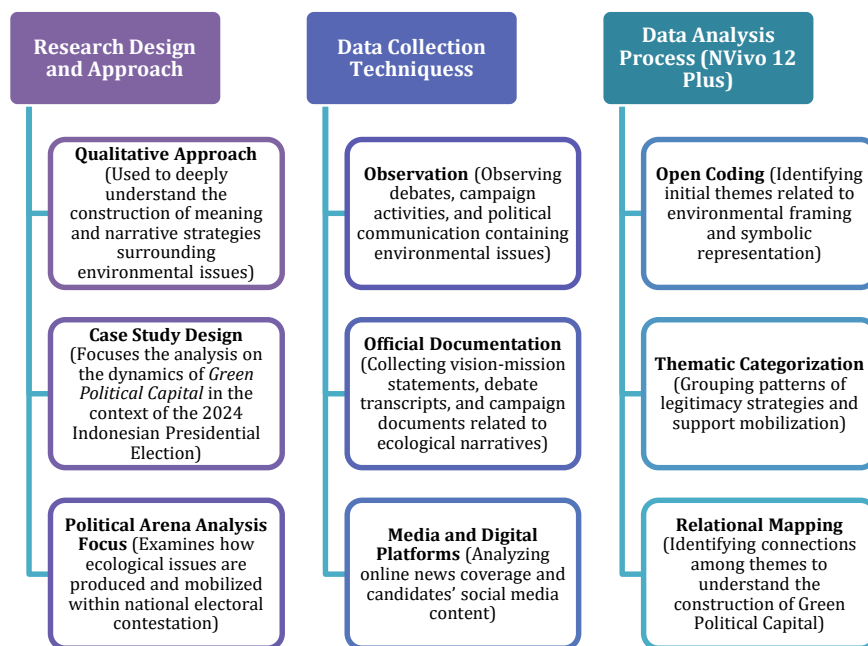


Figure 1. Research Methodological Framework

Source: Processed by Researcher, 2025

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 Plus, which supports systematic coding, categorization, and theme mapping. Using NVivo, textual and visual data were analyzed to identify key themes, including environmental issue framing, legitimation strategies, symbolization of ecological commitment, and forms of support mobilization. This process involved open coding, grouping categories, and drawing patterns of relationships between themes that reflect the construction of *Green Political Capital*.

The analysis results are then interpreted using Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of arena and capital. This interpretation explains how environmental issues serve as a source of symbolic and social capital in political contestation and how public recognition shapes candidate legitimacy. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive

understanding of the practice of *Green Political Capital* in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election and its implications for the dynamics of political support.

To ensure data validity, this study employs source triangulation by comparing and cross-verifying information obtained from multiple data sources. Findings from observations of campaign activities, public debates, and media appearances are systematically compared with documentary data, including official campaign materials, candidates' vision and mission statements, debate transcripts, online news reports, and social media content. This cross-checking process enables the researcher to confirm narrative consistency, identify discrepancies, and minimize potential bias arising from single-source interpretation. By integrating data from various platforms and actors involved in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election, source triangulation strengthens the credibility, reliability, and interpretive depth of the analysis of Green Political Capital.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Construction of Green Political Capital in Campaign Narratives

The construction of *Green Political Capital* within the campaign narrative of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar reflects a systematic effort to integrate environmental issues into the broader framework of the vision of “*A Just and Prosperous Indonesia for All*” (KPU, 2023).

Table 1. Campaign Content from Anies Baswedan – Muhaimin Iskandar

Vision / Mission	Statement
Vision	<i>A Just and Prosperous Indonesia for All</i> (Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua).
Mission 1	Ensuring the availability of basic necessities and affordable living costs through food independence, energy security, and water sovereignty.
Mission 2	Alleviating poverty by expanding business opportunities and creating employment, promoting equitable wages, advancing an economy grounded in self-reliance and equality, and supporting Indonesian corporations to succeed domestically and grow globally.
Mission 3	Realizing sustainable ecological justice for future generations.
Mission 4	Building regionally based cities and villages that are humane, equitable, and mutually beneficial.
Mission 5	Fostering an Indonesian society that is healthy, intelligent, productive, moral, and culturally grounded.
Mission 6	Establishing prosperous and happy Indonesian families as the foundation of national strength.
Mission 7	Strengthening the national defense and security system, while enhancing Indonesia's role and leadership in global politics to advance national interests and promote world peace.
Mission 8	Restoring the quality of democracy, upholding the rule of law and human rights, eradicating corruption without discrimination, and administering a government that is responsive to and aligned with the interests of the people.

Source: General Election Commissions, 2023

Within this vision, environmental issues are not positioned as a standalone sectoral concern, but rather as an integral component of distributive justice and social welfare. Formulating missions such as “food independence, energy resilience/security, and water sovereignty” constitutes a strategic framing that situates ecological concerns within a broader political-economic discourse. In this way, environmental issues are constructed not merely as moral commitments, but as prerequisites for national prosperity. Here, *Green Political Capital* is developed through an integrative narrative that links sustainability to people's basic needs, thereby expanding its legitimacy across diverse segments of the electorate.

Discursively, the phrase “realizing sustainable ecological justice for future generations” becomes central to the production of green symbolic capital. The term “ecological justice” carries strong normative connotations, as it integrates ethical dimensions, intergenerational rights, and

state responsibility. Within the logic of the political arena, this terminology serves as a moral symbol that enhances candidates' reputations as visionary, future-oriented leaders. Critically, however, it remains open to question to what extent this concept is translated into concrete policy agendas. Without clear operational indicators, "ecological justice" risks becoming a rhetorically powerful yet weakly implemented concept. In other words, the accumulation of *Green Political Capital* in this context depends heavily on public perceptions of consistency between campaign narratives and actual policy track records.

Furthermore, integrating environmental issues into regionally based urban and rural development reflects a strategy to convert ecological capital into socio-political capital. The narrative of "humane, equitable, and mutually beneficial" development broadens the appeal of green issues by embedding them in everyday concerns such as spatial planning, air quality, and access to clean water. This strategy tends to be inclusive, as it avoids the perception that environmental agendas are exclusively the domain of the urban middle class. Consequently, *Green Political Capital* is constructed not merely through a technocratic approach, but through linking ecological issues with spatial justice and local welfare. Within the national political arena, such an approach has the potential to expand symbolic recognition among communities directly affected by environmental crises.

Nevertheless, an inherent tension exists between narratives of economic growth, such as support for Indonesian corporations expanding into global markets, and commitments to sustainable ecological principles. It is at this juncture that the construction of *Green Political Capital* faces a critical test of consistency. If economic expansion continues to rely predominantly on extractive natural resource practices, the narrative of ecological justice risks losing its symbolic legitimacy. Critically, this suggests that *green capital* in political campaigns often occupies an ambivalent position: it serves as a source of moral legitimacy while simultaneously confronting conventional development agendas that may be inherently contradictory. This tension ultimately determines whether *Green Political Capital* is institutionalised within governance structures or merely serves as a rhetorical instrument in electoral contestation.

In conclusion, the construction of *Green Political Capital* by the Anies–Muhaimin ticket demonstrates a relatively comprehensive and normative narrative strategy, positioning environmental issues within the broader framework of social justice and substantive democracy. Its primary strength lies in its ability to connect ecological concerns with welfare agendas and clean governance. However, its effectiveness in generating public support depends on two key factors: the consistency of the candidates' track records and their capacity to translate the symbolic notion of "ecological justice" into measurable, implementable policies. In a competitive political arena, *Green Political Capital* is not merely about raising environmental issues, but about ensuring that the broader public recognises them as authentic and substantively relevant commitments.

The construction of *Green Political Capital* in the campaign narrative of the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka pair departs from the grand vision of "*Together with Indonesia, Advancing toward a Golden Indonesia 2045*" (KPU, 2023).

Table 2. Campaign Content from Prabowo Subianto – Gibran Rakabuming Raka

Vision / Mission	Statement
Vision	<i>Together with Indonesia, Advancing toward a Golden Indonesia 2045</i> (Bersama Indonesia Maju Menuju Indonesia Emas 2045)
Mission 1	Strengthening the ideology of Pancasila, democracy, and human rights (HAM).
Mission 2	Strengthening the national defense and security system and promoting national independence through self-sufficiency in food, energy, water, the sharia economy, digital economy, green economy, and blue economy.
Mission 3	Continuing infrastructure development and expanding quality employment opportunities; encouraging entrepreneurship; fostering creative industries; and developing agro-maritime industries in production centers through the active role of cooperatives.
Mission 4	Strengthening human resource development (HRD), science, technology, education, health, sports achievement, gender equality, and enhancing the role of women, youth (millennials and Generation Z), and persons with disabilities.

Mission 5	Continuing downstream industrialization and developing natural resource-based industries to increase domestic added value.
Mission 6	Building from villages and from the grassroots level to promote economic growth, equity, and poverty eradication.
Mission 7	Strengthening political, legal, and bureaucratic reforms, as well as reinforcing the prevention and eradication of corruption, narcotics, gambling, and smuggling.
Mission 8	Promoting harmonious living in alignment with the environment, nature, and culture, while enhancing interreligious tolerance to achieve a just and prosperous society.

Source: General Election Commissions, 2023

Within this framework, environmental issues are not merely normative-moral agendas, but are embedded in the state's long-term development project. The explicit reference to the "green economy" and the "blue economy" in the mission statements reflects an effort to incorporate sustainability into a growth-oriented national development architecture. Accordingly, *Green Political Capital* is constructed through a developmentalist approach by situating ecological concerns as integral to economic modernisation and structural transformation toward advanced nationhood.

Discursively, the term "green economy" frames a strategy oriented toward productivity and innovation rather than solely environmental protection. This narrative demonstrates the conversion of ecological issues into the language of investment, downstream industrialisation, and industrial value added. Within the political arena, such an approach has the potential to broaden support among business actors and the productive middle class, who may perceive sustainability as an economic opportunity rather than a regulatory burden. Critically, however, this framing also risks reducing the dimension of ecological justice to a mere instrument of growth. If sustainability is positioned exclusively as an economic strategy, green symbolic capital may lose its ethical and transformative dimensions.

The integration of a downstream industrialisation agenda based on natural resources with a commitment to "harmonious living in alignment with the environment" reveals the ambivalence in the construction of Green Political Capital. On the one hand, downstreaming is presented as a means to increase domestic value added and economic self-reliance; on the other hand, the expansion of resource-based industries may intensify ecological pressures. This tension illustrates that *green capital* within this narrative operates through a logic of compromise between growth and sustainability. Ecological legitimacy is constructed not by limiting exploitation, but by promising more efficient, technologically advanced resource management. Consequently, *Green Political Capital* in this context emphasises the modernisation of resource governance rather than a fundamental restructuring of the development model.

Furthermore, linking environmental issues to food, energy, and water self-sufficiency demonstrates a strategy for grounding the green agenda in society's basic needs. Unlike normative-ideological approaches, this narrative links sustainability to national stability and state resilience. The environment is positioned as part of security and sovereignty, not merely a moral responsibility. This strategy is effective at broadening public resonance by linking ecological issues with economic nationalism. In the context of electoral contestation, this approach enables the accumulation of *Green Political Capital* by identifying the green agenda with the vision of national independence.

However, the effectiveness of this construction depends heavily on public perception of the consistency between the downstreaming agenda, industrial expansion, and the commitment to environmental harmony. If the public perceives that economic growth remains extractive-oriented and that there are no significant ecological governance reforms, the symbolic legitimacy of green politics could erode. Thus, *Green Political Capital* in the Prabowo-Gibran narrative is pragmatic and instrumental, strongly integrated with national development projects, but faces challenges in maintaining a balance between industrialisation ambitions and sustainability commitments.

On the other hand, the construction of *Green Political Capital* in the campaign narrative of the Ganjar Pranowo – Mahfud MD pair is based on the vision of "*Accelerating Progress toward an Advanced Indonesia*" (KPU, 2023).

Table 3. Campaign Content from Ganjar Pranowo – Mahfud MD

Vision / Mission	Statement
Vision	<i>Accelerating Progress toward an Advanced Indonesia</i> (Gerak Cepat Menuju Indonesia Unggul)
Mission 1	Developing healthy, educated, and prosperous Indonesian citizens.
Mission 2	Advancing Indonesia as a leader in innovation and technology.
Mission 3	Building a resilient and self-reliant economy.
Mission 4	Eliminating poverty and regional disparities at their roots.
Mission 5	Establishing a digital ecosystem that prioritizes fast and affordable internet access.
Mission 6	Promoting economic development that ensures environmental sustainability.
Mission 7	Safeguarding democracy through the eradication of corruption and the implementation of inclusive governance grounded in the rule of law.
Mission 8	Positioning Indonesia as a respected nation in the international arena, supported by a strong and modern defense system.

Source: General Election Commissions, 2023

In contrast to normative–moral and developmentalist–industrial approaches, this ticket situates environmental issues within a framework of accelerated transformation grounded in innovation and governance reform. The commitment to “economic development that ensures environmental sustainability” suggests that sustainability is positioned as a corrective principle within the growth process. Accordingly, *Green Political Capital* is constructed through an image of leadership that is responsive, adaptive, and grounded in rational policymaking rather than relying solely on ideological symbolism or large-scale industrial projects.

Discursively, the linkage between innovation, technology, and environmental sustainability reflects a strategy of ecological modernization. The environment is not framed as an obstacle to development, but as a variable that can be managed through science, digitalization, and governance reform. Within the political arena, this framing has the potential to attract support from urban voters, the educated middle class, and younger generations who are particularly attentive to climate change and digital transformation. In this context, *Green Political Capital* is constructed through narratives of efficiency, transparency, and policy acceleration aligned with the slogan of “accelerating Progress,” which emphasizes the state’s responsiveness to crises, including ecological crises.

Nevertheless, conceptual challenges remain regarding the depth of the ecological commitment articulated. The phrase “development that ensures environmental sustainability” tends to be moderate and technocratic, lacking explicit articulation of ecological justice or structural reform in natural resource governance. Critically, this suggests that the *green capital* constructed here is more administrative than transformative. It relies on legitimacy derived from managerial capacity and the supremacy of law, particularly through anti-corruption and inclusive governance agendas based on the assumption that clean governance will automatically improve environmental management practices. While this approach is strong in institutional terms, it is less prominent in emotional or symbolic mobilization.

The *Green Political Capital* of the Ganjar–Mahfud ticket thus operates within a reformist and technocratic framework, integrating sustainability into agendas of innovation, digitalization, and the rule of law. Its primary strength lies in the consistency between narratives of clean governance and the regulatory reform needed for environmental protection. However, its effectiveness in the political arena depends heavily on the ability to translate the rhetoric of innovation and acceleration into concrete policies that directly improve environmental quality for citizens. Consequently, their construction of *green capital* emphasizes administrative credibility and systemic reform rather than moral symbolism or economic nationalism.

Table 4. Comparative construction of *Green Political Capital* in the third pair of candidates for the 2024 Presidential Election

Candidate Pair	Character of <i>Green Political Capital</i> Construction	Primary Orientation	Position of Environmental Issues within the Vision-Mission	Main Strength
Anies Baswedan – Muhaimin Iskandar	Normative–Transformative	Ecological justice & social welfare	Relatively central and explicit (sustainable ecological justice)	Strong moral symbolism, integrated with social justice
Prabowo Subianto – Gibran Rakabuming Raka	Instrumental–Developmentalist	Green economy & industrialization	Integrated within the national development vision of Golden Indonesia 2045	Alignment with the national development project
Ganjar Pranowo – Mahfud MD	Reformist–Technocratic	Governance reform, innovation & ecological modernization	Complementary within the reform and acceleration agenda	Administrative credibility & regulatory reform orientation

Source: Processed by researchers, 2025

Table 4 demonstrates that the construction of *Green Political Capital* among the three candidate pairs in the 2024 presidential election reflects significant differences in ideological orientation and political strategy. The ticket of Anies Baswedan – Muhaimin Iskandar situates environmental issues within a normative–transformative framework by emphasizing ecological justice as an integral component of their broader vision of social welfare. The environment is not merely a development variable but an ethical and moral foundation guiding the direction of state policy. In contrast, Prabowo Subianto – Gibran Rakabuming Raka construct *green capital* in an instrumental–developmentalist manner by integrating the green economy into the grand national project of Golden Indonesia 2045. Within this approach, environmental issues are embedded in strategies of growth and national industrialization, with their appeal resting on the perceived compatibility between sustainability and economic expansion. Meanwhile, Ganjar Pranowo – Mahfud MD positions ecological concerns within a reformist–technocratic framework, incorporating them into agendas of clean governance, innovation, and public policy modernization.

Analytically, these differences indicate that *Green Political Capital* operates through three principal logics: moral–symbolic, developmental–instrumental, and administrative–reformist. The first model relies on the strength of ethical narratives and intergenerational justice; the second integrates sustainability into economic development projects; and the third emphasizes institutional credibility and the state’s regulatory capacity. Each model has distinct potential to build public support, depending on the targeted voter segments and the evolving socio-ecological context. Therefore, this study underscores that the dominance of *Green Political Capital* is determined not merely by the frequency with which environmental issues are mentioned in vision and mission statements, but by how these issues are positioned within the broader political narrative structure and the extent to which they generate recognized legitimacy within the arena of power contestation.

Green Capital Mobilization and Conversion Strategy into Public Support

The strategy of mobilizing and converting *green capital* into public support does not stop at constructing a narrative. However, it relies on the candidate’s ability to translate environmental issues into a resonant political identity. In the political arena, symbolic capital is only effective if it is recognized and validated by the public as legitimate and valuable (Spark et al., 2019). Therefore, mobilizing *green capital* requires two crucial stages: first, the production of meaning (through framing, symbols, and political language), and second, the conversion of that meaning into trust, affection, and ultimately, electoral choice. Without this conversion process, environmental issues remain merely campaign rhetoric that fails to generate real support.

In the Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar ticket, the mobilization strategy tends to rely on a normative and moral approach, emphasizing ecological justice and supporting vulnerable groups. *Green capital* is mobilized through narratives of social justice, area-based development, and intergenerational welfare. This strategy is effective at building emotional bonds with voters directly affected by environmental issues such as flooding, water crises, and inequitable spatial planning. However, conversion to electoral support is highly dependent on the credibility of a political track record and policy consistency (Cox, 2004; Fossati, 2025; Muhammad et al., 2025). If the public perceives a gap between the moral narrative and past policy practices, the conversion of symbolic capital into real support may be hampered.

In contrast, the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka ticket adopted a more structural and pragmatic mobilization strategy. *Green capital* was embedded in the green economy, downstreaming, and energy and food self-sufficiency agendas. Thus, the conversion of support was based not only on moral emotion but also on rational calculations regarding economic benefits and national stability. This strategy enabled environmental issues to be accepted by productive voters and business actors, positioning them as growth opportunities. However, the risk of this approach was the emergence of skepticism from civil society groups and environmental activists who saw an ambiguity between industrial expansion and ecological sustainability. The conversion of *green capital* in this model relied heavily on the perception that economic growth was truly compatible with environmental protection.

Meanwhile, the Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD ticket mobilized *green capital* through credibility in governance, innovation, and the rule of law. Their conversion strategy focused on building trust in the state's capacity to manage the environment transparently and in accordance with regulations. The environment was not made the primary moral symbol, but rather part of broader systemic reforms. This approach had strong potential to build support among educated urban voters and the younger generation who prioritized policy effectiveness. However, due to its technocratic nature, its emotional mobilization power is relatively limited compared to normative or nationalistic approaches.

Compared with *Green Political Capital* mobilization and conversion, their effectiveness is strongly influenced by voter segmentation and social context. The normative-transformative model tends to be strong at building moral solidarity, the instrumental-developmental model excels at economic integration and stability, while the reformist-technocratic model is effective at building institutional legitimacy. All three demonstrate that *green capital* can be converted through different channels, emotional, rational-economic, and administrative. This conversion is also influenced by the intensity of digital campaigns, community engagement, and media responses, which strengthen or delegitimize candidates' claims of ecological commitment.

Ultimately, *Green Political Capital* mobilization is not simply a matter of the frequency with which environmental issues are mentioned, but also of the ability to connect those issues to voters' concrete interests. *Green capital* becomes political support when it successfully addresses everyday needs, affordable energy, clean water, green jobs, clean air, and when the public trusts the candidate's capacity to realize them. Thus, *green capital* conversion is a complex socio-political process that involves symbolic legitimacy, economic rationality, and institutional credibility simultaneously in the arena of electoral contestation.

Public Recognition and Legitimacy in the Political Arena

In the political arena, *Green Political Capital* only gains efficacy when it is recognized as a legitimate commitment by the public. Referring to Pierre Bourdieu's perspective on arena and symbolic capital, legitimacy is not something automatically attached to political claims, but rather the result of a social process involving perceptions, evaluations, and interactions between political actors and society (Al-Azmeh, 2025; Baharuddin et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2024; Ocasio et al., 2020). Thus, the dynamics of public recognition of the environmental agenda depend on how the issue is produced in discourse, translated into policy practice, and tested for consistency in everyday social experience.

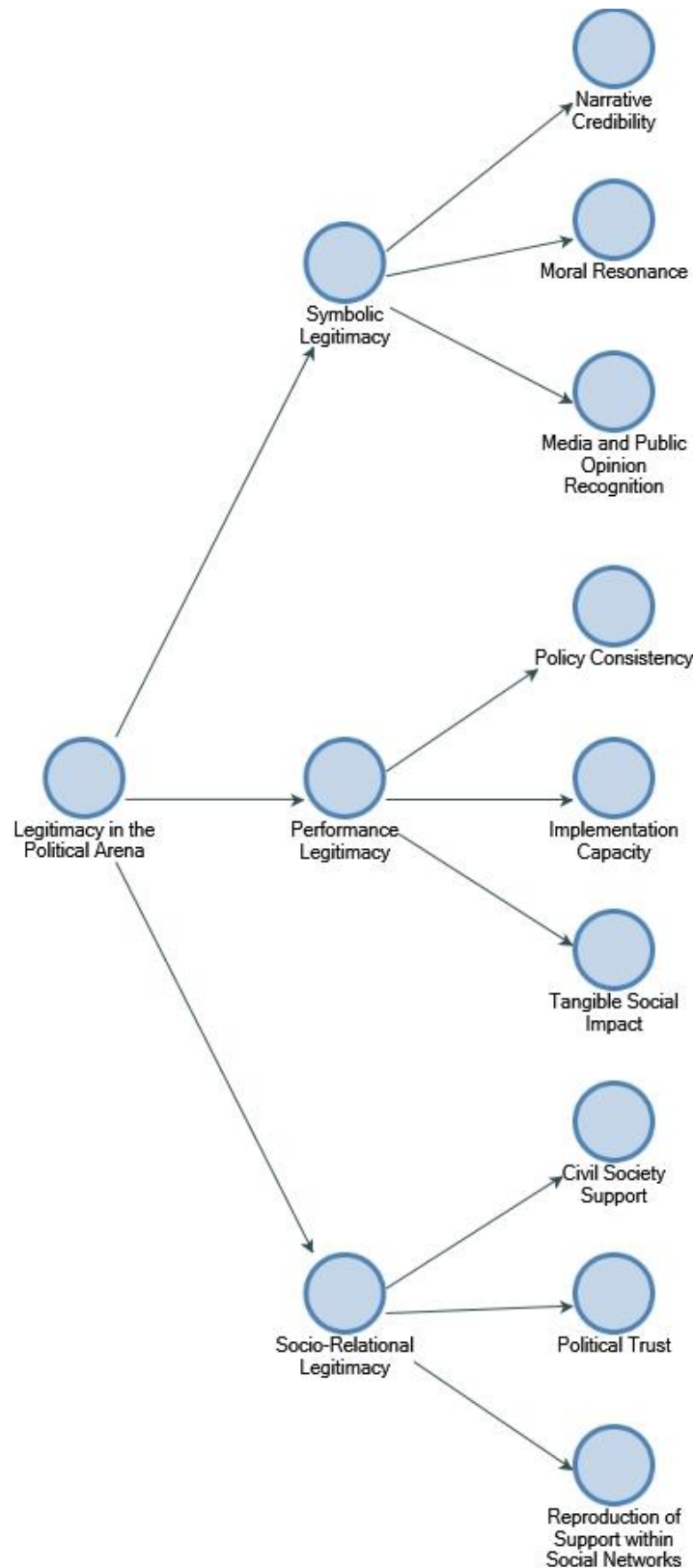


Figure 2. Dynamics of Public Recognition and Legitimacy in the Political Arena
 Source: Processed by Researchers with Nvivo 12 Plus, 2025

Symbolic legitimacy is the initial foundation for the successful construction of *Green Political Capital* in the political arena. In Pierre Bourdieu's thinking, symbols are not merely representations but forms of power that operate through social recognition (Driessens, 2013; Huot, 2017; Law & Mooney, 2012). In this context, environmental commitment must be

constructed as a credible political identity to gain legitimacy (Pereira et al., 2025). Without symbolic recognition, an ecological agenda will simply become normative rhetoric that lacks the power to convert into political support. Therefore, symbolic legitimacy rests not solely on program content but also on the processes of representation, consistency, and public acceptance of the narrative.

In terms of narrative credibility, consistency is a key indicator (van Eck & van der Meer, 2025). Environmental commitment must be consistently present in visions, policy platforms, public speeches, and even digital communication strategies. When environmental narratives emerge sporadically or contradict other development agendas, such as industrialization without ecological boundaries, the public tends to interpret these agendas as electoral instruments, rather than ideological orientations. Narrative credibility is also linked to track records and the continuity of political stances. Within the political arena, political actors compete for a legitimate definition of “green development,” so consistency becomes a source of symbolic capital accumulation that distinguishes authentic commitments from opportunistic claims.

Meanwhile, moral resonance determines the extent to which environmental issues engage society’s affective dimensions and collective values. Ecological issues do not always automatically become voters’ primary concerns, especially in contexts where economic and welfare concerns are more pressing. Therefore, environmental narratives must be linked to values of social justice, protection of future generations, and the balance between growth and sustainability (Gilson, 2024; Han & Ahn, 2020; Wardekker et al., 2009). Moral resonance works when the public perceives that the environmental agenda is not merely technocratic but has ethical dimensions relevant to everyday life. However, this resonance is also vulnerable to politicization and symbolic simplification, where environmental issues are reduced to slogans without concrete policy elaboration.

Media recognition and public opinion act as secondary arenas that mediate symbolic legitimacy. Mainstream media and digital platforms not only disseminate messages but also frame and assess the credibility of ecological claims (Fang et al., 2021; Lestaluhu et al., 2023). Public discourse can strengthen symbolic capital when the media positively reproduces sustainability narratives, but it can also undermine them through criticism, investigation, or exposure of inconsistencies. In the digital era, symbolic legitimacy is increasingly fluid because public opinion is formed through horizontal interactions on social media rather than one-way communication (Alon-Barkat & Gilad, 2016; Liu et al., 2023; Saragih et al., 2025). Thus, the symbolic legitimacy of environmental agendas is dynamic and depends on ongoing negotiations among political narratives, media representations, and public perceptions.

On the other hand, performance legitimacy is a dimension that tests whether *Green Political Capital* remains symbolic or is truly transformed into concrete policy practices. While symbolic legitimacy is based on recognition and representation, performance legitimacy rests on concrete evidence in the government arena. From a sociological-political perspective, legitimacy is built not only through narratives but also through political actors’ ability to convert symbolic capital into institutional capital and effective policies. Thus, this dimension serves as an evaluative arena in which the public assesses the congruence between claims and actions, between promises and their realization.

Regarding policy consistency, performance legitimacy is determined by the alignment between campaign narratives and the design and implementation of environmental policies (Cao et al., 2026; Zhou et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2025). This consistency encompasses the continuity of commitments in planning documents, regulations, budget allocations, and development priorities. When resulting policies contradict the ecological narrative, for example, the expansion of projects that could damage the environment without adequate mitigation, legitimacy erodes. The public perceives inconsistency as a form of political dissonance that undermines trust. Conversely, the continuity between discourse and policy reinforces the perception that the environmental agenda is not merely an electoral strategy but rather part of the structural orientation of development.

Meanwhile, implementation capacity and tangible social impact serve as the ultimate measure of performance legitimacy. Implementation capacity relates to bureaucratic effectiveness, inter-institutional coordination, resource adequacy, and governance transparency (Pan & Zhu, 2025; Yang et al., 2024). Even well-designed policies can lose legitimacy if they are not executed efficiently. In the next stage, legitimacy is tested through observable social impacts such

as improved air and water quality, increased access to clean energy, reduced resource conflicts, or reduced ecological disparities between regions (Cabaña & Richter, 2026; Malhotra et al., 2025; Marilele & Serge Kubanza, 2025). When communities experience the direct benefits of the policy, legitimacy ceases to be symbolic and becomes experiential trust. Thus, performance legitimacy is the intersection of policy, institutional capacity, and the social realities experienced by citizens.

On the other hand, socio-relational legitimacy emphasizes that the strength of *Green Political Capital* is determined not only by symbolic narratives or policy performance, but also by the quality of the social relations that support it. Within the framework of arenas and social capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu, political support is formed through networks, trust, and mutual recognition between actors (Baharuddin et al., 2023). This means that environmental commitments gain legitimacy when they are recognized and reinforced by epistemic communities, civil society organizations, and social networks that possess moral and social authority. Without this relational foundation, the ecological agenda is vulnerable to being perceived as an elitist project disconnected from its social base.

In terms of civil society support, the involvement of groups such as environmental organizations, academics, local communities, and grassroots movements is an important indicator of the social validity of an ecological agenda. This support is not only symbolic but also substantive, for example, through collaboration in policy formulation, joint advocacy, or participation in monitoring program implementation. When civil society provides endorsement or critical recognition, environmental commitments gain horizontal legitimacy, broadening the base of public acceptance. Conversely, resistance or strong criticism from these groups can undermine claims of authenticity, especially when inconsistencies arise between promises and practices.

Another aspect, political trust and the reproduction of support within social networks, demonstrates that legitimacy is dynamic and continuously reproduced through social interactions. Public trust is formed when environmental commitments are perceived as consistent, transparent, and not merely opportunistic (Esmaeili et al., 2026; Wang & Li, 2025). This trust then spreads through interpersonal communication, local communities, and social media, reinforcing itself within the social network. In the digital era, support reproduction occurs rapidly and in a decentralized manner, with citizens' opinions, testimonies, and experiences becoming alternative sources of legitimacy outside formal institutions. Thus, socio-relational legitimacy operates as a collective mechanism that ensures *Green Political Capital* is not only formally recognized but also internalized and reinforced within society's social fabric.

CONCLUSION

The construction of *Green Political Capital* in the 2024 Presidential Election is not a single model, but rather fragmented into three dominant models: normative-transformative, instrumental-developmental, and reformist-technocratic. These differences reflect the varying ways environmental issues are positioned within the vision-mission structure and the campaign strategy. The normative model positions the environment as a foundation for ethics and social justice; the developmentalist model integrates it within the framework of economic growth and industrialization; while the technocratic model emphasizes governance, innovation, and institutional capacity. Conceptually, this confirms that *green capital* operates in the political arena as a symbolic resource that can be constructed according to each actor's ideological orientation. The legitimacy of this capital is determined not only by the intensity of mention of environmental issues, but also by narrative consistency, implementation capacity, and social recognition gained through the media and civil society networks.

Furthermore, this study found that the effectiveness of converting *green capital* into public support depends heavily on three dimensions of legitimacy: symbolic, performance, and socio-relational. *Green capital* that is strong symbolically but weak in policy consistency risks losing public trust. Conversely, a technocratic approach that is administratively strong but lacks moral resonance may struggle to mobilize voters' emotions. Thus, the success of *Green Political Capital* lies in its ability to simultaneously integrate moral narratives, economic rationality, and institutional credibility in the contestation arena. However, this study is limited to analyzing vision-mission documents and campaign narratives, thereby failing to measure voter perceptions

directly. Future research is recommended to use surveys or in-depth interviews to examine how the public truly interprets and responds to the construction of *green capital* in electoral behavior.

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The author declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The author made limited use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology, ChatGPT (OpenAI), to assist with grammar correction, sentence clarity, and language editing. All scientific content, analysis, data interpretation, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author. All content was reviewed and verified by the author. The author ensures that AI use does not replace the primary intellectual contribution to this research and adheres to the ethical standards of scientific publication.

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