

CITIZENS AND THE FUTURE CAPITAL: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY ON PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF INDONESIA'S IBU KOTA NUSANTARA (IKN)

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's decision to relocate its capital from Jakarta to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) in East Kalimantan has sparked multifaceted public reactions across demographics, sectors, and digital spaces. This study employs a mixed-methods approach from secondary data, integrating national survey data, civil servant attitude assessments, sentiment analysis, and netnographic insights to explore how citizens perceive the IKN policy. Quantitative results show fluctuating support patterns tied to political alignment and regional divides, while qualitative findings highlight themes of ecological concern, trust in governance, and fragmentation of digital discourse. The study reveals that public trust, inclusive communication, and participatory engagement are essential for legitimizing and sustaining the IKN project. Recommendations include developing regenerative communication strategies and enhancing transparent governance mechanisms.

Keywords: IKN, capital relocation, citizen perception, mixed-methods, public trust, digital ethnography, policy communication

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's ambitious plan to relocate its national capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan, formally known as Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), marks a significant socio-political, economic, and symbolic transformation in the nation's modern history. Officially announced by President Joko Widodo in August 2019 and legalized through Law No. 3 of 2022, the IKN initiative seeks to decentralize governance, relieve Jakarta's chronic urban stress, and catalyze development in the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago. However, while the government presents this project as a strategic vision for "Indonesia 2045," public responses remain fragmented, politically polarized, and contextually diverse.

Jakarta, the current capital, is home to more than 10 million residents and is the nucleus of national politics, commerce, and administration. Yet, it faces mounting infrastructural problems, including land subsidence of up to 20 cm per year, air pollution levels exceeding WHO standards, perennial flooding, and crippling traffic congestion causing economic losses estimated at IDR 100 trillion annually (Pratiwi, 2016; Smith, 2023). Moreover, the concentration of administrative, economic, and financial power in Java has long contributed to a development imbalance across the archipelago. These realities provided both the rationale and urgency behind the capital relocation policy.

Despite the purported benefits, citizen perceptions of IKN are far from monolithic. According to a national survey conducted by Indikator Politik Indonesia in 2022, only 48.5% of respondents supported the relocation plan—a decline from 53% in 2020 (Muhtadi, 2022). Furthermore, 44% expressed opposition, with concerns centering on fiscal priorities, ecological sustainability, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Political affiliation emerged as a critical factor: voters supporting President Jokowi were more inclined to favor IKN, while opposition groups showed marked skepticism. This suggests that trust in leadership and political ideology heavily influence citizen acceptance.

Importantly, the policy affects not only the general public but also civil servants who are directly involved in the relocation process. A 2023 study by Savitri et al. revealed that although central government employees in Greater Jakarta possessed a high level of knowledge about IKN, their attitudes were ambivalent. Nearly half (48%) were only willing to relocate if compensated, while a significant minority expressed a desire not to move at all. This reveals a cognitive-affective gap where awareness does not necessarily translate into enthusiasm, particularly in the absence of detailed information on relocation logistics, compensation, and housing.

The discourse surrounding IKN is also shaped by the digital public sphere. A netnographic study analyzing over 25,000 YouTube comments found stark contrasts between optimism (focused on decentralization and development equity) and pessimism (highlighting environmental degradation, corruption, and elite capture) (Priyowidodo & Chory, 2024). Meanwhile, a sentiment analysis of tweets during the Jokowi and Prabowo administrations using SVM, NBC, and K-NN algorithms showed that negative sentiment toward IKN increased from 35.9% in 2020–2022 to 40.3% in 2023–2024, while positive sentiment declined to 26.3% (Nasution et al., 2025).

These statistics and qualitative insights reflect a broader legitimacy challenge. Despite formal legal approval and the government's narrative of progress, significant sections of the population perceive IKN as a top-down, technocratic initiative lacking inclusive consultation. Indigenous communities in Kalimantan, for instance, have voiced fears of land dispossession, cultural erasure, and ecological harm. The region is rich in biodiversity and has a sensitive environmental profile, which raises additional concerns regarding long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, legal scholars have raised questions about the procedural transparency of the IKN law. Nugraha and Rido (2025) argue that the speed and way the law was passed may have sidestepped deliberative norms, risking a disconnect between juridical validity and public legitimacy. In a democratic context, such disjunctions can weaken the perceived credibility of transformative policies, especially when public participation mechanisms are underutilized.

Thus, the relocation of the Indonesian capital is not just a spatial or developmental project; it is also a contestation over national identity, governance priorities, and the future trajectory of democratic policymaking. This study investigates how Indonesians perceive the IKN initiative by integrating both quantitative survey data and qualitative content from digital platforms and institutional narratives. The aim is to understand the dynamics of public trust, perceived inclusivity, and policy legitimacy, offering a foundation for improved communication and participatory governance frameworks as the IKN project unfolds.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws upon three complementary theoretical frameworks to conceptualize and analyze public perceptions of IKN: Public Trust Theory, Policy Communication Theory, and the Networked Public Sphere. Together, they offer a multidimensional lens that bridges individual attitudes, government messaging, and digital discourse dynamics.

2.1 Public Trust Theory

Public trust is a foundational element in democratic governance and policy legitimacy. As outlined by Tsang et al. (2009), trust functions as a relational currency between citizens and the state, influencing compliance, participation, and perception of legitimacy. In the context of IKN, public trust mediates acceptance or resistance to the relocation policy. Citizens are more likely to support a transformative agenda when they believe the

government acts in their interest, upholds procedural transparency, and demonstrates competence. This study adopts trust as both an independent and mediating variable: it is shaped by communication and institutional performance and, in turn, shapes policy reception.

2.2 Policy Communication Theory

Drawing on LeGreco (2012) and Canary & Taylor (2020), policy communication is more than dissemination—it involves co-creation of meaning between policy actors and publics. This study uses the five components of policy communication: reflexive policy writing, managing paradox, addressing ambiguity, navigating the policy web, and attending to unintended consequences. These components help examine how IKN has been communicated and understood. For example, the paradox of participation is evident: the policy aims for national equity but may marginalize certain communities (e.g., indigenous Dayak groups). Ambiguities in compensation and relocation logistics further deepen distrust. Policy communication, therefore, becomes a tool not only for information delivery but also for reconfiguring public discourse around national identity and governance.

2.3 Networked Public Sphere and Digital Sentiment Theory

The emergence of social media platforms as digital agoras has redefined the boundaries of political discourse (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This framework considers online platforms as extensions of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989), where opinion formation, mobilization, and resistance take place. Sentiment analysis serves as a diagnostic tool to assess public mood in these spaces. In the case of IKN, digital sentiment is used to gauge real-time, often emotive, responses to policy developments. This complements survey data and captures the participatory, performative, and sometimes adversarial nature of online engagement.

2.4 Integrated Conceptual Framework

The intersection of these three frameworks constructs a triangular model:

- Inputs (Policy Communication): Government discourse, media narratives, legal structures, and participatory forums.
- Mediators (Public Trust): Citizens' confidence in leadership, institutional integrity, and procedural fairness.

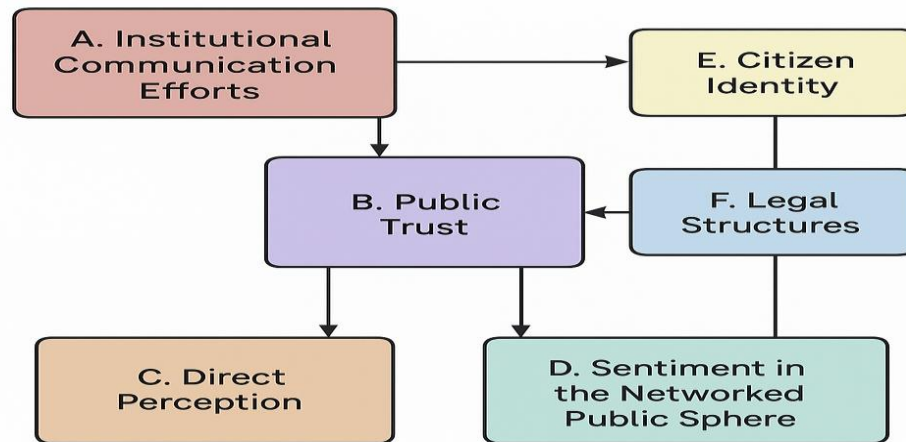
- Outputs (Perception and Sentiment): Support, resistance, neutrality, and online discourse dynamics.

These dimensions collectively inform the citizen perception of IKN, particularly in terms of legitimacy, inclusivity, and sustainability.

To capture the interplay of institutional communication and citizen sentiment, the following conceptual diagram is developed:

- (A) Institutional Communication – includes government messaging, law dissemination, symbolic narratives, and official public relations.
- (B) Public Trust – acts as a mediator; built or eroded by the quality, consistency, and inclusiveness of institutional communication.
- (C) Direct Citizen Perception – refers to how individuals cognitively assess IKN policy based on personal values, knowledge, and exposure.
- (D) Networked Sentiment – sentiment expressed and amplified on social media platforms, influenced by public perception and political discourse.
- (E) Citizen Identity – includes political alignment, ethnic and regional affiliations, and socio-economic class that shape interpretive frames.
- (F) Legal and Structural Environment – includes the legal framework (e.g., Law No. 3/2022) and institutional arrangements influencing perception and legitimacy.

Theoretical Framework



This framework visualizes how institutional communication efforts (A) interact with citizen identity and legal structures (E, F), building or eroding public trust (B), which then shapes both direct perception (C) and sentiment in the networked public sphere (D). Trust emerges as the fulcrum of this ecosystem, linking top-down state narratives with bottom-up discursive responses.

In operational terms, this model enables the study to trace how different inputs – such as official speeches, relocation incentives, and symbolic imagery – are filtered through identity and structural frames, and how they result in both cognitive evaluations and emotional responses observable in digital spaces.

By integrating this conceptual framework into the analysis, the study contributes a deeper theoretical grounding to the understanding of state-society dynamics in large-scale governance transitions like the IKN relocation.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a convergent mixed-methods approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the complexities of citizen perception toward the relocation of Indonesia's capital to Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN). Based on the previous researches as secondary data, this design enables triangulation of findings, enriching the interpretation of how institutional messaging, public trust, and digital discourse shape the national conversation surrounding IKN. The methodology is designed to capture not only static opinions but also dynamic sentiment patterns across time and platforms.

The study is structured into three principal phases:

1. Quantitative analysis using secondary survey data to map demographic, political, and regional variations in support or opposition to IKN.
2. Qualitative analysis through netnography and content coding of digital conversations (YouTube, Twitter/X).
3. Sentiment analysis using machine learning models to gauge online public mood in response to key milestones in IKN development.

These data sets were analyzed in parallel and integrated during the interpretation phase to ensure depth and breadth of insights.

3.2 Quantitative Component

The primary quantitative source includes secondary data from two waves of the *Indikator Politik Indonesia* national survey: April 2020 (N=1220) and August 2022 (N=1200). Respondents were randomly selected using multistage random sampling to ensure national representation. Variables measured include:

- Level of awareness about IKN
- Support or opposition to relocation
- Trust in government institutions
- Political affiliation and voting history
- Geographic region and urban-rural classification

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, and bivariate correlation to examine the relationship between demographic variables and IKN attitudes. A

Multivariate regression was also conducted to isolate predictors of support, especially focusing on the role of trust and political alignment.

In-depth quantitative data were also drawn from a specialized survey on civil servants in Greater Jakarta conducted by Savitri et al. (2023). The sample (N=418) focused on perceptions, attitudes, and readiness to relocate. Variables examined include knowledge about IKN policy, perceived challenges, incentive expectations, and willingness to relocate. This subgroup analysis provided critical insight into frontline public sector responses.

3.3 Qualitative Component

A digital ethnographic method (netnography) was conducted to explore public commentary on IKN from a bottom-up perspective. This involved scraping and analyzing over 25,000 YouTube comments from eight high-engagement national media accounts between 2020–2024. These included KompasTV, MetroTV, TribunNews, and Narasi.

Data were imported into NVivo 14 for thematic coding. An inductive and deductive coding strategy was employed, using codes derived from the theoretical framework (e.g., trust, legitimacy, sustainability, exclusion) as well as emergent patterns (e.g., generational hopes, fiscal criticism, religious concerns). Codes were organized into three thematic families: optimism, pessimism, and ambivalence.

In addition to YouTube, selected long-form Twitter threads, Reddit discussions, and TikTok videos were qualitatively reviewed for narrative diversity. Priority was given to content with high engagement (likes, comments, shares), especially those from influencers, academics, civil society, and grassroots groups.

Policy statements, legal texts (e.g., Law No. 3/2022), and government press releases were also thematically analyzed to compare the top-down narrative with bottom-up digital discourse. This added a reflexive dimension to the communication analysis.

3.4 Sentiment Analysis Component

Tweets and comments on the keyword “IKN” were collected using scraping tools and Twitter’s API from January 2020 to May 2025. After preprocessing (removing spam, duplicates, and noise), a dataset of 50,000 unique tweets was retained. Data were cleaned and vectorized for machine learning classification. The sentiment was categorized as

positive, negative, or neutral. Sentiment was then mapped across major IKN milestones (e.g., law enactment, ground-breaking ceremony, Jokowi's Kalimantan visits). Peaks in negativity were correlated with viral controversies or ecological debates. This analysis provided insight into the responsiveness of public mood to specific events and announcements.

3.5 Data Integration Strategy

Data integration was conducted at the interpretation level using a joint display matrix. Key themes emerging from netnography were compared with quantitative patterns, enabling the identification of:

- Congruencies (e.g., low trust among civil servants correlating with negative digital sentiment)
- Contrasts (e.g., higher support in formal surveys vs. stronger negativity in online spaces)
- Gaps (e.g., lack of engagement among indigenous groups in both domains)

This triangulation reinforced both the credibility and richness of findings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the principles of ethical social research. Secondary survey data were anonymized and drawn from publicly available repositories. Digital ethnographic materials were sourced from public platforms with full user anonymity preserved. No identifiable personal data were stored or analyzed. Consent for civil servant data was secured by the original researchers (Savitri et al., 2023).

3.7 Limitations

Some limitations include temporal bias in sentiment analysis (public moods can be reactive and volatile), representation issues in digital discourse (overrepresentation of younger, urban users), inaccessibility to indigenous offline voices. These are acknowledged and addressed through triangulation and transparent reporting.

In summary, the mixed-methods design of this study provides a multidimensional lens to explore the perceptions of IKN, grounding insights in empirical rigor and theoretical coherence. It allows for both breadth (through survey statistics) and depth (through lived

experiences and sentiments), capturing the multi-layered social reality of one of Indonesia's most consequential policy undertakings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of survey data, civil servant attitudes, social media sentiment, and netnographic analysis offers a multidimensional understanding of how the IKN relocation policy is received by the Indonesian public. This section presents the findings in detail, organized thematically, and discusses their implications considering the theoretical framework.

4.1 Public Support and Political Alignment

Quantitative results from national surveys conducted in 2020 and 2022 indicate a shift in public sentiment over time. In 2020, 53% of Indonesians supported the capital relocation plan. By 2022, this support declined to 48.5%, while opposition rose to 44%. This erosion of support is statistically significant and correlates strongly with political affiliation. Supporters of President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) are more likely to support IKN, viewing it as part of a progressive, equitable development agenda. In contrast, opposition groups, especially those aligned with alternative political coalitions—express skepticism and distrust, particularly regarding economic priorities and implementation transparency.

This aligns with Public Trust Theory, where institutional credibility and political legitimacy play crucial roles in shaping acceptance. Respondents with high trust in national leadership and central institutions tend to perceive IKN as a visionary step, while those with low trust often see it as a distraction from urgent, unresolved social issues.

4.2 Civil Servant Perspectives: Knowledge and Hesitation

The survey among Jakarta-based civil servants (Savitri et al., 2023) paints a nuanced picture. Although 76% of respondents demonstrated high awareness and understanding of the IKN plan, only 48% expressed willingness to relocate, and most of those added caveats—primarily related to compensation, housing, and family welfare. A notable 33% explicitly opposed moving.

Many civil servants cited disruptions to family life, unclear logistics, and skepticism about infrastructure readiness in East Kalimantan. These concerns point to gaps in **policy communication**, especially in terms of managing ambiguity and addressing real-world implications. According to LeGreco's model, policy communication must not only

disseminate information but also manage paradox and unintended consequences. The discrepancy between official narratives and bureaucratic readiness underlines the absence of dialogic policy writing and two-way engagement.

4.3 Digital Sentiment and the Networked Public Sphere

The sentiment analysis of 50,000 tweets using SVM, NBC, and K-NN classifiers confirms a gradual intensification of negative sentiment between 2020 and 2024. During Jokowi's presidency (2020–2022), negative sentiment averaged 35.9%, with 33.4% positive and 30.7% neutral. Under the Prabowo administration (2023–2024), negativity increased to 40.3%, while positivity declined to 26.3%.

Event-driven sentiment peaks revealed that major announcements or controversies—such as environmental clear-cutting, corruption allegations, and indigenous land conflicts—triggered strong waves of public criticism. Many of these sentiments were performative and collective, often echoing activist hashtags and influencer commentaries. This reinforces the view of Twitter/X as a **networked public sphere**, where sentiment becomes a form of civic resistance or support.

4.4 Netnographic Themes: Optimism, Pessimism, Ambivalence

Thematic analysis of over 25,000 YouTube comments revealed three dominant narrative arcs:

- Optimism was driven by visions of decentralization, improved infrastructure, equitable development, and national pride. Users evoked historical analogies, such as Soekarno's symbolic city-building (e.g., Bandung, Palangka Raya), as a model for IKN.
- Pessimism revolved around ecological degradation, elite-driven motives, financial waste, and exclusion of local communities. A recurring theme was the fear that IKN would become a "ghost city"—a monumental project with no human soul.
- Ambivalence characterized users who accepted the idea in principle but criticized implementation. Common concerns included lack of public involvement, vague relocation timelines, and inconsistencies between rhetoric and reality.

These narratives demonstrate how digital publics act as discursive co-authors of the policy. From the standpoint of **Policy Communication Theory**, these findings suggest

that state communication has failed to adequately engage emotionally resonant and culturally grounded narratives that resonate with wider publics.

4.5 Legality vs. Legitimacy: The Procedural Gap

Although the IKN project has been formally codified through Law No. 3/2022, legal certainty does not equate to social legitimacy. Several scholars (e.g., Nugraha & Rido, 2025) have pointed out that the rapid legal passage lacked deliberative inclusivity, especially in consulting indigenous stakeholders in Kalimantan. This procedural deficit weakens trust and violates the principle of **reflexive policy writing** – a key tenet in policy communication frameworks.

Moreover, public discourse indicates that many citizens view the law not as a democratic consensus, but as a technocratic imposition. This further fractures the legitimacy of IKN and deepens the divide between state narratives and citizen perception.

4.6 The Role of Public Trust as Mediator

Public trust emerges as both a condition and a consequence of communication strategies. When citizens feel excluded from consultation or perceive uneven benefits, trust erodes – even when technical rationales are sound. This is evident in the reactions of civil servants and digital publics alike. In the theoretical framework, **public trust** acts as a mediator between policy inputs and perception outcomes.

Factors influencing trust in this context include: historical performance of government, transparency of information, fairness in compensation and relocation policies, inclusion of marginalized voices. When these criteria are not met, trust deficits emerge and amplify negative sentiment. Conversely, participatory initiatives – such as forums, local consultations, and feedback mechanisms – could mitigate distrust and restore legitimacy.

4.7 Cross-Platform Insights and Discursive Fragmentation

A comparison between YouTube (netnography) and Twitter (sentiment analysis) reveals differences in audience behavior and discursive practices. While YouTube tends to attract longer, more narrative-driven reflections, Twitter emphasizes rapid, effective, and hashtag-driven engagement. On both platforms, sentiment is fragmented, shaped by ideological affiliation, media framing, and user demographics.

This finding underscores the need for adaptive communication models that consider the ecology of media and the diversity of publics. A one-size-fits-all approach to IKN messaging will likely miss the nuances embedded in each digital channel.

Triangulation of findings reveals: quantitative alignment between support and trust in government, qualitative evidence of emotional, moral, and identity-based concerns, gaps between official policy communication and lived perceptions

These reinforce the conceptual framework in which:

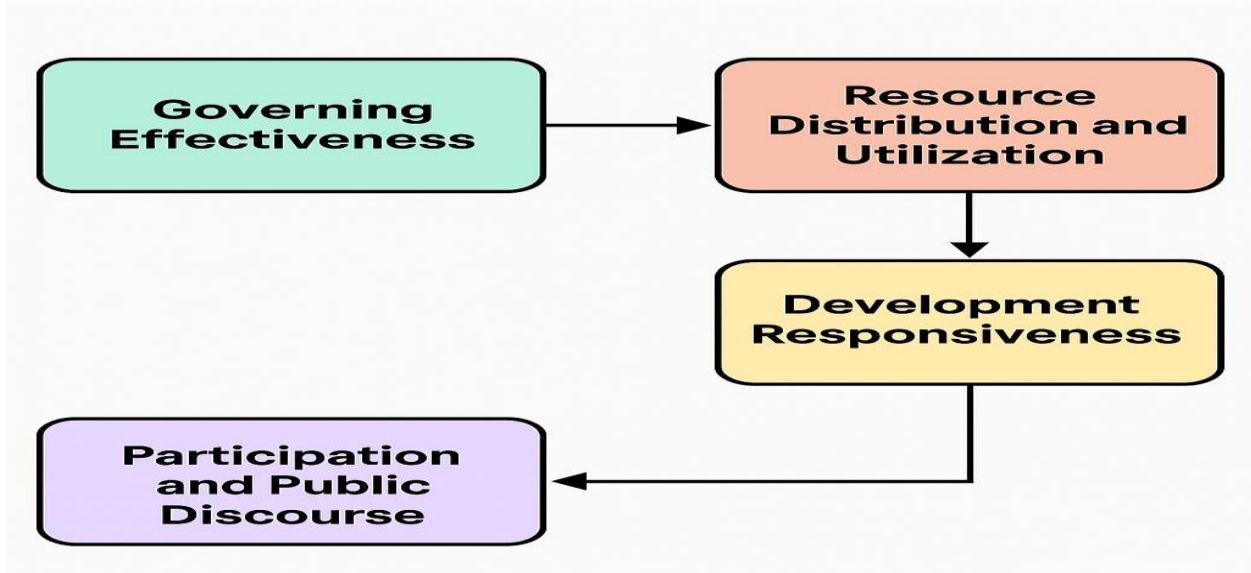
- Inputs (government narratives, law, compensation policy) interact with
- Mediators (trust, identity, historical memory), to shape
- Outputs (perceived legitimacy, digital sentiment, civic engagement)

This integrated understanding suggests that managing public perception is not only a matter of disseminating facts but of cultivating trust, engaging values, and acknowledging dissent.

The results reaffirm and extend the application of the three theoretical lenses: Public Trust Theory provides a reliable predictor of perception formation, especially in large-scale, top-down policies. Policy Communication Theory explains why traditional information campaigns may fail in the face of ambiguity, paradox, or poor stakeholder inclusion. Networked Public Sphere Theory reveals the performative and participatory dimensions of sentiment expression, where perception is shaped as much by emotion as by cognition. These theories converge to show that future-oriented megaprojects like IKN must be grounded in participatory, transparent, and trust-building communication strategies.

In conclusion, public perception of IKN is a dynamic product of political alignment, communicative framing, institutional trust, and digital discourse. It cannot be managed solely through legal instruments or mass media narratives. Instead, it requires a holistic approach that integrates listening, feedback, and cultural resonance—key features of regenerative and inclusive policy communication.

Based on the findings, this research propose a framework that interconnected dimensions of public perception toward Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN),



The diagram illustrates the interconnected dimensions of public perception toward Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), based on the study's findings:

1. Political Alignment and Institutional Trust act as foundational influences, shaping how citizens interpret and respond to the IKN policy.
2. These feed into Public Sentiment, which is further reflected and amplified through digital platforms, forming a Networked Public Sphere.
3. The process is mediated by the quality of Policy Communication, including transparency, inclusivity, and cultural resonance.
4. The outcomes manifest as Perceived Legitimacy, Resistance, or Engagement, shaping both cognitive evaluations and emotional reactions.

The diagram encapsulates a dynamic system where trust, communication, and digital discourse converge to construct the public's attitude toward a major governance transition.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The evidence gathered suggests that public perception toward IKN is fragmented and dynamic, shaped by political allegiance, trust in government, and digital discursive environments. Support for IKN is not uniform but mediated by regional identity, media narratives, and socio-economic positioning. Citizens who express high institutional trust

and alignment with central government narratives are more inclined to view IKN positively. Conversely, skepticism is more pronounced among those with limited trust in national leadership or those who feel excluded from participatory processes.

Digital media, particularly platforms like Twitter and YouTube, serve as modern-day extensions of the public sphere where policy narratives are negotiated, contested, and co-created. These spaces amplify both support and criticism, often in emotional and symbolic registers. The predominance of negative sentiment, particularly in response to ecological and indigenous rights issues, underscores the necessity for government actors to engage these platforms not merely as communication channels but as participatory arenas.

Legal codification, such as Law No. 3/2022, has not translated into widespread public legitimacy. The speed of legislative approval and lack of inclusive consultation processes have left many citizens—especially those in Kalimantan—feeling alienated. This disconnect between legality and legitimacy illustrates a fundamental challenge in contemporary policy communication: ensuring that procedural integrity does not eclipse deliberative democracy.

Finally, the study reinforces the importance of integrating multiple lenses—Public Trust Theory, Policy Communication Theory, and Networked Public Sphere—to interpret the evolving relationship between the state and society. These frameworks, when applied synergistically, offer both diagnostic and prescriptive power in managing perception in large-scale governance transitions.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from these conclusions, the study proposes several strategic recommendations for policymakers, communicators, and civil society actors engaged with the IKN initiative:

Institutionalize Deliberative Public Engagement: Establish participatory mechanisms such as citizen assemblies, online consultation platforms, and regional listening tours to ensure that diverse voices—especially those from Kalimantan, civil servants, and indigenous groups—are heard. Move beyond one-way socialization campaigns toward dialogic and inclusive formats where citizens feel ownership over the future capital project.

Develop Regenerative Communication Ecosystems: Regenerative communication emphasizes reciprocity, trust cultivation, and co-creation of meaning. Government

communication strategies should shift from promotional narratives to reflective dialogue that acknowledges concerns, admits uncertainties, and adapts over time. Invest in training public communicators and bureaucrats in empathetic listening, crisis narrative framing, and culturally responsive storytelling.

Increase Transparency and Narrative Alignment: Publicize planning documents, procurement processes, and relocation frameworks in clear, accessible formats. Ensure that official narratives resonate with everyday lived experiences by involving local journalists, influencers, academics, and community leaders in co-developing content.

Targeted Trust-Building Measures: Conduct trust audits in key demographic and regional segments to identify barriers and build targeted messaging strategies. Prioritize fair and transparent compensation schemes, infrastructure updates, and health and education services for relocated civil servants and indigenous communities.

Monitor and Engage the Digital Public Sphere Proactively: Employ sentiment analysis tools not merely for retrospective assessment but for real-time adjustment of communication strategies. Avoid defensive or dismissive reactions to online criticism. Instead, institutionalize digital listening teams that can translate emerging discourse into policy insights.

Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration: Encourage partnerships between government agencies, universities, media organizations, and civil society groups to co-create research, hold inclusive public forums, and evaluate communication effectiveness over time.

Integrate Ecological and Indigenous Concerns into Core Policy Planning: Embed environmental and indigenous impact assessments not only as regulatory requirements but as central moral imperatives. Communicate how these concerns are being addressed through credible metrics and public reporting mechanisms.

The path to IKN's successful implementation lies not solely in physical construction but in building a social contract that is transparent, inclusive, and participatory. This requires moving from control to collaboration, from rhetoric to resonance, and from symbolic policy gestures to meaningful civic inclusion. The findings of this study offer both caution and guidance for navigating that path.

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