

# POPULISM OR INTELLECTUALISM: ANIES BASWEDAN'S TWITTER DIGITAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN THE 2024 INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the formation of Anies Baswedan's intellectual populism during the 2024 Presidential Election campaign on the digital platform X (formerly Twitter). It dissects how intellectual discourse functions simultaneously as a form of public deliberation and as a populist tool for electoral mobilization. Positioned within Ernesto Laclau's theoretical framework of articulation, empty signifiers, hegemony, and antagonism, this study examines the paradox of the digital space—often imagined as open and democratic—becoming a hegemonic arena that constructs a binary between the "smart" and the "stupid." Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), this article analyzes textual patterns, discursive practices, and social practices across Anies' tweets, support networks, and public responses during the campaign. The findings reveal how Anies transformed intellectual capital into moral authority and consolidated it through digital branding, using hashtags such as #EkspedisiAMIN and #AMINajaDulu. The study argues that populism is not fundamentally anti-intellectual, as suggested by previous studies. Instead, it demonstrates how intellectual narratives can be articulated as powerful instruments of political mobilization.

**Keywords:** Intellectual Populism, Anies Baswedan, Critical Discourse Analysis

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini menyelidiki bagaimana proses pembentukan populisme intelektual Anies Baswedan dalam kampanye Pemilu Presiden tahun 2024 dalam ruang digital X (Twitter), membedah bagaimana wacana intelektual berfungsi secara bersamaan sebagai musyawarah publik dan sebagai alat populis mobilisasi elektoral. Dengan diposisikan dalam kerangka teoritis Ernesto Laclau tentang artikulasi, penanda kosong, hegemoni, dan antagonisme, studi ini mengkaji paradoksial ruang digital—sering dibayangkan sebagai terbuka dan demokratis—menjadi arena hegemonik yang membangun biner antara yang "pintar" dan yang "bodoh." Dengan menggunakan analisis wacana kritis (CDA), artikel ini menganalisis pola tekstual, praktik diskursif, dan praktik sosial di seluruh tweet Anies, jaringan pendukung, dan respons publik selama masa kampanye. Temuan yang didapat mengungkapkan bagaimana Anies mengubah lingkup intelektual menjadi otoritas moral

dan mengonsolidasikannya melalui branding digital seperti #Ekspedisi-AMIN dan #AMINajaDulu. Studi tersebut melihat populisme pada dasarnya tidak anti-intelektual seperti penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya; sebaliknya, studi menemukan bagaimana narasi intelektual dapat diartikulasikan sebagai instrumen ampuh mobilisasi politik.

**Kata kunci:** Populisme Intelektual, Anies Baswedan, Analisis Wacana Kritis

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## Introduction

Populism is a global phenomenon, often understood as a response to democratic crises, and its impact is amplified through digital spaces. This is because, in various parts of the world, a crisis of trust in traditional political parties, increasing economic inequality fueled by neoliberal globalization, and the dominance of oligarchic power have collectively widened the gap between "the people" and "the elite." Populism has become popular because its actors present themselves not only as different and new figures, but also as bold leaders who defend "the people" and challenge "the elite" (Mundde & Kaltwasser, 2017: 4). The presence of social media has amplified the explosive power of populism, as digital space allows direct communication between populist leaders and the public without intermediaries, facilitating rapid, emotional, and personal mobilization. Populism has always been positioned as anti-intellectual (Wejnert, 2014: 146). Therefore, today's populism is no longer merely a conventional political phenomenon, but rather a digital communication logic that redefines the relationship between the people, elites, and political leaders.

In the digital media era, populism finds new channels through algorithmic logic that amplifies affect, identity politics, and virality. The literature on digital democracy emphasizes that online spaces now function as affective publics (Papacharissi, 2016: 311), where emotions, knowledge, and symbols combine to shape political discourse. Castells (2015, p. 223) asserts that social media enables mass autocommunication, that is, network of communication that is both highly personal and viral. Fuchs (2018: 7), in his study of Donald Trump, shows that social media

reinforces populism by transforming politicians not only into political actors but also into brands. Kranert (2020: 21) adds linguistic and rhetorical dimensions by showing that digital populism operates through simple language, repetition, and emotional performativity that are easily consumed in online formats, thus facilitating the instant formation of collective identities. Tan (2019: 89) sees Jokowi's pragmatic populism as transitioning Indonesian democracy toward authoritarianism and dynastic politics.

During the 2024 election, Anies Baswedan emerged as an alternative candidate championing a narrative of "Perubahan" (Change) Anies' background as an academic (former Rector of Paramadina), Minister of Education, and Governor of DKI Jakarta reinforced his political brand as a rational, insightful, and communicative figure. Anies utilized the digital space X to produce intellectual discourse based on data, rationality, and policy. This phenomenon is unique. Through X, he produced a narrative about change, social justice, and inclusivity, which was disseminated through threads, hashtags (#AMINAJaDulu), and direct interactions with the public.

Data from Anies Baswedan's tweets during the election period reinforce this finding. Through threads, hashtags like #Aminajadulu, and direct interactions on his account, Anies consistently presents discourse based on analysis, policy, and concrete data. This strategy articulates various public demands (education, economics, democracy) into the meaning of "Perubahan." By blending intellectual narratives, he successfully built a diverse network of social aspirations within a framework of opposition to the status quo. This phenomenon demonstrates the emergence of a new configuration: populism that does not reject knowledge but instead uses it as a basis for mobilization, establishing a strong discursive hegemony in the digital space.

However, this intellectual populism also presents its own dilemmas. The presence of intellectual narratives in digital space fosters a new antagonism between the "smart" and the "stupid," effectively narrowing the space for democratic deliberation. Rather than opening up a space for pluralistic discussion, Anies'

digital campaign can be understood as an attempt at a new hegemony that dominates discourse with claims of rationality and objectivity. Thus, an antagonism between "us" (the supporters of candidate pair 01) and "them" (the supporters of pair 02) is naturally constructed. Populism in intellectual form not only reproduces variations of populist practices, but also demonstrates how knowledge can be mobilized for populist purposes.

To dissect and analyze this problem, the author uses Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism. Laclau views populism not as a substantive ideology that can be rigidly mapped onto left-right, religious, or nationalist spectrums, but as a fluid and performative political logic. This logic operates through discursive articulation—the process of connecting and uniting various previously scattered and heterogeneous social demands into a chain of equivalence (Laclau, 2005, p. 123). This process finds a unifying node in an empty signifier—such as the word “change,” which can accommodate various meanings simultaneously, from social justice, educational reform, to freedom of expression. This symbol functions as a nodal point that unites diverse aspirations under one banner of collective identity called the people. Populist identity, in this framework, is never present in neutral, but is always formed through antagonism, namely the creation of a clear dividing line between the pure, legitimate, and sovereign “us,” and “them,” who are seen as corrupt elites or the oppressive status quo.

This antagonistic logic was clearly evident in the 2024 election. The polarization of "us" versus "them" became the center of Anies' political mobilization. "We" were positioned as intellectuals, the younger generation, and inclusive citizens supporting change. In contrast, "they" were characterized as the status quo elite—represented by Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Jokowi—associated with political stagnation, ineptitude, and corruption. This conflict frequently emerged in digital conversations, where Anies' supporters were considered intelligent and progressive, while those who rejected him were stigmatized as "stupid" and "backward." Thus, Anies's intellectual discourse

became not merely an instrument for policy rationalization, but also a symbolic weapon that maintained social polarization. This contrasted sharply with Habermas's deliberative democracy.

This phenomenon reinforces Laclau's argument that populism is a logic of articulation, not a political ideology. Therefore, populism should not be universally considered anti-intellectual or anti-science, as Anies's case demonstrates the strategic use of intellectual narratives to gain public support. Anies uses intellectual language not merely to educate the public, but also to build political mobilization. With his academic communication style, he presents himself as an intellectual figure distinct from status quo politicians. However, precisely because of this success, Anies' intellectual discourse has become hegemonic, constructing a single truth claim that precludes the possibility of rational dialogue.

In contrast to research on populism in Indonesian space, this research tries to challenge the stigmatization of populism which is always associated with an anti-intellectual style (Wejnert, 2014: 146. Anies' populism actually uses the image of an intellectual as a mobilization strategy. This is what the author calls intellectual populism: a political strategy based on intellectual discourse to gain electoral support. Intellectual populism is formed, mobilized, and has implications for Indonesia's digital space.

### **Research Methods**

This study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to critically analyze the discourse emerging from Anies Baswedan's navigation of intellectual populism during the 2024 election campaign on platform. A qualitative approach was chosen because CDA is particularly suited to dissecting contemporary phenomena by tracing how language is used to form, legitimize, and maintain power relations in social discourse (Wodak, 2001, p. 2). CDA research is oriented towards social problems that require a multidisciplinary approach, the main concern is demystifying ideology and power through systematic research of semiotic data (written, oral and visual), and is reflective in the research process (Hartyamoko, 2022: 1).

In the context of this research, CDA is relevant for uncovering the socio-political inequalities arising from the construction of digital discourse, particularly on platform X. The principles of CDA include analyzing the relationship between text and context, intertextuality, discursive strategies, the role of social cognition, the use of analytical categories, and interdiscursivity. Fairclough (2013, pp. 235-239) outlines four analytical steps: identifying social problems in the semiotic dimension, recognizing obstacles to addressing them, considering how the social order "needs" these problems, and assessing possible ways to overcome them.

Research data were obtained from written texts sourced from online news articles (e.g., Kompas.com, CNN Indonesia) and the X account @aniesbaswedan. The data selection criteria emphasized relevance to the research focus, representation of ideological positions, and public accessibility. Data analysis was conducted using three layers of CDA Fairclough (2013: 93–94): text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social practice analysis. At the text level, analysis was conducted descriptively, highlighting lexical choices (e.g., "harapan"/hope, "adil"/just, "Perubahan"/change), metaphors, syntactic structures, and pragmatic elements in tweets, headlines, and interview excerpts. At the discursive practice level, the research explored how texts were produced by official accounts and Anies sympathizers, distributed through the X algorithm, influencers, and buzzers, and consumed by the public through likes, retweets, or quote-tweets. At the social practice level, the analysis examines how the discourse relates to the macro context—such as urban middle-class polarization, identity politics, and the 2024 electoral situation—to assess intellectual populism's role in reinforcing discursive inequality within Indonesian digital democracy.

### **Symbol and Representation of Anies Discourse**

Anies Baswedan is a political figure who previously served as Rector of Paramadina (2007-2015), Minister of Education and Culture (2014-2016), and Governor of Jakarta (2017-2022). This political capital has shaped Anies into an intelligent, polite, firm, and authoritative individual (SindoNews, 2021). This is

supported by the awards Anies received during his time as Governor of DKI Jakarta, such as the "21 Heroes 2021" by the Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative (TUMI), an award given by 21 world figures who were able to develop a sustainable urban transportation system amidst the global challenges of facing the Covid-19 pandemic, or the "Sustainable Transport Award 2021", an award that Anies received for his success in the transportation sector (Sinaga, Effendi, Habibie, & Adawiyah, 2023). Anies' policy of using the Community Action Plan (CAP) and impromptu visits has become a symbol of Anies showing his concern and commitment to the people.

Thus, in the 2024 election contest, Anies combined intellectual capital with populist strategies. The result is a new form of populism that can be called intellectual populism. Intellectual populism stems from Weyland's (2001) thinking, where populism is a political strategy but specifically sees the use of intellectual discourse as a way to capture the voice of the public. Therefore, despite its intellectual content, this figure is a personalistic leader who seeks or exercises power. This is unique compared to populism developing in Indonesia because it is not limited to the lower class but also the middle class, especially student groups. Anies is no longer simply a technocrat or a religious populist, but rather an actor capable of articulating "change" as a flexible empty signifier, so that it can be filled by various groups with different aspirations. The narrative of change can be filled with various issues, allowing Anies to reach a wider group base.

Evidence supporting Anies Baswedan's image as an intellectual populist is his call for "change" and listening to the voices of the people who attended his campaign as "voices of change" which shows his pro-people attitude. *"Pendidikan adalah hak bagi setiap anak bangsa, dan hak belajar harusnya mudah didapat oleh penerimanya. AMIN berkomitmen meningkatkan jumlah bangku sekolah dan akses pendidikan bermutu secara merata di seluruh Indonesia. Ingat, tanggal 14 Februari 2024 pilih Anies Baswedan - Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar, untuk kesempatan pendidikan yang adil di seluruh Indonesia. #AMINajaDulu?"* (@aniesbaswedan, 2023B). This tweet is an

example of how Anies' intellectual narrative works. Another example is “*Desak Anies di Pontianak terasa megah, karena ini merupakan Desak Anies yang dihadiri peserta paling banyak. Kami banyak membahas mengenai infrastruktur teknologi informasi dengan memperhatikan manajemen spektrum frekuensi, yang ingin kami ubah di Kalimantan. Harapannya ke depan anak-anak muda dan mahasiswa bisa mendapatkan akses internet yang lebih merata dan mereka bisa lebih produktif. Teman-teman masih ada yang kesulitan jaringan internet? #AMINAJaDulu #DesakAnies #Pontianak*” (@aniesbaswedan, 2023C).

Looking ahead to the 2024 presidential campaign of Anies-Imin, Anies's position as a presidential candidate is being shaped as an alternative. He positioned himself as an alternative to the continuation of Joko Widodo's administration, represented by the Prabowo-Gibran ticket. Furthermore, the narratives of "change" and "A Just and Prosperous Indonesia for All" have become inclusive terms that can captivate and inspire hope among his supporters. This is because in 2024, Anies is again using inclusive language that can work to address broader issues, as the term has always been an empty signifier.

Anies has successfully articulated the term "change" as a flexible, empty signifier. The word lacks a single definition but is able to encompass a variety of issues raised in the campaign, from education costs and employment policies to mortgage issues, ecology, and even freedom of speech. Because of its inclusive nature, "change" can resonate with the hopes of diverse groups, from students and the urban middle class to labor communities and religious groups. The chain of equivalence formed by groups with disparate social backgrounds demonstrates that all the problems they face stem from a corrupt and unjust status quo that requires new leadership.

This strategy is even more effective when implemented in the digital space X (Twitter), which is characterized by short but concise discourse interactions. Anies employs an intellectually driven communication style—through neat prose, data usage, and academic-sounding rhetoric—to reinforce his image as an

intellectual leader. With the support of digital volunteers, this discourse was then popularized through various hashtags such as #expeditionAMIN, #DesakAnies, #Gerakanperubahan, or #AminAjaDulu, which serve as both symbolic binders and a medium for discourse articulation. Through virality, retweets, and mentions, Anies successfully established discursive hegemony in the digital space.

People's digital activities—from scrolling through timelines, to hitting the like button, to weaving long threads—have transformed X into a completely new communication landscape: open, agile, and always pulsing with the currents of contemporary discourse. There, a short tweet can become a spark that ignites a national, even global, public discussion; conversely, a comprehensive series of threads can operate like mini-essays, distributing counter-hegemonic arguments to thousands of users in a matter of minutes (Benedict & Dharmesa, 2023: 104). In other words, X is not just a showcase for opinions, but an arena where the meaning of "activism" is redefined: speaking out no longer has to be through a megaphone on the street, but can be realized through digital gestures—retweets, replies, mentions—that collectively challenge mainstream narratives. To limit the research, the limitation uses hashtags as a means of reading meaning and dissemination.

Anies have a long-standing logic of articulation that has shaped the nodal issues he presents, such as economic problems, the decline of democracy and civil liberties, and environmental and spatial planning issues—which have flooded public discourse from the accumulation of complaints and aspirations within the community during Joko Widodo's two terms (2014-2019 and 2019-2024). Anies have addressed these issues through his personal account (aniesbaswedan) and public forums that tailor particular societal demands. This can be seen in table 1.

Table 1 Particular Demands of Society

No	Issue Area	Issue Form	Particular demands

1	Economy	The issue of rising prices of basic necessities, the issue of national debt, the issue of economic inequality, the issue of non-inclusive national strategic projects, the Omnibus Law	"People's economy", "social justice", "equitable development"
2	Democracy and civil liberties	Silencing through the ITE Law, the issue of revising the KPK Law, the issue of revising the Criminal Code Law, the discourse of three terms, the issue of political dynasties, the issue of oligarchy	"Restore people's democracy", "reject oligarchy", "political dynasty"
3	Environment and spatial planning	IKN issue, Jakarta water crisis issue, flood issue, resident eviction issue, ecological crisis issue	"Sustainable development", "science-based and spatial planning", "reject mining", "environmental justice"
4	Moral and religious issues	Post-212 religious conflict, 2019 presidential election, moral unrest over Indonesian politics	"Ethical leaders", "Islam is a religion of peace", "tolerance and diversity"

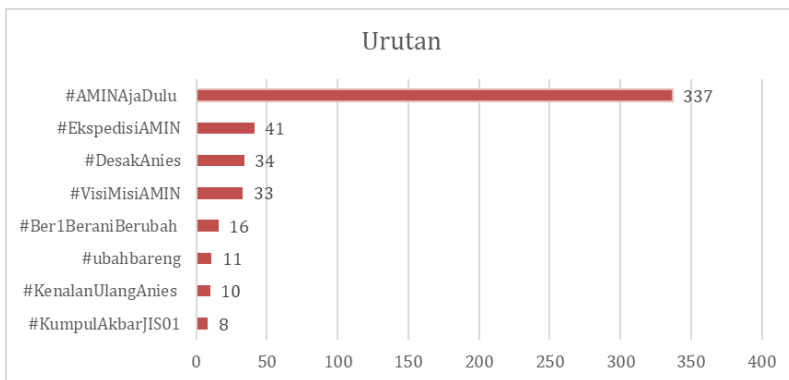
Source: Personal processing

Because they arise from public discourse, these particular demands remain fragmented and have not yet been integrated

into a single, interconnected nodal point. This is because each group discusses its own issues without forming a unified movement or discourse space. This can be seen in student groups discussing politics, activists discussing the environment, religious leaders discussing morality, and even the public, such as the urban poor, discussing the cost of living. Anies views this fragmentation as potentially significant because he is already present in these discursive spaces, capitalizing on the various narratives he uses to integrate these nodal points.

Since 2022, the official @aniesbaswedan account and its volunteer team have used social media—in this case, X—not merely as a means of agitation and propaganda, but as a moral and intellectual deliberative arena. This deliberative arena is characterized by the two-way communication it creates between the digital community and Anies himself. Anies created this deliberative discourse space, filled with numerous tweets and posts containing quotations of philosophical values and ideas that then absorbed disparate issues under a single moral umbrella. This space was an initial articulation of how various particular demands began to interconnect within a single context of meaning: "Perubahan."

Char 1 8 Big Hashtags Used by Anies



Source: Personal processing

Here, the hashtags appearing on Anies' account show which hashtags he consistently uses, and which hashtags have the potential to influence reuse by both Anies and his supporters.

Chart 1 shows that #AMINajaDulu is the primary hashtag on Anies Baswedan's X Account, followed by #EkspedisiAMIN and #VisiMisiAMIN. Here, #AMINajaDulu is used by Anies with 337 hashtags, #EkspedisiAMIN is used by Anies with 41 hashtags, #DesakAnies is used by Anies with 34 hashtags, #VisiMisiAMIN is used by Anies with 33 hashtags, #Ber1BeraniBerubah is used by Anies with 16 hashtags, #ubahbareng is used by Anies with 11 hashtags, #KenalanUlangAnies is used by Anies with 10 hashtags, and #KumpulAkbarJIS01 with 8 hashtags.

The choice of hashtags has its own rationale. Three major hashtags, #AMINajaDulu, #EkspedisiAMIN, and #DesakAnies, are part of the values of Anies Baswedan and his campaign team. #VisiMisiAMIN itself was included because of its significant role in conveying AMIN's vision and mission in infographic form. #Ber1BeraniBerubah and #ubahbareng emphasize that AMIN does not support the status quo but supports change. #Kenalan-UlangAnies was included because it has the power to strengthen Anies Baswedan's image as a figure. And #KumpulAkbarJIS01 was included because it evokes euphoria about AMIN's power as a distinct political force that brings about change.

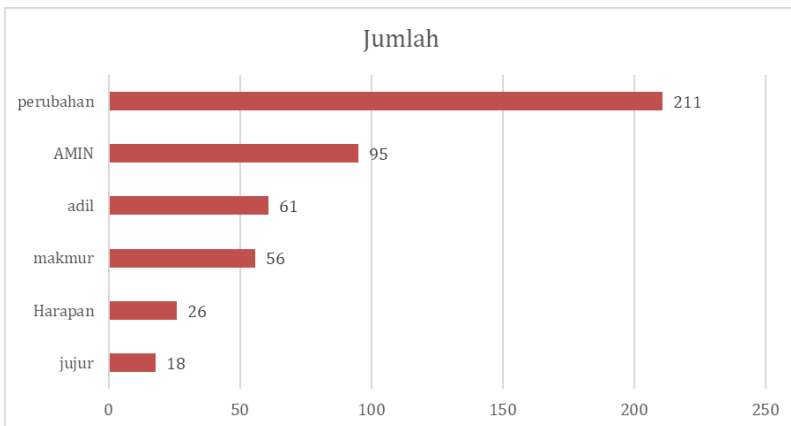
By viewing the hashtag #AMINajaDulu as the top hashtag, this can help the author see the distribution and writing that Anies has used to identify the 12 keywords that are consistently present in Anies Baswedan's tweets. On the other hand, hashtags can also help identify posts, retweets, likes, and comments from Anies supporters in the distribution and consumption of Anies Baswedan's discourse.

The use of #AMINajaDulu can also be seen from the meaning of the word itself. First, #AMINajaDulu is a slogan used by the campaign team of candidate pair 01 Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar in the 2024 Election. Second, "AMIN" is a combination of the names of the two candidate pairs: Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, making the word AMIN a group identity. Third, #AMINajaDulu is an invitation to the public to vote for them in the 2024 Election. This invitation can reach both Islamic groups (because the word "amin" is synonymous with prayer or agreement for religious groups) and

moderate groups who can still accept it as a soft religion. Fourth, the word "aja dulu" in #AMINAjaDulu presents a low-commitment cue, a low-psychological cost invitation that can lower the threshold of initial skepticism and facilitate early conversion. Thus, #AMINAjaDulu combines the keyword (AMIN) with a gentle invitation (aja dulu), creating a concise, parodical phrase that is open to voters' interpretation.

In X Anies' account, the author found several dominant words within X Anies. These words convey a meaning within Anies' narrative that can attract public sympathy. The author observed "Change," "AMIN," "Fair," "Hope," and "Honest" as dominant words. These five words were chosen due to their inclusiveness in each of Anies' tweets and how they represent the face of Anies' populism. The number of times each word was used in each tweet is also included. The number of words is shown in Figure 2.

Char 2 Number of keywords frequently used by Anies  
Baswedan



Source: Personal processing

Character 2 shows how Anies' account consistently emphasizes his tweets. "Change" is a word Anies constantly repeats and promises, making it part of the AMIN campaign. AMIN is a group identifier that identifies Anies as a member of AMIN. Justice, prosperity, hope, and honesty are part of the struggle and promises Anies and AMIN make to the wider community. The

regularity of these words has its own meaning: There is a meaning discernible in the presence of these words. The words are derived from two official slogans of the Anies-Imin campaign team: "Just, Prosperous Indonesia for All" and "Just AMIN First."

This routine can be seen in the following tweet examples: *"Kami bersyukur sekali bisa silaturahmi kembali ke ponpes Miftahul Huda. Ini adalah ponpes perjuangan, ponpes yang selalu peduli dengan persoalan kebangsaan. Kita berharap Insya Allah perubahan yang diikhtiarkan bisa mendapatkan doanya, mendapatkan dukungannya agar kita sama-sama merasakan Indonesia lebih adil, makmur bagi semua. Kami sampaikan pesan utama soal kesetaraan dan ini salah satu perjuangan kita. Kesetaraan di bidang pendidikan agar tidak ada lagi pembeda antara negeri dan swasta, pembeda antara sekolah umum dan diniyah, pendidikan pesantren khususnya pesantren salafiyah supaya dapat kesetaraan, baik dukungan maupun kesempatan, agar proses pendidikannya bisa optimal"* (@aniesbaswedan, 2024A) This tweet was written by Anies Baswedan on January 5, 2024, at 8:27 PM. It demonstrates the consistent use of the words "Adil" and "Perubahan" in Anies' tweet narrative. These words demonstrate a repetitive language play aimed at building public awareness and support for him.

The word "Perubahan" became a repetitive and symbolic phrase in Anies Baswedan's campaign narrative. "Change" was a key word, slogan, and vision of AMIN itself. Anies also presented a narrative of correction and renewal from previous programs. In Laclau's analysis of populism, "change" became an empty signifier because it was neutral and therefore served as a point of identification for different groups. This word "change" reinforced the public's belief that by electing Anies and Imin as figures of change, Indonesian society would achieve justice and prosperity. By articulating "change" as an empty signifier, Anies allowed the public to fill it with different meanings: economic change, educational change, civil liberties change, or even power relations change.

The use of the word "*Perubahan*" became an inclusive political brand. A society fed up with socio-economic problems found itself offered a renewed narrative that sought to continue the previous government's programmatic approach. He offered a significant shift in policy direction, governance change, and social coalition change. This context of change was also legitimized through the programmatic initiatives Anies implemented during his leadership as Governor of Jakarta from 2017 to 2023. Anies' legacy imbued confidence in his early supporters and the undecided voters who had yet to identify with the three presidential candidates.

Figure 1 Illustration of AMIN's Vision and Mission



Source: Taken from

<https://x.com/aniesbaswedan/status/1738113316705407204>

The word “*Perubahan*” is closely tied to AMIN's vision and mission. Based on Figure 1, AMIN's eight missions show several things: that Anies' narrative attempted to examine the context of digital media users in general (@aniesbaswedan, 2023A). In this case, the illustration could appeal to social media users, who are predominantly millennials and Generation Z. Platform X, as identified by Fuchs (2013: 190), stratified users between the ages of 18 and 34, those in higher education, and those without children. Therefore, the use of virtual reality and intellectual narratives becomes crucial in the X space.

Because change is an empty signifier, this change emerged as a nodal point that encapsulates various issues that Indonesian society needs. Anies created 28 welfare nodes and 8 wings of

progress. The 8 wings of progress address spatial development in areas such as Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, and others, while the 28 welfare nodes represent community groups. This representation can be seen in Chart 3.

Chart 3 Nodal point of Perubahan



Source: Personal processing

Chart 3 above explains how AMIN's vision and mission encompass various groups. AMIN's vision and mission foster sympathy for subaltern groups rarely represented in Indonesian politics, such as people with disabilities, the elderly, the press, lecturers, and the diaspora. For them, Anies Baswedan's vision and mission bring about change to address the problems they face, bringing these seemingly unrelated groups under Anies Baswedan's umbrella of change.

Strategically, Anies Baswedan chose issues with strong cross-segment social cohesion: social justice, anti-corruption, the people's economy, and moral values. These issues were then consistently integrated—particularly in economics and democracy—through the lens of justice, change, and improved governance (Suryantari, Noak, & Pramana, 2025: 29). In addi-

on, the posts on the Twitter account @aniesbaswedan are interesting because the tweets include Anies Baswedan's activities, Anies Baswedan's track record, comments about certain moments, retweets and verification if they receive hoaxes on social media about Anies Baswedan (Wahyudi & Fadel, 2023: 114).

Thus, Anies successfully articulated the term "*Perubahan*" as a flexible, empty signifier. The word lacks a single definition but encompasses a wide range of issues raised in the campaign, from education costs and employment policies to mortgage issues, ecology, and even freedom of speech. Because of its inclusive nature, "change" can resonate with the hopes of diverse groups, from students and the urban middle class to labor communities and religious groups.

### **Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Anies' Discourse**

Discursive practices are forms of production, distribution, and consumption of texts. At this level, Anies Baswedan's intellectual populism operates through three main stages: production, distribution, and consumption. format demonstrates a systematic effort to frame political messages in a form easily consumed by the digital public. Distribution examines how the distribution process is strengthened by the X algorithm, digital volunteer networks, buzzers, and the use of hashtags such as #EkspedisiAMIN, #Ber1BeraniBerubah, and #AminAjaDulu. These hashtags function as branding instruments and floating signifiers that bind various online conversations into a single mainstream. And consumption examines how Anies' discourse is consumed through organic interactions and echo chambers. Retweets, likes, and quote-tweets demonstrate how intellectual discourse is accepted as "truth" by some users.

"Perubahan" has become an empty signifier, offering an alternative to the elite status quo. For spatial planning activists, Anies is a figure focused on ensuring healthy spatial planning. For disabled activists, Anies' videos using sign language and his programs involving people with disabilities give them hope that they are recognized and represented by him. For the middle class,

Anies is an inclusive, intellectual alternative with whom they can interact directly.

Figure 2 Anies' post in response to @her\_fnu



Source: Taken from

<https://x.com/aniesbaswedan/status/1750699172456755536>

Figure 2 shows Anies' interaction with his supporters. This post is highlighted because it received the highest number of comments in January (@aniesbaswedan, 2024B). Taman Maju Bersama (TMB) is a collaborative program between the Jakarta

government and the local community, encompassing planning, development, and utilization as functional and ecological public infrastructure (Kumparan News, 2022). In terms of content, this tweet is Anies' validation of @her\_fnu's post discussing the TMB program and how it is implemented collaboratively in an empathetic and populist language. However, on the other hand, he also shows his intellectual narrative, that he has created a participatory development program with the residents, that he shows humility in wanting to acknowledge these programs but cannot discuss them all due to X's limitations.

Anies then continued his tweet in the same post by writing “*Mau taman-taman kayak gini di daerahmu? Ketik: (Nama Daerah) MAU 1 di reply*” (@aniesbaswedan, 2024C). This tweet is also notable, having garnered 5.6 thousand comments. This tweet offers a similar program on a national scale: are there people outside of DKI Jakarta who want a program like TMB established in their respective regions? Linguistically, this tweet is a form of intellectual populism that opens a dialogue with X users to engage in digital interaction. The narrative of this tweet creates a view of Anies as an inclusive intellectual figure to his supporters. His supporters respond to Anies' response with rational and emotional participation.

There are two comments on this post that are interesting to highlight. A tweet from @plot said: “*Menteng MAU 1, tapi dengan tambahan fitur ya: Slide dari puncak Monas langsung ke taman! Biar bisa turun gaya ala superhero setiap pagi*” (@plot, 2024). This tweet reached 1.3 thousand likes and was replied to directly by Anies “*Yang ben0065r aja....*” (@aniesbaswedan, 2024D). @plot's tweet, both a form of concern and support, received a humorous response, particularly in the replies to Anies' comments. The majority of the tweets were positive, positioning @plot as a supporter of Anies, who wants his programs to be present in Menteng. A similar tweet occurred with @skinbrotha, who wrote, “*2024 masih percaya sama beginian? KABUPATEN BOGOR MAU 1 PAKKK*” (@skinbrotha, 2024). This tweet also received a high number of likes, with 1.2 thousand likes and the most comments, apart from those from other users. Comments

from other users were positive and expressed support from each region in Bogor Regency, which wants a park like TMB.

Figure 3 Anies interaction with his supporters



Source: Taken from

<https://x.com/aniesbaswedan/status/1750784300902223905>

Figure 3 was taken when Anies created a retweet from the @puspa\_fintya account along with the Net Zero School video which contained: “Yang ini? Kita sempat bikin empat di Jakarta sebagai percontohan awal. Kalau ke depan mau diperbanyak se-Indonesia, yuk #AMINAJaDulu” (@aniesbaswedan, 2024E). Besides the hashtag, this tweet was chosen because of its 9.5,000 likes. This tweet is interesting because Anies didn't create a new tweet, but rather interacted with those who commented on his old tweet.

Here, Anies also actively answers questions regarding Anies's urging programs. Anies informally interacts and helps followers/supporters who support Anies. In terms of interaction, Anies's personality makes him a representative of "The People." He is a figure who easily establishes communication and a figure who does not hesitate to help his supporters. This Anies personality is what gives him positive responses and feedback. This can be seen in the figure of @itsayeeshaa who provided an illustration of Anies and Cak Imin as a form of appreciation for Anies's character. We can see @itsayeeshaa received 3 thousand likes and 64 comments (@itsayeeshaa, 2024). In the comments also contained a positive response and appreciation for @itsayeeshaa's support.

### **Hegemony, Antagonism, and Echo Chamber**

Social practices are crucial for understanding sociocultural practices in immediate situations, institutions or organizations at large, and at the societal level. At the level of social practice, Anies' intellectual populism reflects the hegemonic process of political discourse in the digital space. By embracing change as an empty signifier, Anies successfully forged a new historical bloc that transcends conventional ideological boundaries. Students, activists, urban workers, and even segments of the middle class can feel represented in this narrative.

However, this hegemony also breeds antagonism. According to Laclau, antagonism is the logic of opposition that divides society into two camps: the people versus the elites. In Anies' case, the "intellectual" camp is positioned against the "status quo" represented by Prabowo, Ganjar, and Jokowi. This polarization not only creates healthy political competition but also reinforces stigmatization and exclusion of dissenting parties.

Since the beginning of the campaign, Anies has opposed the status quo with promises of change, the decline of democracy, the eradication of corruption, the lack of employment opportunities and criticism of the distribution of social assistance (Suryantari, Noak, & Pramana, 2025: 27-28). This can be seen in Anies' discourse such as: "*Kita harus mengembalikan Indonesia kepada rakyatnya, memberantas korupsi, dan menciptakan keadilan*

*sosial bagi semua*" (Kompas, 2024). Thus, Anies implicitly and explicitly positions himself as an opponent of the status quo, exploiting public disappointment with the government to attract support from people who feel unrepresented by the government (Firdausi & Djuyandi, 2024: 43). This is important because making the structural context the enemy expands the scope of "them" and encompasses various groups of "us".

Anies then actively utilized Twitter as a public and symbolic arena to build his image and position himself as a figure who listens to the people. This is because Twitter allows for rapid dissemination, amplification through retweets/mentions, and digital mobilization. The echo chamber phenomenon further emphasizes this. Algorithm X reinforces confirmation bias by only displaying content that aligns with user preferences. As a result, Anies' intellectual discourse not only spreads but also creates a closed space that crystallizes loyalties while widening the gap of antagonism—making the discourse hegemonic, with each discourse produced and amplified digitally.

This creates a sharp digital polarization, where Anies' supporters appear as "Intelektual" while his opponents are labeled "bodoh". The word "bodoh" itself does not just come out of nowhere; it is a word that comes from intellectual populism that provides society with data and a discourse of reform. By using the hashtag #AminAjaDulu, we can see how this keyword "bodoh" is a labeling keyword for Anies' political opponents. "bodoh" here is a criticism of Prabowo Subianto, Gibran Rakabuming Raka and Prabowo-Gibran supporters. They are the objects of antagonism from Anies' supporters who consider them enemies of society.

Figure 4 Dynamics of antagonism between supporters of 01 towards supporters of 02



Source: Taken from using X search engine

In Figure 4 of the hashtag #AminAjaDulu, the use of the word "Bodoh" positions the subaltern against those who support Prabowo. For them, the relationship between supporters and voters is not seen as a problem of democracy as a procedural space, but as a moral weakness for change. Thus, the dichotomy between "smart" and "stupid" is not a natural human category, but an antagonistic construct. Figure 4 explicitly demonstrates

the antagonism between Anies supporters and those who support Prabowo.

Figure 5 Quote from Labor Party tweet



Source: Taken from

<https://x.com/EXCOPARTAIBURUH/status/1762316884685565997/quotes>

Figure 5 is a quote from a tweet posted by the @EXCOPARTAIBURUH account discussing agrarian issues. The tweet from the Labor Party account said: “*Mengapa solusinya bukan food estate atau contract farming, tetapi reforma agraria dan kedaulatan pangan? Karena kita berangkat dari realitas di lapangan. Bukan sekedar konsep di awang-awang*” (@EXCOPARTAIBURUH, 2024) considered to be criticizing

AMIN's contract farming program. 7 quotes from @EXCOPARTAIBURUH's tweets contain attacks and criticism. The account @ruthnats wrote "*Aduh, Mimin, ampun.. Narasimu kenapa jadi terkesan seolah-olah contract farming tidak ada materi kajian dari realita lapangan sama sekali? Yang dilakukan di DKI itu terbukti mutual, baik utk petani maupun konsumen. Kayaknya saya lbh baik stop expecting too much from you*" (@ruthnats, 2024). @ruthnats is interesting because it received 177 likes, 40 retweets, and 10 comments. The 10 comments were in support of @ruthnats and criticism of the @EXCOPARTAIBURUH account.

According to Mathew Stein (2016:10), social media also operates as a panopticon, where each member of society has chosen to be both a prisoner of the panopticon and a member of the watchtower. The society is a prisoner because its information is permanently visible and it is unknown whether its pages are being accessed or not. The society is a member of the watchtower because it can monitor any page that can be accessed at any time without the knowledge of the page owner (Stein, 2016:10). Likes, retweets, and comments have become a form of social discipline, both positive and negative. As a result, those who don't support or even criticize Anies face various forms of ridicule and criticism.

The presence of Anies Baswedan and AMIN supporters demonstrates that what is happening in X is an antagonism. The populism formed by Anies Baswedan has divided the demarcation between us (AMIN, perubahan, intelektual) and them (Prabowo, status quo, bodoh). He cannot enter an agonistic discourse due to the state's power relations that support the 02 ticket and block healthy inclusive spaces. The government does not want the status quo of the power system to be disrupted. Consequently, AMIN supporters become antagonistic. They see the those who support Prabowo-Gibran because they are "stupid," those support Prabowo-Gibran because they are Jokowi, and those support Prabowo-Gibran because they are "gemoy." In this case, the antagonism of 01 arises from the limitations of the social order established by the government.

Thus, Anies Baswedan constructs a populist relationship that forms a collective subject in opposition to power perceived as

oppressive. He forms a chain of equivalencies where different social groups unite to support Anies because he promises to resist the corrupt and unjust status quo. Anies created an empty signifier called "change," a meaning that isn't fixed but filled with diverse aspirations. And Anies created an antagonism: us (AMIN, perubahan, intelektual) versus them (Prabowo, status quo, bodoh).

## Conclusion

This research finds that Anies Baswedan's digital campaign for the 2024 Presidential Election presents a new form of populism called intellectual populism, a political strategy that combines an academic persona, data-driven rhetoric, and intellectual narratives aimed at mass mobilization. Using the term "perubahan" as an empty signifier and hashtags like "#AMINajaDulu," Anies successfully created an intellectual discourse that encapsulated diverse social demands from students, the urban middle class, activists, and even marginalized communities into a single social group within a chain of equivalence. This strategy effectively established moral legitimacy and community struggles in the digital space, transforming intellectual discourse into a powerful political tool for recruiting and mobilizing support.

However, this use of intellectual discourse also has problematic implications for the quality of public discourse. Instead of intellectual discourse expanding the space for rational deliberation, this digital campaign produces a pattern of antagonism that divides society into the intelligent and the ignorant. Intellectual discourse reinforces the echo chamber practices that emerge from digital algorithms. Thus, what appears in the digital space as a knowledge-based argument becomes a single truth claim that stifles the possibility of critical dialogue, thereby transforming the digital public sphere into a terrain of discursive hegemony rather than an arena for egalitarian deliberation.

Theoretically, this finding confirms Ernesto Laclau's framework on the articulation and formation of populist identity: populism is not a fixed ideology but a political logic capable of

articulating diverse demands under a single, empty signifier. Anies' campaign practices demonstrate how intellectual knowledge and symbols can be mobilized not merely for public education, but also to form chains of equivalence and produce political solidarity. Therefore, intellectual populism challenges the simplification that populism is always anti-intellectual; it can instead utilize intellectuality as hegemonic capital.

The practical implications of this research demand attention to how the digital public sphere is regulated and how political actors use symbols and data to shape opinion. To maintain the quality of deliberative and agonistic democracy, efforts are needed to strengthen the basis of public awareness and encourage agonistic discourse practices that recognize the legitimacy of opponents, as well as to develop and create platforms that can reduce algorithmic polarization. Only then can knowledge return to functioning as a means of discursive emancipation.

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