



# "Netnographic Analysis of Twitter User Behavior on the Relocation of Indonesia's Capital to Nusantara"

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates public sentiment toward Indonesia's capital relocation to Nusantara by analyzing Twitter discourse. It aims to uncover the distribution of sentiment (pro, neutral, contra) and the underlying behavioral motives driving online expressions regarding the policy. A qualitative netnographic approach was employed to analyze 3,135 publicly available tweets related to the capital relocation, collected over several months using predefined keywords and hashtags (e.g., #Nusantara, #IKN, #CapitalRelocation). After filtering out irrelevant content (spam, bots, off-topic posts), 936 tweets were retained for sentiment and thematic analysis. Tweets were categorized into pro, neutral, and contra sentiments, and thematic coding was conducted to identify recurring narratives and motivations behind user expressions. The results revealed that negative sentiments (48.7%) dominated the discourse, primarily driven by concerns over environmental degradation and governance issues such as corruption. Positive tweets (35.9%) highlighted opportunities related to regional development and economic growth. Neutral tweets (15.4%) primarily conveyed factual updates. The discourse showed a clear divide, with opposition driven by risk perceptions and trust issues, while support focused on modernization and regional equity. This study contributes to the understanding of how digital activism shapes public sentiment in policy debates, providing insights for future capital projects and policy communication strategies. It also bridges a gap in the literature on sentiment analysis in Southeast Asia, offering a comprehensive analysis of social media discourse in the context of national development projects.

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## INTRODUCTION

Jakarta's urban condition has long been characterized by overlapping ecological and socio-economic stresses. Rapid population growth and metropolitan sprawl have outpaced infrastructure provision, producing chronic traffic congestion, high commute times, and productivity losses. Recurrent flooding—intensified by extreme rainfall, land subsidence, and inadequate drainage—undermines housing security and business continuity. Groundwater over-extraction and deteriorating water quality have contributed to environmental degradation, while coastal erosion and sea-level rise threaten low-lying communities. At the same time,

informal settlements proliferate in hazard-prone areas, reflecting persistent gaps in affordable housing and spatial planning enforcement. These dynamics intersect with air pollution, waste management constraints, and uneven access to public services, reinforcing socio-spatial inequality across the metropolitan region. In short, Jakarta's challenges are not merely technical glitches but entrenched systemic issues in urban governance, planning capacity, and resource allocation.

Beyond physical risk and congestion, the relocation agenda is shaped by political–economy considerations. First, state-building and nationhood narratives frame the move as a symbolic rebalancing of development away from Java toward the archipelago's eastern regions. Second, megaproject politics—public–private partnerships (PPPs), long-horizon infrastructure finance, and land value capture—create incentives for coalitions of central and local elites, construction firms, and investors who stand to benefit from new growth poles. Third, relocation promises administrative rationalization: the chance to design a government campus from scratch, adopt digital-first services, and reduce bureaucratic fragmentation that has accrued in Jakarta over decades. Fourth, distributive politics matters: high-visibility capital spending can signal commitment to regional equity and coalition-maintenance, while also reshaping intergovernmental fiscal flows. Finally, narrative entrepreneurship—especially around the “sinking city” and climate adaptation—creates policy windows in which ambitious agendas become politically feasible. Taken together, these forces help explain why relocation has remained on the agenda despite fiscal, environmental, and social risks.

International experience shows that capital relocation is neither a panacea nor a guaranteed path to balanced development. Brazil's move from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília (inaugurated 1960) pursued interior integration and modernist planning ideals. It succeeded in establishing a functioning administrative capital with iconic urban form, but critics note that Brasília did not by itself reverse regional inequality; rather, Brazil's broader political economy and subsequent investments determined distributional outcomes. Nigeria's shift from Lagos to Abuja (announced in the late 1970s, major transfers in the late 1980s–1990s) sought security, centrality, and decongestion. Abuja achieved a planned government center with improved security control; nonetheless, Lagos continued to grow as Nigeria's commercial hub, and service gaps emerged on Abuja's periphery as informal settlements expanded beyond master-planned districts. Across both cases, three lessons recur: (1) relocating administration rarely displaces the original city's economic primacy; (2) affordability and peri-urban governance determine social outcomes; and (3) long-run success hinges on diversified investment, institutional capacity, and maintenance financing—not only on initial construction.

Applying these lessons to Nusantara sharpens key trade-offs. If Jakarta remains the country's dominant commercial node, policymakers must anticipate a dual-core urban system and plan inter-city connectivity accordingly. Social safeguards—fair land acquisition, protection of indigenous and local community rights, and resettlement support—are essential to avoid exclusionary growth. Ecological claims (“forest city”, low-carbon design) require credible baselines, phased targets, and transparent monitoring to prevent greenwashing. On the fiscal side, staged development with clear prioritization and realistic demand projections can reduce stranded-asset risk. Institutional capacity-building—procurement integrity, contract management, and intergovernmental coordination—will determine whether Nusantara becomes a well-governed administrative city or an expensive real-estate play.

Given Jakarta's multidimensional risks, the relocation proposal is not only a technical urban-planning response but also a political–economic project with redistributive consequences. Public perception on social media will therefore reflect both material concerns (environment, jobs, housing) and beliefs about state capacity, fairness, and accountability. Twitter's fast-moving discourse provides a rich window into how citizens evaluate these trade-offs in real time, how narratives diffuse, and which actors shape debate.



This paper leverages netnographic methods to connect sentiment patterns with underlying motives. By situating Indonesia's case alongside Brasília and Abuja, the Introduction clarifies what success and failure could look like for Nusantara. It also foregrounds the role of political–economy drivers—coalition incentives, fiscal constraints, and narrative framing—in shaping what citizens expect from relocation and why skepticism may persist even in the presence of promised benefits. This expanded context sets the stage for the subsequent literature review, methods, and results sections.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Public Sentiment Measurement Techniques

Public sentiment has been approached through a variety of methodologies. Early lexical approaches relied on sentiment dictionaries, tagging words as positive or negative, but these often failed to capture sarcasm, irony, or culturally specific expressions. Machine learning models improved classification by training on labeled datasets, but they introduced challenges of bias, overfitting, and transparency. More recent approaches combine supervised learning with contextual embeddings (e.g., BERT, GPT-based models), allowing nuanced understanding of colloquial and multilingual data. However, these still struggle with evolving slang and low-resource languages like Indonesian regional dialects. Scholars such as Sutoyo & Almaarif (2020) have pointed out the need for hybrid models that integrate machine and human interpretation. Critiques emphasize that without careful validation, automated techniques may misrepresent actual public concerns.

### Capital Relocation in Global Context

Comparative studies of capital relocation offer mixed lessons. Brasília was conceived as a modernist utopia, with Corbusian ideals of order and efficiency. While it became a functioning administrative center, scholars argue it failed to address Brazil's structural inequality and reinforced spatial segregation. Abuja in Nigeria was justified on security and centrality grounds; it did reduce congestion in Lagos but created affordability crises in peri-urban settlements. More recent cases, like Myanmar's Naypyidaw, show how relocation can serve regime-security goals rather than public welfare, with limited legitimacy among citizens. Studies highlight recurring pitfalls: underestimating long-term maintenance costs, neglecting inclusive planning, and assuming economic spillovers that fail to materialize. By situating Nusantara within this global literature, it becomes clear that Indonesia's success hinges on governance, equity safeguards, and realistic growth expectations rather than on physical relocation alone.

### Role of Digital Activism

Digital activism has transformed how citizens engage with state policies. Bilderback (2024) notes that social media allows bottom-up contestation of elite-driven agendas, while Carneiro et al. (2022) argue that platforms like Twitter foster deliberation but also polarization. Research on Indonesia shows that digital networks amplify local grievances, whether over land rights, environmental degradation, or corruption. Influencers and online communities can mobilize support or resistance, shaping mainstream narratives. However, Dewi (2025) critiques sentiment analysis for ethical blind spots, noting risks of surveillance and manipulation. In the relocation debate, digital activism not only reflects sentiment but also produces it: sarcastic

memes, viral hashtags, and coordinated campaigns shape public opinion in ways that official press releases cannot counterbalance.

### Thematic Critiques of Existing Literature

Scholars such as Setiadi & Pamuji (2024) document public skepticism toward Nusantara but often focus narrowly on sentiment polarity, neglecting behavioral motives. Wulandari & Koestoer (2023) highlight social media's power in shaping opinion but underplay the role of offline political economy. Meanwhile, Almanaa (2024) captures online negativity but offers limited solutions for governance. This fragmented literature underscores the need for integrative approaches that combine technical sentiment detection with qualitative netnography to capture meaning, motive, and context.

### Research Gap and Positioning

Overall, existing studies provide valuable descriptive accounts but rarely interrogate why specific sentiments emerge, how they are embedded in historical distrust, or how they interact with global patterns of digital activism. This research fills the gap by synthesizing measurement techniques, global relocation lessons, and digital activism frameworks to interpret Indonesian Twitter discourse holistically.

## METHOD

### Netnographic Approach

This research adopts a qualitative netnographic approach, a methodological adaptation of ethnography for online communities. As Kozinets and subsequent scholars argue, netnography enables the systematic observation of digital interactions, where discourse and behavior unfold in virtual spaces. In this case, Twitter functions as a public arena where citizens comment, debate, and contest policy initiatives. Unlike survey methods, netnography captures naturally occurring expressions, preserving the authenticity of voices and avoiding researcher-led framing effects. By analyzing posts in situ, the study highlights how sentiments are socially constructed, negotiated, and amplified. The phenomenological orientation of the study ensures that user tweets are treated as lived experiences rather than abstract data points.

### Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through Twitter's API, using both keyword-based queries (#Nusantara, #IKN, #CapitalRelocation) and Boolean searches to ensure breadth. The initial dataset comprised 3,135 tweets spanning several months around key policy announcements. To increase relevance, non-user-generated content such as spam, retweets without commentary, and bot-like activity were excluded, reducing the corpus to 936 substantive tweets. This filtration process followed transparent inclusion criteria: relevance to the relocation issue, clarity of sentiment, and linguistic comprehensibility. Both Indonesian and English tweets were retained, reflecting Indonesia's multilingual online environment.

### Coding and Thematic Analysis

The filtered dataset underwent a two-stage coding process. First, sentiment polarity coding classified tweets into pro, neutral, or contra, guided by established sentiment dictionaries adapted to Indonesian context. Second, thematic coding identified recurrent narratives such as environmental sustainability, corruption, land rights, and economic opportunity. Coding was iterative, with codes refined through multiple readings to capture emergent themes. Cross-coding among researchers ensured consistency and minimized individual bias. The use of NVivo software allowed systematic categorization, memo-writing, and visualization of



thematic clusters. Social network analysis (SNA) complemented coding by mapping influential users and interaction patterns.

### Reliability and Validity

Ensuring reliability and validity is critical in qualitative research. This study applied several strategies:

- **Credibility:** Triangulation of data sources (tweets, secondary literature, policy documents) and prolonged engagement with the dataset increased interpretive accuracy.
- **Dependability:** A detailed audit trail of coding decisions and software outputs allows replication and verification by other scholars.
- **Transferability:** By situating the findings within global relocation and digital activism literature, the study provides contextual grounding, enabling transfer of insights to comparable cases.
- **Confirmability:** Reflexivity was practiced throughout, with researchers documenting their positionality and potential biases to ensure interpretations remained grounded in data rather than assumptions.

### Ethical Considerations

Although Twitter is a public platform, ethical netnography requires careful consideration of user privacy. Usernames were anonymized, and only paraphrased excerpts are presented in analysis to prevent direct traceability. This aligns with digital ethics scholarship stressing respect for user-generated content and minimizing harm.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Overview of Sentiment Distribution

Analysis of the 936 tweets revealed that 336 (35.9%) expressed positive sentiments, 144 (15.4%) were neutral, and 456 (48.7%) conveyed negative sentiments. This distribution indicates that nearly half of the online discourse leaned toward criticism or skepticism. To contextualize, the ratio of negative-to-positive sentiment was approximately 1.36:1, highlighting a significant tilt toward opposition. The following table summarizes these findings:

Table 1. Sentiment Distribution of Tweets on Capital Relocation

Sentiment Category	Number of Tweets	Percentage
Positive (Pro)	336	35.9%
Neutral	144	15.4%
Negative (Contra)	456	48.7%

### Visualization of Sentiment Trends

If represented as a pie chart, the largest slice would clearly be negative sentiments, nearly half of the discourse, while positive voices form a little more than one-third. A bar chart over time would show peaks of negativity aligned with policy announcements or environmental controversies, while positivity spiked around official government campaigns promoting Nusantara as a “green, smart city.”

### Thematic Breakdown of Sentiments

1. Positive Narratives: Supportive tweets emphasized job creation, regional equality, and symbolic modernization. For example, one user posted: “Finally, eastern Indonesia gets the attention it deserves. Nusantara means a fairer future for us all.” Another highlighted digital governance opportunities: “This is our chance to build an AI-driven capital, not stuck with Jakarta’s outdated systems.”

Neutral Narratives: Neutral tweets tended to share factual updates or news links without overt judgment. A typical post included: “President announces progress on IKN construction phase 1 – housing for civil servants nearly complete.” These posts functioned more as information relays than expressions of opinion.

2. Negative Narratives: Contra tweets focused on environmental degradation, land acquisition disputes, and corruption risks. A widely shared critical post stated: “Cutting down forests for a new capital while preaching sustainability – hypocrisy at its peak.” Another expressed suspicion: “This is just another mega project for the elites, ordinary people will suffer.” These examples illustrate the skepticism that dominates online discourse.

### 3. Interaction Patterns and Influential Actors

Social network analysis revealed clusters of conversation around hashtags like #IKN, #Nusantara, and #SaveKalimantan. Influential voices included national media outlets, environmental NGOs, and high-profile political commentators. Retweet networks showed echo chambers: supportive tweets were clustered around government-affiliated accounts, while critical tweets circulated heavily in activist networks. Visualization of these clusters would resemble two distinct, partially overlapping spheres, indicating limited cross-engagement.

### 4. Temporal Correlations with Key Events

Sentiment volume correlated with policy milestones. For example, the announcement of the IKN Law triggered a 40% surge in tweet volume, with negativity spiking by 55%. In contrast, when government promotional videos about smart infrastructure were released, positive tweets briefly outnumbered negatives for 48 hours. These oscillations suggest that official communication can influence sentiment temporarily, though skepticism quickly resurfaces.

### Extended Findings

- Environmental Concerns: The most common critical theme, appearing in 41% of negative tweets, focused on deforestation, climate impact, and indigenous land rights.
- Corruption and Governance: About 28% of negative tweets raised issues of transparency, citing fears of rent-seeking and elite capture.
- Economic Opportunities: Roughly 44% of positive tweets emphasized job prospects, construction contracts, and investment inflows.
- Equity and National Unity: Around 22% of supportive posts referenced the symbolism of moving away from Java-centric development.



## Supplementary Table: Thematic Coding of Tweets

Table 2. Thematic Distribution Across Sentiment Categories

Theme	Positive %	Neutral %	Negative %
Economic Opportunities	44	12	18
Environmental Concerns	8	10	41
Governance/Corruption	10	5	28
Social Equity	22	8	13
Neutral Information	—	65	—

The results show a discourse dominated by negative perceptions, especially around environmental and governance issues, even as positive narratives of modernization and equity persist. Visualizing these findings through pie charts, bar charts, and network diagrams would provide policymakers and scholars with a clear view of the polarized online environment.

## Discussion

### 5.1. Cross-National Comparisons and What They Suggest for Nusantara

International experience clarifies what capital relocation can and cannot achieve. Brasília demonstrates that planned administrative cities can function as government hubs yet still reproduce inequality without sustained social policy and housing affordability measures. Abuja shows that decongesting a commercial capital is possible for the core bureaucracy, but peri-urban expansion can outpace service provision, generating informal settlements and new inequities. Naypyidaw highlights the political-risk dimension: relocation can advance regime security while failing to create authentic civic life or economic spillovers. Secondary cases like Canberra and Ottawa underscore the importance of inter-city connectivity and federal–municipal coordination; both capitals rely on strong transport links and stable public service career pathways to anchor population and amenities. For Nusantara, the lesson is twofold: (1) administration can move faster than society and markets; (2) durable success depends on affordability, connectivity, and institutional capacity beyond the initial build.

### Reading Indonesia's Results Through These Lenses

The dominance of environmental and governance concerns in Indonesian Twitter discourse mirrors pain points from Brasília (spatial segregation) and Abuja (peri-urban strain) while adding a distinctly Indonesian emphasis on forest conservation and indigenous rights. Skepticism about corruption echoes cross-country worries about megaproject rent-seeking. Meanwhile, supportive narratives about regional equity align with state-building motives seen in Brazil and Nigeria. The oscillation of sentiment around major announcements suggests that official messaging can momentarily shift the tone, but durable trust remains contingent on visible safeguards and credible progress on the ground. In short, the public is responsive to policy windows but anchors judgment in risk perceptions shaped by history and place.

### Theoretical Implications

**Agenda-Setting & Framing.** Government narratives (green, smart, equitable) compete with counter-frames (deforestation, elite capture). Hashtags function as framing devices that organize attention and prime certain interpretations.

**Networked Public Sphere.** Retweet clusters reveal parallel publics with limited cross-talk, producing echo chambers that stabilize sentiment polarity. Influencers act as hubs that reduce information costs but can also accelerate rumor cascades.

**Policy Feedback & Social License.** Early implementation choices feed back into public beliefs about capacity and fairness. Visible wins (transparent procurement, protected forests, fair compensation) generate positive feedback; perceived failures harden opposition and shrink the state's social license to operate.

**Digital Activism as Co-Production.** Online discourse does not simply reflect opinion; it co-produces legitimacy by surfacing evidence, coordinating scrutiny, and shaping elites' anticipations of public reaction. Policy durability thus hinges on ongoing negotiation with a networked citizenry.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- a) **Governance & Integrity.** Establish an independent oversight panel for procurement and land transactions; publish all major contracts, EIAs, and progress dashboards in machine-readable formats; mandate open tender norms with real-time disclosure of bidders and award rationales.
- b) **Environmental Safeguards.** Adopt a no-net-loss biodiversity policy; set phased deforestation caps tied to project milestones; require third-party monitoring (remote sensing + on-the-ground audits); create a public grievance mechanism with time-bound resolution.
- c) **Social Inclusion & Land Rights.** Operationalize free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC); standardize compensation formulas indexed to replacement value; provide resettlement packages that include serviced plots, livelihood support, and tenure security; institutionalize community benefit agreements.
- d) **Fiscal Prudence & Phasing.** Sequence development to avoid stranded assets: prioritize core administrative functions, shared utilities, and housing for civil servants before speculative commercial districts; adopt demand-based triggers for subsequent phases; apply value-capture tools transparently and cap public contingent liabilities.
- e) **Connectivity & Services.** Ensure early investment in inter-city rail/air links and digital infrastructure; integrate Nusantara–Jakarta–Balikpapan logistics; design public-service career pathways and education/health amenities to attract and retain talent.
- f) **Communications & Participation.** Move from one-way promotion to two-way engagement: monthly open-data briefings, participatory mapping of sensitive areas, and citizen juries for major design choices. Pair narrative claims ("green city") with verifiable indicators and third-party validations.
- g) **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management.** Define a compact set of KPIs: forest cover preserved, affordable-housing delivery, procurement transparency scores, commute times, and job quality metrics. Publish quarterly performance reports and revise plans iteratively.

### **Risks to Anticipate**

- **Greenwashing Risk:** Ambitious sustainability claims without credible baselines and independent audits.





- **Affordability Spiral:** Land speculation pricing out civil servants and service workers, creating long commutes and informal settlements.
- **Governance Slippage:** Procurement opacity and weak contract management eroding trust and escalating costs.
- **Connectivity Lag:** Administrative relocation outpacing transport and digital links, impeding service delivery.

Comparative evidence suggests that relocation succeeds when it is treated as a long-term institutional project rather than a construction sprint. The Indonesian online discourse is already stress-testing official promises; addressing the highlighted risks with concrete, auditable actions is likely to shift sentiment more sustainably than promotional campaigns alone.

## CONCLUSION

### Reflective Insights

This study demonstrates that Indonesia's capital relocation debate is as much about governance, trust, and sustainability as it is about bricks and mortar. Twitter users do not merely echo official narratives; they actively interrogate them, inserting skepticism, hope, and irony into the public sphere. The overwhelming dominance of negative sentiment reveals deep-seated anxieties about corruption, ecological damage, and distributive injustice, even as positive voices articulate aspirations for regional equity and modernization. Importantly, neutrality in discourse appears fragile, often tipping into support or criticism when new information emerges. These patterns underscore the fragile legitimacy of megaprojects when transparency and inclusivity are perceived as insufficient.

### Policy Relevance

Findings from this research carry direct implications for policymakers. The public is not resistant to the idea of Nusantara per se but demands credible guarantees on environmental protection, corruption prevention, and fair treatment of affected communities. Failure to address these concerns risks delegitimizing the project and reinforcing distrust in state capacity. Conversely, visible safeguards—transparent procurement, participatory planning, ecological monitoring—could shift sentiment toward cautious optimism. The study thus advises policymakers to treat social media not simply as a publicity tool but as a diagnostic platform that surfaces risks and enables iterative course corrections.

### Contributions to Scholarship

Theoretically, this study illustrates the utility of netnography for connecting sentiment patterns with behavioral motives. By integrating agenda-setting, framing, and participatory democracy perspectives, it highlights how online discourse both reflects and shapes policy legitimacy. The comparative dimension—linking Indonesia to Brasília, Abuja, Naypyidaw, and beyond—broadens the empirical base of relocation studies and situates Indonesia within a global conversation about development, governance, and digital activism.

### Implications for Future Research

Future studies should consider several directions:

1. **Multi-Platform Analysis:** Expanding beyond Twitter to Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp groups would capture a broader demographic and regional variation in sentiment.

2. Longitudinal Tracking: Monitoring sentiment across the relocation's phases would reveal how perceptions evolve with visible progress, setbacks, or scandals.
3. Mixed-Methods Approaches: Combining netnography with interviews, focus groups, or surveys could triangulate insights and uncover nuanced motives behind online expressions.
4. Comparative Regional Studies: Examining sentiment in provinces most affected by the relocation, particularly in Kalimantan, would illuminate local–national tensions in perception.
5. Algorithmic Mediation: Research on how social media algorithms amplify certain narratives would shed light on why particular frames dominate and how echo chambers are sustained.

Indonesia's capital relocation to Nusantara represents both an unprecedented opportunity and a formidable challenge. As a policy experiment, it will be judged not only by infrastructure erected but also by the inclusiveness of its process and the credibility of its governance. Social media analysis reveals the contours of public legitimacy in real time. Harnessing these insights for adaptive policymaking could transform skepticism into cautious trust, ensuring that Nusantara becomes not just a symbol of state ambition but a lived embodiment of equitable, sustainable development.

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