

**EXPLAINING ELECTORAL VICTORY THROUGH SOCIAL CAPITAL: A CASE STUDY OF A FORMER VILLAGE HEAD IN THE 2024 TEMANGGUNG LOCAL ELECTION, INDONESIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The 2024 Temanggung Regency Regional Head Election (Pilkada) presented a compelling political phenomenon, wherein a former village head successfully triumphed over two incumbent candidates. This study aims to analyze the role and mechanisms of utilizing social capital in Agus Setyawan's victory in the 2024 Temanggung Election. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing a social capital analytical framework encompassing three primary dimensions: trust, social networks, and norms of reciprocity. Data collection is assumed through literature reviews, media analysis, and the candidate's track record. The findings indicate that the candidate's victory was deeply rooted in the social capital accumulated during his 16-year tenure as the Village Head of Campurejo. First, the trust dimension was established through an empirical track record in transforming human resources within his village, including reducing early marriage rates and advancing education. Second, the expansion of social networks was executed effectively by capitalizing on farmer groups, cultural arts associations (kuda lumping), inter-village head solidarity, and supported by structural political networks. Third, norms of reciprocity were fostered through a populist and grassroots approach that positioned the candidate as an equal to the common citizenry, thereby generating solid voter loyalty. In conclusion, the conversion of communal social capital and grassroots support proved capable of dismantling the political hegemony of incumbents. The phenomenon of the 2024 Temanggung Election reaffirms that a proven track record and social proximity at the village level can serve as a superior political modality compared to mere elite popularity.

**Keywords:** Head of Village, Local Election, Social Capital.

**ABSTRAK**

Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (Pilkada) Kabupaten Temanggung tahun 2024 menghadirkan dan fenomena politik yang menarik, di mana seorang mantan kepala desa berhasil memenangkan kontestasi melawan dua kandidat petahana. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran dan mekanisme pemanfaatan modal sosial dalam kemenangan Agus Setyawan pada Pilkada Temanggung 2024. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan kerangka analisis modal sosial yang mencakup tiga dimensi utama: kepercayaan (trust), jaringan sosial (networks), dan norma timbal balik (norms of reciprocity). Pengumpulan data diasumsikan melalui studi literatur, analisis media, dan rekam jejak kandidat. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kemenangan kandidat berakar kuat pada modal sosial yang diakumulasi selama 16 tahun menjabat sebagai Kepala Desa Campurejo. Pertama, dimensi kepercayaan terbangun dari rekam jejak empiris dalam mentransformasi sumber daya manusia di desanya, termasuk penekanan angka pernikahan dini dan memajukan pendidikan. Kedua, ekspansi jaringan sosial dilakukan secara efektif dengan mengapitalisasi kelompok petani, paguyuban seni budaya (kuda lumping), solidaritas antar-kepala desa, serta didukung oleh jaringan politik struktural. Ketiga, norma resiprositas terjalin melalui pendekatan populis dan masyarakat yang memosisikan kandidat setara dengan masyarakat biasa, sehingga melahirkan loyalitas pemilih yang solid. Kesimpulannya, konversi modal sosial komunal dan dukungan akar rumput

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349

Indexed:



SINTA 4



terbukti mampu mendobrak hegemoni politik petahana. Fenomena Pilkada Temanggung 2024 ini menegaskan bahwa rekam jejak dan kedekatan sosial di tingkat desa dapat menjadi modalitas politik yang lebih superior dibandingkan sekadar popularitas elitis.

**Kata kunci:** Kepala Desa, Modal Sosial, Politik Lokal

## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of direct Local Head Elections (Pilkada) in Indonesia is fundamentally designed to produce leaders with strong democratic legitimacy. However, electoral dynamics at the local level are frequently characterized by the strong hegemony of incumbents and capital-intensive political elites. Recent studies on Indonesian local politics between 2020 and 2025 highlight an increasingly entrenched "incumbency advantage." Scholars such as (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019) and (Hidayatullah et al., 2022) emphasize that incumbents possess asymmetric structural advantages, including the monopolization of local bureaucracies, access to state resources, and the capacity for massive clientelistic mobilization. This structural dominance often creates an oligarchic political climate at the regional level, rendering it exceedingly difficult for new challengers, particularly those outside the established political elite to win electoral contests (Brown, 2025). Nevertheless, a profound political that dismantled this elite domination thesis occurred during the 2024 Temanggung Local Election.

The 2024 Temanggung Local Election presented a highly unexpected electoral dynamic when Agus Setyawan, a former Village Head of Campurejo, Tretep District, emerged victorious. This contest became a focal point of political analysis because Setyawan successfully defeated two formidable political giants simultaneously: the incumbent Regent (M. Al Khadziq) and the incumbent Vice Regent (Heri Ibnu Wibowo). The victory of a grassroots figure against established incumbents equipped with robust political machinery and deep bureaucratic penetration raises fundamental academic questions. Empirically, this phenomenon demonstrates that the logistical superiority and structural privileges of the bureaucratic elite can be subverted by alternative political modalities cultivated directly within the grassroots community (Christens et al., 2021).

To comprehend this electoral, a political sociology approach specifically through the lens of Social Capital theories is highly relevant. Contemporary literature (2021-2024) indicates a paradigm shift in how social capital is mobilized in local elections. As argued by (K. M. P. Setiawan & Tomsa, 2022) and (Nugroho & Windyastuti, 2021) social capital at the communal level, when effectively mobilized, can act as a powerful counter-hegemonic force against established political oligarchies and transactional politics (vote buying). Temanggung Regency possesses unique sociocultural and demographic characteristics that provide fertile ground for such mobilization. As an agrarian region predominantly reliant on tobacco farming and characterized by strong traditional cultural roots such as the Kuda Lumping (Jaran Kepang) arts Temanggung society maintains robust communal patron-client relationships at the village level. In this social ecosystem, a village head does not merely function as a low-level administrative bureaucrat but acts as a primary patron, protector, and cultural representative of the citizens (Wang et al., 2025).

Agus Setyawan's victory is fundamentally the crystallization and conversion of the social capital he consistently accumulated during his 16-year tenure as Village Head. Sociologically, this success was driven by the synergy of three core elements of social capital: trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity. Trust was not generated through artificial political charm or transient campaign promises, but through a proven track record of transformative leadership over four terms, including significant achievements in reducing early marriage rates and advancing human resources in a remote village. This communal trust was subsequently expanded into a regency-wide electoral force through the strategic optimization of horizontal social networks (Miswoni & Satyawan, 2022). These networks included the mobilization of the village heads' association (which effectively bypassed traditional party machinery), the consolidation of tobacco farmer

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350

Indexed:



SINTA 4



groups (the economic backbone of Temanggung), and the integration of local cultural artist communities.

Furthermore, intensive interactions grounded in a populist approach symbolized by his retention of long hair ("Agus Gondrong") as a marker of grassroots authenticity and cultural resistance fostered strong norms of reciprocity. Recent research by (Bland, 2020) and (Mietzner, 2020) on Indonesian populism suggests that such authentic, long-term reciprocal relationships create an emotional bond between leaders and the electorate, resulting in solid voter militancy that is highly immune to transactional politics and structural repression by the ruling elite.

Therefore, researching the political phenomenon of the 2024 Temanggung Local Election holds significant urgency and academic novelty. This study offers an alternative perspective: in a local democratic climate often marred by money politics and bureaucratic mobilization, communally managed social capital can effectively transform into a lethal political capital against incumbents. This phenomenon deconstructs the conventional paradigm which assumes that local politics can only be won by distant elites with access to macro-level power. Consequently, this research aims to comprehensively dissect the anatomy, network expansion mechanisms, and social capital conversion strategies employed by a former village head to break the incumbent's hegemony in the 2024 Temanggung Local Election. The profundity of this electoral is further amplified when juxtaposed with pre-election projections; initial political surveys consistently positioned the incumbent, M. Al Khadziq, as the definitive frontrunner, predicting a seamless victory based on his established structural machinery. Yet, the grassroots movement completely defied these predictions. As a preliminary empirical foundation to contextualize the magnitude of this sudden electoral reversal, the following table illustrates the official recapitulation results that confirm the absolute collapse of the incumbents' dominance:

**Table 1: Official Recapitulation Results of the 2024 Temanggung Local Election**

Ballot Number	Candidate Pair	Status / Background	Valid Votes Obtained	Vote Percentage
1	Agus Setyawan – drg. Nadia Muna	Challenger (Former Village Head)	230,436	46.42%
2	Heri Ibnu Wibowo – Fuad Hidayat	Incumbent (Former Vice Regent)	199,854	40.26%
3	M. Al Khadziq – Bimo Alugoro	Incumbent (Former Regent)	63,841	12.86%

Source: Official Plenary Recapitulation of the Temanggung General Election Commission, December 2024

Table 1.1 presents empirical evidence that unequivocally confirms the occurrence of an electoral in the 2024 Temanggung Local Election. Quantitatively, the data illustrates the dramatic collapse of incumbent hegemony. The challenger pair, Agus Setyawan and Nadia Muna—originating from a localized, village-head background—successfully secured a dominant victory with 230,436 votes (46.42%). This achievement convincingly surpasses the electoral strength of two incumbent figures who previously controlled the regency's bureaucratic infrastructure: the former Vice Regent Heri Ibnu Wibowo (40.26%) and the former Regent M. Al Khadziq, who plummeted significantly to 12.86%.

The profound significance of this quantitative data lies in the political message it conveys: the structural power machinery and logistical superiority of incumbents can be effectively dismantled by the micro-penetration of cultural machineries at the grassroots level. The margin of victory achieved by the challenger delegitimizes the conventional assumption that regional elections can only be won by central elites or figures with direct access to macro-level power. Consequently, this electoral tabulation is not merely a sequence of numbers, but rather the factual bedrock that validates the urgency of this research: specifically, to deconstruct how social capital and communal networks are converted into a highly lethal electoral force against established incumbents.

## METHOD

This research is designed using a qualitative approach through an empirical case study method to dissect, deeply and holistically, the political of Agus Setyawan's victory in the 2024 Temanggung Local Election. The selection of this qualitative design is driven by the urgency to uncover the mechanisms of invisible power at the grassroots level. As asserted by (T. Setiawan, 2024) in their study of contemporary Indonesian local politics, tracing patron-client relations and the conversion of communal social capital cannot be solely measured through quantitative statistical instruments. Instead, it demands a qualitative-interpretive approach to reveal the meanings, motives, and emotional solidarity underlying the interactions between political actors and society. The victory of a former village head against two incumbent candidates who controlled the bureaucracy constitutes a highly unique case phenomenon. Consequently, this research requires precise historical tracking of the accumulation of trust and norms of reciprocity originating from Campurejo Village, in order to observe how this social embryo transformed into a regency-scale wave of electoral support.

The Focus of data collection is focused on strategic nodes within Temanggung Regency, specifically targeting the entities of the village heads' association, centers of tobacco farming communities, and cultural pockets of kuda lumping traditional arts. Adopting the grassroots electoral research framework developed by (Locatelli, 2022) regarding informal politics mapping, primary data collection is conducted through in depth interview techniques, employing dynamic purposive informant selection via snowball sampling. This tracking technique is applied to map the architecture of horizontal social networks that frequently operate beneath the radar of formal political institutions. Key informants are drawn in a multi-layered manner, ranging from the elected regent, the architects of the campaign team, central figures driving the village heads' association, leaders of farmer groups, to representatives of ordinary voters in remote villages. This approach is reinforced by documentary studies of the General Election Commission's (KPU) vote recapitulation archives, the digital footprint of the populist "Agus Gondrong" campaign symbol, as well as observations to authentically capture the pulse of cultural interactions binding the candidate to his mass base.

The entire compilation of primary and secondary data is subsequently analyzed in a circular manner using an interactive model through the stages of data condensation, relational narrative display, and conclusion drawing, which are continuously confronted with the theoretical framework of social capital. Furthermore, in alignment with the methodological caveats in post-election political research elaborated by (Fatima et al., 2025), election-related qualitative research is highly susceptible to the glorification of the winning candidate. The researcher will conduct a cross-examination between the claims of network solidity articulated by the campaign team elites and the empirical reality directly experienced by grassroots voters, juxtaposing them with the objective patterns of vote distribution from the KPU. Through this methodological rigor, the hypothesis regarding how the conversion of social capital is capable of breaking the logistical and bureaucratic hegemony of incumbents can be validated, held accountable, and replicated as a solid academic finding.

## DISCUSSION

### The Conversion of Social Capital as an Antithesis to Incumbent Hegemony

Agus Setyawan's victory in the 2024 Temanggung Local Election presents a new discourse that refutes the traditional thesis regarding the absolute superiority of incumbents (incumbency advantage) in Indonesian local elections. In the post-decentralization political landscape, scholars such as (Avelino Filho et al., 2021) frequently underscore that incumbents possess structural privileges in the form of bureaucratic apparatus control and access to state logistics, which facilitate electoral mobilization based on clientelism. However, the defeat of former Regent M. Al Khadzizq and former Vice Regent Heri Ibnu Wibowo by a former Village Head of Campurejo demonstrates that bureaucratic machinery and financial capital can be

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352

Indexed:



paralyzed by the strength of deep-rooted social capital. This phenomenon aligns with Warburton's (2023) findings, which assert that when grassroots communities experience saturation with distant bureaucratic elites, they will shift toward alternative figures who possess organic proximity (Ng et al., 2022). In the case of Temanggung, Agus Setyawan did not emerge as a challenger relying on money politics; rather, he capitalized on his 16 year track record of communal leadership to penetrate the incumbents' political barricades. Utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical lens, what transpired in the 2024 Temanggung Election was a successful process of capital conversion, wherein social capital (relations, networks, and cultural legitimacy at the village level) was effectively transformed into regency-scale political capital.

The success of this conversion relies on the first dimension of social capital according to (Putnam, 2025), namely communal trust. Unlike the political trust constructed by party elites through instant campaigns and street billboards, the trust in Agus Setyawan is historical and performative. During his four terms as village head, he empirically proved his capacity to resolve citizens' daily problems, such as reducing early marriage rates, advocating for farmers' rights, and improving infrastructure in remote villages. (Qadir & Khan, 2026), in their study on local voter resistance, note that trust born from direct (organic) interaction experiences is far more solid and militant compared to artificial trust produced by political consultants. In the context of Temanggung, this empirical track record created a psychological fortress for voters. When the incumbent candidates attempted electoral penetration through populist programs or social assistance instruments ahead of the election, Agus Setyawan's mass base remained solid because their political rationality was bound by time-tested trust, not by momentary transactions.

Furthermore, this capital of trust was massively expanded through the optimization of the second dimension, namely social networks. The primary weakness of independent candidates or non-elite figures usually lies in the absence of a political party machinery capable of reaching voters in remote areas. However, Agus Setyawan overcame this institutional deficit by mobilizing informal networks that possess a stronger cohesive power within Temanggung's agrarian society. The epicenter of this network is the village heads' association, which operated as a "shadow machinery," replacing the function of formal party structures. (Nofrima et al., 2021) confirms that in Javanese political culture, the village head acts as a primary patron whose political references are highly obeyed by the citizens. Additionally, Agus astutely wove horizontal solidarity with tobacco farmer groups and local cultural arts associations, such as the kuda lumping (jaran kepong) troupes. These communities are not merely hobby or professional groups, but rather sociocultural entities with high emotional bonds. By infiltrating and merging into the networks of these mass epicenters, Agus Setyawan's campaign moved decentrally through word of mouth in coffee shops, regular community gatherings (selapanan), and village arts stages, which ultimately besieged the incumbents' stronghold from the periphery.

Acting as the binder for all these elements is the operation of the third dimension: norms of reciprocity. The interaction between Agus Setyawan and the Temanggung society was not constructed within an elitist relationship between the ruler and the ruled, but rather an egalitarian relationship symbolized through the "Agus Gondrong" (Long-haired Agus) identity. His physical appearance with long hair and his down-to-earth language style were not mere political gimmicks, but a representation of subaltern class resistance against rigid bureaucratic styles. (Bland, 2020) and (Mietzner, 2020), in their analyses of local populism in Indonesia, observe that figures capable of displaying cultural authenticity and shared suffering with the common people will harvest absolute loyalty. These norms of reciprocity function emotionally: because Agus Setyawan spent over a decade safeguarding the dignity and livelihoods of rural communities (particularly tobacco farmers), the community felt a moral obligation to reciprocate by securing its victory on election day. In conclusion, the hegemony of the two incumbents in Temanggung collapsed not due to the magnitude of the challenger's campaign funds, but due to the weaving of grassroots social capital that had metamorphosed into a militant and organized electoral resistance movement.

**Table 1: The Conversion Matrix of Social Capital as an Antithesis to Incumbent Hegemony in the 2024 Temanggung Local Election**

Putnam's Dimensions of Social Capital	Incumbent's Strategy & Reality	Agus Setyawan's Grassroots Strategy & Empirical Findings	Political Conversion Output
Trust	Relied on instant populist programs and the distribution of social assistance (bansos) approaching the election.	A 16-year track record of empirical leadership at the village level (e.g., human resource advocacy, reducing early marriage rates).	The creation of absolute voter loyalty that was highly immune to the onslaught of vote-buying practices.
Social Networks	Formally mobilized (top-down) through political party machineries and the structural mobilization of the civil service apparatus (ASN).	Consolidation of horizontal communal networks (Village Heads' Association, tobacco farmers' associations, and kuda lumping traditional artists).	Informal networks functioned as a "shadow machinery" that reached remote villages decentrally through word-of-mouth.
Norms of Reciprocity	Constructed elitist, hierarchical patron-client relationships that were distanced from the grassroots community.	An egalitarian and authentic approach through the cultural resistance symbol of "Agus Gondrong" (representing the common people).	The emergence of a communal moral obligation; the community mobilized voluntarily and militantly to secure the candidate's victory.

Source: Synthesized from the Researcher's Processed Data, 2024

As shown in Table 4.1 delineates the fundamental dichotomy between the structural electoral strategies employed by the incumbents and the organic, grassroots approach utilized by Agus Setyawan. Regarding the first dimension, trust, the matrix highlights a significant contrast in how political legitimacy is established and sustained. The incumbents predominantly relied on short term, transactional mechanisms, such as the sudden deployment of populist programs and the distribution of social assistance (bansos) immediately prior to the election. Conversely, Setyawan cultivated organic and historical trust through a proven, 16-year empirical track record as a village head, characterized by tangible achievements such as advocating for human resource development and mitigating early marriage rates. This historical accumulation of trust proved to be far more resilient than artificial political charm, engendering absolute voter loyalty that effectively insulated his supporters from the incumbents' aggressive vote-buying tactics and logistical onslaught (Mauk, 2022).

In terms of the second dimension, social networks, the table illustrates a formidable clash between formal, top-down mobilization and informal, horizontal consolidation. The incumbents utilized conventional political machinery, heavily leveraging party structures and the bureaucratic influence of the civil service apparatus (ASN) to orchestrate support from the regency level down to the sub-districts. In stark contrast, Setyawan capitalized on localized communal networks by seamlessly integrating the Village Heads' Association, tobacco farmers' groups, and traditional kuda lumping artist communities. As depicted in the matrix, these horizontal networks operated as a highly effective "shadow machinery." Because these entities are deeply embedded in the socio-economic and cultural fabric of Temanggung's agrarian society, they facilitated a decentralized, word-of-mouth campaign that successfully penetrated remote villages where formal political parties often fail to maintain a consistent presence.

Finally, the dimension of norms of reciprocity reveals a profound divergence in relational dynamics

between the candidates and the electorate. The matrix indicates that the incumbents-maintained elitist, hierarchical patron-client relationships that inherently distanced them from the grassroots populace (Schuster, 2020). Setyawan, however, adopted a radically egalitarian approach, epitomized by his "Agus Gondrong" persona, which served as a symbol of cultural authenticity and subaltern identity. This shared identity, combined with a history of mutual support, cultivated a powerful sense of communal moral obligation. Rather than viewing their vote as a transactional commodity to be exchanged for cash or goods, the community perceived it as a moral duty to reciprocate Setyawan's long-standing dedication to their welfare. Consequently, as summarized in the political conversion output, this organic reciprocity transformed passive constituents into a militant, voluntary electoral force, ultimately proving that well-nurtured social capital can decisively dismantle established structural and bureaucratic hegemony.

## **The Village Heads' Association as an Informal Political Machinery and Electoral Substitute**

The electoral triumph of Agus Setyawan in Temanggung Regency cannot be fully comprehended without scrutinizing the operationalization of his most vital social network: the Village Heads' Association (Paguyuban Kepala Desa). In the landscape of Indonesian local elections, challengers who do not originate from the central party elites frequently suffer from severe institutional deficits. Formal political parties, while necessary for electoral nomination, often lack the deeply rooted, micro-level structural penetration required to secure votes in remote agrarian pockets. To circumvent this limitation, Setyawan capitalized on his 16-year tenure as a village head by transforming the horizontal solidarity among his peers into a formidable "shadow machinery." As highlighted by (Le Galès, 2021) in their analysis of grassroots mobilization in democratic Indonesia, localized political movements are increasingly bypassing formal party structures, relying instead on indigenous communal networks that possess higher emotional resonance and agility. This informal association effectively substituted the traditional role of formal political parties, operating as a highly efficient, decentralized conduit for mass mobilization that the incumbents' bureaucratic apparatus struggled to detect and dismantle.

The efficacy of this shadow machinery lies in its subterranean operational nature and its reliance on deeply entrenched patron-client dynamics at the grassroots level. According to Indonesian electoral regulations, active village heads are legally prohibited from participating in formal political campaigns. Consequently, the mobilization efforts orchestrated by the association did not manifest through overt political rallies or the distribution of official campaign attributes. Instead, these actors utilized pre-existing social and cultural spaces such as neighborhood gatherings (selapanan), religious congregations (tahlilan), and agricultural cooperative meetings as clandestine arenas for political consolidation. (Ravanilla et al., 2022), in his study of informal networks and political brokerage, argues that village elites in Indonesia frequently operate as invisible power brokers who translate political directives into cultural idioms that are easily digested by rural voters. Within the Javanese socio-political nexus, a village head transcends the role of a mere administrative official; they act as the primary communal patron whose informal directives are highly respected and implicitly followed. By securing the collective endorsement of this association, Setyawan seamlessly bypassed the formal bureaucratic hierarchy controlled by the incumbents, establishing a direct line of communication with the electorate.

Theoretically, the mobilization of the Village Heads' Association exemplifies the optimal utilization of "bridging" social capital. While Setyawan's initial political capital was heavily concentrated within his own jurisdiction of Campurejo Village, the association served as the critical bridge that replicated and expanded his localized legitimacy across the entire regency. (Bitzer et al., 2023) conceptualize this phenomenon as "electoral substitution," wherein village elite associations emerge as alternative political vehicles in Javanese politics when formal parties fail to represent subaltern interests. The network of village heads acted as trusted intermediaries who vouched for his character and leadership capabilities to their respective communities. They constructed a compelling narrative that framed Setyawan not as a distant politician, but as a representative of the villages a fellow grassroots leader who genuinely understood the

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355

Indexed:



systemic disenfranchisement experienced by rural communities. Ultimately, this informal, network-driven strategy proved vastly superior to the incumbents' reliance on formal structural command.

**Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Formal Electoral Machinery versus Informal Shadow Machinery in Grassroots Mobilization**

Analytical Dimensions	Formal Political Machinery (Incumbents' Strategy)	Informal "Shadow Machinery" (Agus Setyawan's Strategy)
Primary Vehicle	Centralized political party structures and civil service apparatus (ASN).	The Village Heads' Association (Paguyuban Kepala Desa) acting as an "electoral substitute."
Operational Modality	Overt and regulated: public rallies, distribution of official campaign attributes, and mass media.	Covert and subterranean: mobilization through pre-existing socio-cultural spaces (e.g., selapanan, tahlilan, cooperative meetings).
Structural Penetration	Macro-level reach; often struggles to maintain a consistent presence or deep penetration in remote agrarian pockets.	Micro-level penetration; highly agile and deeply embedded within localized, grassroots agrarian communities.
Political Brokerage	Driven by formal party elites and top-down bureaucratic command.	Driven by village heads acting as "invisible brokers" and trusted communal patrons translating political directives into cultural idioms.
Nature of Legitimacy	Institutional, procedural, and transactional.	Emotional resonance, cultural authenticity, and "bridging" social capital.

Source: Synthesized from Field Data and Theoretical Frameworks of Fossati & Hui, 2022; Tans, 2021; Widodo & Suyanto, 2024)

As shown in Table 4.2 provides a comparative analytical synthesis of the diametrical electoral forces that operated during the Temanggung Local Election: the formal political machinery of the incumbents versus the informal "shadow machinery" mobilized by Agus Setyawan. Regarding their primary electoral vehicles, the matrix highlights that the incumbents relied almost exclusively on centralized political party structures and the state's civil service apparatus (ASN). Conversely, the challenger astutely positioned the Village Heads' Association as an "electoral substitute," effectively usurping the role of formal parties at the grassroots level. This divergence in structural penetration is critical. As analyzed by (Buehler et al., 2021) in their study of spatial limitations in Indonesian electoral politics, formal party machineries are inherently macro-oriented; they consistently struggle to maintain a sustained, organic presence in remote, micro-level agrarian pockets. By deploying the network of village heads, Setyawan overcame this spatial deficit, achieving a level of micro-penetration that centralized bureaucratic commands simply could not replicate.

Furthermore, this structural dichotomy dictated the operational modalities of the respective campaigns. The incumbents' approach was overtly visible, heavily regulated, and conventional, characterized by public rallies and the distribution of official party attributes. In stark contrast, Setyawan's shadow machinery operated clandestinely, beneath the radar of formal electoral oversight. Instead of constructing new political arenas, these informal actors strategically co-opted preexisting socio cultural spaces such as routine neighborhood gatherings (selapanan), religious congregations (tahlilan), and agricultural cooperative meetings. (Hanani et al., 2021), in their research on grassroots mobilization in Java, emphasize that the weaponization of such socio-religious spaces allows for organic, subterranean political consolidation that is immune to state surveillance and formal campaign restrictions. Within these intimate settings, village heads function as "invisible brokers." According to (Adams et al., 2021), unlike formal party elites who issue rigid, top down directives, these local patrons act as cultural translators, converting political

instructions into localized cultural idioms that deeply resonate with the agrarian electorate.

Ultimately, the convergence of these strategies culminated in fundamentally different forms of political legitimacy. As the matrix demonstrates, the legitimacy generated by the incumbents' formal machinery was inherently procedural, rigid, and highly susceptible to transactional clientelism. In opposition, Setyawan's legitimacy was anchored in emotional resonance, cultural authenticity, and the cohesive power of "bridging" social capital. The informal networks did not merely distribute instructions; they cultivated a shared subaltern identity and a communal moral obligation. The conclusion drawn from this comparative matrix is unequivocal: the agility, militancy, and emotional proximity of informal grassroots networks possess the profound capacity to neutralize and dismantle the rigid structural and bureaucratic hegemony of established incumbents.

## The Symbiosis of Formal Party Coalitions and Informal Grassroots Networks

The profound reliance on informal shadow machineries and communal social capital does not negate the indispensable role of formal political institutions. In the context of the 2024 Temanggung Local Election, Agus Setyawan's grassroots mobilization was structurally anchored by a formidable coalition of established political parties, namely PDI Perjuangan (PDI-P), the United Development Party (PPP), the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), and the People's Conscience Party (Hanura). As articulated by (Suryanagara et al., 2025) in their analysis of contemporary Indonesian electoral strategies, localized popularity without robust institutional backing frequently fails to survive the rigorous procedural and legal hurdles of regional elections. Therefore, Setyawan's victory must be analyzed through the lens of a "hybrid electoral architecture." This architecture represents a sophisticated symbiosis where institutional political capital and communal social capital mutually reinforced one another. The formal party coalition provided the indispensable legal vehicle, fulfilling the institutional prerequisites for candidacy, while the informal networks supplied the organic electoral fuel necessary to dismantle the incumbents' hegemony (Husu, 2022).

The efficacy of this hybrid model is rooted in a highly strategic division of electoral labor that effectively addresses both spatial and demographic complexities. The formal party machinery operated predominantly within procedural domains, activating their traditional ideological bases such as the nationalist constituency of PDI-P and the religious voter bases of PPP and PKS particularly within urban and semi-urban constituencies. However, as (Nanammal et al., 2023) note in their study of local political dynamics, formal party structures often suffer from "electoral sclerosis," displaying institutional rigidity when attempting to mobilize non-partisan or swing voters in remote agrarian areas. To compensate for this structural limitation, the campaign deployed Setyawan's informal networks, including the Village Heads' Association, tobacco farmer collectives, and traditional arts communities. This grassroots coalition bypassed conventional party jargon, utilizing cultural idioms and subaltern aesthetics to deeply penetrate agrarian pockets, thereby capturing the demographic segments that the formal parties could not organically reach (García-Montoya et al., 2025).

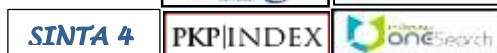
Furthermore, this symbiosis effectively neutralized the incumbents' structural advantages by securing both the generation and the rigorous safeguarding of votes. The informal shadow machinery excelled at the micro-level generation of electoral support through decentralized, word-of-mouth campaigns driven by emotional resonance and moral obligation. Yet, as Tomsa and Setiawan (2024) argue, generating grassroots momentum is fundamentally insufficient if those votes are not institutionally protected at the ballot box (Turnbull-Dugarte & Devine, 2023). In this critical phase, the formal party coalition executed its primary institutional function by deploying a comprehensive network of official poll witnesses across all voting stations in Temanggung. This formal apparatus provided a vital legal shield, protecting the organically mobilized grassroots votes from potential manipulation or systemic suppression by the incumbents' entrenched bureaucratic apparatus. Ultimately, the seamless integration of cultural authenticity at the grassroots level with institutional rigor at the structural level created an impregnable electoral strategy.

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357

Indexed:



**Table 3: The Division of Labor within the Hybrid Electoral Architecture**

Analytical Dimension	Formal Party Coalition (PDI-P, PPP, PKS, Hanura)	Informal Grassroots Networks (Village Heads & Cultural Groups)
Primary Electoral Function	Fulfilling institutional prerequisites, providing the legal electoral vehicle, and safeguarding the ballot boxes through official witnesses.	Acting as the primary vote-getters, mobilizing swing voters, and driving decentralized, word-of-mouth campaigning.
Source of Legitimacy	Procedural legitimacy, legal-formal authority, and established ideological party platforms.	Cultural authenticity, emotional resonance, and communal trust derived from a proven local track record.
Demographic and Spatial Target	Ideological/partisan voter bases (nationalist and religious segments) and constituents in urban/semi-urban areas.	Non-partisan swing voters, remote agrarian pockets, tobacco farming communities, and subaltern classes.
Operational Modality	Structural, hierarchical (top-down), and strictly bound by official campaign regulations and formal political rhetoric.	Subterranean (covert), horizontal (peer-to-peer), and organically embedded within everyday socio-cultural spaces (e.g., selapanan).

As shown in Table 4.3 comprehensively delineates how the hybrid electoral architecture precisely divided roles between formal political institutions and informal grassroots networks. Regarding the dimensions of primary electoral function and sources of legitimacy, the matrix illustrates a strategic division of labor that mutually compensated for the inherent weaknesses of each respective entity. The sponsoring party coalition (PDI-P, PPP, PKS, and Hanura) assumed the macro-level function as the legal-institutional vehicle, generating procedural legitimacy and legal authority. This institutional role proved paramount during the final stages of the election, wherein the formal party structures mobilized official witnesses to safeguard the ballot boxes against potential manipulation by the incumbents' entrenched bureaucratic apparatus. Conversely, because formal party machinery frequently lack emotional proximity to non-partisan constituents, the informal networks (specifically the Village Heads' Association and cultural entities) assumed the role of the primary vote-getters. These communal networks generated a form of legitimacy predicated on cultural authenticity and an empirical track record of leadership, which proved significantly more effective in penetrating the psychological defenses of rural swing voters (Shepherd, 2024).

Furthermore, the table highlights specific strategies concerning demographic and spatial targeting, as well as operational modalities. The party machinery operating structurally, vertically (top-down), and strictly bound by official campaign regulations was instructed to secure ideological voter bases, such as the nationalist and religious segments, within urban and semi-urban areas (Kenny & Luca, 2021). However, recognizing the structural limitations of formal parties in reaching remote regions, the campaign team astutely delegated the penetration of agrarian pockets to the shadow machinery networks. Distinct from formal political parties, these grassroots networks operated clandestinely and horizontally through word-of-mouth communication. They organically infiltrated everyday rural socio-cultural spaces, such as routine selapanan forums and farmers' group meetings, to consolidate political support from the subaltern class. The ultimate conclusion drawn from this matrix is that the challenger's victory did not rely on a singular electoral force, but rather on a consummate synergy: the formal party machinery provided the legal shield

and the vote-protection infrastructure, while the cultural machinery supplied the lifeblood, militancy, and wave of emotional grassroots support that ultimately dismantled the incumbents' hegemony.

## CONCLUSION

The 2024 Temanggung Local Election stands as a watershed moment in the study of contemporary Indonesian local politics, serving as a profound that systematically dismantles the traditional thesis of absolute incumbent hegemony. This research conclusively demonstrates that the structural, logistical, and bureaucratic advantages historically monopolized by incumbent candidates to secure electoral continuity can be effectively neutralized and ultimately defeated through the strategic accumulation, mobilization, and conversion of localized social capital. The victory of Agus Setyawan over two entrenched incumbent figures was not engineered through superior financial capital or the deployment of massive transactional clientelism. Instead, it was the culmination of a highly orchestrated grassroots resistance rooted in communal trust, egalitarian norms of reciprocity, and the potent weaponization of subaltern cultural authenticity. By operationalizing his 16-year empirical track record as a village head, Setyawan successfully transformed localized, village-level social capital into a regency-scale political phenomenon, proving that agrarian voters possess the rational agency to reject last-minute transactional politics when presented with a leader who organically embodies their socio-economic struggles.

At the core of this electoral subversion was the activation of informal "shadow machineries" that effectively overcame the spatial and structural deficits inherent to formal political parties. The study reveals that the conventional, top-down bureaucratic command utilized by the incumbents alienated the grassroots, creating a pervasive sense of incumbent fatigue. In stark contrast, Setyawan capitalized on deeply embedded socio-cultural networks, specifically the Village Heads' Association (Paguyuban Kepala Desa), tobacco farmer collectives, and traditional Kuda Lumping arts communities. Operating strategically beneath the radar of formal electoral oversight, these networks functioned as highly agile invisible brokers. They bypassed rigid campaign regulations by transforming everyday communal spaces—such as selapanan forums and agricultural cooperative meetings into clandestine arenas for political consolidation. This micro-level penetration generated a wave of hyper-solidarity and moral obligation among the electorate that the incumbents' formal machinery fundamentally failed to anticipate or dismantle.

Crucially, however, this research emphasizes that the triumph of grassroots militancy did not occur in an institutional vacuum. The ultimate success of Setyawan's campaign was predicated on the execution of a highly sophisticated "hybrid electoral architecture." The study finds that relying solely on informal networks is insufficient to survive the rigorous procedural hurdles of Indonesian regional elections. Therefore, a precise division of electoral labor was established between the organic grassroots movement and a formal party coalition comprising PDI-P, PPP, PKS, and Hanura. Within this symbiotic framework, the informal networks served as the emotional vanguard and primary vote-getters in remote agrarian pockets, while the formal political parties provided the indispensable legal vehicle, procedural legitimacy, and critical structural protection through the deployment of official poll witnesses. It is this consummate symbiosis the seamless integration of cultural authenticity at the grassroots level with institutional rigor at the structural level that ultimately fractured the incumbents' stronghold and secured the electoral victory.

Ultimately, the Temanggung case signifies a maturing localized democracy where voters are increasingly resistant to the superficial distribution of social assistance (bansos) and vote-buying practices. It serves as an empirical testament that when bureaucratic elites become detached from the cultural and economic realities of their constituents, well-nurtured social capital can decisively reclaim the political narrative, returning electoral power to the subaltern class.

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360

Indexed:



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361

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