Green narratives or greenwashing? An ecological discourse analysis of IKN-related discourses

Narasi hijau atau greenwashing? Analisis wacana ekologis terhadap wacana terkait IKN

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Abstract

This research aims to determine whether the IKN-related discourses produced by the Indonesian government constitute a green narrative that promotes ecological conservation and protection or are merely greenwashing strategies designed to gain public acceptance. Fifty-two articles taken from the Indonesian government's official website about IKN, https://ikn.go.id/ are the data source of this research. Utilizing AntConc and NVivo software, the researchers investigate the word frequency of environmentally related lexical choices and complete an analysis of the six-taxonomy of greenwashing. The results reveal that five greenwashing strategies are prominent: attention deflection, deceptive manipulation, decoupling, selective disclosure, and inefficient public voluntary programs. These strategies reflect the gap between environmental claims and actions, with the government focusing on technological solutions while downplaying or omitting critical ecological issues such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and indigenous displacement. This research makes a valuable contribution to the field of ecolinguistics by emphasizing the need for a critical examination of governmental environmental narratives, particularly in situations where ecological claims are used to justify large-scale development. This analysis could be further developed in the future by integrating indigenous perspectives, ecological data, and longitudinal monitoring of IKN's environmental impact.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan apakah wacana terkait IKN yang diproduksi oleh pemerintah Indonesia membentuk narasi hijau yang mendorong pelestarian dan perlindungan ekologi, atau hanya merupakan strategi *greenwashing* yang dirancang untuk mendapatkan penerimaan publik. Lima puluh dua artikel yang diambil dari situs resmi pemerintah Indonesia tentang IKN, https://ikn.go.id/ menjadi sumber data penelitian ini. Dengan memanfaatkan perangkat lunak AntConc dan NVivo, para peneliti menyelidiki frekuensi kata dari pilihan leksikal yang terkait lingkungan dan melakukan analisis terhadap enam taksonomi *greenwashing*. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa lima strategi *greenwashing* menonjol: pengalihan perhatian, manipulasi menipu, pemisahan, pengungkapan selektif, dan program sukarela publik yang tidak efisien. Strategi-strategi ini mencerminkan kesenjangan antara klaim lingkungan dan tindakan, dengan pemerintah fokus pada solusi teknologi sekaligus meremehkan atau mengabaikan isu-isu ekologis penting seperti deforestasi, hilangnya keanekaragaman hayati, dan perpindahan masyarakat adat. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi yang berharga di bidang ekolinguistik dengan menekankan perlunya pemeriksaan kritis terhadap narasi lingkungan pemerintah, khususnya dalam situasi di mana klaim ekologis digunakan untuk membenarkan pembangunan berskala besar. Analisis ini dapat dikembangkan lebih lanjut di masa depan dengan mengintegrasikan perspektif masyarakat adat, data ekologis, dan pemantauan jangka panjang terhadap dampak lingkungan IKN.

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A. Introduction

On 29th April 2019, Former President Joko Widodo announced the relocation of Indonesia's capital city to East Kalimantan. This decision is based on the fact that Jakarta is no longer suitable as the capital city due to its various environmental and social issues. Problems such as air pollution, slums, a lack of water supply, traffic congestion, and the possibility of an earthquake make Jakarta one of the most vulnerable cities in the world. Additionally, the target location, East Kalimantan, is considered safe from natural disasters, making it the most suitable place to relocate the capital city.

Learning from Jakarta's vulnerability ecological condition, the Indonesian government plans a new capital city with a sustainable concept and introduces it as the first "forest city" in the world. The concept of a "forest city" is chosen because the Indonesian government aims to maintain Kalimantan's role as the lungs of the world. It is also an answer to environmentalists' worries about the ecological condition in Kalimantan, as impacted by the development of IKN. It then builds tensions over the sustainability claim and its ecological realities. It raises two questions: first, does the government genuinely promote ecological awareness in their discourses as a consequence of having a sustainable capital city? Second, how do the discursive strategies reflect green narratives or just a mere greenwashing?

Despite the frequent mentions of terms such as "green city," "forest city," and "eco-smart capital," much of the environmental discourse surrounding IKN reflects characteristics of greenwashing in which symbolic language substitutes for substantive ecological commitment. Greenwashing was first alleged in 1986 by activist Jay Westerveld, when hotels began requesting that guests reuse their towels, claiming it was a water-saving technique (Guo et al., 2018; Pearson, 2010; Zioło et al., 2024). However, it lacked substantial environmental initiatives addressing more critical ecological issues. According to Becker-Olsen & Potucek (2013), greenwashing refers to the strategic use of environmental jargon to create the impression of sustainability while concealing ecological harm. The term greenwashing is commonly employed to criticize deceptive methods that claim beneficial environmental effects without any genuine impact. Corporate greenwashing denotes the dissemination of inaccurate, incomplete (Furlow, n.d.), or deceptive (Siano et al., 2017) environmental information regarding a company, product, or service, or the obfuscation of adverse environmental impacts within communications about a company's environmental performance (Buil et al., 2014; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Lyon & Maxwell, 2005; Marquis et al., 2011).

For IKN, the government and the media frequently discuss reforestation, renewable energy, and biodiversity protection. However, these claims often lack clear ecological baselines, measurable results, or recognition of trade-offs, such as deforestation, species displacement, and extractive land use. For example, Kalimantan is sometimes called the "lungs of the world" in a metaphorical way to support development instead of putting ecological stewardship first. This discursive tactic corresponds with Siano et al., (2017) classification of greenwashing, wherein "green talk" is employed to meet stakeholder expectations without genuine environmental responsibility. In the context of ecolinguistics, this type of language is a destructive discourse that overlooks non-human agency and promotes technocentric ideas, while appearing to be sustainable.

To examine whether the government's discourses genuinely promote ecological awareness or are just greenwashing, this study uses ecolinguistics. Ecolinguistics is an interdisciplinary framework that examines the relationship between language and ecological concepts. Ecolinguistics seeks to clarify how linguistic patterns either enhance or undermine the well-being of the natural environment and its inhabitants, including both human and non-human creatures. It builds upon systemic functional linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and cognitive linguistics by integrating ecological values and environmental ideologies (Stibbe, 2015). Ecolinguistics, akin to critical discourse analysis (CDA), aims to reveal the foundational assumptions present in the prevailing discourses of society (Stibbe, 2014, p.119). CDA seeks to enhance awareness of social inequality and foster social change, while ecolinguistics and EDA employ linguistic analysis to reveal and emphasize discourses that may adversely affect the environment (Stibbe, 2014).

Ecolinguistics provides a significant paradigm for uncovering the environmental ideology implicitly embedded in governmental discourses. Stibbe (2014) contends that language profoundly affects the understanding and articulation of human-nature relationships. The government's rhetoric of IKN may emphasize human-centered development narratives while overlooking or minimizing ecological consequences, such as the displacement of indigenous species and deforestation. Additionally, the Indonesian government consistently characterizes the new capital city as a "smart city," "green city," and "forest city" (Rahayu et al., 2025). The government employs metaphors and specific word choices to portray Nusantara as a remedy for the issues faced by Jakarta. The concept of green and forest city is infrequently elucidated through concrete governmental actions, suggesting it may primarily serve as a rhetorical device (Rahayu et al., 2025). The narratives illustrate a technocentric environmental ideology that emphasizes infrastructure, innovation, and national symbolism, frequently compromising ecological integrity and indigenous knowledge systems (Ebhuoma, 2024; Suawi & Diedong, 2025). Developing Nusantara without a comprehensive understanding of its ecological conditions will result in environmental degradation under the guise of establishing a smart city. This disparity allows for significant aspects to be omitted or diminished. This framing illustrates how governmental discourse deliberately conceals ecological and cultural complexities. This research employs Ecological Discourse Analysis (EDA) as a methodological extension, considering the environmental implications of Nusantara's planning discourse. EDA extends the principles of CDA through a systematic analysis of the ways in which language constructs ecological meaning. This study operationalizes EDA by coding eco-beneficial, eco-destructive, and eco-ambivalent framings, employing transitivity analysis, metaphor identification, and evaluative language mapping.

Recent researchers have employed ecolinguistic analysis to examine diverse discourses, including news articles (Yuniawan et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2023), UN narratives (Gong & Liu, 2018), presidential speeches (Mansyur et al., 2021), vegan campaign posters (Zhdanava et al., 2021), and public debates (Poole, 2016). Research has demonstrated that specific discourses embody varying ideological beliefs, attitudes, or messages that can either harm or benefit the environment. Many of these studies examine unilateral narratives, showcasing a singular party's viewpoint regarding the environment (Gong & Liu, 2018; Mansyur et al., 2021; Yuniawan et al., 2017; Zhdanava et al., 2021), whereas (Zhang et al., 2023) offer a comparative analysis of two international media ideologies, and Poole (2016) presents a discourse between two factions concerning mining in Arizona. On the other hand, greenwashing has been a popular research interest (Zioło et al., 2024). The recent studies investigated greenwashing in fashion industry (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022), systematic reviews on greenwashing on trends and their impacts (Álvarez-García & Sureda-Negre, 2023; de Freitas Netto et al., 2020; Zioło et al., 2024), and greenwashing behavior in CSR reports (Gorovaia & Makrominas, 2025; Siano et al., 2017). Nonetheless, no studies have been undertaken to examine more of how the government promotes sustainability through its discourses, which reflects the greenwashing. Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap by analyzing the Indonesian government's discourses when promoting IKN that reflect greenwashing behaviors.

B. Method

This study employs Ecological Discourse Analysis (EDA), grounded in the ecolinguistics framework established by Stibbe (2015), focusing on the role of language in shaping ecological ideologies through narratives of framing, assessment, identity, salience, and erasure. The corpus comprises 104 items sourced from the Indonesian government's official IKN website (https://ikn.go.id), constituting a thorough chronicle of public discourse regarding the future capital. The data of the research are words, phrases, clauses, or sentences which consist of greenwashing strategies found in IKN-related discourses. The researchers used AntConc to conduct an advanced search for 50 keywords related to the environment in the 104 articles, revealing that 52 articles contained those words. AntConc features a user-friendly interface and

analysis tools that are easy to use, especially for researchers unfamiliar with computational tools (Purwaramdhona, 2025). These articles are decided as the data source of this study. To complement the analysis, the researchers also examine the blueprint of IKN and the Nusantara Biodiversity Management Master Plan as a means to see how the Indonesian government translates its planning discourse into reality. It is essential to compare the discourses used to introduce and inform about IKN with the blueprint, as greenwashing addresses the discrepancy between what is stated and what is actually done.

Additionally, the data was organized into thematic clusters to identify recurring patterns in the discourse, which were then analyzed for ideological consistency. This process aimed to highlight the extent to which the government's environmental narratives were genuine or amounted to greenwashing. The analysis was further enhanced by applying Yang et al.'s greenwashing taxonomy, which provided a structured framework for classifying greenwashing practices and evaluating their alignment with the government's stated sustainability goals.

To complement the qualitative approach, a word frequency analysis was conducted using AntConc to examine the prevalence of environmental-related terms across the corpus. This analysis revealed that terms associated with technological development (e.g., "smart city," "technology") were more prominent than those related to direct ecological actions, underscoring a technocentric approach in the discourse. To ensure the reliability of the findings, a 20% subset of the data was double-coded by two independent researchers, and Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used to measure inter-coder agreement. Discrepancies in the coding were resolved through peer-debriefing, ensuring the consistency and robustness of the coding process.

Finally, the results were synthesized and presented in tables and excerpts to demonstrate the frequency of greenwashing strategies and to illustrate how the official discourse compares to the IKN Blueprint and the Nusantara Biodiversity Management Master Plan. This comparative analysis highlighted gaps between the government's expressed sustainability goals and the actual rhetoric employed in the IKN communications. The researchers ensured validity and trustworthiness through: (1) source authentication (all texts come from the official IKN website); (2) transparent corpus construction using AntConc to filter 104 posts down to 52 environment-relevant texts via a predeclared 50-keyword list; (3) method triangulation by comparing website discourse with the IKN Blueprint and the Nusantara Biodiversity Management Master Plan; (4) a documented coding protocol grounded in Stibbe's EDA with exemplar quotes and a summary table; and (5) reliability safeguards (dual-coding of a subset, intercoder agreement check, peer debrief, and an audit trail).

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

The analysis of selected government discourses surrounding the development of IKN reveals a complex interplay of environmental rhetoric and strategic erasure. Drawing from Yang et al., (2020) six-part taxonomy of greenwashing, five of them were identified across the corpus: attention deflection, deceptive manipulation, decoupling, inefficient public voluntary programmes, and selective disclosure. To support the interpretation, the researchers present the findings in a summary table and strengthen it with an excerpt. The following Table 1 shows the data distribution for each type of greenwashing.

Table 1. Data Distribution across the corpus

No.	Types of Greenwashing	References	Files
1	Attention Deflection	9	7
2	Deceptive Manipulation	5	5
3	Decoupling	11	11
4	Dubious Authorizations & Labels	0	0
5	Inefficient Public Voluntary Programmes	1	1
	Selective Disclosure	6	5

Based on the table above, it can be seen that from 52 articles, only 20 articles shows greenwashing behavior. It does not mean that the other 32 are free from greenwashing, but they do not take the environment into consideration in their discourses, which is called erasure or the total absence of ecological concerns in the discourses. The articles not mentioned are those that discuss the investment plan in the IKN. Besides, the word count of the Indonesian government document from https://ikn.go.id/ (see Table 2) reveals that ecology-related words are not even in their top ten most frequent word. Seeing that they barely discuss environmental concerns in their discourse, it is alarming that the taglines 'forest city' and 'green city' are merely greenwashing.

Table 2. Word Count in Government Documents in ikn.go.id

No.	Word	Length	Count	Percentage (%)
1	Nusantara	9	940	2,16
2	IKN	3	538	1,24
3	Kota	4	506	1,00
4	Capital	7	478	1,10
5	Development	11	423	0,97
6	Indonesia	9	349	0,80
7	Smart	5	283	0,65
8	City	4	277	0,64
9	Technology	9	271	0,62
10	Authority	9	250	0,57

From the 20 articles, the researchers mapped the greenwashing strategies into five types as suggested by (Yang et al., 2020) as follows.

a. Attention Deflection through Technocratic Frames

Attention deflection refers to shifting focus to unrelated achievements to distract from ecological concerns (Yang et al., 2020). Companies that engage in greenwashing often highlight the positive aspects, such as achievements, to divert the audience's attention away from their own ecological issues. In their discourses, the Indonesian government usually deflects the readers' attention to the promise of development and advancement from the capital relocation to Kalimantan Island, rather than addressing the environmental degradation that might result. It implies that the environmental degradation resulting from land clearing to prepare the IKN's area is a sacrifice that people need to pay to be a more developed region, as stated in the following excerpt:

> Nusantara Capital City will be a sustainable **smart forest city** that represents the use of the **latest technologies** and **innovations** that enable new models of social, economic and **environmentally sustainable growth** to create cities that are liveable fairly. (IKN25)

The quotation above reveals that the government emphasizes the use of technology, making IKN a smart city with all the latest technologies and innovations. The word "environmentally" exists not to describe or discuss the nature, but rather to be a modifier of sustainable growth. This statement reveals the technocentrism ideology, which suggests that the government believes nature

is meant to be exploited by humans for their purposes. Another example of attention deflection which is brought through the technocentrism frame is as follows:

> The relocation of the State Capital will encourage the Dayak community to mingle and be presented with the same opportunities **to help advance Indonesia**. Moving the State Capital to East Kalimantan will also **increase the island's greater contribution to the Republic of Indonesia**, beyond just dealing with natural resources such as timber, palm oil, coal, oil, and gas, Minister Bambang said. (IKN4)

From the quotation above, the Indonesian government projects that the capital relocation to East Kalimantan will make a greater contribution, especially for the Dayak people, so they should support the government's decision. While doing so, the Minister said that the relocation will increase the contribution beyond just natural resources such as timber, palm oil, coal, oil, and gas. This statement implies that East Kalimantan is already making a significant contribution through the natural resources taken from it. The exploitation of natural resources surely has a negative impact on the environment, but rather than discussing the damage East Kalimantan has suffered, the minister chooses to highlight the greater contribution that East Kalimantan's people could make. Choosing to emphasize development over ecological issues in this discourse is achieved through technocratic framing. Technocratic framing focuses on the advancement and development of a nation while sidelining the ecological problem that may appear because of the development. Technocratic framing is rooted in the ideology of technocentrism, which puts nature as a resource for human purposes. Therefore, this ideology believes that nature is meant to be exploited to make human life comfortable.

The fact that the Indonesian government has a technocentrism ideology is supported by the fact that in the IKN blueprint, the frequency of words talking about "smart" and "technology" is higher than the frequency of words discussing ecology and environment. The detail of word frequency taken from the IKN blueprint is as follows.

Table 3. Word Count in IKN Blueprint

No.	Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
1	Kota *(city)*	4	491	2,53
2	Cerdas *(smart)*	6	397	2,05
3	Ikn	3	290	1,50
4	Nusantara	9	288	1,49
5	Teknologi *(technology)*	9	271	1,40
6	Smart *(pintar)*	5	243	1,25
7	System *(system)*	6	199	1,03
8	Layanan *(service)*	7	183	0,94
9	Data	4	156	0,80
10	Solusi *(solution)*	6	124	0,64
11	Digital	7	109	0,56
12	Pembangunan *(development)*	11	104	0,54

The table above shows the top 12 words used in the IKN Blueprint, and none of them discuss or depict an ecological concern. The absence of words related to environment or ecology clarifies that the Indonesian government believes in a technocentric ideology over the ecocentric one.

b. Deceptive Manipulation through Metaphors

Deceptive Manipulation implies misleading conduct in which sustainable communication creates a deliberate operation of business practices to promote the perception that a firm's products, aims, and/or policies are environmentally friendly (Yang et al., 2020). It is used to symbolize an

ecological action. The Indonesian government used deceptive manipulation through the use of metaphors. The example of deceptive manipulation can be observed from the following quotation:

The new capital city will be built under the concept of being a "**forest city**". Public transportation will be a mainstay of the IKN, starting from trams, buses, an LRT, and other modes of transportation to avoid potential pollution and congestion. It will be built as a symbol of **national identity**, a "**smart, green, beautiful and sustainable**" city with modern and international standards. It will be governed effectively and efficiently. (IKN7)

From the quotation above, the Indonesian government used the metaphor 'forest city' to describe IKN. However, this symbolic label is lack of details and measured claims which can be controlled. The 'forest city' seems to be translated into the city which is free from pollution and congestion as the opposite of Jakarta. The metaphor 'forest city' also reveals the irony in which the Indonesian government planned to make a 'forest city' by cutting trees in the existing forest that they claim as building IKN from scratch. Another metaphor that frequently used in the Indonesian government's discourse is the 'lung of the world' as stated in the following quotation:

Regarding the environment, one of the emerging concerns involves the future of the forest area. Minister Suharso emphasized that the sustainability of Kalimantan's forests, known as the **'lungs of the world'**, would be the main focus of the development, considering that the IKN Masterplan itself has even mandated that 75% of the new city must be 'green areas', with the principle of being a **'forest city'**. (IKN13)

The use of metaphor in IKN's environmental discourse reveals a pattern of deceptive manipulation, wherein symbolic language is employed to project ecological virtue without substantiating material commitments. As Yang et al. (2020) describe, deceptive manipulation involves communicative strategies that mislead audiences into perceiving sustainability where it may be absent or overstated. In the case of IKN, metaphors such as "forest city" and "lungs of the world" serve as rhetorical devices that evoke ecological harmony and global responsibility. However, these metaphors' function more as branding tools than as indicators of ecological accountability. The phrase "smart, green, beautiful and sustainable" (IKN7) constructs an idealized urban identity yet lacks clarity on how sustainability is operationalized beyond aesthetics and infrastructure. Similarly, the invocation of Kalimantan's forests as the "lungs of the world" (IKN13) positions nature as a national asset, while obscuring the ecological risks posed by large-scale development. These metaphorical framings contribute to a discursive environment where environmental legitimacy is symbolically performed rather than critically examined.

c. Decoupling through Unverified Claims

Decoupling refers to making environmental claims without implementing them in practice (Yang et al., 2020). It is typically demonstrated by making claims that lack clear measurements or actionable plans to make them a reality. From the Table.1, it can be seen that decoupling are the most frequent strategy used by the government. The Indonesian government often makes claims about green spaces and forest cities, but there are no clear measurements for those claims.

He assured that the construction of the new capital city **will not encourage deforestation**, but will instead **encourage reforestation**. It will be built with the concept of being a forest city, not a city in the forest.(IKN1)

This statement exemplifies **decoupling** through its rhetorical reassurance that reforestation will occur, while offering no empirical evidence or implementation details. The phrase "forest city" is conceptually appealing but remains abstract and unsubstantiated. The contrast between "forest city" and "city in the forest" is metaphorical, not ecological—it reframes spatial development without addressing the material consequences of land conversion, biodiversity loss, or ecological fragmentation. The assurance of "not encouraging deforestation" lacks accountability mechanisms, making it a symbolic gesture rather than a verifiable commitment. Another example of decoupling is as follows:

> "With **the concept of 'living with nature'**, we want to make sure that we implement the Forest City plan with utmost care and success. To do so, we plan to fit the new State Capital with many open spaces to reduce the environmental footprint. **At least 50% of the 56,000 hectare area, as big as Manhattan, will be dedicated to open green spaces. Within the entire 256,000 hectare area, we expect 70% to 75% to be green spaces because we do not want to disturb the environment in and around Soeharto Hill**. There are many rivers in and around the State Capital area, so we will take care of this by implementing the One River One Management approach," explained the Deputy for Regional Development at the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas Rudy Prawiradinata.(IKN9)

This excerpt demonstrates **decoupling** through the use of ambitious numerical targets and strategic planning language that is not supported by operational transparency. While the claim of dedicating 70–75% of the area to green space appears ecologically responsible, it lacks clarity on what constitutes "green space," how it will be maintained, and whether it includes monoculture plantations, recreational parks, or preserved ecosystems. The "One River One Management" approach is mentioned without elaboration, making it a placeholder for environmental stewardship rather than a defined policy. These statements claim to promote ecological care but remain decoupled from enforceable, measurable, or ecologically grounded action.

d. Selective Disclosure through Erasure

Selective Disclosure **is h**ighlighting positive environmental actions while omitting negative impacts. According to Yang et al (2020), selective disclosure is used to show off one positive action while disclose other negative actions or impact such as how the Indonesian government emphasize on the low carbon emission target while disclose the land clearing for developing IKN. In the discourses surrounding IKN, selective disclosure are found through the introduction or nursery seedling as stated in the following quotation:

> **This nursery**, with a total area of 120 hectares and a capacity of 10 million seedlings per year, will later provide the tree seedlings needed for the IKN area. Earlier, I emphasized that 75% of the IKN area will be designated **'green areas'** and it is not just a wish, but a reality that we will realize in the development of this city, the Minister concluded.(IKN13)

From the quotation above, the government developed a nursery seedling to be planted in IKN area. It implies that the government plans to make its so-called 'green city' or 'forest city' in which the plants will be from the seedling nursery. It sounds like a good plan, but the fact that plants or trees need years to grow and make the city green means that the green city or forest city they aim for will not be realized in two or three years. It will leave the IKN area with less green than the government claimed, which will last for a couple of years. Additionally, the area where IKN is located is an industrial forest; therefore, the government assumes it is acceptable to cut trees from this forest and subsequently create a new one. However, what they say is an unproductive industrial

forest is a home for several species, like birds, insects, grasses, and other living things. Being an unproductive industrial forest does not mean they are not part of nature. This paradigm is harmful to the ecology because when people view any land as empty space simply because it is no longer productive, it promotes land clearing, which will surely damage the environment. Furthermore, selective disclosure is often used to conceal harmful environmental impacts by highlighting one or two positive actions. This selective disclosure is considered an erasure, where the discourse's producers created a discourse that backgrounded or marginalized ecological concerns.

e. Inefficient Public Voluntary Program

Inefficient public voluntary programme is promoting weak or symbolic environmental initiatives. It focuses on a symbolic activity that shows a good intention towards the ecological issues. Some of the most frequent activity for this greenwashing agenda is tree planting. The involvement of tree planting is also appeared in the Indonesian government discourse as follows:

> The activity concluded with tree planting in the Miniature Tropical Rainforest of Nusantara. Here, the delegation planted local seedlings such as damar, keruing, red meranti, and kapur. In the Miniature Tropical Rainforest, the delegation was also invited to see the plants that were planted earlier by the President of the Republic of Indonesia. (IKN41)

Tree planting is usually seen as a symbolic activity that depict someone's good intention to the environment. With tree planting, the discourse's producer will likely gain trust from the public that they intend to save the environment. However, in reality, tree planting is often used as an excuse for a further ecological concern. People involved in tree planting feel that they already free from the 'sin'. Tree planting raises an issue in two ways: first, the tree planting program usually only focuses on the ceremonial events when stakeholders plant the trees symbolically. What happened after the tree planting event is that they do not bother maintaining the growth of the plan because it is just a ceremonial event without following up. The second, as the aforementioned it makes people who involved in it feel like they already pay what they did. They can continue harming the environment through deforestation, land clearing, logging, and mining while the environment is not getting better from the tree planting (Kameo, 2024; Sumartini et al., 2025).

2. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the Indonesian government's discourse surrounding IKN is marked by a strategic deployment of environmental language that often functions more symbolically than substantively. Through the lens of Yang et al.'s (2020) greenwashing taxonomy, five types of discursive manipulation were identified: selective disclosure, decoupling, attention deflection, deceptive manipulation, and inefficient public voluntary programmes. These strategies collectively construct a narrative of ecological responsibility while simultaneously obscuring the material consequences of development.

Selective disclosure was evident in the emphasis on nursery seedling programs and green space targets, which were presented without acknowledging the ecological disruption caused by land clearing and species displacement (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). Decoupling emerged as the most frequent strategy, with repeated claims of reforestation and green infrastructure lacking operational clarity or measurable outcomes (Bothello et al., 2023; Talpur et al., 2024). Attention deflection was achieved through technocratic framing, where the promise of innovation and national progress diverted attention from environmental degradation (Andreoli & Minciotti, 2023). Deceptive manipulation was realized through metaphorical constructs such as "forest city" and "lungs of the world," which evoke ecological virtue but lack ecological accountability (Janz et al., 2025; Smith

& Font, 2014). Finally, inefficient public voluntary programmes—such as ceremonial tree planting—served as symbolic gestures that failed to address systemic environmental concerns.

The word frequency analysis further supports these findings, revealing that ecology-related terms are not among the most frequent in either the government corpus or the IKN blueprint. This lexical absence reinforces the argument that environmental concerns are discursively marginalized (Sumartini et al., 2025), and that the dominant narrative prioritizes development, technology, and national symbolism over ecological integrity.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Indonesian government's discourse on IKN reflects a pattern of strategic greenwashing, where environmental language is used to legitimize development while masking ecological contradictions. By applying Ecological Discourse Analysis and Yang et al.'s greenwashing taxonomy, the research reveals how sustainability is discursively constructed through the use of metaphor, omission, and symbolic action. The findings suggest that while the government promotes IKN as a "forest city," the underlying discourse reveals a technocentric ideology that treats nature as a resource rather than a living system.

The absence of ecological depth in both textual frequency and thematic framing suggests that environmental stewardship is not a central aspect of the planning narrative. Instead, sustainability is performed rhetorically to satisfy stakeholder expectations and reinforce national identity. This study contributes to ecolinguistics scholarship by highlighting the need for critical scrutiny of governmental environmental narratives, especially in contexts where ecological claims are used to justify large-scale development. Future research may expand this analysis by incorporating indigenous perspectives, ecological data, and longitudinal monitoring of IKN's environmental impact.
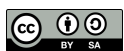
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