

# Eco-Democracy: Advancing Sustainable Governance Through Green Politics

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## **Abstract**

This study focuses on eco-democracy, a governance model that integrates democratic principles with environmental sustainability to address global challenges such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, and natural resource degradation. The model emerges as a response to the shortcomings of



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traditional governance, which often prioritizes short-term economic growth while neglecting ecological balance. Eco-democracy emphasizes the importance of inclusive participation, transparency, and accountability in environmental decision-making, while advocating for social justice in the context of environmental policies. This research employs normative legal methods with conceptual, comparative, and futuristic approaches. Descriptive-prescriptive in nature, the study aims to describe the concept of eco-democracy and formulate forward-looking policy recommendations. The collected data is analyzed using content analysis to evaluate the implementation of eco-democracy and green politics in various countries, including Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand, and Germany. These nations have adopted policies recognizing the rights of nature and promoting public participation in environmental governance. The findings reveal that Indonesia has significant potential to adopt eco-democracy, rooted in the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. However, several challenges impede its implementation, such as conflicts between economic and environmental interests, corruption, and a lack of environmental awareness among the public. The study concludes that the successful adoption of eco-democracy in Indonesia requires comprehensive legal reform, enhanced institutional capacity, and broader public education. Eco-democracy, therefore, has the potential to contribute to the creation of a more sustainable and equitable environmental governance system in Indonesia.

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## Keywords

*eco-democracy, environmental sustainability, green politics, governance, Indonesia.*

## I. Introduction

In recent decades, the world has faced increasing environmental challenges that threaten the sustainability of natural resources, biodiversity, and the very systems that support human life.<sup>1</sup> Climate change, deforestation, air and water pollution, and the depletion of natural resources are just a few examples of the pressing issues that demand immediate attention.<sup>2</sup> These environmental crises have spurred a growing awareness that traditional governance models, which often prioritize economic growth over ecological balance, are inadequate to address the complexity and urgency of these challenges.<sup>3</sup> As a result, there is a significant shift towards eco-democracy a governance model that integrates environmental considerations with democratic principles to ensure sustainable and just development for present and future generations.

Eco-democracy, rooted in the convergence of environmentalism and democratic governance, seeks to

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Foley, "Living by The Lessons of The Planet," *Science* 356, no. 6335 (April 21, 2017): 251-52, <https://doi.org/10.1126/SCIENCE.AAL4863>.

<sup>2</sup> Mironshoh Sattorov, "Towards a Sustainable Future: Addressing Climate Change, Reforestation, and the Aral Sea Crisis with Econometric Models," *Scientific Research Archive* 5, no. 5 (2020): 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.55439/sra/03685>.

<sup>3</sup> Arun Agrawal et al., "From Environmental Governance to Governance for Sustainability," *One Earth* 5, no. 6 (June 17, 2022): 615-21, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2022.05.014>.

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reshape the way societies approach environmental policy and decision-making.<sup>4</sup> It is founded on the belief that sustainability cannot be achieved solely through top-down regulations or market-based mechanisms, but rather through participatory and inclusive governance processes that empower citizens, communities, and environmental stakeholders. This model emphasizes the need for transparency, accountability, and public involvement in environmental decision-making processes, ensuring that policies are not only environmentally sound but also socially just and democratically legitimate.<sup>5</sup>

The rise of eco-democracy is closely linked to the evolution of green politics a political ideology that places environmental sustainability at the core of its agenda. Green politics advocates for the protection of natural ecosystems, the reduction of environmental degradation, and the promotion of sustainable practices in all areas of human activity, including agriculture, industry, and urban development. The green political movement has grown significantly since the late 20th century, gaining momentum through grassroots activism, political parties, and international agreements aimed at combating climate change and promoting sustainable development. The intersection of eco-democracy and green politics represents a powerful force for change, as both emphasize the importance of protecting the environment

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<sup>4</sup> Robyn Eckersley, "Ecological Democracy and The Rise and Decline of Liberal Democracy: Looking Back, Looking Forward," *Environmental Politics* 29, no. 2 (February 23, 2020): 214–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2019.1594536>.

<sup>5</sup> David Schlosberg, Karin Bäckstrand, and Jonathan Pickering, "Reconciling Ecological and Democratic Values: Recent Perspectives on Ecological Democracy," *Environmental Values* 28, no. 1 (February 1, 2019): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327119X15445433913541>.

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while upholding democratic values such as justice, equality, and public participation.

One of the key features of eco-democracy is its focus on participatory governance. Traditional environmental policies have often been developed by experts and implemented through top-down government mandates, with limited input from the broader public. However, eco-democracy challenges this model by advocating for the inclusion of diverse voices in environmental decision-making processes. This includes not only governmental bodies and environmental experts but also local communities, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups who are often disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. By fostering a more inclusive approach, eco-democracy aims to ensure that environmental policies reflect the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders, particularly those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental change.

Another important aspect of eco-democracy is the emphasis on transparency and accountability. In many traditional governance systems, environmental policies are shaped by powerful corporate interests and political elites, leading to decisions that prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term environmental sustainability. Eco-democracy seeks to counter this by promoting transparency in environmental governance, ensuring that decisions are made in an open and accountable manner. This is particularly relevant in the context of greenwashing a practice where corporations or governments deceptively present their activities as environmentally friendly to gain public approval without making meaningful changes. By holding policymakers and corporations accountable, eco-democracy helps prevent such practices and encourages genuine commitments to environmental sustainability.

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The transition to eco-democracy also necessitates legal and institutional reforms. Environmental challenges, by their nature, often transcend national borders and require coordinated efforts at the international level. This has led to the development of various international agreements and institutions aimed at addressing global environmental issues, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>6</sup>. However, eco-democracy calls for more robust legal frameworks that not only address environmental problems but also enshrine environmental rights as fundamental human rights. The recognition of the environment as a legal subject, as seen in some countries like Ecuador and New Zealand, where nature is granted legal rights, is an example of how legal systems are evolving to incorporate the principles of eco-democracy. These developments reflect a growing understanding that environmental protection must be integrated into the core of governance structures, rather than treated as a peripheral issue.

In addition to legal reforms, eco-democracy emphasizes the need for innovation in governance mechanisms. Traditional hierarchical governance structures are often slow to respond to the dynamic and complex nature of environmental challenges. In contrast, eco-democracy promotes more flexible, decentralized, and adaptive governance models that can better accommodate the rapidly changing environmental landscape. This includes the use of technology and data-driven decision-making processes to enhance environmental monitoring, as well as the

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<sup>6</sup> Malgosia Fitzmaurice, "Biodiversity and Climate Change," *International Community Law Review* 23, no. 2-3 (June 29, 2021): 230-40, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18719732-12341473>.

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development of multi-level governance structures that facilitate cooperation between local, national, and international actors. Green politics, which is deeply intertwined with the concept of eco-democracy, further underscores the importance of aligning political ideologies with environmental sustainability. Green political parties and movements have become prominent in many countries, advocating for policies that prioritize renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and climate justice. These parties often emphasize the need for systemic changes to the economy, advocating for a shift away from fossil fuel dependence and towards more sustainable, circular economies. Green politics also highlights the importance of intergenerational equity, recognizing that current environmental policies will have lasting impacts on future generations. By promoting policies that protect the environment for the long term, green politics aligns closely with the goals of eco-democracy.

Moreover, eco-democracy aligns with broader global trends in sustainable development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 13 on climate action, Goal 14 on life below water, and Goal 15 on life on land, provide a comprehensive framework for promoting environmental sustainability alongside social and economic development.<sup>7</sup> Eco-democracy offers a governance model that can help achieve these goals by integrating environmental considerations into all levels of policy-making and ensuring that sustainable development is pursued

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<sup>7</sup> Maria Angela Capello, "President's Page: Advancing Sustainability in SEG," *Leading Edge* 41, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 6-7, [https://doi.org/10.1190/TLE41010006.1/ASSET/IMAGES/LARGE/TLE41010006.1\\_FIG1.JPEG](https://doi.org/10.1190/TLE41010006.1/ASSET/IMAGES/LARGE/TLE41010006.1_FIG1.JPEG).

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through democratic processes. This alignment between eco-democracy and the SDGs demonstrates the potential of eco-democracy to contribute to global efforts to combat environmental degradation and promote a more sustainable and equitable world.

Despite its potential, the implementation of eco-democracy faces several challenges. One major obstacle is the resistance from entrenched political and economic interests that benefit from the status quo. In many countries, powerful industries such as oil, gas, and mining have significant influence over environmental policies, making it difficult to enact reforms that prioritize sustainability. Additionally, there is often a lack of political will to implement eco-democracy, particularly in countries where environmental concerns are viewed as secondary to economic development. Overcoming these challenges requires a concerted effort from civil society, environmental activists, and forward-thinking political leaders to push for the necessary changes in governance structures and policies.

Another challenge is the need for public awareness and education. For eco-democracy to be effective, citizens must be informed about environmental issues and empowered to participate in decision-making processes. This requires comprehensive environmental education programs that raise awareness about the importance of sustainability and equip citizens with the knowledge and skills to engage in environmental governance. It also requires the development of platforms and mechanisms that facilitate public participation, such as public consultations, citizen assemblies, and digital platforms for environmental advocacy.

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## Problem Formulation

The central issue in understanding eco-democracy lies in how its principles and practices can be effectively applied in modern governance to achieve a balance between environmental sustainability and social justice. Additionally, there is a question of how green politics can contribute to promoting sustainable governance, which actively seeks to balance environmental interests with development goals. In Indonesia, the implementation of eco-democracy and the integration of green politics face various opportunities and challenges, including the country's complex political, social, and economic factors. Therefore, a thorough analysis is needed to explore how Indonesia can adopt these approaches to create sustainable and inclusive governance.

## II. Method

This study utilizes a normative legal research method<sup>8</sup>, focusing on the analysis of existing legal norms to explore the concept of eco-democracy in the context of environmental governance. The research adopts three primary approaches. First, the conceptual approach is used to analyze the fundamental concepts of eco-democracy and green politics. This approach involves reviewing relevant literature, theories, and ideas related to participatory and sustainable environmental governance, along with their connection to

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<sup>8</sup> Ria Anggraeni Utami & Zico Junius Fernando Agusalim, "Green Victimology: Sebuah Konsep Perlindungan Korban Dan Penegakan Hukum Lingkungan Di Indonesia," *Bina Hukum Lingkungan* 7, no. 1 (October 2022): 60-79, <https://doi.org/10.24970/BHL.V7I1.302>.

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democratic principles and social justice. Second, the comparative approach is employed to compare the implementation of eco-democracy in various countries, such as Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand, Germany etc. By examining how these nations have recognized the rights of nature and involved public participation in environmental decision-making, this approach helps to assess the relevance and potential application of eco-democracy in Indonesia. Third, the futuristic approach is used to formulate forward-looking policy recommendations based on global trends and the analysis of data, considering the potential challenges and opportunities for implementing eco-democracy in the future. The study relies on secondary data sources, including primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials.<sup>9</sup> The collected data is analyzed using content analysis<sup>10</sup>, which allows for a detailed evaluation of the legal and policy frameworks related to eco-democracy and environmental governance. Overall, this methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of the potential for eco-democracy in Indonesia and addresses the challenges and solutions that may arise in its implementation.

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<sup>9</sup> Zico Junius Fernando et al., "Robot Lawyer in Indonesian Criminal Justice System: Problems and Challenges for Future Law Enforcement," *Lex Scientia Law Review* 7, no. 2 (November 14, 2023): 489-528, <https://doi.org/10.15294/LESREV.V7I2.69423>.

<sup>10</sup> Hendra Karianga and Zico Junius Fernando, "The Damage of the Shadow Economy: The Urgency of Addressing Foreign Bribery in Indonesia," *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* 16, no. 2 (April 1, 2024): 783-96, <https://doi.org/10.62271/PJC.16.2.783.796>.

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### III. DISCUSSION

#### *Understanding Eco-Democracy: Principles and Practices*

Eco-democracy is a modern concept that emerges from the fusion of democratic theory with the urgent need to preserve environmental sustainability. This concept does not originate from a single figure or movement but has evolved through various schools of thought in political ecology, environmental philosophy, and participatory democracy theory. It developed in response to the weaknesses of traditional democracy, which often fails to address environmental crises effectively. Therefore, eco-democracy places the environment as an integral part of political decision-making processes, shifting the focus from merely human interests to the well-being of ecosystems as a whole. One of the key figures in the development of eco-democracy is Murray Bookchin, with his concept of *social ecology*. In his work *Ecology of Freedom* (1982), Bookchin links environmental degradation to hierarchical and undemocratic social structures. He argues that environmental problems cannot be solved solely by policies created by political elites but require direct democracy that allows for broad public participation in decisions affecting their environment. According to Bookchin, true democracy can only be achieved when decisions about the environment are placed in the hands of the people, not those in power.

Another important contribution comes from David Held, who, through his theory of *democratic cosmopolitanism*, emphasizes the importance of global public engagement in

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addressing cross-border environmental issues.<sup>11</sup> Held develops the idea that democracy must become more deliberative, providing the public with the opportunity to participate in policy formulation, including environmental policies. This idea is further deepened by John Dryzek, who in his book *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond* (2000), highlights the need for more deliberative and inclusive democracy in addressing environmental issues. Dryzek argues that traditional democracy often focuses too much on short-term interests, which ultimately harms ecological sustainability.<sup>12</sup>

Robyn Eckersley adds another important dimension to the discourse on eco-democracy through her work *Environmentalism and Political Theory* (1992), in which she argues that democracy should protect not only human rights but also the rights of nature and ecosystems. Eckersley believes that environmental sustainability must be an integral part of political processes, where ecosystems are seen as actors with rights in decision-making.<sup>13</sup> This idea is further strengthened by Elinor Ostrom, Nobel Prize-winning economist, who in her book *Governing the Commons* (1990), shows how local communities can democratically and sustainably manage

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Lupel, "Tasks of A Global Civil Society: Held, Habermas and Democratic Legitimacy Beyond The Nation-State," *Globalizations* 2, no. 1 (May 1, 2005): 117-33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747730500085171>.

<sup>12</sup> John S Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford University Press, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.1093/019925043X.001.0001>.

<sup>13</sup> Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward An Ecocentric Approach, Environmentalism And Political Theory: Toward An Ecocentric Approach* (Taylor and Francis, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315072111/ENVIRONMENTALISM-POLITICAL-THEORY-ROBYN-ECKERSLEY/ACCESSIBILITY-INFORMATION>.

natural resources. Ostrom's principles of communal resource management are highly relevant to eco-democracy, where local communities take responsibility for the sustainability of their environments.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Bruno Latour introduces a more radical perspective in eco-democracy through his work *Politics of Nature* (2004), proposing that nature should not merely be seen as a political object to be regulated by humans but as an equal political actor. Latour emphasizes the importance of nature's participation in the political process, aligning with the principles of eco-democracy, which seeks to treat the environment as a legal subject with rights that must be respected.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the concept of *intergenerational justice* is a crucial component of eco-democracy. This theory asserts that political decisions and public policies must consider their impact on future generations.<sup>16</sup> Ecological justice, according to this theory, involves ensuring that future generations can enjoy the same rights to a healthy and sustainable environment. It entails a moral responsibility to protect limited natural resources for the future. Lastly, *green political theory* underscores the importance of sustainability and environmental conservation as central to political theory and governance. This theory advocates for systemic changes in

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<sup>14</sup> Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Canto Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/CBO9781316423936>.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Nordquist, "Title: A Democracy of Things? On Bruno Latour's Democratic Politics," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2010, 1-10, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1580323](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1580323).

<sup>16</sup> Michael Rose, "All-Affected, Non-Identity and the Political Representation of Future Generations: Linking Intergenerational Justice with Democracy in: Intergenerational Equity," in *Intergenerational Equity*, 2019, 32-51, [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004388000\\_004](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004388000_004).

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political decision-making, where environmental and ecosystem considerations become integral to society. Thus, eco-democracy promotes democratic and sustainable political governance to ensure the harmonious survival of both humanity and the environment.

Eco-democracy has evolved as a result of the fusion of various ideas from the fields of ecology, politics, and justice theory. Thinkers such as Murray Bookchin, John Dryzek, Robyn Eckersley, and Elinor Ostrom have made significant contributions in creating a framework where the environment is regarded as an important part of the political and democratic process. Eco-democracy seeks to integrate environmental and human interests in a more participatory and sustainable decision-making process.

Eco-democracy has been adopted by several countries in their policies and governance systems, particularly in relation to environmental protection and public participation in decision-making on environmental issues. These countries have integrated the principles of eco-democracy by recognizing the importance of the environment as an integral part of political processes. Below are examples of countries that have embraced concepts aligned with eco-democracy:

1. Ecuador

Ecuador is one of the first countries to officially recognize the *Rights of Nature* in its 2008 Constitution. In this Constitution, nature, or *Pacha Mama*, is considered a legal entity with rights, including the right to exist, develop, and be restored in cases of harm.<sup>17</sup> This approach allows citizens or community groups to file lawsuits on behalf of nature

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<sup>17</sup> Synneva Geithus Laastad, "Nature as a Subject of Rights? National Discourses on Ecuador's Constitutional Rights of Nature," *Forum for Development Studies* 47, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 401-25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2019.1654544>.

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against those who damage it. This recognition is a significant step towards eco-democracy, where nature is treated as a legal subject equal to humans.

## 2. Bolivia

Bolivia followed Ecuador's example by passing the *Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra* or the Law of Mother Earth's Rights in 2010. This law grants legal rights to nature, affirming that nature has the right to live, develop, and maintain its natural cycles. Bolivia adopts a holistic view of the relationship between humans and the environment, which lies at the core of eco-democracy. This approach ensures that political decisions take into account long-term impacts on ecosystems.<sup>18</sup>

## 3. Iceland

Iceland is well-known for its strong public participation in decision-making processes, especially in environmental policies. The country utilizes renewable energy almost exclusively, with geothermal and hydroelectric power being the main sources.<sup>19</sup> Iceland also engages in extensive public consultation regarding environmental policies, creating a strong example of eco-democracy where the public is actively involved in determining the direction of policies affecting the environment.

## 4. Finland

Finland stands out for its public involvement in political decision-making, including in environmental policy. The

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<sup>18</sup> Cletus Gregor Barié, "Doce Años de Soledad de Los Derechos de La Madre Tierra En Bolivia," *Naturaleza y Sociedad. Desafíos Medioambientales*, no. 4 (December 1, 2022): 142–82, <https://doi.org/10.53010/NYS4.05>.

<sup>19</sup> Halla Hrund Logadóttir, "Iceland's Sustainable Energy Story: A Model for The World?," *UN Chronicle* 52, no. 3 (April 25, 2013): 40–45, <https://doi.org/10.18356/639208EE-EN>.

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Finnish government regularly holds public consultations on environmental issues, and the country has adopted ambitious targets to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035.<sup>20</sup> The extensive public participation in formulating climate and environmental policies demonstrates how the principles of eco-democracy can be integrated into an established democratic system.

#### 5. Germany

Germany has long been recognized as a pioneer in environmental policies and renewable energy. The country's *Energiewende* policy aims to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar. The German government also encourages public involvement in renewable energy projects by providing incentives for local initiatives.<sup>21</sup> This illustrates how eco-democracy is applied in the context of widespread public participation in the transition towards cleaner and more sustainable energy.

#### 6. Norway

Norway is a country that is highly focused on environmental sustainability and has incorporated public participation principles into environmental decision-making.<sup>22</sup> The country's policies on forest protection and

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<sup>20</sup> Vesa Koskimaa, Lauri Rapeli, and Juha Hiedanpää, "Governing Through Strategies: How Does Finland Sustain a Future-Oriented Environmental Policy for The Long Term?," *Futures* 125 (2021): 1-7,

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2020.102667>.

<sup>21</sup> Solange Reis, "Energiewende: German Energy Policy in Times of Green Transition," *Carta Internacional* 12, no. 3 (2017): 29-249, <https://doi.org/10.21530/ci.v12n3.2017.649>.

<sup>22</sup> Liv Astrid Sverdrup, "Norway's Institutional Response to Sustainable Development," *Environmental Politics* 6, no. 1 (March 1, 1997): 54-82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644019708414311>.

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polar environment conservation, along with its commitment to reducing carbon emissions, make it an important example of eco-democracy. Norway also has policies that allow indigenous peoples, such as the Sami, to be directly involved in protecting natural resources.

#### 7. New Zealand

New Zealand introduced a unique law in 2017 by recognizing the Whanganui River as a “legal entity.”<sup>23</sup> This river now holds rights equivalent to a human being under the law, and the New Zealand government works alongside the indigenous Maori community to manage and protect the river. This is a concrete example of eco-democracy, where nature is granted legal rights and environmental decisions involve active community participation.<sup>24</sup>

#### 8. Sweden

Sweden is frequently cited as one of the leading countries in environmental policy. Sweden has ambitious goals to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, and the country consistently integrates eco-democracy principles into public policy. Sweden also provides opportunities for the public to be involved in environmental decision-making, including in planning renewable energy projects and biodiversity conservation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Abigail Hutchison, “The Whanganui River as a Legal Person,” *Alternative Law Journal* 39, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 179, [https://doi.org/10.1177/1037969X1403900309/ASSET/1037969X1403900309.FP.PNG\\_V03](https://doi.org/10.1177/1037969X1403900309/ASSET/1037969X1403900309.FP.PNG_V03).

<sup>24</sup> Catherine J. Iorns Magallanes, “From Rights to Responsibilities Using Legal Personhood and Guardianship for Rivers,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, August 21, 2019, 216–39, <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.3270391>.

<sup>25</sup> Maria Mansson, “Sweden – The World’s Most Sustainable Country: Political Statements and Goals for a Sustainable

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Several countries around the world have taken significant steps to integrate the principles of eco-democracy into their governance systems. Countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and New Zealand have pioneered the recognition of legal rights for nature, while others like Germany, Norway, and Canada focus on public participation in environmental policy. These examples demonstrate that eco-democracy is not merely a theoretical concept but can be implemented through policies that prioritize sustainability and ecological justice.

Unlike conventional democracy, which is often dominated by short-term interests and economic growth, eco-democracy offers a more holistic approach. Conventional democracy tends to focus on electoral cycles and political promises that are oriented toward immediate interests. This often neglects the long-term environmental impact and leads to excessive exploitation of natural resources. Eco-democracy, on the other hand, emphasizes long-term sustainability and responsibility toward future generations. Policies made within the eco-democracy framework take into account the ecological impact of every political decision. Moreover, eco-democracy expands the concept of public participation, not only for humans but also for natural ecosystems, whose voices are represented in the political process.<sup>26</sup>

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Society," *Earth Common Journal* 6, no. 1 (2016): 16–22, <https://doi.org/10.31542/j.ecj.887>.

<sup>26</sup> Helen Kopnina et al., "Ecodemocracy in Practice: Exploration of Debates on Limits and Possibilities of Addressing Environmental Challenges Within Democratic Systems," *Visions for Sustainability* 2021, no. 15 (2021): 9–23, <https://doi.org/10.13135/2384-8677/5832>.

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## *Green Politics and Sustainable Governance*

Green politics or environmental politics, is a political movement that places the environment at the center of public policy and governance.<sup>27</sup> This movement emerged out of concerns about environmental degradation, excessive exploitation of natural resources, and the threat of global climate change. Across the world, green politics has developed as a response to traditional political systems that often fail to consider ecological sustainability. On the other hand, *sustainable governance* is an approach to government that emphasizes the importance of making decisions that take into account the long-term impacts on the environment, economy, and social well-being. The core principle of sustainable governance is to create a balance between current needs and the rights of future generations. In this context, green politics plays a crucial role in shaping public policy toward a greater focus on sustainability, particularly in terms of maintaining ecosystem balance, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting social and environmental justice.

The history of green politics can be traced back to the 1970s, when global awareness of the negative impact of unchecked economic growth on the environment began to rise.<sup>28</sup> The energy crisis of the 1970s and the publication of *The Limits to Growth* by the Club of Rome in 1972, which warned about the limitations of natural resources, prompted many

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<sup>27</sup> Yeni Sri Lestari, "Environmentalism Dan Politik Hijau: Tinjauan Teoretis," *Community: Pengawas Dinamika Sosial* 2, no. 2 (April 2, 2018): 188–200, <https://doi.org/10.35308/JCPDS.V2I2.137>.

<sup>28</sup> Lucia Bonfreschi and Marzia Maccaferri, "Introduction: 'Greening' European Political Cultures," *European History Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (June 21, 2022): 327–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02656914221104583>.

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countries to begin considering environmental aspects in their policies.<sup>29</sup> Political parties focused on green issues also began to form in many countries. One of the earliest and most well-known examples is *Die Grünen* (The Green Party) in Germany, which was founded in 1980. This party aimed to integrate sustainability principles into public policy by emphasizing renewable energy, pollution reduction, and biodiversity protection.<sup>30</sup> The German Green Party became an inspiration for the formation of other green parties in countries such as the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom. At the same time, environmental activism outside formal political realms was also rapidly growing. Movements like *Greenpeace* and *Friends of the Earth* played key roles in raising public awareness about the need to protect the environment from threats such as deforestation, ocean pollution, and climate change.

Green politics operates on a set of clear and consistent principles, all of which focus on ecological sustainability and social justice. Some of the key principles include:

1. Ecological Sustainability

Green politics is committed to ensuring that public policies are made with consideration for the balance of ecosystems. This involves efforts to reduce carbon emissions, protect biodiversity, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. Renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, and geothermal power, play a significant role in green

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<sup>29</sup> Matthias Schmelzer, "Born in The Corridors of The OECD': The Forgotten Origins of The Club of Rome, Transnational Networks, and The 1970s in Global History," *Journal of Global History* 12, no. 1 (2017): 26–48, <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/S1740022816000322>.

<sup>30</sup> Emil Kwidziński, "German Green Party: The Evolution of Political Agenda," *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society* 10, no. 2 (June 22, 2020): 45–51, <https://doi.org/10.26881/JPGS.2020.2.06>.

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policies, as they are more environmentally friendly alternatives to fossil fuels.

## 2. Social and Ecological Justice

Green politics recognizes that the negative impacts of environmental degradation are often felt most severely by the economically and socially vulnerable. Therefore, green politics focuses not only on environmental preservation but also on social justice, advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples, small-scale farmers, and communities that depend on the natural environment for their livelihoods.

## 3. Broader Public Participation

One of the core principles of green politics is the importance of public participation in political decision-making, particularly regarding environmental policy. Green politics emphasizes that people should be involved in decisions that affect the environment they live in, whether through referendums, public consultations, or advocacy campaigns.

## 4. Decentralization of Power

Green politics tends to support the decentralization of power, where decisions related to the environment and natural resources are managed at the local or regional level. This is considered more effective than centralized decision-making, which often overlooks the specific conditions of a region or local community.

## 5. Non-Violence and Peace

The green movement frequently links peace and non-violence with environmental sustainability. Violence and conflict are often tied to competition over limited natural resources, so green politics promotes diplomacy, dialogue, and international cooperation in addressing environmental issues and ensuring fair access to resources.

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Green politics has played a significant role in influencing sustainable governance in many countries. Here are some ways in which green politics shapes sustainable governance:

### 1. Renewable Energy Policies

One of the most notable contributions of green politics to sustainable governance is its advocacy for the transition to renewable energy. In countries like Germany and Sweden, green parties and environmental activists have pushed for policies that transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

### 2. Biodiversity Protection

Green politics has also played a key role in protecting biodiversity. In many cases, green politics has influenced conservation policies, either through legislation to protect critical habitats or through campaigns to stop the destruction of rainforests and other sensitive ecosystems. For instance, the Green Party in Brazil has worked hard to protect the Amazon rainforest from destructive commercial exploitation.<sup>31</sup> Biodiversity protection is vital not only for maintaining healthy ecosystems but also for safeguarding indigenous peoples and local communities who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. Green politics often seeks to link social justice with environmental protection, creating a more holistic approach to governance.

### 3. Environmental Law Enforcement

Green politics has been instrumental in strengthening the enforcement of environmental laws. In many countries, green political movements have pushed for stricter environmental regulations and stronger mechanisms for

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<sup>31</sup> Doug Boucher, Sarah Roquemore, and Estrellita Fitzhugh, "Brazil's Success in Reducing Deforestation," *Tropical Conservation Science* 6, no. 3 (August 1, 2013): 426-45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/194008291300600308>.

holding companies accountable for violating environmental laws. Policies such as carbon taxes, incentives for environmentally friendly businesses, and heavy penalties for environmental offenders are the result of green political pressure.

#### 4. Climate Justice

Green politics is closely aligned with the concept of climate justice, where climate policies focus not only on mitigating the impacts of climate change but also on considering who is most affected by it. Developing countries and impoverished communities are often the primary victims of climate change, despite contributing very little to the problem. Green politics pushes developed nations to take responsibility for their contributions to climate change and provide technological and financial support to developing countries to help them adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Several countries have become pioneers in integrating the principles of green politics into their national policies. Germany, through its *energiewende* program, and Sweden, with its ambitious target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. The Green Party in Germany has played a pivotal role in driving the *Energiewende* policy, which aims to shift the country's energy consumption away from fossil fuels and nuclear power to renewable energy sources.<sup>32</sup> This ambitious program is one of the most comprehensive renewable energy initiatives globally, focusing on increasing the use of solar and

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<sup>32</sup> Aurélien Evrard, "Political Parties and Policy Change: Explaining the Impact of French and German Greens on Energy Policy," *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 14, no. 4 (August 1, 2012): 275-91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2012.698582>.

wind power, while also phasing out coal and nuclear energy. The success of *Energiewende* demonstrates how green politics can shape national policies with long-term impacts on sustainability.<sup>33</sup> The Green Party's influence has also extended to creating frameworks that promote energy efficiency and environmental innovation across sectors, showing that eco-friendly policies can coexist with economic growth. Furthermore, Germany's commitment to renewable energy is accompanied by efforts to decarbonize its industrial sector, foster energy independence, and address climate change, highlighting how green political movements can drive transformative changes at both national and global levels.

Sweden stands as one of the most committed nations in achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. Its green policies are characterized by aggressive carbon emission reduction targets, increased use of renewable energy, and tax incentives for electric vehicles and environmentally friendly industries. Sweden has implemented substantial measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon taxes and investments in clean energy technologies.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the country has introduced progressive policies to reduce waste and boost recycling, driven by the principle of a circular economy. Public transport systems in Sweden have also been overhauled to become more sustainable, with cities like

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<sup>33</sup> Christian Von Hirschhausen, "The German 'Energiewende' – An," *Economics of Energy & Environmental Policy* 3, no. 2 (2014): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.5547/2160-5890.3.2.CHIR>.

<sup>34</sup> Sergey Stanislavovich Murtuzaliev and Svetlana Yuryevna Murtuzalieva, "Development of The Green Economy in Sweden," *Mezhdunarodnaja Jekonomika (The World Economics)*, no. 6 (May 24, 2022): 440–49, <https://doi.org/10.33920/VNE-04-2206-04>.

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Stockholm aiming for fossil fuel-free transportation by 2030.<sup>35</sup> Sweden's holistic approach, influenced by green politics, not only focuses on reducing its carbon footprint but also integrates social and economic sustainability, ensuring that policies benefit the environment, economy, and society alike. These actions showcase how green politics, when integrated into national governance, can lead to comprehensive policy shifts that prioritize long-term ecological balance and innovation in sustainable practices.

### ***Integrating Eco-Democracy and Green Politics in Indonesia: Opportunities and Challenges***

Indonesia, as the largest archipelago in the world, boasts extraordinary biodiversity, ranging from tropical rainforests in Sumatra and Kalimantan to coral reefs in the waters of Papua.<sup>36</sup> However, this vast natural wealth is also confronted with serious challenges, including deforestation, land degradation, climate change, and pollution. These environmental issues necessitate that Indonesia find sustainable solutions for managing its natural resources. In this context, the integration of eco-democracy and green politics in Indonesia becomes increasingly relevant. Eco-democracy emphasizes the importance of public participation and the recognition of nature's rights in political decision-

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<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey R. Kenworthy, "Urban Transport and Eco-Urbanism: A Global Comparative Study of Cities with a Special Focus on Five Larger Swedish Urban Regions," *Urban Science* 3, no. 1 (February 27, 2019): 1–44, <https://doi.org/10.3390/URBANSOCI3010025>.

<sup>36</sup> Didik Widyatmoko, "Biodiversity in Indonesia," in *Global Biodiversity* (Apple Academic Press, 2018), 149–64, <https://doi.org/10.1201/9780429487743-5>.

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making. Green politics, on the other hand, focuses on environmental sustainability, social justice, and the preservation of natural resources. Integrating these two concepts in Indonesia, while adhering to the principles of the Constitution, Pancasila, and the 1945 Constitution, presents great opportunities but also faces various challenges.

Indonesia has a strong constitutional and ideological foundation to support environmental sustainability, as reflected in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945) and Pancasila.<sup>37</sup> Pancasila, as the state ideology, embodies core values that can be integrated with the principles of eco-democracy and green politics. Several of its principles are highly relevant in supporting these concepts. The second principle, "Just and Civilized Humanity," underscores the importance of justice, not only for humans but also for the environment. Ecological justice and the protection of sustainable ecosystems align with the concept of humane justice, where excessive exploitation of natural resources is seen as a violation of humanity's principles. Green politics resonates with this principle by promoting policies that balance human needs with environmental protection. The third principle, "*The Unity of Indonesia*," highlights how environmental degradation can lead to social conflict, as seen in land disputes and deforestation in various regions of Indonesia. This principle emphasizes the need to maintain national unity, which can be achieved by preserving natural resources, as they are a collective right of all citizens. Sustainable resource management helps to strengthen the unity of Indonesia by preventing resource-driven conflicts and

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<sup>37</sup> Sekar Anggun Gading Pinilih, "The Concept of A Green Constitution in The 1945 Constitution of The Republic of Indonesia," *Mimbar Hukum* 30, no. 1 (February 15, 2018): 200–211, <https://doi.org/10.22146/JMH.28684>.

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promoting social harmony. The fifth principle, "*Social Justice for All Indonesians*," closely ties social justice to ecological justice. Green politics seeks to ensure that the negative impacts of environmental degradation, such as climate change, do not disproportionately affect vulnerable groups but are addressed fairly across society. This principle underscores the need for equitable distribution of the benefits of sustainably managed natural resources, ensuring that all citizens, especially those marginalized, benefit from development without bearing the brunt of environmental harm.

In addition to Pancasila, the UUD NRI 1945 provides a constitutional foundation supporting eco-democracy and green politics. Article 28H(1) of the UUD NRI 1945 states that every person has the right to live in physical and mental well-being and to reside in a good and healthy environment. This provision affirms the state's obligation to ensure environmental sustainability for the well-being of its people, linking environmental health to the overall welfare of individuals and communities. Furthermore, Article 33(3) of the UUD NRI 1945 establishes that the earth, water, and natural resources within Indonesia are controlled by the state and must be utilized for the greatest possible prosperity of the people. This article provides a strong legal basis for Indonesia to manage its natural resources sustainably, prioritizing the welfare of the broader population over corporate interests or exploitative practices. It aligns with the principles of eco-democracy, ensuring that natural resources are managed to serve the long-term prosperity and well-being of all Indonesians.

Indonesia has tremendous potential to integrate the principles of eco-democracy and green politics into its environmental policies and governance. As a country rich in biodiversity and abundant natural resources, Indonesia faces

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significant challenges in managing its environment sustainably. However, with the right approach, Indonesia also has the opportunity to become a pioneer in implementing eco-democracy and green politics. The following are some key opportunities that can be leveraged in this context:

#### 1. Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making

One of the essential elements of eco-democracy is public involvement in environmental decision-making. In Indonesia, mechanisms for public participation are already regulated by various laws, such as in the environmental impact assessment (AMDAL) process. However, there is still a significant opportunity to expand and deepen public participation, especially in projects that directly impact the environment. Involving local communities, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable groups in decision-making about land use, natural resource exploitation, and large-scale development projects can foster better sustainability. This aligns with Pancasila's principle, which emphasizes the active participation of all citizens in achieving collective well-being, in line with the spirit of eco-democracy, which prioritizes transparency and accountability in environmental management. Iceland has successfully implemented a system where public participation plays a key role in decision-making, particularly in the management of natural resources like geothermal energy and fisheries. The public is given the opportunity to provide input through consultations facilitated by the government, ensuring that people feel they have a stake in the decisions being made. This process promotes transparency and accountability in decision-making, allowing citizens to feel a sense of ownership over policies that affect them. This model of public participation in Iceland, especially in the management of natural resources, can serve as an example

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for Indonesia. By facilitating broader, more transparent, and accessible public consultations at both the local and national levels, the Indonesian government could strengthen community involvement in environmental and resource management decisions. This approach could enhance accountability, encourage more sustainable decisions, and reduce conflicts that may arise from natural resource exploitation.

## 2. Recognition of Nature's Rights and Biodiversity

Eco-democracy also emphasizes the recognition of nature's rights, where nature is considered to have basic rights, similar to humans. Countries like Ecuador and New Zealand have recognized legal rights for nature, where ecosystems such as rivers and forests are granted legal status and the right to be protected. In Indonesia, the potential to adopt a similar approach is vast, especially considering its rich biodiversity and the threats facing critical ecosystems like rainforests and coral reefs. Indonesia's customary laws, which often include sustainable principles, can be used to strengthen community-based natural resource management. Formal legal recognition of nature's rights can not only enhance ecosystem sustainability but also respect local traditions and indigenous knowledge that have long contributed to environmental conservation.

## 3. Renewable Energy Policies

The transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is one of the core pillars of green politics. Indonesia has significant potential in renewable energy, particularly geothermal, solar, and wind energy. Although the Indonesian government has set ambitious targets to increase the contribution of renewable energy in the national energy mix, its implementation still requires further support, both

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in terms of policy and public participation. Denmark is a prime example of community-based renewable energy development. The country not only leads globally in wind energy but also actively involves local communities in the management and ownership of renewable energy projects, where local residents hold shares in these initiatives. Indonesia can take inspiration from Denmark by promoting local renewable energy projects that engage communities in the utilization of renewable energy resources, particularly in remote areas that are not connected to the national electricity grid.

Eco-democracy can play a crucial role in encouraging community involvement in renewable energy projects. Through decentralized energy schemes, local communities can directly participate in the development and utilization of renewable energy that taps into local natural resources. This will not only accelerate the energy transition in Indonesia but also strengthen community engagement in creating a more inclusive and equitable energy sustainability framework. With the right approach, Indonesia has a significant opportunity to become a pioneer in the implementation of eco-democracy and green politics in Southeast Asia. By strengthening public participation in environmental decision-making, recognizing the rights of nature, and harnessing the potential of renewable energy, Indonesia can create a more sustainable, equitable, and participatory environmental governance system. This not only will enhance environmental well-being domestically but also position Indonesia as a global model for balancing development with the preservation of nature.

While there are significant opportunities, factors such as economic interests, low environmental awareness, and corruption remain major obstacles. The following are some key

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challenges Indonesia faces in implementing the principles of eco-democracy and green politics:

### 1. Conflict Between Economic and Environmental Interests

One of the biggest challenges in integrating eco-democracy and green politics in Indonesia is the conflict between economic interests and environmental sustainability. Many large-scale development projects, such as mining and palm oil plantations, bring short-term economic benefits but cause long-term environmental damage. The government often faces a dilemma between promoting economic growth and protecting the environment. The implementation of eco-democracy requires balancing economic development with environmental preservation. The principle of sustainable development, in accordance with the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, should be a priority, focusing on long-term benefits rather than short-term gains. This policy demands a shift in perspective toward development that not only seeks economic profit but also considers sustainable environmental impacts.

### 2. Lack of Environmental Education and Awareness

Another challenge is the low level of environmental awareness among the public. Although public participation is a core principle of eco-democracy, many people in Indonesia still lack adequate access to information about environmental issues. The lack of education and comprehensive understanding of the importance of ecosystem sustainability can hinder public participation in environmental decision-making. Therefore, environmental education and outreach must be an integral part of the strategy to integrate eco-democracy in Indonesia. Raising public awareness can help create a more environmentally conscious society and encourage active involvement in environmental conservation.

### 3. Corruption and Corporate Interests

Corruption in the management of natural resources and the dominance of corporate interests in political decision-making are also significant obstacles to the implementation of eco-democracy and green politics. The management of natural resources, which should be used for the prosperity of the people, is often controlled by a small economic elite who exploit natural wealth without considering environmental impacts. Corruption exacerbates this issue, with improper licensing and disregard for environmental regulations becoming common practices. Therefore, efforts to combat corruption and reform governance with transparency must be integral to the efforts to integrate eco-democracy and green politics. These measures are crucial to ensure that Indonesia's natural resources are managed sustainably and responsibly, for the benefit of all citizens and the preservation of the environment.

### 4. Institutional and Regulatory Gaps

Another challenge lies in the regulatory and institutional frameworks governing environmental protection in Indonesia. While there are numerous laws and regulations related to environmental management, the enforcement of these laws is often weak. Lack of coordination between government agencies, overlapping jurisdiction, and bureaucratic inefficiency can hinder effective implementation. Furthermore, loopholes in environmental legislation and limited capacity of local governments to manage resources sustainably exacerbate these challenges. Strengthening institutional capacity, improving regulatory frameworks, and enhancing the role of local governments in environmental management are necessary to overcome these challenges. Promoting decentralized environmental governance that allows local communities to manage their

natural resources can also foster greater accountability and more sustainable outcomes.

#### 5. Socioeconomic Disparities

Socioeconomic disparities also contribute to the challenges of implementing eco-democracy in Indonesia. Rural and indigenous communities, who often live in areas rich in natural resources, are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and may lack the political influence to protect their rights. Large corporations, on the other hand, often hold significant economic and political power, which they use to exploit these resources with little regard for the environment. To address this imbalance, policies must prioritize inclusive development that ensures the equitable distribution of the benefits from natural resources. Supporting community-led conservation efforts, protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, and promoting social justice alongside environmental sustainability are crucial elements of an integrated eco-democracy and green politics approach.

The integration of eco-democracy and green politics in Indonesia presents a significant opportunity to create a more sustainable, just, and participatory environmental governance. By utilizing the strong constitutional foundation provided by the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945) and adhering to the values of Pancasila, Indonesia can develop environmental policies that focus not only on short-term interests but also on the long-term welfare of future generations. Challenges such as conflicts between economic interests, corruption, and low environmental awareness must be addressed through comprehensive and sustainable strategies.

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## IV. Conclusion

Eco-democracy is a governance model that integrates democratic principles with environmental sustainability. This model promotes inclusive participation, transparency, and accountability in decision-making processes related to environmental issues. Eco-democracy emerges as a solution to the weaknesses of traditional governance approaches, which often prioritize short-term economic growth over ecological balance. By involving the voices of citizens, communities, and vulnerable groups, eco-democracy ensures that environmental policies are not only ecologically sustainable but also socially just. Several countries, such as Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand, and Germany, have demonstrated that the implementation of eco-democracy and green politics can be achieved through legal recognition of the rights of nature, public involvement in governance, and sustainable policies such as renewable energy transitions. These examples show that eco-democracy is not just a theoretical concept but can be practically implemented through comprehensive policy and governance reforms. Indonesia, with its vast natural resources and extraordinary biodiversity, holds great potential to adopt eco-democracy and green politics. The integration of these concepts with the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution provides a strong foundation for Indonesia to achieve a balance between economic development and environmental protection. Pancasila's principles, such as social justice and collective well-being, align with the goals of eco-democracy, which promotes public participation, transparency, and sustainability. However, Indonesia faces significant challenges, including conflicts between economic and environmental interests, corruption, low environmental

awareness, and regulatory and institutional gaps. Addressing these challenges will require a comprehensive approach through legal reforms, institutional capacity building, environmental education, and anti-corruption efforts. Eco-democracy and green politics offer a pathway to a more sustainable and just future for Indonesia. By applying these principles, Indonesia can create a more participatory, fair, and sustainable environmental governance system. This will not only benefit the current generation but also ensure the preservation of natural resources and the well-being of future generations across Indonesia.

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