

# The Transformation Of Entrepreneurs Into Politicians Through Nusantara Gilang Gemilang In The 2024 Election Contest

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**Abstract:** This study examines the strategic role of the Nusantara Gilang Gemilang (NGG) organization in developing entrepreneur-politicians for Indonesia's 2024 legislative elections. As political and economic interests increasingly intersect, the emergence of business leaders in formal politics signifies a transformation in electoral representation. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach and was conducted in Malang Raya. Purposely selected informants were interviewed, including NGG leaders, entrepreneur-candidates, political volunteers, and local voters. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation and analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model. The results demonstrate that NGG functions as a non-party political institution that systematically prepares entrepreneurs to become legislative candidates. NGG accomplishes this through leadership training, campaign support, and network mobilization. Entrepreneur-candidates strategically convert their economic capital into political legitimacy by leveraging their business achievements, community engagement, and symbolic narratives of success. The study highlights three main findings: (1) the transformation of social identity from entrepreneur to politician, (2) the role of NGG in political mobilization through branding and grassroots networks, and (3) the conversion of economic capital into political capital that shapes new political elites. This research contributes to the theories of rational legislators and political economy by demonstrating how non-state institutions like the NGG facilitate the formation of elites through entrepreneurial pathways. The study suggests that hybrid political entrepreneurship reshapes local democracy and emphasizes the need for stronger regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency, accountability, and equitable political participation.

**KEYWORDS:** Economic Politic, Legislative Elections, Political Entrepreneurship, Political Mobilization

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## INTRODUCTION

General elections, also known as elections, are a challenge for the people to elect their representatives or candidates for leaders at the legislative level (Iswanto & Pamungkas, 2023; Tauda, 2018). On the contrary, elections provide an opportunity for citizens to become candidates for legislative members at the central, provincial, district, and municipal levels (Anderson et al., 2020; Hadita, 2020; Winzen et al., 2018). Being a member of the legislature not only talks about duties and responsibilities, but also about the income, salary, and various perks that will be received once they are elected and considered as state officials at the legislative level. This is clearly directly correlated with the efforts of legislative candidates to make the best plan to get votes in the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, the House of Representatives, and the Provincial DPRD as well as districts and cities (Fatonie, 2020; Nugroho, 2016). In addition, the large number of parties and the complicated multiparty system cause confusion and skepticism towards golput from parties and candidate contestants (Hermanto & Mondir, 2020). This problem is a lesson in the next election to understand how their votes are important in the election process.

At this time, the political dynamics in Indonesia are developing quite rapidly, as shown by the public's attitude that looks forward to open and transparent elections and begins to pay attention to and supervise candidates involved in political contests, both from the supporting party and the proposed candidate (Fionna & Hutchinson, 2019; Hadita, 2020; Ito, 2011; Rosyida & Sasaoka, 2018). In the 2024 election, there will be an increase in public interest and involvement. This is supported by Bawaslu's efforts to encourage youth participation (Abqa et al., 2022; Iswanto & Pamungkas, 2023). However, political polarization creates anxiety in society, leading to stronger competition in the political world. This is a challenge for political candidates to reinforce the idea that they have the right to be elected by the public.

Indonesia has a democratic system that allows people to participate in the development of the country, mainly through direct elections (Bachtiar, 2014; Wibisono et al., 2023).

Elections, according to Law number 7 of 2017 concerning general elections, not only serve as a way for the people to elect the people's representatives, but also to elect leaders who are directly responsible for the development of people's sovereignty. Democracy allows everyone to engage and participate in political activities such as elections (Fionna & Hutchinson, 2019; Fitri & Setiadi, 2022; Tomsa, 2009). Entrepreneurs can also be directly involved in practical political activities thanks to this openness (Dhungana & Curato, 2021). Many former businessmen have endorsed executive officials and legislative candidates. Political campaigns cost a lot of money; This includes buying props, organizing events, creating ads in the media, and running teams well (Hermanto & Mondir, 2020; Wibisono et al., 2023). This has led many would-be legislators, especially those who do not have strong financial backing, to rely on the help of businessmen.

As long as the financial support of the entrepreneur is done openly, honestly, and according to the rules, it is not fundamentally a violation of the law. Based on Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, the highest contribution for campaigns is IDR 2.5 billion for individuals and IDR 25 billion for legal entities or companies (Galuh Larasati et al., 2023; Purwanto et al., 2018). However, in reality, violations of the law are often used to conceal the source of funds, with large amounts of individual and corporate donations exceeding the limits set by regulations (Galuh Larasati et al., 2023). Additionally, because the law does not explicitly prohibit cash donations, it is difficult to monitor the donor's identity, address, and even employment or employment status. This shows how weak oversight of cash campaign funds is. There is a problem with transparency and accountability of political financing in Indonesia, as demonstrated by campaign finance violations (Kurnia, 2022). To maintain the integrity of the democratic process, the institution concerned must carry out supervision and law enforcement. Seven types of campaign fund violations were identified by the Financial Transaction Reporting and Analysis Center (PPATK). This includes using a cooperative to raise campaign funds, using personal accounts to receive donations, and receiving cash without knowing the identity of the donor (Y. Permana et al., 2024a).

The phenomenon of increasing the number of businessmen entering the legislative world shows the consolidation of economic power in the formal political realm of Indonesia. In the 2019 election, as many as 262 out of 575 members of the House of Representatives came from business backgrounds, serving as shareholders, commissioners, or directors in more than a thousand companies across sectors, ranging from broadcasting to extractive industries (Tempo, 2019). This figure reflects that almost half of the seats in the national parliament are controlled by those with direct economic interests. According to studies (Aidulsyah et al., 2020) even noted that 55 percent of members of the House of Representatives have active business relationships, indicating that 5 to 6 out of every 10 legislators are business actors. The majority of them are spread across eight of the eleven House committees, showing dominance in strategic policy committees. The tendency of entrepreneurs to enter the legislature is rooted in the drive to secure access to state budget projects and the state budget structure (Febriansyah et al., 2020; Hermanto & Mondir, 2020; Lurusati & Torenvlied, 2023). This opens up space for conflicts of interest between the legislative function and personal interests in business.

Entering the 2024–2029 period, the dominance of businessmen and politicians is getting stronger. Based on a search by Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), at least 354 of the 580 new members of the House of Representatives have direct or indirect affiliations with private business entities (Tempo, 2024). This means that more than 60 percent of legislative members have positions as shareholders, directors, or commissioners, or have close family relationships in the corporate structure (Aidulsyah et al., 2020; Ekawati et al., 2024; Y. Permana et al., 2024a). Major parties such as Gerindra, PDI-P, and Golkar rank top in the number of business-related members of the House of Representatives (Sumarni, 2023). This phenomenon shows how political parties have become a strategic vehicle for the business class to strengthen its influence in public policy formulation. Provinces with large voter bases such as East Java, West Java, and Central Java are recorded as the regions with the highest concentration of businessmen and politicians (Susanti & Fahmi, 2022). This situation confirms the symptoms of legislative oligarcization, in which economic capital increasingly determines political representation. As a result, procedural democracy in Indonesia faces serious challenges in ensuring representation based on the interests of the broad people (Lurusati & Torenvlied, 2023).

In the midst of the problem of joining political and economic interests, there are associations or community organizations that encourage successful entrepreneurs to enter the world of practical politics (Tito, 2023). The organization is Nusantara Gilang Gemilang (NGG), is a non-profit organization, or community organization that is not business-oriented or business intended to gain economic benefits, but it is undeniable that the organization is aimed at forming or giving birth to successful and successful entrepreneurs in the business world, then enter the world of politics, and occupy important positions in the world of politics both at the executive and executive levels legislative, at the central and regional levels (I. Permana et al., 2025a).

One of the main reasons why Nusantara Gilang Gemilang (NGG) encourages the entry of entrepreneurs into the world of practical politics is that so far political leadership, both at the national and local levels, has experienced leadership disorientation as mandated by the nation's founders. There are so many political figures who are tempted to abuse power, because of the high economic needs factor, with the mode of abuse of public office for economic interests (I. Permana et al., 2025b). So, to minimize this, political positions at various levels and segments need to be held by people who are successful and economically successful. When likened, politics and economics are two interconnected and inseparable wings. When they go hand in hand, they can make a great contribution to the progress of a region or even a nation and state. Leadership at the regional and national levels that is able to combine these two aspects is believed to be the path to progress and development success (Hermawati, 2019; Hochadel, 2018; Kgatele, 2018)

Leadership at various levels, global, and national, including local, is a strategic stakeholder in designing and implementing innovation programs in environmental management and community empowerment in an area so that in this case strong local leadership is needed from the resources owned by the individual both in terms of knowledge, expertise, competence, experience, and leadership vision (Dumatubun & Suwandi, 2016; Iqbal et al., 2021; Steenberg, 2016). One of the considerations in this context is the involvement of entrepreneurs in the political world, because economically entrepreneurs have the ability to meet their living needs, so they are not too dependent on the state budget, or salaries and other income that comes from government funds.

Based on this, regional leaders such as DPRD members have roles and challenges to encourage change at the local level by understanding the needs in the regions through communication with the community. This is also in line with the efforts of the Nusantara Gilang Gemilang organization which trains and prepares future leaders through leadership development programs. In Indonesia, areas such as Malang Raya recorded an increase in voter participation as reported in Radar Malang news, the total Permanent Voter List (DPT) in 2024 in the Greater Malang area experienced an increase of 100,389 voters compared to the 2019 election and did not include the potential for additional potential voters (Wicaksana, 2023). The data shows an increase in voters who exercise their voting rights which has the potential to achieve the expected target compared to the 2019 election. Community participation is starting to increase because more and more people understand the importance of contributing to elections, especially in having figures who are able to keep promises, prosper the community, and have a clear vision and mission (Waladi et al., 2019; Wicaksana, 2023). In addition, in the 2013 regional elections in Malang City, participation was influenced by factors of length of stay, political socialization, and curiosity about the performance of regional head candidates (Usfinit et al., 2014). This shows that the community has begun to be careful in choosing the desired leader candidate

Based on this context, Nusantara Gilang Gemilang (NGG) can be a forum for entrepreneurs who enter the world of politics as entrepreneurs as well as politicians. Nusantara Gilang Gemilang (NGG) has a role in preparing various important instruments in the involvement of entrepreneurs to engage in practical politics, ranging from providing spirit, inspiration, to winning strategies with various community empowerment programs disseminated through branding and political marketing.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the phenomenon of entrepreneurs' involvement in legislative politics through the facilitation of the Nusantara Gilang Gemilang (NGG) organization. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe in depth the social dynamics, subjective narratives, and power relations formed between economics and politics (Creswell, 2018; Yin et

al., 2016). Qualitative strategies allow researchers to interpret the meanings constructed by political actors from entrepreneurial backgrounds in complex local contexts. The research was conducted in the Greater Malang area, which includes Malang City, Malang Regency, and Batu City. This area was chosen because it is the main base of NGG activities and is one of the strategic vote pockets in the legislative elections. The research informants consisted of NGG's core management, businessmen who became legislative candidates, NGG political volunteers, and the voting community in the relevant constituencies. The selection of informants was carried out purposively, taking into account direct involvement in NGG activities and relevance to the focus of the study (Miles et al., 2014). The data collection technique was carried out through in-depth interviews in a semi-structured manner to explore the experiences, motivations, and strategies of actors in the process of transformation from entrepreneurs to politicians; participatory observation in NGG activities such as leadership training, campaigns, and community forums to understand internal dynamics and interactions between actors; as well as documentation that includes analysis of official NGG documents, campaign materials, brochures, photos of activities, local media news, and the candidates' social media profiles. These three techniques are used in an integrated manner for data triangulation and validation (Bogdan, 2007). The data obtained was analyzed using interactive analysis techniques from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and iterative conclusion drawn. Data reduction was carried out by sorting relevant information based on the focus of the analysis such as the role of NGG, electoral strategy, and identity transformation. The presentation of data is carried out in the form of narratives and thematic matrices that facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships between categories. Conclusions and verification are drawn from the beginning to the end of the research process, by consistently testing the relationships between concepts. To maintain the validity of the findings, triangulation of sources and techniques, member checking of key informants, and discussion of initial findings with academic colleagues was carried out (Neuman & Djamba, 2016).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study found that NGG plays a role as an institution that forms entrepreneur-politicians through training, campaign support, and social network mobilization. Entrepreneurs take advantage of business success to build electability. This phenomenon strengthens the concept of conversion of economic capital into electoral power and expands the theory of rational legislators and capital conversion in the context of Indonesia's local democracy.

### **Identity transformation from businessman to politician**

One of the main findings of this study is the process of transformation of social identity from economic actors (entrepreneurs) to political actors (legislative candidates). The entrepreneurs who are members of the NGG initially have no political experience, but through intensive training and ideological debriefing, they begin to understand electoral mechanisms, campaign strategies, and political narratives based on economic performance. Some informant narratives assert that business success is used as proof of managerial capacity to then be capitalized as legitimacy in the campaign. "If I can grow a business from scratch, of course I can bring the aspirations of the people in an efficient and measurable way," said one of the informants. This phenomenon reinforces Callaghan & Sylvester's findings (2021), Regarding the emergence of *entrepreneurial candidates* who sell efficiency and results as electoral advantages (Callaghan & Sylvester, 2021). Entrepreneurs who initially had no political knowledge gained a new understanding of electoral dynamics, communication strategies, and the importance of building public image. The narrative of the informants shows that success in the business world is used as symbolic capital to build voter trust. They use business achievements as evidence of leadership capacity and efficiency, which then translates into political promises during the campaign. This process shows the conversion of economic capital into political capital, in line with Bourdieu's concept of capital conversion (1986), and reinforcing Callaghan and Sylvester's findings (2021) about the emergence of entrepreneurial candidates in local politics. In addition, involvement in community-based social activities mediated by the NGG expands social networks and increases the public visibility of candidates, which significantly increases their chances of electability in legislative contests (Callaghan & Sylvester, 2021; Fowler, 2020).

Interestingly, this process does not occur linearly in a linear manner. Some candidates face a dilemma between maintaining the characteristics of rational business professionalism and an emotional and

populist style of political communication. One of the informants stated that in the business world, they are used to talking based on data and efficiency, but when they enter the world of politics, they are required to be more grounded and play on the symbolism of a broader identity. This gives rise to a deep reflective process, in which candidates combine market logic and popular logic into a single political narrative. Within this framework, identity transformation becomes a process of constant negotiation between business personas and political personas. Structurally, NGG provides an ecosystem that supports this process through a solid network of mentors, volunteers, and logistical support. Some candidates even stated that they would not be able to go through the candidacy stage without the support of NGG. In the interview, it was also mentioned that NGG provides access to survey institutions, campaign design services, rhetorical training, and public debate simulations. This form of support not only strengthens the candidate's technical capacity, but also gives them the confidence to perform in a competitive political public space. Thus, the transformation from businessman to politician is not merely the result of individual decisions, but the fruit of a structured and intentional collective process.

Theoretically, these findings broaden the understanding of how political power in local democracies not only comes from political parties or traditional elites, but can also be shaped by non-state actors who have economic resources and social organizations. NGG as an intermediary institution plays a strategic function in crossing economic capital into the political arena, and in the process, forms new political actors who were not previously involved in the world of government. This phenomenon also shows that post-reform Indonesian democracy continues to develop through various new channels of participation, including community-based entrepreneurship politics.

#### **The strategic role of the NGG in Political Mobilization**

NGG functions as a non-party political regeneration institution that equips its members with three main forms of support: (1) political training and public rhetoric; (2) campaign resource facilitation; and (3) logistical and volunteer support. The organization not only strengthens personal capacity, but also expands the candidates' social and economic networks through internal business connections. This organizational model is known in the study of social entrepreneurship, where local communities develop a model of simultaneous economic-political empowerment based on collectivity (Khoirun Nisa' & Wahyu Eko Pujianto, 2024). NGG also acts as a *political branding vehicle*, where the values of honesty, business success, and social concern are promoted in the campaign narrative of the candidates. NGG provides political and public rhetoric training designed to shape candidates' communication skills to be able to convey political messages persuasively and in accordance with the characteristics of local voters. In addition, this organization provides facilitation of campaign resources in the form of access to funding, campaign equipment, and professional services such as visual design and social media management. No less important, NGG also coordinates logistical and volunteer support that serves as the spearhead of mass mobilization during the campaign period.

This role shows that NGG does not only function as a training platform, but also as a political ecosystem that brings together economic, social, and symbolic resources to support the candidates' election. In practice, NGG builds a mentoring structure that allows candidates to get guidance from senior figures, including in terms of developing campaign narratives, scheduling field activities, and approaching local community leaders. Some informants said that without the support of the NGG, they did not have enough networks or experience to face stiff political competition at the local level. Thus, NGG is not only a technical facilitator, but also a provider of early political legitimacy for non-party cadres who want to pursue a legislative career. In the context of NGG, the synergy not only touches on economic and representational aspects, but also produces and reproduces new political norms rooted in entrepreneurial experiences. Candidates are not only positioned as future people's representatives, but also as exemplary figures who build their businesses from scratch, show perseverance, and provide jobs for the surrounding community. This strengthens the positive perception of the public and creates a very important symbolic capital in electoral contests.

NGG also plays an important role in shaping the image of candidates through a strong political branding strategy. This branding is not built instantly, but rather through a series of public training, evaluations, and simulations designed to align personal narratives with the electoral needs of their respective constituencies. Values such as honesty, success in business, social care, and religious background are the main pillars in the campaign narrative developed. Candidates are guided to use customer testimonials,

stories of failure and revival in ventures, and their social contributions to build an emotionally touching political narrative.

This branding strategy is also accompanied by the use of digital media and strong visualization. NGG works closely with a local creative team to produce campaign videos, visual posters, and social media designs that are thematically and colorfully consistent. This not only creates a professional impression, but also differentiates candidates from entrepreneurial backgrounds from traditional politicians. One of the informants stated that voters trust them more because they are considered real, not just promises, but have been proven through efforts that have been built before. In the context of mobilization, NGG has also succeeded in building a multi-layered and tiered volunteer system. Volunteers not only serve as campaign props, but also as communication agents who bridge candidates with their respective communities. Through a grouping system known as "community nodes," NGG divides campaign work areas into small zones with local coordinators who are familiar with the sociocultural conditions of the community. This makes the campaign message more targeted and creates a higher direct engagement effect at the grassroots level.

The effectiveness of this mobilization is strengthened by the inclusive approach applied by NGG. Not only young entrepreneurs, but also housewives, informal workers, and students are involved in various community activities, such as entrepreneurship training, MSME bazaars, and social actions. This activity is designed not only to show the candidate's social partisanship, but also to strengthen social solidarity and create a loyal voter ecosystem. In some cases, these activities have even become a means of covert political recruitment, where active participants are offered volunteer positions or regional coordinators. Structurally, the NGG formed work units that resembled modern party structures, such as the fields of regeneration, logistics, media, and public communication. Each unit is led by an individual who has a professional background and competence, so that the management of the organization takes place efficiently and measurably. This shows that NGG combines the principles of entrepreneurship, organizational management, and communication strategies in one institutional model that is adaptive to the needs of modern political contestation.

These findings show that NGG not only fills the institutional void due to weak party regeneration, but also creates an alternative system of political representation based on the community-economy. Within the framework of procedural democracy, the existence of an organization such as NGG is important to expand the channels of political participation, especially for non-elites who previously did not have access to formal political resources. Furthermore, the NGG encourages the creation of a new middle class that is not only economically independent, but also politically active, which in turn can strengthen substantive democracy at the local level. From a theoretical point of view, the strategic role of the NGG in political mobilization is in line with the thinking of McCaffrey & Salerno (2011) about political entrepreneurship, where social and organizational innovation plays a central role in creating new political actors outside of conventional structures (McCaffrey & Salerno, 2011). NGG is a concrete example of how non-state institutions are able to shape the local political map through an inclusive, systematic, and community-based entrepreneurial approach. Thus, this study not only contributes to the study of local politics and political economy, but also opens up new spaces for discussion about participatory democratization based on the business community.

#### **Conversion of economic capital to political models**

Field findings show that the involvement of entrepreneurs in politics is largely determined by their ability to convert financial capital into electoral power. This includes: campaign prop funding, successful team operations, and social media management. However, what is more important is how economic capital is used to build trust and likeability in the eyes of voters. From the socio-political point of view, this phenomenon indicates the existence of a conversion mechanism between economic and symbolic capital, as explained by Bourdieu (1986) (Bourdieu, 1986). When economic capital is used to gain political support, there is a consolidation of power across sectors that strengthens group dominance (Bakir, 2017). Furthermore, field data shows that business-politicians utilize their economic resources not only in the form of cash, but also in the form of business networks, logistical access, and social influence accumulated from their reputation as business owners. In various campaign activities, they donate their products for free, sponsor social events, and facilitate community activities such as social services, blood donations, and village competitions. This strategy is not solely aimed at increasing popularity, but to instill the perception

that candidates have the capacity to directly benefit society.

One of the candidates interviewed stated that he routinely held cheap markets in the sub-district where he was running. The activity is funded by its business network and organized by the company's internal team. This is not only a form of local economic empowerment, but also a strategy to show social commitment and closeness to the people. This conversion does not happen automatically, but through structured planning and narratives so that the public understands that the economic resources they have are being used for the public good, not for personal gain alone. In addition to material contributions, businessmen and politicians also use symbols of economic success to strengthen their self-image. For example, showing its business journey from the bottom, showing photos of the company's social activities, and listing entrepreneurial awards as part of the campaign profile. All of this forms a representation that they are competent, tenacious, and trustworthy. The conversion of economic capital into symbolic is very important in a society that still values material achievements as indicators of personal success and leadership.

This conversion process also operates in a more structural realm, namely through the formation of patronage relationships between businessmen and politicians and certain community groups. They support youth groups, religious communities, farmer groups, and social organizations through grants, skills training, or logistical support. This endorsement creates a reciprocal relationship where the recipient group feels obligated to support the candidate. In this case, economic capital is converted into long-term political loyalty. In this context, economic capital not only becomes a resource to fund campaigns, but also a tool to build deeper social support structures. This leads to the formation of local electoral oligarchy, where economic actors with high distribution capacities have a systematic advantage over candidates who do not have similar resources. This strengthens Winters' (2011) argument regarding oligarchic power in democratic countries, where the owners of large wealth have a disproportionate influence in the system of representation.

More complexly, these candidates are also engaged in a practice that Bourdieu calls long-term symbolic investments. They contributed to the construction of mosques, schools, neighborhood roads, and other public facilities, long before the campaign period began. This practice is not just a form of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), but an investment in the form of "collective memories" that will be reactivated when they run for office. In many cases, electoral support arises not because of campaign promises, but because of the experience of citizens receiving tangible benefits from the candidate over a long period of time. On the other hand, these conversions also come with risks. Candidates with entrepreneurial backgrounds are often faced with accusations of vote buying, using transactional practices that are considered to hurt the spirit of democracy (Y. Permana et al., 2024b). Therefore, they need to balance conversion strategies with strong and ethical imagery. In some cases, candidates form special teams tasked with communicating their social contributions within the framework of mutual cooperation values and local wisdom, rather than just one-way assistance.

In further analysis, this process of converting economic capital to politics also affects the internal dynamics of the NGG organization. Candidates with stronger financial resources tend to get more room to perform, both in training, internal publicity, and placement on strategic agendas. Although the NGG tries to maintain equality, the reality of internal power is still influenced by the economic capacity of the members. This creates a kind of symbolic stratification that differentiates actors based on resources and mobilization capabilities.

However, it's worth noting that this conversion also opens up a space for learning and collaboration. Candidates with high economic capital often sponsor training for other members, contribute to NGG's logistical needs, and share their managerial experience. In this context, economic capital becomes a collective instrument, not just a hegemonic tool. This suggests that capital conversion does not always result in dominance, but can also create a redistribution of capacity within new political communities. Normatively, the phenomenon of converting economic capital into political power raises important questions about ethics, representation, and political justice. Will actors with greater wealth always excel in elections? Does the campaign model based on economic capital narrow political access for ordinary citizens? These questions are important to follow up on through research and policy settings that are able to balance access to political power in the era of electoral democracy.

In conclusion from the discussion at this point, the conversion of economic capital to political capital is

not just a transactional phenomenon, but a complex, symbolic, and structured social process. Candidates don't just use money to buy influence, but create narratives, build social networks, and create new spaces of trust. In the context of organizations such as NGG, this process is facilitated through a platform that connects economic actors with the political world in a collaborative and community-oriented framework. These findings enrich the study of local political economy, as well as provide a new perspective on how power is generated and reproduced in a democratic society based on capital and social relations.

#### **Theoretical discussion: Synthesis with global literature**

These findings confirm and expand the theoretical study of rational legislators from (Callaghan & Sylvester, 2021). In the Indonesian context, political rationality is not only based on ideological preferences, but also on economic interests embedded in the social position of legislative candidates. Thus, businessmen and politicians operate as *homo economicus* as well as *homo politicus*, combining the logic of the market and the logic of power simultaneously (Mintrom, 1997). In the context of NGG, this theory is clearly seen in the mindset of candidates who design electoral strategies not only based on ideological proximity to certain political parties, but also based on economic-political calculations involving campaign costs, political return of investment (ROI), and opportunities for the development of new business-political networks. Their rationality is shaped by considerations of resource efficiency and the effectiveness of mass mobilization, as well as the business logic they apply in everyday entrepreneurial practices. In this context, political rationality becomes a direct derivative of the habits of market rationality that have been internalized in their social and professional behavior.

The global literature on the shifting character of the elite in democratic systems is also very relevant for analyzing the case of NGG. In a study by Winters (2011) and Ford & Pepinsky (2014), it was stated that procedural democracy in developing countries tends to create conditions that allow economic elites to consolidate their political power through electoral channels (Howard et al., 2017; Winters, 2011). This study shows how such consolidation occurs not through formal political party channels but through community organizations such as NGG, which bridges entrepreneurs with access to electoral networks, mobilization resources, and political cadre regeneration mechanisms. In the tradition of Bourdieu's thought (Bourdieu, 1986).

The literature on intermediary institutions is even more relevant when we look at how NGG functions not only as an electoral facilitator, but also as a community-based political cadre regeneration institution (McCaffrey & Salerno, 2011). In many modern democracies, political parties experience a crisis of representation and a decline in cadre capacity. The NGG emerged as a response to this vacuum by offering an alternative path to enter the political arena, without having to go through formal party mechanisms that are often perceived as non-transparent and elitist. In this case, NGG serves as a transitional institution that bridges the economic, community, and formal political worlds. This discovery can also be attributed to the concept of political opportunity structure in the study of social movements. The NGG creates a new political opportunity structure for non-political actors to access and utilize the representation system. This structure was formed through a series of trainings, community activities, and volunteer networks that opened up spaces for political participation that were previously unavailable. This reinforces the argument that in a fragmented democracy, non-state actors have the ability to create new spaces of representation through strategic organizing and symbolic distribution.

From the point of view of institutional theory, NGG can also be positioned as an informal institution that functions to complement the weaknesses of formal institutions in the recruitment and political education process. In North's perspective (1990), Informal institutions have an important role in shaping political behavior when formal rules are ineffective or do not cover the needs of society at large. NGG fills this gap by providing norms, values, and procedures that shape a new political culture among entrepreneurs and local communities. More broadly, the phenomenon studied in this study is also related to the shift in the recruitment pattern of political elites in the era of globalization. In the theoretical context developed by Zygmunt Bauman (2000), We are witnessing the emergence of an elite that is not only locally rooted but also symbolically mobile and networked (Bakir, 2017). Businessmen and politicians in the NGG demonstrate the capacity to move from one domain of power to another (economic to political), and in the process they form cross-sector networks that are more flexible and adaptive to changing power constellations.

The theoretical contribution of this research also touches on the renewal of the classical socio-political



approach that overemphasizes class structure and production relations. By showing how business-politicians shape narratives, create symbols, and use communities as a medium of mobilization, this study combines structural and cultural approaches in the analysis of political power. This is in line with the neo-Gramscian approach that sees hegemony not only as shaped by control over the means of production, but also by the ability to control ideas, images, and representations (Gilley, 2018). The implication of this discussion is the need to redefine who is referred to as the political elite in contemporary local democracy. If in the past elites were defined as those who controlled the bureaucracy or had strong affiliations with major parties, now political elites can also be formed by those who control community spaces, control the narrative of local development, and have economic resources that can be converted into electoral support. In this context, NGG became a political laboratory where a hybrid elite was born that combined the characteristics of business professionalism and community advocacy.

Finally, this synthesis with global literature shows that although the context of NGG is local, the processes that take place within it represent global dynamics in contemporary political power formation: political personalization, self-image capitalization, shifting institutions of representation, and the synergy between market logic and democratic logic. Thus, this study is not only important for understanding the local dynamics of Greater Malang, but also provides a theoretical contribution to the development of political science and political sociology in the context of the globalization of power.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research reveals that the *Nusantara Gilang Gemilang* (NGG) organization plays a significant role in shaping and consolidating the identity of businessmen and politicians in the Greater Malang region ahead of the 2024 Legislative Election. The main findings show that there is a transformation of identity from economic actors to political actors facilitated through training and strategic assistance from NGG. This organization acts as a non-party regeneration institution that is effective in mobilizing economic and social resources to support the electability of candidates. The economic capital owned by entrepreneurs is strategically converted into political capital, through campaign activities, networking, and the symbolization of personal success as public legitimacy. This study expands the understanding of rational legislator theory and socio-political economy by adding the dimensions of capital conversion as well as the function of hybrid organizations in electoral democratic systems at the local level. Based on these results, there are a number of practical implications that need to be considered. First, for election organizers, it is necessary to strengthen regulations related to the transparency of campaign funding and supervision of the relationship between economic forces and political parties. Second, political parties should build a more systematic internal cadre system so that they do not fully rely on external actors such as NGG. Third, for civil society, it is necessary to increase political literacy to prevent the dominance of economic interests in political representation. To support scientific development and practice improvement in the future, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal research on the effectiveness of legislators from entrepreneurs after they take office. In addition, a comparative study between regions on the pattern of political recruitment based on the business community, as well as a quantitative study on the relationship between the amount of campaign funds and the rate of electability, are important to deepen understanding of the political dynamics of entrepreneurship in Indonesia.

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