



# Reimagining Democracy: An Exploration of Anies Baswedan's "Desak Anies" Program

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**Abstract:** Global democracy is at a crossroads, amidst geopolitical turmoil and socioeconomic upheaval. Despite widespread support for democratic principles such as popular sovereignty and civic involvement, their practical implementation is frequently hampered by entrenched power dynamics and vested interests. Anies Baswedan's pioneering "Desak Anies" program in Indonesia takes a novel approach to democratic government, questioning traditional top-down methods and calling for active citizen participation in decision-making processes. This study, based on theoretical frameworks proposed by authors such as Dahl and Rousseau, investigates the Desak Anies initiative's complex impact. The study's qualitative research approaches, which include a literature review and content analysis observations, aim to provide thorough insights into Desak Anies' transformative potential in transforming democratic behaviors. The findings show that Desak Anies had a significant impact on youth empowerment, instilling a sense of agency and political efficacy in young Indonesians. Furthermore, the program has made a substantial contribution to improving community cohesiveness by giving a forum for varied views to be heard and respected. Desak Anies has ushered in a new era of governmental openness, with an emphasis on open data projects and citizen involvement, which promote accountability and trust in government institutions; establishes a new benchmark for democratic renewal and sustainability by leveraging grassroots mobilization and adopting inclusive policies, providing a replicable model for advancing democracy and fostering inclusive government on a global scale.

**Keywords:** Democracy; Citizen empowerment; Grassroots mobilization; Governance transparency; Youth empowerment; Community cohesion; Environmental sustainability

## Introduction

In a period of geopolitical shifts, technological developments, and socioeconomic transformations, global democracy is at a crossroads. The ideas of democracy, which emphasize popular sovereignty, political equality, and civic involvement, are the foundation of modern governing systems. Despite these lofty goals, modern democracies frequently fall short of fulfilling their full potential, with power dynamics and vested interests obscuring the substance of democratic principles.

In many cases, the dominant concept of democracy is merely a façade, molded to fit the interests of political elites and parties with significant financial backing. This raises basic concerns about the integrity of democratic processes and their ability to really reflect the intentions and aspirations of the people they claim to serve (Magstadt, 2020). In such a context, critical public engagement becomes crucial, serving as a litmus test for determining if democracy fits with societal principles or simply serves as a vehicle for partisan interests.

Indonesia's rich historical tapestry, along with the diversity of hundreds of cultures, languages, and traditions, creates a one-of-a-kind melting pot that exemplifies the concept of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" or "Unity in Diversity." This variety is the cornerstone of Indonesian democracy, which is based on Pancasila values. Within this background, it is necessary to explore Anies Baswedan's revolutionary "Desak Anies" program, which has sparked a revitalized discussion about democracy in Indonesia. This initiative acts as a catalyst for democratic renewal by questioning traditional top-down governance models and encouraging citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes.

This inquiry is significant beyond Indonesia's boundaries since it resonates with broader democratic and political themes that impact government systems around the world. Drawing on the concepts stated by notable scholars such as Dahl, Rousseau, Diamond, and Huntington, it is necessary to explore the theoretical foundations of democracy and its practical manifestations in a variety of sociopolitical circumstances.

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies initiative shows a redesigned type of democracy that is consistent with key democratic concepts such as participation, responsibility, and responsiveness (Diamond 1999). Anies aims to bridge the divide between political elites and regular individuals by emphasizing citizen involvement and grassroots empowerment, producing a more inclusive and representative democracy (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014). The program's conformity with Indonesia's national ideology, Pancasila, lends it cultural and ideological validity, gaining acceptance from a wide range of Indonesian society (Huntington, 1993). Desak Anies supports a uniquely Indonesian vision of democracy that values diversity, pluralism, and communal welfare (McLeod & MacIntyre, 2007).

Furthermore, it is vital to understand the complexities of Anies Baswedan's visionary proposal in order to unveil its long-term impact on global democracy. Desak Anies redefines democratic renewal and sustainability by empowering youth, developing communal cohesiveness, increasing government transparency, and promoting environmental sustainability. Through these initiatives, the program lays the groundwork for a more robust, inclusive, and participatory democratic framework that may be emulated and adapted globally. Furthermore, it is necessary to investigate the multidimensional components of Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies program, specifically its implications for youth empowerment, community cohesion, governance transparency, and environmental sustainability. It critically obtains insights into the transformative potential of grassroots-led efforts in influencing the future trajectory of global democracy by conducting a thorough analysis of these interconnected themes.

## Method

The exploration of Anies Baswedan's "Desak Anies" program required a qualitative methodical approach that combined discussion observation with a thorough literature review. Firsthand observations of Desak Anies events hosted across the country provided insights into the program's dynamics, levels of community engagement, and the nature of relationships between Anies Baswedan and participants. Furthermore, a thorough examination of academic literature, associated web publications, and theoretical

frameworks on democracy, grassroots empowerment, and participatory government offered context for understanding the program's consequences. This study sought to provide a nuanced understanding of how "Desak Anies" contributes to the altering of democratic practices in Indonesia by combining findings from observation and literature.

## Result and Discussion

Contemporary democracies around the world regularly diverge from the ideal of true democracy, as power dynamics usually trump the substance of democratic values. The common perception of democracy is a fiction, molded to fit the goals of those in power, particularly those with strong financial backing. This occurrence raises serious concerns about whether such democracies truly reflect the will of the people or are merely instruments of political parties (Magstadt, 2020). In this setting, critical public participation is required to determine if democracy coincides with society goals or simply serves partisan interests. The following discussion dives into the complexities of democracy, connecting parallels to Anies Baswedan's revolutionary Desak Anies initiative, which has prompted a revitalized discussion about democracy throughout Indonesia.

## Principles of Indonesian Democracy

Democracy as a political system is based on several core principles, including popular sovereignty, political equality, and civic participation (Dahl, 2008). At its core, democracy allows citizens to participate in decision-making processes, assuring accountability and representation (Rousseau, 1987). However, the practical application of these ideas differs greatly amongst democratic situations.

Democracy is interpreted and implemented differently around the world, affected by historical, cultural, and institutional variables (Diamond, 1999). Western liberal democracies stress individual rights and liberties, whereas emerging democracies prioritize economic development and stability (Huntington, 1993). Furthermore, election systems, party politics, and socioeconomic differences all have an impact on how democracies function, often leading to systemic issues like corruption, populism, and inequality (Linz & Stepan, 1996).

Indonesia's democratic history is inextricably linked to Pancasila, the nation's guiding ideology. Pancasila, with its five principles of one God, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice, is the foundation of Indonesian democracy (Chaniago, 2019). Pancasila, which is rooted in Indonesia's historical and cultural setting, provides a comprehensive framework for government that prioritizes social cohesiveness, pluralism, and communal welfare.

The Reformasi movement of 1998, sparked by large protests and demands for political reform, represented a watershed moment in Indonesia's democratic history. During this moment of transition, the Indonesian people renewed their devotion to Pancasila principles, seeking to reinvent their democracy in accordance with these fundamental values (Aspinall, 2013). The Reformasi movement sought to demolish past authoritarian systems and develop a more inclusive and participatory political system that reflected Indonesians' desires.

Furthermore, Pancasila's emphasis on democracy and social fairness shaped the evolution of Indonesian democratic institutions and practices. Pancasila's democratic principle emphasizes the importance of people sovereignty and civic participation, and it guides the development of election processes and institutions for public engagement. Meanwhile, the principle of social justice emphasizes the importance of equal distribution of resources and opportunities, which guides policies targeted at reducing socioeconomic disparities and encouraging inclusive growth (Hosen, 2005).

In essence, Pancasila serves as both a philosophical foundation and a practical framework for Indonesian democracy, offering guiding principles that define the country's political institutions, laws, and practices (Kersten, 2009). Indonesia is navigating the intricacies of democracy while maintaining its own character as a diverse and inclusive society by embracing Pancasila's principles of unity, democracy, and social justice (Fatlolon, 2016; Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019). Thus, Pancasila remains a cornerstone of Indonesia's democratic ethos, providing a vision of governance that is strongly anchored in the country's cultural, historical, and intellectual legacy.

### **Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies Program: A Catalyst for Democratic Renewal**

Anies Baswedan's candidacy as an independent in the 2024 election is important since it demonstrates the Nasdem party's faith and support for him. This confidence is founded on Baswedan's shown ability to transform Jakarta into a collaborative city, which aligns with the concept of smart cities in global sustainability discourse (Syalianda & Kusumastuti, 2021). The Nasdem party's endorsement demonstrates their believe in Baswedan's ability to lead and implement creative policies that stress sustainability and diversity, which aligns with political leadership and trust theories (Bryman, 2011). The swift construction of trust across Indonesia's diverse population of 280 million is critical to Baswedan's candidacy's success, emphasizing the importance of efforts like Desak Anies in developing civic engagement and establishing consensus (Norris, 2002). Baswedan hopes to transcend societal differences, stimulate dialogue, and build a shared vision for the nation's future through Desak Anies, which will take place both in-person and online (Putnam, 2000).

On the other hand, the reciprocal relationship between Anies Baswedan's response to criticism and the public's increased trust is deeply tied to democratic ideology. According to deliberative democracy theory, public discourse and participation are critical components of a good democratic process (Dryzek, 2002). Anies' readiness to respond to criticism demonstrates a commitment to deliberative ideals, which allow residents to express their concerns and hold elected authorities accountable (Cohen, 2005). This interactive approach not only enhances the link between the government and the people, but it also promotes civic empowerment (Fung, 2003). When voters believe their opinions are heard and respected, their trust in the democratic system grows (Warren, 2001).

This phenomenon is consistent with social capital theory, which holds that trust and cooperation within a society are critical to the functioning of democracy (Putnam, 2000). Anies helps to build social capital by reacting to criticism and communicating with the

public, which strengthens the cornerstone of democracy (Nolan & Whelan, 2014). As a result, this iterative process strengthens democratic institutions and fosters a stronger democratic culture (Diamond, 1999). Thus, Anies' response to criticism serves not just as a vehicle for addressing public concerns, but also as a catalyst for improving democratic resilience and involvement in Indonesian society.

Meanwhile, Anies Baswedan, a well-known personality in Indonesian education and recently politics, has emerged as an advocate of democratic reform with his unique Desak Anies campaign 2024. This effort, based on grassroots participation and participatory government, represents a shift away from traditional top-down policymaking practices. Desak Anies exemplifies the values of inclusion and civic engagement by actively including residents in decision-making processes. Anies promotes direct engagement with citizens via town hall meetings, community forums, and internet channels, requesting feedback on policy goals and local development efforts through 22 Indonesian main cities.

Desak Anies supports bottom-up government models by decentralizing decision-making authority and empowering local communities. This method not only increases citizen participation but also promotes accountability mechanisms by ensuring that elected officials are sensitive to their people's wants and preferences (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014). Furthermore, Desak Anies acts as a forum for democratic discourse and ideation, cultivating a culture of political awareness and activism among Indonesian youth. Anies enables citizens to critically analyze government policies and shape the country's democratic destiny by fostering open debates and constructive dialogue (Mansbridge, 1993).

Desak Anies supports bottom-up government models by decentralizing decision-making authority and empowering local communities. This strategy not only encourages citizen participation but also develops accountability mechanisms by ensuring that elected officials are aware of their constituents' demands and preferences (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014). In addition, Desak Anies serves as a place for democratic discourse and ideation, instilling a sense of political awareness and activism in Indonesian youth. Anies encourages open debates and constructive dialogue, allowing citizens to critically assess government decisions and determine the country's democratic future (Mansbridge, 1993).

The Desak Anies program was a main campaign approach from November 28, 2023 to February 10, 2024, with the goal of directly engaging with people and gathering feedback on his vision and suggested policies for the 2024 Presidential Election. Desak Anies events, held in a variety of places, provide a calm environment for Anies to interact with the community, allowing them to express their concerns and ask questions face to face. These events, which use a dialogic approach, allow participants ranging from 500 to over 13000, the majority of whom are young people, to interact with Anies and his crew.

Through Desak Anies, Anies and his running mate Muhaimin Iskandar hope to address urgent societal challenges and propose answers for a more equitable and prosperous Indonesia. Their strategy focuses on improving national defense and security, expanding Indonesia's involvement in global politics, and fostering economic diplomacy. The duo also promises to strengthen the Indonesian National Armed Forces and maintain peace and security throughout the archipelago.



Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar's shared vision is "Indonesia Fair and Prosperous for All." Executed for travelling from Aceh to Papua, highlighting several societal flaws along the way. As a result, they give a promise of improvement. Anies and Cak Imin have established eight routes of change to realize this vision, which serve as the foundation of their purpose. Mission 7 comprises strengthening the country's defense and security systems, as well as enhancing Indonesia's role and leadership in global politics in order to realize national objectives and international peace.

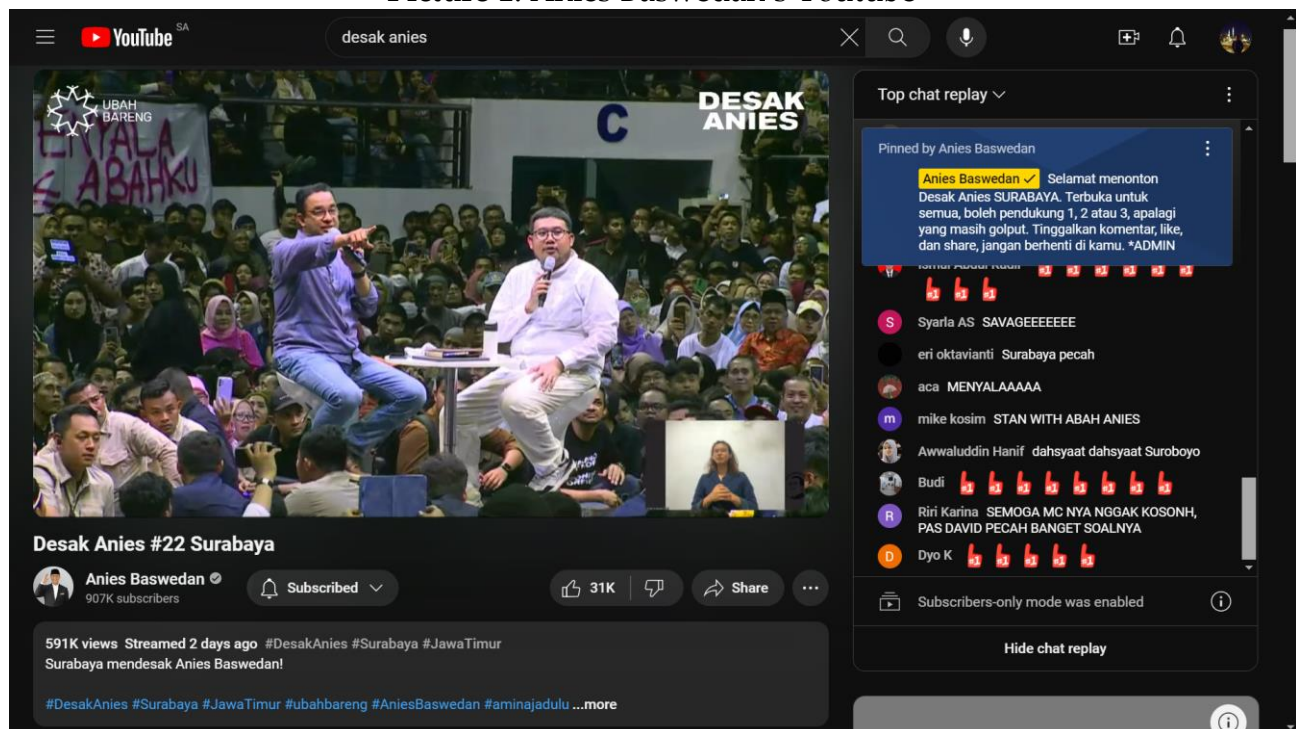
Anies and Muhaimin want to improve Indonesia's economic diplomacy by balancing its position in efforts like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), BRICS, and the World Trade Organization. Additionally, they intend to strengthen Indonesia's position in international organizations such as the G20, OIC, and OECD. To preserve order and security, the TNI (Indonesian National Armed Forces) will deploy forces from Sabang to Merauke across all branches, including the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

On the other hand, Anies' story revolves around the importance of providing Indonesian individuals with not only access to information, but also critical thinking skills, ethical ideals, and principled decision-making processes (Dahl, 2000). Citizens are encouraged to use dialogue to determine the congruence between their own convictions and the candidate's vision. This discernment enables individuals to navigate beyond surface impressions produced by visual or aural signals, allowing for more informed and substance-based election choices (Rousseau 1987).

Anies explains how the Desak Anies program, similar to the rigors of a debate, functions as a crucible for evaluating candidates on characteristics ranging from technical aptitude to the depth of their policy proposals. These platforms become critical in the electorate's search to assess the mettle of future leaders because they provide voters with an unfiltered peek into candidates' cognitive processes and decision-making modalities (Diamond, 1999).

The Desak Anies events had a far-reaching impact on a wide range of demographics, including millennials and Generation Z. However, beneath the surface of this blooming phenomenon is a historical trajectory that can be traced back to the 2013 "Mengadili Anies" events. This speech, which marked Anies' shift from academia to politics, served as a watershed moment, inspiring the Ubah Bareng team to start on the Desak Anies project. Recognizing the power of dialogue as a conduit for substantial involvement, the team imagined a platform tailored specifically to Anies Baswedan's profile (McLeod & MacIntyre, 2007).

Picture 1. Anies Baswedan's Youtube



(Photo Source: Anies Baswedan's Youtube)

The concept that underpins Desak Anies goes beyond the mere theatrics of electoral cycles, rejecting the trappings of one-way communication and superficial entertainment. Instead, it signals a paradigm change marked by a concerted effort to educate and enlighten the nation's youth on the complexities of political debate (Putnam, 2000). This purpose includes the imperative of developing a cadre of intellectually astute and civically engaged individuals capable of shaping the trajectory of the nation's democratic journey every five-year electoral cycle.

### Interconnections with Broader Democratic and Political Concepts

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies initiative shows a redesigned type of democracy that is consistent with the essential democratic principles of participation, accountability, and responsiveness (Diamond 1999). Anies aims to bridge the divide between political elites and regular individuals by emphasizing citizen involvement and grassroots empowerment, producing a more inclusive and representative democracy (Baicocchi & Ganuza, 2014).

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies initiative is strongly aligned with basic democratic concepts including participation, responsibility, and responsiveness (Dahl, 2000). Anies actively incorporates citizens in decision-making processes via town hall meetings, community forums, and internet platforms, hence increasing political involvement and civic engagement (Rousseau, 1987). Furthermore, by decentralizing decision-making authority and empowering local communities, Anies improves accountability mechanisms, ensuring that elected officials stay responsive to their citizens' demands and preferences (Linz & Stepan, 1996).

Moreover, Anies' emphasis on community-driven government is consistent with Indonesia's national ideology, Pancasila, which promotes social justice, democracy, and

unity (Huntington, 1993). Anies supports a distinctive Indonesian type of democracy that values variety, pluralism, and community welfare by incorporating Pancasila's ideas into his governance style (McLeod & MacIntyre, 2007). This congruence with Pancasila strengthens the cultural and ideological legitimacy of Anies' Desak Anies initiative, which has garnered support from a wide range of Indonesian citizens. By expanding on these interconnected ideas, we obtain a better understanding of how Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies program incorporates democratic values while also aligning with Indonesia's national ideology of Pancasila.

### **The Sustainable Impact of Desak Anies on Global Democracy**

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies program not only revitalizes Indonesian democracy, but also establishes a global model for sustainable democratic practices. By encouraging grassroots mobilization, empowerment, and democratic discourse, Desak Anies has an impact on all elements of society, ultimately contributing to the long-term viability and strengthening of global democracy.

#### **1. Youth Empowerment and Political Participation**

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies program is driving a paradigm shift in young engagement in political arenas. Young Indonesians can express their concerns, goals, and policy ideas through creative institutions such as the Youth Political Empowerment Forum. For example, in Surabaya, the program hosted a youth-led summit where students debated urgent problems such as school reform and environmental sustainability. By supporting such forums, Desak Anies promotes an active civic culture among young people, empowering them to create their collective destiny (Dalton, 2015).

Additionally, digital channels play an important role in amplifying youth voices and rallying support for civic issues. The program's online engagement activities, which include social media campaigns and interactive websites, allow young Indonesians to join in political debate and advocacy from the comfort of their own homes. For example, during a recent policy consultation on urban development, hundreds of youngsters contributed recommendations and opinions via the program's online site, illustrating their enthusiasm to participate in governance processes.

This concentrated effort to empower young not only increases their political efficacy, but it also improves democratic debate by absorbing varied perspectives and new ideas (Norris, 2002). By actively engaging young people in decision-making, Desak Anies guarantees that policies reflect the needs and ambitions of future generations, building a more inclusive and sustainable democratic society.

#### **2. Community Cohesion and Social Inclusion**

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies initiative works as a catalyst to promote community cohesion and social inclusion throughout Indonesia. Through a number of inclusive projects, the program actively attempts to bridge societal differences and raise the voices of underrepresented people. For example, in Makassar, Desak Anies



held a community conversation session in which residents from various ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds gathered to discuss common concerns and goals. During the event, attendees discussed concerns such as healthcare access, economic opportunity, and environmental sustainability. The program fostered a sense of belonging and solidarity among participants by offering a forum for debate and collaboration, breaking down traditional barriers and creating a more cohesive community (Putnam, 2000).

Moreover, Desak Anies emphasizes the participation of underrepresented perspectives, ensuring that underserved communities have a seat at the decision-making table. In Surabaya, for example, the initiative organized a series of town hall meetings in low-income districts, where citizens could express their problems and goals directly to local politicians. Desak Anies aims to reduce societal fragmentation and combat systemic inequalities by elevating these voices and incorporating their viewpoints into policy conversations (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Desak Anies helps to build a more resilient and equitable democratic society by boosting community cohesion and social inclusion, allowing all persons to play a meaningful role in defining their collective future (Whitehead, 2002; Wijaya *et al.*, 2021).

### 3. Transparency and Accountability in Governance

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies program is a light of transparency and accountability in government, dramatically changing the landscape of public administration in Indonesia. The initiative establishes a new standard for governmental conduct by maintaining an unrelenting commitment to transparency and honesty, encouraging public confidence and accountability. The program's emphasis on transparency is exemplified by its deployment of open data initiatives. In Jakarta, Desak Anies launched an online platform that allows individuals to view full information about government spending, project budgets, and procurement processes. By making this data easily accessible to the public in an understandable format, the program fosters openness in governance and encourages citizens to hold politicians accountable for their actions (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2011).

Furthermore, Desak Anies aggressively seeks feedback and input from citizens on policy issues through town hall meetings and online surveys. By participating in communication with constituents and incorporating their viewpoints into decision-making processes, the program not only increases transparency but also creates a sense of ownership and responsibility among the public (Treisman, 2000). In addition to fostering transparency, Desak Anies stresses accountability in government by holding officials responsible for their actions. In cases of alleged misbehavior or corruption, the program conducts thorough investigations and imposes fast disciplinary action on wrongdoers. This zero-tolerance policy sends a strong message that unethical behavior will not be accepted in public service, discouraging future instances of misconduct (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2011). By advocating for openness and accountability in governance, Desak Anies helps to foster a culture

of good governance and integrity, in which public officials are held to the greatest ethical standards and citizens can have faith in their government's honesty.

#### 4. Environmental Sustainability and Civic Responsibility

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies initiative is a comprehensive approach to governance that goes beyond traditional political realms to address critical environmental challenges and promote civic responsibility among residents. The program fosters environmental sustainability while instilling a feeling of civic duty in the general public through a number of creative policies and community-driven initiatives. The program's dedication to environmental sustainability is demonstrated by the implementation of eco-friendly policies and actions targeted at minimizing environmental damage. For example, Desak Anies has led efforts in Jakarta to minimize plastic waste and encourage recycling by offering incentives for environmentally friendly practices and collaborating with local businesses and non-governmental organizations to develop recycling programs (Dietz *et al.*, 2013). By proactively addressing environmental concerns, the program demonstrates a commitment to protecting the earth for future generations while infusing individuals with a sense of environmental responsibility.

In addition to promoting environmental sustainability, Desak Anies fosters civic duty by actively engaging residents in environmental conservation initiatives. The initiative organizes community clean-ups, tree planting activities, and environmental awareness campaigns to engage individuals and empower them to take control of their local ecosystems (Dietz *et al.*, 2005). Desak Anies fosters a culture of civic participation and solidarity by instilling a sense of communal responsibility for the environment in citizens, encouraging them to actively participate in preserving and defending their communities.

Furthermore, Desak Anies incorporates environmental education into school curricula and community outreach initiatives to create awareness about environmental challenges and promote sustainable habits (Dietz *et al.*, 2005). The program prepares citizens with the skills and incentive to make environmentally aware decisions in their daily lives by teaching them about the importance of environmental conservation and giving them with the knowledge and resources they need to effect change. Desak Anies expresses a concept of democracy that extends beyond mere political involvement to include broader notions of environmental consciousness and social responsibility. The program, via its holistic governance approach, allows residents to become environmental stewards and active participants in crafting a sustainable future for their communities.

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies initiative offers hope for the future of global democracy. Desak Anies raises the bar for democratic renewal and sustainability by empowering young people, developing communal cohesiveness, increasing government transparency, and promoting environmental sustainability. Through these initiatives, the program opens the path for a more resilient, inclusive, and

participatory democratic framework that may be replicated and adapted around the world.

## Conclusion

Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies program represents a paradigm shift in democratic governance, focusing on citizen engagement, empowerment, and accountability. Anies' compelling vision for the future of Indonesian democracy is based on renewing democratic values and strengthening inclusive political processes. However, maintaining and institutionalizing these reforms will necessitate continual commitment from both political leaders and civil society to guarantee that democracy is a living reality rather than a simple illusion.

Looking ahead, the study of Anies Baswedan's Desak Anies program has important implications for the future of Indonesian democracy. This study highlights the relevance of citizen involvement and participatory governance, emphasizing the possibility for long-term democratic renewal and increased civic participation. However, it raises serious concerns about the long-term viability of such initiatives, as well as the difficulties associated with institutionalizing them within the present political structure. As Indonesia continues its democratic journey, more research into the long-term impact of Desak Anies and other grassroots movements will be critical for designing policies and practices that maintain democratic values and promote inclusive governance in the coming years.

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