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## Research Note

# The Downside of Indonesia's Successful Liberal Democratisation and the Way Ahead. Notes from the Participatory Surveys and Case Studies 2000–2016

Olle Törnquist

with Hasrul Hanif, Eric Hiariej, Willy P. Samadhi and Amalinda Savirani

**Abstract:** Indonesia is a critical case of liberal democratisation. Most of the country's old dominant actors were included in compromises aimed at democracy and were expected to become democrats by adjusting to the new institutions. The pro-democrats were expected to propel change from civil society. However, the recurrent participatory surveys and follow-up studies summarised herein point to remarkable freedoms, along with deplorable governance and representation. The major causes are biased institutions of representation, plus weak political capacity of the crucial actors of change within modern business and among the middle classes and labourers. Advances presuppose new ways to represent their interests.

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**Keywords:** Indonesia, democratisation, civil society

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## Introduction

By August 1998, three months after the Indonesian autocrat Suharto stepped down amidst economic crisis and student-led pro-democracy demonstrations, leading scholars and experts were brought together in Jakarta by the Institute of Sciences and the Ford Foundation to discuss how democracy might be crafted (Liddle 2001). Responding to sceptics who worried about the applicability of the liberal model of agreements among the elite with roots in Spain and Latin America, comparativists concluded: “we just give you the framework, you fill it in”.<sup>1</sup> This is indeed what would happen. Two months later, moderate leaders turned down the pro-democracy activists’ idea of a transitional government, opening up instead for quick elections. By implication, only the leaders, parties and socio-religious organisations that had coexisted with Suharto stood a fair chance to gain representation. Principled pro-democrats were advised to either align themselves with the old mainstream or to be active in civil society. The assumption was that the old leaders would become democrats when adjusting to the new institutions and that civil society would act from below to improve the system.

From the liberal point of view, this framework proved remarkably successful. Larry Diamond has shown, based on broad comparative surveys, that Indonesia is a success case, aside from persistent corruption and poor rule of law (Diamond 2010). Advances include demilitarisation, reduced communal conflicts and separatism, more liberties, vibrant elections, and extensive civil society. David Horowitz has argued, moreover, that one reason for Indonesia’s success is that the decisive actors have been accommodated through laudable institutional design (Horowitz 2013).

However, given that the largest of the world’s new democracies is a celebrated test case for the liberal model, a critical question is how the pro-democrats that were side-lined after the fall of Suharto interpreted the dynamics. Have they anything to add?

Many of the dissidents dropped out, while others linked up with the established actors and were absorbed by mainstream politics. However, a majority joined civil society and negated ‘crook politics’. Some of the latter dissidents subscribed to the arguments that democracy is a naïve endeavour as long as the state and its politics are dominated by oligarchs, or as long as politics and the judiciary are ridden by corruption.<sup>2</sup> Howev-

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1 Expressed by Alfred Stepan. (Törnquist’s notes from the meeting).

2 For example, with references, in the first case, to Robison and Hadiz 2013, and in the second case to the more general arguments of Fukuyama 2014.

er, others searched for alternatives. For example, concerned researchers and investigative journalists, along with reflective activists, revisited the state of the democracy movement. Their major conclusion was that most groups were short of social and political foundations, almost as 'floating' as ordinary people were made to be under the Suharto dictatorship (Prasetyo, Priyono, and Törnquist 2003). Hence it was high time to 'go politics' again. But what were the problems and options?

To answer this questions, the researchers took David Beetham's framework for assessing the quality of liberal democratic institutions as a point of departure (Beetham et al. 2002), adding questions of special importance to deliberative and social democratic perspectives. Thereafter, all indicators were condensed as a way of providing space for analyses of democratisation. Hence, two sets of factors were added. The first set involved identifying (i) the major mainstream actors that had co-existed with Suharto and (ii) the principled pro-democrats, who were labelled as 'dominant' and 'alternative' actors as time passed. The second set comprised analyses of these actors' willingness and capacity to foster the democratic rules and develop democratic policies (for details and evaluation, Törnquist 2013). These additional variables were not included in order to invite statistical analysis but to test crucial arguments about whether and how further democratisation would come about, such as the character of citizenship, the scope of public affairs, the ability to put issues on the agenda, to mobilise and organise people, and to foster representation.

Similarly, the study did not identify any statistical samples of respondents, relying instead on the possibly best grounded experts on democratisation in various sectors around the country. This was done with strict principles of merit and in consultation with publicly identified democracy groups and key informants. Thereby, it was possible to conduct three rounds of interviews (each time) with between 700 and 900 experts on the basis of about 60 questions (with numerous alternative answers and comments) from 2003 till 2013. The results were then supplemented by case studies of the most crucial issues and deliberated with the informants. All kinds of challenges were involved, but the number of drop-outs was remarkably low, despite the highly time-consuming interviews, and there was no major critique of misrepresentation beyond valid points on insufficient inclusion of female activists and union leaders among the informants. Moreover, in contrast to the often-hyped statements by pundits in metropolitan media, the fear of biased answers from

pro-democracy informants came to nothing in face of their cautious and self-critical answers.<sup>3</sup>

All major results and data are now available for further analyses (Priyono, Samadhi, and Törnquist 2007; Samadhi and Warouw 2009; Savirani and Törnquist 2015), and a number of case studies are out or on their way.<sup>4</sup> However, in view of Indonesia's importance in the general discussion about the problems of democracy, some of the main conclusions may be of wider interest.

## More Freedoms than Democratic Governance

There is little doubt about Indonesia's liberal advances; the pro-democrats themselves confirm them. However, there are a number of qualifications. For example, case studies reveal that freedom of assembly and expression are upheld selectively; that citizen rights are used by sectarian groups and 'task forces' that do not respect the rights of others; that the suppression in school and public life of the history of crimes against humanity holds back civil rights and democracy; and that the situation remains deplorable in parts of West Papua, Central Sulawesi and Aceh in particular. However, the general assessments are positive, especially with regard to the freedom of speech and organisation, which now only 9 per cent of the informants deem bad rather than fair or good. Almost the same applies to equal citizenship and human rights, which only 18 per cent of informants consider to be bad. Moreover, even the pro-democracy informants say that democratic rules and regulation are not only supported by some 61 per cent of the alternative actors but also by approximately 48 per cent of the dominant actors. The serious abusers are down to 7 per cent of the alternative actors and 29 per cent of the dominant (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Tables 3.1, 3.6 and 3.7). So, thus defined, democracy seems to be 'the only game in town', and the liberal strategy of fostering elite compromises in support of democratic rules and regulations has no doubt been valid.

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3 The research was funded initially by the Norwegian and Swedish international development agencies, Ford Foundation and the University of Oslo in cooperation with Indonesian democracy organisations; later on by the Norwegian Embassy to Indonesia in additional cooperation with the University of Gadjah Mada.

4 Including Priyono and Nur 2009; Törnquist, Tharakan, and Quimpo 2009; Törnquist, Prasetyo, and Birks 2011; Samhadi 2015; Djani and Törnquist 2016; and Hiariej and Stokke (forthcoming) 2017. All survey data are available at <<http://pwd.polgov.id/>> (6 April 2017).

However, the grounded experts also affirm the mainstream assessment that governance is lagging behind. Approximately one-third of the informants deem the level of rule of law, equal rights to justice, and impartial governance to be particularly bad, and a similar figure applies to the quality of parties and elections (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Table 3.1). Most actors seem to have appreciated freedoms but not democratic governance. While the informants have become increasingly positive over the years, they now also point to stagnation: 60 per cent say that the various democratic institutions have not improved or have become worse between 2009 and 2013 (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Table 3.3). In other words, the liberal assumptions that institutions are so crucial that adherence to them would make mainstream actors democratic and that liberties and stronger civil society would generate progress are now in doubt. How can this be explained?

## The Accommodation Dilemma

The informants' initial answer to the above question is that the first pillar in the liberal model of fostering compromises within the elite, and thus also including the most powerful actors, has generated both stability and problems. In short, the informants support the thesis of leading scholars of Indonesian politics, such as Edward Aspinall, that there is an "irony of success"; that is, that the price for achievements is that the main potential adversaries (the military, oligarchs, ethnoregional elites, and militant Islamists) have been accommodated into the system along with patronage and corruption (Aspinall 2010: 20–34; c.f. Törnquist 2001). Generally, while physical force is no longer a decisive source of political authority and legitimacy for the dominant actors (fewer than 10 per cent of the informants' responses), money and 'good contacts' have become increasingly important (about 46 and 32 per cent, respectively) (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 76–77). For example, according to the informants, almost 60 per cent of the dominant actors that are elected public officials own or operate large business (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 59).

However, the informants also state that most dominant actors do not have roots in Suharto's regime (only about 26 per cent). Instead, most of them seem to be of more recent origin, sometimes with a background in civil society organisations (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Table 4.3). Similarly, as Marcus Mietzner has stressed, some potentially progressive actors have penetrated parties and public administration (Mietzner 2013). Hence, the accommodation of the powerful actors and the

importance of what some scholars have called ‘oligarch democracy’ may not be the only explanations for the problems.

## Unfair Institutions of Representation

The informants’ supplementary answer to why democratic institutions, new actors, and civil society are not doing better is that the existing parties and widespread free and fair elections, along with many participatory practices, are not only dominated by the most powerful actors. They typically also fail to open up for fair representation of progressive interests and collective actors. The informants point to some improvements, but the common estimates are almost as negative as those of the quality of rule of law and impartial governance. Citizen participation is deemed particularly bad, but so too are interest- and issue-based representation (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Tables 3.1, 3.3 and 90–94). Thus, the frequent results from other studies and media reporting about crooked politicians and elitist parties, vote buying, patronage, and clientelism are confirmed (most recently, Aspinall and Sukmajati 2016).

Our case studies also stress that people without good formal education are barred from running as candidates, even locally and even though they may be experienced and knowledgeable. Likewise, active civil servants (including teachers) remain prevented from candidacy, even though their subordination to authoritarian regimes has been reduced and participation could be combined with strict rules on impartiality at work. This certainly stands in contrast to the dominance of actors from business and private organisations with their own special interests. Moreover, the conditions for parties to be allowed to participate in elections remain extremely stringent. Although the mission of consolidating a unified political system in the country has been accomplished, parties wanting to field a candidate, even in local elections, are still required to demonstrate a physical presence in the country at large.<sup>5</sup> For those parties without massive economic resources and exceptionally ‘good contacts’, it is next to impossible to build a party and participate in elections in Indonesia, especially with an alternative democratic party.<sup>6</sup> The exception to allow

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5 A party must have chapters in all provinces, in 75 per cent of the regencies/municipalities in each province, and in 50 per cent of the districts within each regency/municipality.

6 Progressive, young, middle-class liberals in Jakarta, with interests in Singaporean urban management and certain social democratic ideas, might succeed in mobilising sufficient financial support to establish chapters of their new Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI). They may also be able to effectively convey their



local parties in Aceh, as part of the internationally brokered peace accord in 2005, served to facilitate the country's unification, but the democratic opening was soon undermined without significant critique from liberals inside and outside the country. As reformists advanced within the new democratic space, the conservative former-rebel leaders were given special benefits that undermined their reformist opponents in return for abstaining from resuming armed struggle and for mobilising votes for the president and his party in the national elections (Törnquist, Prasetyo, and Birks 2011).

Instead, the main liberal strategy has been to introduce individual candidates in the context of party lists and to promote direct elections of political executives. The effect of this has been increasingly personality-oriented money politics. Only a few progressive candidates have been elected as members of mainstream parties and to the powerless Regional Representative Council and also as village leaders, regents, mayors, and governors. However, the particular challenge of winning direct elections for political executives by way of traditional individually oriented patronage has given rise to what James Manor has identified as "post-clientelist" methods. In Indonesia, this has mainly occurred by way of populism, including by gaining personal popularity as being against the establishment, and by building supposedly direct relations with broad unspecified sections of the population (Manor 2013). These efforts have no doubt opened up new avenues for alternative actors that can help provide popularity and popular support, as in the case of activists' cooperation with the current reform-oriented president Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo, but also for conservative and religious leaders, as well as for established parties that may rally behind popular independent candidates. Moreover, in both cases there are few if any democratic institutions for representation and negotiations (Djani and Törnquist 2016). We shall return to the implications later.

Meanwhile Suharto's state-corporatist system of top-down appointed and thoroughly controlled 'functional groups' was effectively broken down. However, the results of the attempts to instead promote direct participation at the local level have been mixed. The typical critique is of elite dominance, even in the context of the new village-level governance reforms (most recently, for example, White 2016). There have also been exciting attempts to initiate commissions and central and local advisory boards on issues such as corruption, human rights, and planning. These

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bold female leadership profile and to efficiently exploit their media skills and contacts within polling institutes. However, their lack of a popular base and transformative policies remains unresolved.

are potentially important institutionalised linkages between state and society that add to general elections and may weaken the importance of ‘good contacts’. A major conclusion in this essay is that they should be expanded but also democratised. This is because the members tend to be selected in their individual capacities and appointed in accordance with the vested interests of the parliamentarians and executive politicians. Hence, the members cannot act as representatives of democratic issue and interest organisations and other communities (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 109–113, incl. Table 6.3).

## Weak Democratic Capacity

The informants’ third answer to the question of why democratisation has stalled is that the freedoms and emphasis on decentralisation and civil society (of which there is little doubt) have not significantly improved the political capacity of potentially progressive actors. The more recent movements in response to the uneven economic development point to advances in terms of collective action, but also come with problems of populism.

While the dominant actors are able to rely on superior economic resources and ‘good contacts’, the alternative actors have rarely developed any collective counter-powers, such as protests and mass organisation, and have instead relied on culture and knowledge. Moreover, the importance of the latter has been reduced (from 37 per cent of the responses in 2009 to 25 per cent in 2013); and the roles of ‘good contacts’ and economic resources have increased (from 32 to 52 per cent and 10 to 15 per cent, respectively) (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 76–77).

Similarly, the dominant actors have sustained their ability to decide the political agenda with wide sets of values, issues, and general promises. By contrast, the alternative actors retreated in 1999 from their previous overall focus on resisting the Suharto regime. This was often done on the basis of a combination of class interests and demands for democracy (Budiman and Törnquist 2001). They now turned to anti-state and self-management in civil society, plus advocacy and campaigns on single issues such as human rights, gender, governance (including corruption), the environment, and separate attention to the plight of farmers, urban poor, and workers (Prasetyo, Priyono, and Törnquist 2003). Much of this tendency is still present, as is the lack of long-term policies for gradual transformation (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 77–89; Djani and Törnquist 2016). However, there has been one crucial change since the second survey. The previously strong emphasis on the above-mentioned

single issues and focus on self-help and self-management has given way to greater emphasis on welfare issues and quests for public governance. Now, 55 per cent of the informants say that social welfare such as health and education are the most important public matters, while governance scores 30 per cent and citizenship 14 per cent. Moreover, 66 per cent say that state and local government rather than private actors should manage the welfare issues (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 23–26, incl. Graph 2.1). Similarly, according to the informants, the most important figures also focus on welfare, especially the dominant actors (40 per cent of responses), but also the alternative (33 per cent). The alternative actors' preoccupation with human rights and governance has dropped to 22 and 14 per cent respectively (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Table 5.2). Interestingly, however, politicians, along with state and local government, do not seem to deliver based on the respondents' indications that they deal with their problems more through citizens' own engagement and, for example, socio-religious organisations (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 26).

Our case studies also point in this direction (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 83–87; Djani and Törnquist 2016; Hiariej and Stokke forthcoming 2017; and Samhadi 2015). There are signs of counter movement against the drawbacks of the uneven economic development and deficits of public welfare and services. Most of the activists who used to negate the state and 'dirty politics' and celebrated the liberal emphasis on civil society and self-management now ask politicians and governments to consider more decent wages, the development of a welfare state, and environmentally responsible compromises in order to handle chaotic urban growth. The best illustration is the successful broad alliance between 2010 and 2012 for a universal public health reform among unions and civil society organisations, together with urban poor and informal labourers as well as supportive politicians. Similarly, President Jokowi advanced largely thanks to efforts regarding public welfare and urban development, while also negotiating with urban poor organisations.

However, other populist-oriented politicians have also attempted similar methods of attracting broad support, often by employing transactional money politics and by exploiting religious identities. So, in spite of the growing importance of demands for public welfare, the dominant politicians have managed to stay in command and retain hegemony, whereas the movements based on popular interest and activists have remained short of alternatives and are tailing behind. In fact, the alternative actors' capacity to develop long-term policies remains weak, so the struggles for the health reform have not continued, in favour of more comprehensive welfare policies.

The previous focus on single issues tends to be associated with methods of mobilising people such as lobbying and networking, plus alternative patronage of vulnerable people, rather than broad membership-based organisations. However, the increasing focus on the interests of labour in particular, as well as social rights and welfare have come with greater mobilisation and organisation in this sector and behind populist-oriented politicians and their parties (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 83–90, incl. Table 5.4B). Frequent methods include populism, mainly characterised by anti-elitism and supposedly direct relations between charismatic leaders and notoriously undefined ‘people’. This is most common among dominant actors (59 per cent) but also with alternative actors (41 per cent). Meanwhile clientelism and patronage are still in use (17 and 24 per cent for dominant and alternative actors, respectively), as is networking (6 per cent for dominant and 10 per cent for alternative actors); but movement coordination is trailing behind (4 per cent for dominant and 9 per cent for alternative actors). Related information adds the role of social media and confirms the limited importance of organisation as compared to mobilisation (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Tables 5.4 and 5.4A). For example, only 5 per cent of the actors generally turn to democratic organisations or institutions as a means of overcoming problems of exclusion (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 74 and Table 5.1).

The grounded informants’ experiences are particularly worrying when it comes to the alternative actors’ strategies and related means of representation to gain influence and foster policies (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: 66, 81, 99 and 102–116). The main method for addressing problems is still to turn to institutions of self-governance and private governance (51 per cent of responses). It is true that actors also turn to institutions for stakeholders to advance their claims (24 per cent) and to the judiciary (10 per cent), but these face problems of representation and corruption, and the political institutions are tailing behind (10 per cent) (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Table 6.3 (percentage of responses)). In terms of mediators, moreover, civil society organisations and media remain at the top (49 per cent), along with informal leaders (13 per cent), while interest organisations and political organisations come far behind (between 10 and 12 per cent each) (Savirani and Törnquist 2015: Table 6.4 (per cent of responses)).

To put it bluntly, the main strategy seems to be to establish linkages with friends in influential positions rather than with people with similar problems. Strategies to widen one’s base come to 24 per cent, while campaigning via media, advocacy, and lobbying totals 44 per cent (Savi-

rani and Törnquist 2015: Table 6.5 (percentage of responses)). In short, the major effect of liberal democratisation is that there are few reformist strategies in the first place; that is, plans for stepwise advances such as building an alliance in order to promote a particular public reform, which in turn may enable a wider coalition of actors to implement a follow-up reform that may promote more inclusive development, better welfare systems, improved education, and greater democracy.<sup>7</sup>

Instead, most of our informants instead conceptualise strategies in terms of calculations of how to gain the best-possible contacts within state and politics, in order to gain access to influential political positions and as many public resources as possible in an effort to foster their own interests, projects, and organisations outside the state and government. In short, the idea of developing reform proposals and mobilising the widest possible support for them, and for their impartial implementation through improved state and government services, seems to be almost absent among alternative actors. Under liberal democratisation, most alternative actors are simply so weak that the rational prime focus is lobbying and 'getting access' to resources for their activities outside the state and government, rather than trying to win elections or building mass organisations and broad alliances.

## The Way Ahead

In conclusion, it is true that advances have been made during recent years, mainly in the context of the broad alliance of unions, civil society organisations, and progressive politicians for public health reform. There has also been mobilisation behind and in favour of reformist populists like Jokowi, mainly along his route to the presidential palace, less when in office. In fact, our empirical studies indicate that the so-far fragmented and weak actors of change in Indonesia might be able to build the kind of broader counter-movements against the tortuous liberal economic development that Karl Polanyi identified during the 1930s. The chaotic urban growth has fostered compromises between sections of business, middle classes, and urban poor. Many of these sections wish to build more liveable cities by fighting capital accumulation based on dispossessing citizens of land and other resources rather than on production. The best-known cooperation was brokered by Jokowi in Solo on Central Java and in Jakarta before he was elected president. Moreover, some

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7 For related discussions of gradualism and transformative politics, see Carothers 2007: 12–14, and Stokke and Törnquist 2013.

organised workers have started to realise the need to link up with the growing number of contract and self-employed labourers in order to avoid losing out under the global reign of flexibility and subcontracting but still stand a chance when fighting for more and decent jobs and better welfare schemes. This was the background for the broad movement for the national public health insurance. Numerous middle-class people who work under precarious conditions are also concerned and in favour of public welfare. Their willingness to pay taxes for such services (instead of seeking private solutions) certainly presupposes trust in actors advocating effective and impartial public administration. However, the same demand for impartial public administration also applies to the coalitions for liveable cities, as well as to the wider alliances among labourers in favour of better work and welfare schemes. Therefore, all these movements may add demands for better governance (Djani and Törnquist 2016). The signs of such potentials in Indonesia are somewhat similar to the recent dynamics that carried the Indian Common People's Party (AAP) into local government in New Delhi (for further analyses and references, see Törnquist and Harriss 2016). Most importantly, such broad unity in favour of well-implemented reforms towards decent work relations and welfare may foster wider and better-organised collective action. Well-organised actors, in turn, are a fundamental element in democratic routes to economic improvements through the historical social-growth pacts that preceded comprehensive welfare states.

As concluded in a recent study on *Reinventing Social Democratic Development* (see Törnquist and Harriss 2016), the above would thus be an upside-down scenario. By way of comparison, the Scandinavian history of broad labour movements countered the global economic crises via pre-Keynesian public works and investments, and then engaged in social-growth pacts between well-organised representatives of capital and labour, which generated capacity and interest (even among employers) in welfare reforms that also fostered economic development. In contrast, the possible scenario in countries in the Global South, where uneven development prevails and organisation is weak and fragmented, is that more extensive struggles for rights, welfare, and impartial implementation pave the way for unified strong organisations and social growth pacts.

However, the basic problem for alternative actors is still building such broad alliances and then sustaining them. Moreover, the actors remain fragmented because of poor popular- and interest-based representation. As previously noted, this makes it more rational for actors to gain access to good contacts and resources within state and government

(and the private sector), rather than mobilising and organising as many as possible behind joint demands and public policies that could, in a step-by-step manner, improve democracy and people's capacity to use it, and to foster social equality combined with inclusive and sustainable economic growth (see also the insightful analysis in Aspinall 2013: 27–54).

Hence, there must be more institutions of representation that foster democratic collective action behind long-term gradual policies to transform the troublesome conditions. The present actors in control of decisions on electoral reforms have their own fingers in the pie and are unlikely to proceed. Instead, progress appears to require more social aspects of democratisation and better representation of those interests that have historically proven more engaged in fostering equal inclusive development.

In short, the coordinators of the participatory research conclude that the main priority of democratisation should now be the promotion of social democratic representation of issue and interest groups to complement liberal democratic elections and direct citizen participation. As already mentioned, an initial step in this direction could be to demand democratisation of the current commissions and central and local advisory boards that have so far involved top-down selected civil society leaders. There is also a need to expand the institutions by including democratic unions, employers' associations, and civil society organisations in the development and implementation of reforms towards effective governance and welfare schemes that promote inclusive development. The policy areas are a matter of priority and must certainly be decided by politicians elected on the basis of citizens' preferences. However, Suharto's top-down appointment of delegates, as well as the current selection in accordance with the vested interests of crooked politicians, should be replaced by impartial and transparent public facilitation of representatives selected by and accountable to those who build nation-wide democratic issue and interest organisations.

A step in the right direction is that the civil society organisations that advise President Jokowi's chief of staff, Teten Masduki, have been allowed to appoint their own representatives. However, popular mass organisations remain on the outside. Further sources of inspiration may include the possibilities to widen the International Labour Organization's principles of tripartite labour market negotiations to other sectors and actors. The democratic representation of the crucial but neglected issues and interests may also address the abuse of powers among politicians and bureaucrats, as well as enhance the political capacity of actors of change. But would this be politically feasible in Indonesia?

Reform-oriented leaders who are less elitist, such as Jokowi, need support from not just powerful actors but also citizen organisation, unions and other interest organisations. As we have seen, there are signs that these citizens' and workers' and other interest organisations can come together regarding demands for decent work relations, welfare reforms, and efficient and fair implementation of related services. The crucial question that requires more research is whether they can also agree on demanding democratic representation in the development and implementation of such policies (to thus also increase their own capacity), and whether political leaders and employers with an interest in inclusive development would then realise that such agreements might also be in their favour. This has not yet materialised. For the time being, political leaders such as Jokowi's ally, the present governor of Jakarta (Basuki Tjahaja 'Ahok' Purnama), have downgraded the importance of negotiating with the urban poor, thereby opening up for other powerful politicians and even Muslim extremists to gain their support. Also, potentially progressive actors, such as unions, have returned to transactional politics and rallied behind the leaders that promise the best patronage in return for popular support with whatever means, at worst engaging in religious identity politics.

Internationally, support for the alternative route may be provided by development, labour, and prodemocracy organisations in favour of broad agendas and agreements. Such partnerships do not need to be politically partisan in favour of particular parties. (But later on, of course, democratically stronger issue and interest organisations are also the best base for the development of less elitist and oligarch-driven parties.) In terms of democracy studies, we believe in waiting for a while before making significant assessments (such as ours) and correlations of factors involved. Instead, we should focus on whether and how the problems of moving ahead can be met and how the options can be best analysed and fostered.

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