

## **‘Floating Democrats’**

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### **1. Introduction**

It was the modern independence movement, not the liberal West, that first fought for democracy in Indonesia. Ideas of democracy gained ground and flourished till the late 1950s, only to be set aside as the impact of the cold war shaped social and economic conflict and distorted priorities. From the mid- to late 1960s onwards, the main democratically oriented forces - on one side liberal sections of the intellectuals, professionals and the business community and on the other radical popular movements – were either marginalized or even eliminated, Muslims and Christians alike, with the support of the dominant Western powers.

For three decades thereafter, the deterministic pathway to middle class democracy – by way of 'politics of order' and modernisation – failed. But it took till the end of Soeharto's New Order regime for this doctrine to be swept away – by anarchic global finance, dysfunctional domestic institutions and rebellious students. It was swiftly replaced by another extreme: the idealistic preoccupation with an internationally sponsored 'crafting of instant democracy' that did not take into consideration real conditions on the ground. Yet for a few years there existed some space for the kind of efforts at democratisation that had long been ridiculed as 'a waste of time'. But at present, as we know too well, much of that democratic space has disappeared, particularly for ordinary people and weak pro-democrats. The so-called opportunity structure is back to 'normal,' reflecting actual and largely prevailing power relations. So the question we now face is whether it is yet possible to defend, expand and make forceful use of the democratic space remaining, or whether the historical opportunity to sustain and develop the at least nominally third largest democracy in the world has been lost?

Democracy is about popular control over binding collective decisions in matters of common concern e.g. in a country, a village or an organisation of citizens or members who in this respect are equals. Hence there may be more or less democracy: more or less control by more or less (in this respect) equal people over many or just a few matters of common concern. The means to promote these ends usually vary with the given contexts. To that extent, democracy is contextual. The functioning of any given democracy, moreover, as well as the problems and options of developing and consolidating it (i.e. what we call democratisation), depends to a large extent on two things. Firstly how crucial actors promote, use or bypass the major instruments of democracy (in the form of certain rights and institutions) when they try to promote their more or less instrumental ideas and interests. Secondly, what capacity the actors have to do so. In this respect also democracy is contextual. A basic level of substantial democracy requires that ordinary people, not just the elite, have some fundamental capacity to make use of the basic instruments of democracy – at least to the extent that it makes more sense to them to further their aims and interests democratically than by non-democratic methods. Since such a minimum capacity among underprivileged citizens usually calls for more favourable power relations, rules and regulations, democratisation is not mainly about institutional techniques but of principles and visions, interests and power. Democratisation is of politics.

Because the West that briefly attempted at promoting democracy in Indonesia has now prioritised

the fighting of real or imagined terrorists and selected despots in ways which boost 'friendly' authoritarian rulers and weaken human rights and democratic institutions, the identification and analysis of the nature, problems and potential of these rights and institutions in Indonesia in the wake of the post-Soeharto democracy movement has become a matter of some urgency. This book aims to make a modest contribution to that end.

### **Democratic actors and their constituencies**

One of the major difficulties facing Indonesian pro-democrats is the absence of a clear constituency in terms of a basis amongst organised popular interests and visions. From the mid-1960s onwards, radical movements with roots in the struggle for national and humanitarian liberation were eradicated. Independent mass organising beyond conservative socio-religious movements was prohibited. Ordinary people were deliberately transformed into a 'floating mass' of subjects. Elitist dissidents amongst students, intellectuals and professionals benefited from certain limited citizens rights. But isolated as they were, they inevitably became a movement of almost equivalently 'floating democrats' – scattered, poorly organised and often detached from society in general. The present problem therefore, is not just one of promoting and maintaining rights and institutions, but more essentially one of turning decades of authoritarianism into a historical parenthesis by breaking those invisible barriers between and amongst equivalently floating masses and democrats.

Conditions in the mid-1990s provide the specific theme and motivation for this book. It is true that the 1994 crackdown on the vibrant dissident milieu based at the Satya Wacana Christian University in Salatiga provided the initial impetus, but the main reason was the need to discuss problems and options within the democracy movement itself. While the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI) had just proclaimed itself as the 'locomotive of democracy,' its strategic programme was mainly concerned with promoting civil society in general. It had almost nothing to say about identifying the specific actors and constituents that had the potential to promote and pioneer real democratisation. Even YLBHI's director, Adnan Buyung Nasution, the then 'engine driver' of democracy, acknowledged the need for more focussed and critical analysis. As a result, Arief Budiman and Olle Törnquist determined to design and develop as well as mobilise funds to implement just such an endeavour.

Just as a brief pilot study was concluded and the main application for funds submitted however, came the next major crackdown by the New Order regime – that of 27 July 1996. The 'success' of the crackdown seemed, on the surface, to indicate the strength and power of the regime, and one direct impact was the delay of our project. But in our analysis, this latest crackdown was not an indication of the regime's strength, but rather provided a brief moment of transparency that revealed its actual weaknesses. The regime was unable to reform itself from within, politically as well as institutionally. It could not even handle weak opposition forces from outside. All it could do was delay its own collapse – so long as there was not a strong enough triggering factor to

generate not so much another crackdown on the opposition but the break-up of the regime.

But the democracy movement itself was not yet strong enough to provide such a trigger – and after the 27 July crackdown, it had also been severely weakened. Despite prevailing conditions, and in order not to just sit and wait for such more powerful factors to emerge (which then came about somewhat earlier than expected in 1997-98), we decided to go ahead with the original idea of studying democratic actors and their constituents, and to present the results for discussion and analysis.

The project was framed as a joint venture between, on the one hand, concerned scholars and investigative journalists and on the other, reflective activists. We decided that ISAI would provide the most appropriate institutional base, the only pro-democratic NGO with a vibrant and relevant constituency within culture, media and academia. This model was adopted because of the narrow space that existed within the academic sector, coupled with the need to draw on the expertise of and sources within the democracy movement itself, as well as providing material for reflective discussions within it (whilst taking into consideration the likely interest of *agent provocateurs* in the sensitive information gathered about the pro-democrats). It was perhaps not the most ideal or straightforward combination, but probably the best available.

In order to discuss the validity of the general arguments put forward about ‘what is to be done,’ we opted for case studies of specific actors within the context of selected incidents and movements that the main proponents of these arguments considered to be both significant and representative. These included actors and constituents in relation to the Kedung Ombo conflict (1989), Nipah dam conflict (1993), the Medan labour movement (1994), the demonstrations against press restrictions (1994), the Amungme Rebellion, the 27 July incident (1996), and the Mega-Bintang movement (1997). We did not focus our study the students and the student movement as such, only (as in the case of other actors) their way of intervening in the incidents and movements referred to above.

### **First round results**

The early results indicated that *firstly*, those actors who developed their own critical understanding of and engaged in wider discussions about democracy and democratisation as well as modern forms of resistance, were the only ones that proved sustainable and reasonably efficient in the long term. *Secondly*, that those groups that remained 'flexible' and did not opt for institutionalisation and organisation building tended to lose out over time. *Thirdly*, that all experiences pointed to the strategic importance of broad networks and organisational contacts in order to prevent fragmentation and isolation. *Fourthly*, that while pro-democracy movements influenced and contributed to each other's efforts (such as the interconnections between the students and democratic NGOs), one major weakness was the lack of links between national level politics and local level issues and action. *Fifthly*, that organisational structures and leadership (no

matter whether 'modern' or 'traditional') did not seem able to converge and coordinate efforts within various incidents and movements. The overall agenda at the time seems to have been dominated by the urgency of undermining and resisting the repressive regime in whatever way possible given the specific conditions and actors available at any given time and in any given location.

As the first results of this project were being discussed and analysed in various workshops and seminars, financial turbulence began to hit the country in late 1997. Of course it was neither this financial crisis nor the international capitalists and the IMF that were to later overthrow Soeharto's regime. Financial turbulence served only to provide the sufficiently powerful trigger-factor that had been missing in 1996. Thus, while Singapore, Thailand, Korea and even Malaysia managed to overcome most of their financial problems within a relatively brief period of time, Indonesia's more fundamental and longstanding political and administrative problems (that were briefly visible in July 1996) prevented the same from happening here. Instead, problems just grew worse by the minute, no matter which way the various dominant actors positioned themselves and how many conventional economic remedies they attempted to apply. International actors as well as opposition forces within the crisis-ridden government, military and business community took the initiative and stepped outside the structural framework of the regime to thus fill up the political vacuum. And just as our preliminary results had indicated, the weak organic, civil-society oriented democrats were not able to make much difference. Instead, it was the radical student activists that for a brief period of time (with the backing of various democratic groups) spearheaded the venting of society's frustration and substituted the lack of a strong pro-democracy movement.

Thereafter – and all too predictably - the students and their civil society NGO supporters lost out within a period of some eight months. The surviving establishment was much more capable of reorganising and adapting to the quickly crafted semi-democratic rights and institutions than the pro-democrats themselves.

Our research group did not respond quickly enough to undertake a contemporaneous case study of this swiftly unfolding process and add it to earlier ones already in the pipeline. Instead, we prioritised the discussion of draft analyses and the publication of separate articles. The book, *Aktor Demokrasi* was published later, when 'normalisation' was already a fact. By now the book is a mainly historical analysis to be used, for instance, if and when the movement finds time to reflect on what has happened and how it should move forward.

### **Beyond the end of history**

At the time, however, the major and most urgent question was whether the post-Soeharto democracy movement would be capable of recovering and regrouping, despite being marginalized by dominating forces that had taken over the process of transition. Would the

movement be able to continue its struggle in a significant way for a deeper and more meaningful democracy?

Whilst most scholars continued to focus on the central-level elite, there was an increasingly evident need to respond to the process of decentralisation and the deterioration of centralist structures as well as the new importance of mass politics on the ground. Similarly, there was a need not to *a priori* ignore the still strategic potential of the pro-democrats, despite their current state of weakness. Finally it was also important to broaden the studies of the dynamics at play in Indonesia within a comparative framework, in order to benefit from the experiences of earlier transitions. For instance, the difficulties facing civil society oriented movements in moving from anti-authoritarian resistance to renewed, decisive activity within semi-democratic frameworks seems to be a universal problem.

Thus, the idea for the case studies presented in this book was born. Whilst there was a little more space within the academic sector, we still had to draw on the expertise of the democracy movement itself –in order to access the best sources, to be careful with sometimes sensitive information, and to improve on our ability to provide material for reflective discussion within the movement itself. Consequently, we opted for continuing the joint venture (with ISAI providing the institutional basis) between concerned scholars and investigative journalists and reflective activists.

Although necessary, this model provided its own challenges. Arief Budiman moreover had to prioritise other commitments. We tackled these difficulties by strengthening both the academic and team leadership whilst institutionalising a permanent consultative faculty of concerned scholars and senior reflective activists. This group has met regularly to screen and discuss early drafts and analysis (for the names of those involved, see the preface).

### **Preparatory survey of actors and major issue-areas**

A precondition for the new project was identification of consistent and significant actors as the focus of critical case studies within the broader discussion of the capacity of the post-Soeharto democracy movement. Conditions on the ground were somewhat confusing however. Nobody really ‘knew’ the status of the movement. Several old groups had disintegrated whilst new ones appeared within the formally democratic framework. Dynamics appeared highly centrifugal and localised. Facing such uncertainty and conditions, ideally an initial explorative mapping exercise would be undertaken before even getting started. But as this was far beyond our economic and other capacities, we opted instead to undertake a quick national survey on the basis of our existing networks, including those of concerned local journalists that had been trained by ISAI/AJI, worked in sister organisations or with Radio 68H, in combination with reflective human rights activists related to KontraS.

The survey was carried out between December 2000 and March 2001 in 21 provinces, namely:

Aceh, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, Riau, Lampung, South Sumatra, West Java-Banten, Jakarta, Central Java-Yogyakarta, East Java, West Kalimantan, Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, North Sulawesi-Gorontalo, Maluku and Papua. We adopted a simple classification system in terms of (a) 'producers of democracy' meaning actors who are primarily concerned with advancing their (and their constituents') aims and interests by both promoting and using democratic rights and institutions; (b) 'consumers of democracy' who rarely try to promote democratic rights and institutions but mainly adapt to and make use of them when they happen to be 'the only game in town' plus sometimes also bypass them and thus promote their aims and interests in other ways, and (c) 'non-democrats' who may claim to be democrats but deliberately try to promote their aims and interests in ways other than through democratic rights and institutions and who often even try to undermine them. Each respondent was asked to identify and give a brief profile of the five most important producers of democracy, the three most powerful consumers democracy, and the three most powerful non-democrats in his/her province. As we double-checked the information and combined the responses of several respondents within each province, the number of actors per province was adjusted.

On the basis of this classification and profiles, we could then identify major issue-orientations within the post-Soeharto movement as well as collecting a 'pool' of actors (and their constituents) from which it would be possible to make a reasonably well informed selection of cases for more in-depth study.

Altogether we collected profiles of 177 democracy issues/cases at stake with 107 actors involved in the 21 surveyed regions. Further, these movements and groups focused on the following issue areas, ranked in accordance with their frequency (within brackets) in all the provinces: (a) human rights and anti state- and military-violence (31); (b) supremacy of law and advocacy of civil and political rights (22); (c) movement networking (20); (d) development of democratic discourses and mechanisms (18); (e) labour, farmer and marginal groups advocacy (18); (f) empowerment of indigenous peoples (16); (g) local government issues or regional autonomy (14); (h) anti-corruption, -collusion and -nepotism and clean governance (8); (i) environment (8); (j) gender equality (8); (k) social and religious pluralism (7); and (l) conflict resolution and reconciliation(7).

Further details are to be found in appendix 1 – but we do like to warn against reading too much into the lists and figures. It was interesting to note some tendencies in our respondents' way of reviewing the state of affairs. Whilst cross-checking information with other informants, it became obvious for instance, that middle-class oriented respondents tended to give priority to (or simply had little knowledge of anything but) NGOs as compared to popular based movements of workers and peasants. And despite our efforts to make up for this through the triangulation of our sources, we did not fully succeed. Finally, it became apparent that the actual locus of local dynamics was rarely found at provincial, but rather at district (*kabupaten*) level. The ideal survey would thus have been carried out with a sample of districts as the base (which, however, would have called

not only for more resources but also sufficient quality information in order to make a representative selection).

Notwithstanding these inevitable limitations, we like to think that we succeeded in collecting a representative pool of actors for the case studies, a reasonably firm understanding of what kind of issues were prioritised as well as some idea of their 'popularity'. Overall, the groups tend to be specialised and rather fragmented. There is a tendency to focus on single issues and special interests and a lack of unifying ideological and political perspectives. Local networking makes up for some of this but the links between the centre and the local level remain poor.

In our final selection of issue-areas and actors, however, some additional factors had to be attended to. There was a need also to consider what is probably the most strategic field of democratisation – political organising. Certain potentially important issue-areas such as gay gender identity were also added. In order not to lose sight of the major actors, two case studies of selected 'consumers of democracy' and the increasingly significant anti-democratic militias were included as well.

### **Issues and actors in the current study**

The thus re-defined issue-areas for the case studies are as follows: (1) Workers and Urban poor actions, (2) Peasant struggles, (3) Rural politics and community action, (4) Watchdog activities, (5) Gender struggles, (6) Human rights issues, (7) Networking and democratisation of political parties, (8) Consumers of democracy and Civil militias.

The selection of actors within these issue-areas was difficult. This was done from amongst the actors identified in the survey and in the supplementary re-checking of the initial results. The first criteria were significance, importance, and track record over a reasonable period of time. Hence, for example, the students in terms of qualifying as a unified actor were never opted for. The second criterion was that we should try to pick cases that could function as reasonable test cases for essential arguments on the capacity of the democracy movement in general. The third criterion, when possible, was to compare groups that were active within similar issue-areas but based in different contexts. The fourth criterion, of course, was 'simply' the availability of good, reliable and reflective activists-cum-informants. Finally, at times, we opted against separate cases because parallel studies (which we could draw on in the final report) were already under way within the team, (such as by Törnquist on labour and Perdana on land disputes) or because some informants were capable of delivering their own mini-studies, which we could either use to broaden our case studies or integrate as boxes in the final book.

The team itself focussed on carrying out 19 case studies. Fifty-one actors were selected within 12 research-localities in Aceh, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, South Sumatra, Jakarta, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, West Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi and Papua. Forty-one of the actors selected fell into the pro-democratic category, whilst the remaining 10 were either

consumers of democracy or anti-democracy actors (See appendix 2). The studies were carried out between May 2001 and November 2002. During that period some of the selected pro-democratic actors turned consumers and some turned non-democratic.

### **Key questions**

The general aim of the project has been to examine a series of critical cases that demonstrate how pro-democratic (and a few less or even non-democratic) actors relate to various associated rights and institutions. We have tried to undertake and convey analyses that might help in generating a more context-sensitive understanding and discussion of the actual efforts on the ground as well as the problems and options involved.

We have not aspired to carry out a series of case studies that at first hand correspond to top-level academic analyses. Fundamental standards are maintained, but we have focussed on maximizing and making the best out of the given need (and privilege) of working together with (and making contributions to) concerned but also often very self-critical and reflective activists with the best possible access to their sources and experience. Moreover, it was vital to us to cover most of the issue areas that the movement was engaged in and a reasonable spectrum of contexts.

We have attempted to look simultaneously into both what the actors' think of democracy and what they actually do. This, of course, does not just relate to groups that deliberately focus on promoting democracy as such but also to the majority of actors that may do so in order to further their more 'instrumental' ideas and interests such as access to land, livelihood, and better working conditions or less destruction of the environment. In each case, therefore, we have asked questions about the specific issues, ideas and interests involved as well as how the actors try to promote them (including by networking, organising and mobilising resources and support) – and their outcomes, both in terms of democratisation and the 'instrumental' aspirations involved. In a general way we have drawn on the approach and method adopted in Törnquist's comparative work on popular politics of democratisation and have benefited from some of his results.

### **Deliberations and additional cooperation**

As has already been indicated, we attempted to broaden the scope of the case studies and relevant discussion by holding a series of workshops and seminars with concerned scholars and reflective activists. These culminated in a conference held in Jakarta in January 2002. For this occasion we also invited a number of leading international experts on Indonesia's decentralisation and political violence in a comparative perspective, labour and democracy movements (with a special focus on Africa and Asia), and the pro-democracy movement in India, Thailand and the Philippines. In addition to the case studies therefore, the book includes a selection of the Indonesian as well as international contributions to this conference

## **2. Results**

In summary, what may be said then of the nature, problems and potential of the post-Soeharto democracy movement – on the basis of the essays, case-studies and ensuing discussion? What is its capacity to recover and regroup, now that the forces promoting the status quo dominate? What are the problems and options involved in continuing a more fruitful struggle for a substantial and meaningful democracy?

*The second chapter is concerned with the social and political crisis* that constitutes a threat even against the country itself and the national project as such. Soon after the fall of Soeharto, the student movement lost momentum. It was poorly institutionalised and organised. Links with the broader and more longstanding democracy movement were weak. Neither was this older movement able to offer an alternative. Ironically, no section of the pro-democracy movement managed even to relate to and take advantage of the new democratic institutions (including elections). The surviving elite were more capable of at least formally adjusting to the new elements of human rights and democracy as well as to the disintegrating system of governance and administration. While simultaneously defending their vested interests however, they merely drove the country from bad to worse. Economic and political problems were not resolved and the country was soon on the brink of a full-scale crisis threatening the heart of its social and cultural fabric, and continue to balance on a tight-rope. How do such conditions impact on efforts at further democratisation?

According to *J. Nasikun*, any form of democracy in Indonesia must function within an ethnically and religiously plural setting. At present, most political competition is based on such loyalties and sympathies. No democracy will be immune against communal competition and none of the conventional remedies for handling such situations seem to work. The common political pacts in mainstream formulas for transitions to democracy restrict widespread participation in order to allow for agreement among the elite. But in Indonesia, this instead tends to generate more conflict between politicised ethnic and religious groups. At this point in time there is a need for a more consociational political arrangement that might allow for broader representation, coalition, compromise and strong minority rights. Moreover, whilst decentralisation as an attempt to avoid the aggregation of communal conflict at national level may be wise, it also opens up the opportunity for decentralised despotism. So both consociational arrangements and decentralisation may be necessary –though they are also conservative. According to Dr. Nasikun therefore, democratisation must not just change the state by promoting popular representation and rule of law. Over time, civil society must also be transformed so that religious and ethnic organising becomes less dominant.

The late *Th. Sumartana*, moves deeper into the particularly serious post-Soeharto conflicts that relate to race, ethnicity, and religion (the so called SARA-conflicts), especially between Muslims and Christians. At worst even the very basis of democracy in terms of a reasonably unified people (*demos*) is at risk. According to Sumartana there is an urgent need for reconciliation, which, he

asserts, could and should be based within a humanitarian framework. Religions do not only exist as beliefs and practices, but include various institutions and networks that may be linked to colonial and despotic contexts as well as specific vested interests. At worst, the military and police are also involved. The challenge, according to Sumartana, is to separate these 'physical' distortions from the fundamental human values of the religions themselves. As people become aware of these distinctions they are better equipped to separate those instrumental interests from belief. Thus the human values can be transformed into clear beacons and bases for reconciliation.

*Gerry van Klinken*, takes one step back in history to the colonial period, and one step in a comparative direction to contemporary Africa, in order to better understand the character of current conflict and violence, especially on the 'outer islands'. As in Mahmood Mamdani's analysis of Africa, Indonesian problems, van Klinken contends, are rooted in surviving forms of the old system of indirect rule. The problems are best described in terms of decentralised despotism – often inherited by the *priyayi* and later on by Golkar. The relevance of this tendency is increasing as the power and authority of a centralised state is in decline. The deterioration of the central state and the fall of the patrimonial-like ruler at the top have increased the importance of changes within power configurations at lower levels. Geographical as well as sectoral boundaries and territories are redefined and renegotiated and fought over. Thus, democratisation at central level will not have a great impact, as long as urbanised dissidents do not take the lead in supporting real democratisation at the local level in order to undermine decentralised despotism. If this is not done, democracy will be limited to urban state-civil society relations while the bifurcated character of the state survives in the country in general and the roots of violence remain.

Within the context of these analyses of the broader crisis, *chapter three addresses the general problems of democratisation* and what one can learn from a comparative perspective. As indicated by *Olle Törnquist*, none of the four major theories of democratisation have proved valid in Indonesia. It was not the comparatively impressive capitalist modernisation but rather its crisis that opened up some space for democracy in the mid-1990s. With the support of the West, the bourgeoisie and most of the middle class never really opted for democracy but rather paved the way for the massacre in 1965 and (aside from some social workers and intellectuals) supported the authoritarian regime until the bitter end some 33 years later. The working class expanded from the mid-1980s but was never able to organise effectively. Then, suddenly, the West tried to implant instant democracy. This was done by promoting agreements between reformist sections among the incumbents who had left Soeharto and moderate sections among the elitist dissent politicians. It was also done by quickly crafting a full set of democratic rights and institutions, including elections. And it was done by disempowering and decentralising the state in favour of the civil society together with intensified privatisation and globalisation of the economy. But to a large extent this has also failed. One major reason, according to Törnquist, is that decentralisation, deregulation and privatisation against centralist political monopolies and

corruption – in order to foster the rule of law as well as pacts allowing the powerful to retain their positions and properties in exchange for liberal democratic politics – only work when the powerful business groups in question are capable of existing without the need for a symbiotic relationship with the state, military, and judiciary. Otherwise, democracy will only generate more corruption and bossism. Substantial democratisation calls instead for transformation of the power relations. But such structural transformation is only favoured by the pro-democracy movement, which remains much too weak. It has largely emphasised single issues, pressure and lobbying and work within small organisations in civil society. So in the era of mass politics and elections they are easily marginalized. The result of these twin processes and problems, Törnquist argues, is that ‘instant democracy’ does not make much sense to most key groups and interests. Thus so much of the crucial decision-making, agreements and struggles are taking place outside the democratic system – ultimately tending to render them irrelevant.

Reviewing the origins and character of the ‘New Order,’ *Vedi Hadiz* draws our attention to its continuity. Much of the New Order oligarchy and patronage-system, he asserts, remains intact. The major change is that this oligarchy now rules less via the bureaucracy and more through political parties and parliament, national and regional. More resources are located in the provinces and other increasingly important regions. Here flourish the mini-Soehartos. Thus, we should be making comparisons less with Europe and North America and more with the Philippines, Thailand and Russia. If the deterioration and fragmentation of the state continues it may not even serve as a basis for agreement and negotiation. Hadiz recalls Gramsci’s observation that while the old order has collapsed; the new has failed to be born. Good governance is not just a matter of creating better institutions. The underlying power relations must be transformed. In the run up to the 2004 elections no forces of change are presenting evidence. The mobilising capacity of the dominating parties rests within ethnic and religious blocks and their finance depends on the oligarchs. There is no liberal party representing middle class interest in the rule of law. There is no labour party representing the interests of the workers, farmers and marginalized sections of society in social and economic change. Thus, according to Hadiz, there is no basis yet in Indonesia for the necessary alliance between these two pillars in the process of genuine democratisation.

Soeharto could have opted for reform much earlier on in his rule, adds *Mochtar Pabottingi*. But he opted for a long and drawn-out struggle and the opposition had few alternatives aside from stubborn resistance. Consequently, problems are extensive and deep-rooted, and there is much to be done. There need to be constitutional improvements, better political laws, increased ‘quality’ of the political parties, a ‘cleansed’ judiciary, a democratically controlled and disciplined bureaucracy and military, and improved popular understanding of democracy. But we cannot do everything at once. The fundamental question, therefore, is what needs to be prioritised. According to Pabottingi one must first recall the close relationship between the nation state and democracy. Today, as well as in the past, we cannot imagine democratisation and democracy

outside of the context of a nation-state. Secondly, he adds, the most important factor is the judiciary, the rule of law. Stopping short of elaborating on how such institutional changes maybe implemented however, it is unclear whether Pabottingi's argument is in contrast to or compatible with those of Törnquist and Hadiz concerning the need to alter the balance of power.

This discussion relates to the experiences of promoting the rule of law and constitutional change in Thailand. *Kavi Chongkittavorn* draws attention to the concerted efforts in 1997 at rule of law through comprehensive revisions of the constitution on the basis of unusually broad and open public deliberation. Among the most important aims were the prevention of authoritarianism and money politics through the institutionalisation of an integrated set of checks and balances. The outcome is currently being debated and improvements are being discussed. The massive electoral victory of business tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra has altered the balance of power. The real challenge is to go beyond the crafting ideal rules and regulation by also considering how to counter the powerful groups and forces that may abuse and bypass them.

The following seven chapters of the book are devoted to a series of case studies and comments on various sections of the post-Soeharto democracy movement. *Chapter four concerns the experiences of urban poor.* Given the labour movement's great potential as an agent of democratic change both in terms of *democratic action among labour activists and workers and the collective interests in organisational rights, political equality, and freedom of speech, as well as in its numbers, why is it that labour did not play a more prominent role in the undermining and overthrow of the Soeharto regime, and what has its role in the pro-democracy movement been since?*

Bearing in mind the devastating effect of the massacres of the mid-1960s, the virtual elimination of progressive movements and persistent repression for over three decades, *Olle Törnquist also draws attention to the substantial increase in the number of wage labourers and industrial workers since the early 1980s.* Moreover, though economic development was uneven, even the fragmented structures of the 1950s did not prevent the rise of a reasonably unified labour movement. Over the years, there have been signs of resistance. These have been in the main over 'innocent economic issues' within the non-state and export oriented modern sectors where there has been less social control and repression coupled with less ability to pass on high costs (for corruption, protection etc.) to the buyers and thus having to hold down wages even more than otherwise. Yet more fundamental labour demands for democratic rights were also gaining ground and spreading. So why did this not have more of an impact? At the structural level, Törnquist argues, labour's bargaining power was weakened by the economic depression from late-1997 onwards, and many faced redundancy. The weakening of the regime and the availability of broader space for action was caused by the crisis within not the development of capitalism. At the level of the politics of democratisation, moreover, labour was never really integrated into the dispersed and often middle-class dominated dissident movement. Both these factors also explain

labour's inability to make a difference despite the fall of Soeharto's repressive New Order regime. In addition to labour's weak bargaining power, the generally unfavourable institutional conditions, and the increasingly privatised nature of the violence of thugs and militias, the weak politics of democratisation stands out. Törnquist points to the tendency to opt for 'exit' rather than 'voice' by establishing many new 'free' groups and organisations (as it was difficult to change the old ones); the divisive role of much needed resources from central organisations, NGOs, and foreign donors; the problematic ways in which foreign partners try to promote 'unity'; the de-unifying localisation of politics and bossism; the predominance of pressure-politics, lobbying, and clientelism; the negligible importance of workers to parliamentary politics and elections; and the dual and unrelated progressive strategies of either promoting grass-roots initiatives or political-issue-alliances.

On a general level, both these progressive strategies or lines of thought very much concur with *Björn Beckman's* assertion that one should not overestimate the divisive effects of uneven development. As capitalism spreads, labour is increasing and its potential power is growing in a number of key sectors. The role of rapidly increasing organised labour has been extremely important in a number of struggles for democracy, not only in South Africa and most recently in Brazil but also in a country as hard hit by crisis as Nigeria. Firstly, aside from the simple strength of numbers, enlightened state and management practices require strong trade unions through which to negotiate structural change with the workers. Secondly, trade unions need rights to organise as well as legal protection against the utilization by employers and the state of their 'raw' economic, political and repressive powers. Hence, trade unions are not on their way out but may well play a vital role in democratisation, even if their actions are based on their own so-called special interests.

One of Indonesia's progressive labour forces with a pro-democratic orientation was represented at the January 2002 conference by union activist and human rights lawyer *Hemasari Dharmabumi*. Her main argument is that since labour-based politics is very important, assisting in the organisation of a strong and genuine labour movement on the ground must be a priority, in order that politicians and political parties do not come to dominate it and use it to their own advantage. Hema, thus, focuses on workplace based unions. Various pro-labour NGOs have also tried to offer support 'from below'. Their lines of thought have varied and, for instance, often included the harnessing of labour groups outside the workplace.

On the other end of the spectrum of progressive and pro-democratic union organisers is *Dita Indah Sari*. Dita emphasises the need for clear political and ideological orientation with regard to broad and potentially unifying key class issues – such as those related to labour laws, structural adjustment or the celebration of May 1 – in order to succeed in mobilising labour in a significant way.

It is interesting to see how two examples of these approaches function in reality. *Donny Edwin* has coordinated a case study of the trade union led by Dita Sari, the National Front for Indonesian Worker's Struggle, (FNPBI), and one of the most influential pro-labour NGOs in Medan, the Welfare Beacon Group, (KPS). Neither organisation is based primarily at the shop-floor level, neither dealing with day to day workers' problems nor with collective bargaining. Both try to compensate for this by working in the direction of so-called social movement trade unionism, i.e. extending the tasks of organised labour beyond the limits of their own specific interests to broader social and political concerns also drawing on their strength to mobilise and improve the conditions of casual workers and the urban poor in general. Both organisations are also quite dependent on leading figures and face similar problems in terms of semi-private hoodlums. But there are also differences. The FNPBI seems not to differentiate between democracy as a system of equal governance and the more general justice and equality that may (but does not have to) come out of it. Further, FNPBI's more left-political, student-related, radical action, and often cell-based mobilisation work is in contrast to that of KPS. KPS, on the other hand, has a background of liberation theology perspectives and is also radical in orientation, but acts more as a general facilitator and supporter of the very many different groups and activities that may be related to labour, from alternative unions to welfare activities.

A potentially very influential sector of the trade union movement is that representing salaried employees. Before 1965, this sector played a significant role, both politically and within the trade union movement itself. The New Order regime however, did not allow for the existence of any organisations aside from its own state-corporatist associations. The only pioneering underground attempts were made by principled, anti-authoritarian pro-democrats. *Donny Edwin* has coordinated a comparison of three new salaried employees' unions. The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) was one such pioneer. Those angry journalists whose leading magazines were closed down in 1994 left all nostalgic notions of themselves as independent professionals behind and opted for the formation of a straight-forward union. No matter how much they liked to promote their independent professional skills and autonomy, they were in reality subordinated, not just by the regime but also by political and economic vested interests. And both these aims, for professionalism and autonomy as they themselves asserted, called for democratisation. But there was more to come. As financial turbulence triggered a general economic and political crisis, even the hitherto quite silent middle class employee found within banks for example, were affected and began to unionise. This, of course, was not an easy process. Various quarrels over special interests, tactics and patrons have littered the way forward. And it is still an open question as to whether the new *reformasi*-related unions will limit themselves to the narrow interests of their members or situate their struggle within a wider societal perspective of fundamental conflicts and interests.

The question of labour and employee interest-based organising and its relation to democracy is closely linked to social movement trade unionism, or more generally the need to link work-place

and resident activism, drawing on the formers better organisational capacity but widening its role and concerns. This has played a vital role in the history of comprehensive labour and salaried employee's movements from Europe to South Africa and Brazil. But it is particularly vital under conditions of uneven economic development in order to make links between those in the formal and informal sectors, as well as between the employed and unemployed. Moreover, people residing in poor urban neighbourhoods also face their own special problems. These problems have usually served as an entry-point for resourceful bosses within politics and business as well as related ethnic and religious groups, in search for profit, votes, and, when required, critical masses (and goons) on the streets. *Donny Edwin* has also coordinated a case study of three different organisations in Jakarta that try to counter this and instead provide links to pro-democratic forces, by harnessing alternative urban poor organising on the basis of people's immediate problems. The three groups studied are: the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC), the Jakarta Social Institute (ISJ) and *Sanggar Ciliwung*, all of which resist making shortcuts through negotiation with existing local bosses and attempts at instant political mobilisation on 'hot' issues. Instead, they all place their money on the fostering of more independent and democratic civil society organisations. One important question mark, however, is whether the formation of independent and progressive urban poor organisations is realistic without making alliances with organised labour (a la social movement trade unionism) and the adoption of alternative political and ideological perspectives. Wardah Hafidz of the UPC, for instance, may have been wise in resisting the suggestion that she stand as an alternative candidate for mayor in Jakarta, arguing that independent popular organisations were still too weak, resulting in her finding herself in an equally vulnerable and powerless position as did Gus Dur. But when exactly does it make sense for activists to use their position to advance the potential of urban poor groups – as when the progressive mayor's administration in Porto Alegre bypassed clientelistic politicians and opened up for neighbourhood organisations and the process of 'participatory budgeting'? And when is it reasonable to not just facilitate urban poor organising and self-help activity but also link up with trade unions in the organised sector or relate to human rights support for political activists, as did Sandyawan Sumardi (of ISJ and *Sanggar Ciliwung*) during the crack down on the pro-democracy movement in mid-1996?

*In chapter five, attention is shifted to the democratically oriented work of peasants and small farmers.* For some time now there has been almost universal agreement that remnants of feudal- and colonial-like relations in rural areas, especially within agriculture, are fundamental obstacles to democratisation. Thus, even the specific interest of the peasant and small farmer have, periodically, promoted democratisation – in which perspectives and leadership have been decisive. *Herlambang Perdana's* essay provides an overview of peasant and small farmer resistance since independence. From the late 1940s, up until the early 1960s, peasants struggled in the main for land that had been occupied by or subordinated to Dutch and other colonialists. This struggle became increasingly difficult from 1957 onward, when the Indonesian state and army took over foreign plantations. Parallel to this, the struggle for land reform in relation to non-

plantation land also developed. This opened up a variety of complex issues that gave rise to often devastating conflict. Within the general framework proposed by Perdana, it may be important also to emphasise the complex forms of subordination of people and appropriation of economic surplus in densely populated areas with very high pressure on land and resources, in addition to multiple identities and loyalties and forms of patronage, that often blur the issues of class and form the basis for clientelistic political and religious mobilisation. The New Order then, according to Perdana, may be divided in three periods. The first ten years were characterised by substantial appropriation of peasant/farmers' land by powerful state-supported actors who were confronted only by hidden forms of resistance. Over the following twenty years, little by little, more opposition developed, and not just in famous cases like Jenggawah (Jember, East Java), and Kedung Ombo (Central Java). This opposition was characterised by public protests and lobbying as well as negotiation with government bureaucracy, a few politicians and at times even the military and security apparatus. Since the fall of Soeharto, many peasants and small farmers have turned to the explicit re-appropriation of land from state (and at times the military) and private companies. It should be added here that these movements and intervention tend to be localised, that conflicts between peasants who reclaim land and plantation labourers who work on that land often remains to be handled and that the complex and deep-rooted issue of land reform with regard to non-plantation land have not really been touched upon yet. In Perdana's view, peasants and farmers may be less dependent now than during the Sukarno period on political parties that might turn them into 'transmission belts'. That notwithstanding, they are nevertheless still largely left to their own devices, often dependent on not always favourable local alliances and 'horse-trading,' and, says Perdana, therefore in great need of support from a popular oriented national political leader. The details of this analysis call for contextual elaboration of the relative balance of power as well as possible alternatives. But the need for politics in addition to formally independent civil society action is clear. Further, Perdana asserts, regional autonomy has rarely been to the benefit of peasants and small farmers. For instance, land under dispute is often attractive to local bosses and localisation does not prevent intervention by powerful global forces - quite the contrary. Similarly, Perdana concludes, the logic and interests of several (but far from all) NGOs does not always lie in harmony with peasant and farmers' mass organisations. Several journalists moreover, have been offended by the fact that angry and frustrated peasants - deprived of efficient democratic channels to promote their interests - have employed less refined alternative forms of protests, including what has been labelled as 'snatching, looting and burning'. Finally, as pointed out in the separate extract from a paper by the Transitional Justice Society (MTJ), it is important to study the various forms of transitional justice and restitution that have been developed in other countries regarding disputed land.

The next case study, by *Muhammad Qodari*, concerning the peasant movement in Batang, Pekalongan, and the land reclamation case from Mara Enim, South Sumatra, described in the adjoining box (collected during the preliminary survey for this project), serve as contextual illustrations of some of the complex processes involved. Both cases of peasant efforts at

reclaiming expropriated land demonstrate clearly the important role of influential alternative patrons (*bapak*) and their ability to associate successfully with bureaucrats, politicians, as well as socio-religious mass organisations. In Batang the local populist *bapak*, Handoko, seems to have taken on legendary proportions and one wonders how sustainable the peasant organisations under his wing will turn out to be once his special or indeed charismatic leadership disappears or fades away. Interestingly, Handoko confirms the observation made earlier that decentralisation is not always to the benefit of people in general. Local bosses search for ways of covering their budget deficits and their goons and militias constitute a great problem to ordinary people. In both cases, finally, it has made little sense for the peasants themselves to try to further their causes through formalised democratic rights and institutions. The latter rather seem to be firmly dominated by the local elite, and therefore the peasants have opted instead for making use of extra-parliamentary and not always formally democratic means to mobilise pressure from outside.

*Chapter six is concerned with democratically-oriented movements that focus on local communities or local governance.* Here there are two major tendencies identifiable. The first tendency emphasises the capacity of various communities within civil society to develop forms of self-governance on the basis of their traditions and customs. As described in the case study coordinated by *Emanuel Lalang Wardoyo* of two facilitating groups in Kalimantan and Central Sulawesi, the aim is to support the potential of ‘traditional’ communities to develop democratic oriented practices and generate alternative development by way of internalising small-scale credit schemes and environmental consciousness within their own frameworks and institutions, formal or informal. The reinterpretation of customary law within a human rights based democratic framework is often a challenging task, particularly given the often unfriendly environment of elitist resurgence in local despotism, as pointed out earlier by Gerry van Klinken and others. Yet its positive potential is further illustrated by the extract from *John Bamba’s* paper on how some sections of the Dayak indigenous people have attempted to develop their own autonomy and implement their own laws against the state, including the military and big business.

The second tendency is to support popular attempts from below at both improving the formal nation-state institutions of local governance and to make use of them to further alternative projects and visions. The case study coordinated by *Donny Edwin* examines efforts by ATMA (Advocacy for Societal Transformation) and its leading exponent, Jhony Simanjuntak to support the democratisation of village government in several districts in the vicinity of Solo (Central Java). Simanjuntak was already a leading actor during the Kedung Ombo peasants’ struggle for their land against various state organs, but more recently his focus has been on abuses of power that relate to local governance and the possibility of fostering democracy. The practices and experiences reviewed are pioneering and challenging. In addition to providing legal assistance, ATMA encourages and facilitates organisation, lobbying, pressure politics, network building and coordination.

One of the major challenges faced is highlighted in a separate brief analysis made by *Törnquist*. In one of the villages where ATMA is involved, successful progress was made from the single issue focus on corruption (that was advocated by a local *Komite Reformasi* or Reform Committee) to more comprehensive demands and proposed alternatives for local governance. These efforts, however, ran aground in face of village elections that the Committee was widely expected to win. The rules and regulations prevented the formation of and campaigning through a genuine and unifying local political organisation and favoured instead divisive individual candidacy and intervention by the established and clientelistic parties and religious networks.

Finally in chapter six, the earlier essay by the late Th. Sumartana is followed up by a case study – coordinated by *Nur Hidayat Sardini* – on how ideas concerning the importance and opportunities of promoting pluralism, coexistence and shared perspectives are implemented. The experiences of three organisations that focus their activities on religious and ethnic conflict are described and analysed: the work of *Gedangan Forum* rooted in the Muslim community of Semarang District and Salatiga town (Central Java); the Christian based interfaith dialogue program of which Sumartana was the director, (Interfidei), based in Yogyakarta, and the advocacy organisation Nation State Solidarity, which focuses on the discrimination of ethnic Chinese. The basic focus is on the promotion of civility and tolerance within civil society itself. This, it is argued, is because several of the problems are structural in nature, resting within the framework of state and government, which, in addition, have proved too weak to reform themselves and to thus intervene in a fruitful way.

Many of the present semi-democratic rights and institutions, including the process of decentralisation, have been crafted without the provision of any institutionalised mechanism for checks and balances accessible to the general public. One reaction to this by educated and concerned citizens – with little capacity to compete within mass politics – has been to found a variety of ‘watchdog’ organisations. *Chapter seven is devoted to a series studies of such watchdog initiatives.*

The first case, coordinated by *Andrinof A. Chaniago*, concerns public expenditure control. Elected politicians at first gained public support for their critique of the New Order’s centralised bureaucracy. Then, when many powers were transferred to legislators at the provincial and regional level, people became disillusioned by the instant predominance of personal and factional vested interests, not least with regard to fiscal regimes. The popular response to the defunct democratic rights and institutions was less to compete on the same level but to opt for an ‘exit strategy’ and apply extra-parliamentary means instead. The three watchdogs under review are based in West Sumatra, South Sumatra, and Jakarta respectively. The first two are middle class oriented NGOs in their own right and operate also through coalitions with other progressive elements such as student groups, the third is also associated with organisations focusing on transparency issues and the grass roots work of the Urban Poor Consortium. Most efforts are

focussed on exposing abuses and problems perpetrated by others. So far there is little emphasis on facilitating accountability and citizen participation even though one major experience is that work which is limited to the legal front is less sustainable than when other avenues and popular activities are also included.

A similar critical reaction also began to emerge amongst educated, concerned citizens over the general ability and performance of elected politicians. *Andrinof A. Chaniago* has coordinated a case study of the local parliament watchdog PARWI in Yogyakarta. The lower class and poorly educated local parliamentary representatives from the PDI-P have come under particular scrutiny and exposed to critique. While their performance as people's representatives may indeed be open to criticism, it is hard to avoid the impression of a slightly supercilious attitude on part of the educated middle class (including a university rector and leaders of the local chamber of commerce) with regard to the potential capacity of popular, plebeian representation. PARWI's major preoccupation is the monitoring and critiquing of parliament and elected legislators. Trying to intervene in elections and improving accountability through and education within parties, for instance, has been of less concern thus far.

A third case study focuses on several attempts at establishing media watchdogs. Media watchdogs are different from other similar institutions in that they do not act as substitute for defunct democratic rights and institutions (such as the budget and parliamentary watchdog organisations) but rather represent one of the few ways in which people within the public sphere (to which the media of course belongs) can keep some track of the usually very commercial and politically biased media. In the study coordinated by *Otto Adi Yulianto*, three watchdog groups in different settings are analysed and compared. One group mainly engages journalists and focuses on critical content analysis of selected media. Another association adds the ambition of empowering underprivileged groups whose position is weak in relation to media. A third group focuses on assessing and critiquing media coverage including, for instance, more or less 'immoral' writings and certain political tendencies – but may thus also nourish its own special interests in that regard. The newly found freedom of the press since the fall of Soeharto has primarily provided more space for the bad-quality and commercially and politically profitable journalism that had earlier survived by following 'his masters voice'. During the Soeharto period this reality was fairly easy to pinpoint. Now it is hidden in the jungle of the economic and political market. As was discussed in our earlier book, concerned and skilled journalists in collaboration with associated cultural workers and academicians with integrity formed a limited but critical pro-democratic constituency of their own in the struggle against the Soeharto regime. A key question is whether this broader orientation can be sustained in the dialectics between professional priorities, commercial and political realities, and joint work with concerned contributors and readers. One positive example of the latter is in the separate contribution by *Ignatius Haryanto* on peace journalism. This is an effort to foster professional quality improvement in reporting and analysing a peace process by way of not just internal studies and seminars but also cooperation

with concerned associates and readers in the field.

The democracy movement has often been engaged in legal aid provision and human rights issues. With the fall of Soeharto there was also some space for attempts at reforming the very rules of the game. One field of action was in regard to the constitution, including laws on elections and political parties spearheaded by the Coalition for Constitutional Change. Another focussed more on the judicial system in order to promote just rule of law. Frustrations soon emerged over the lack of change. Concerned professionals and scholars wanted to protest and put forward alternatives. The final case study in this chapter, coordinated by *Agustinus Agung Widjaya*, is on two judicial watchdog organisations. One is the Centre for Law and Policy Studies, established among former student activists at the University of Indonesia; the other is the professional NGO Institute for Independent Judiciary. An important part of the job is to revisit the historical development and functioning of the actually existing system in order to be able, thereafter, to propose changes. Both groups specialise in institution building with regard to the rule of law and state management. They are not deeply engaged in relating this to other aspects of democratic governance and democratisation.

*Gender and democracy, the subject of chapter eight*, is a multidimensional theme. As pointed out in the first case study coordinated by *Otto Adi Yulianto*, historically, women's organisations have been mainly engaged in the provision of a space in which women are able to consider similar issues as those engaging men, such as national liberation. Many of their early achievements were hard hit with the elimination of the left oriented groups in the mid-1960s. The new generation of women's groups have been mainly confined to a limited number of NGOs trying to reclaim this space, as well offering some of the much needed support to women organising whilst further developing the concept of gender. Presently, there is most concern with specific gender issues. This case study describes and analyses the profiles and experiences of four groups in different contexts: the pioneering Kalyanamitra; LBH Apik, the structural legal aid group initiated by Nursyahbani Katjasungkana; the Makassar based forum for women's issues; and the Crisis Centre in Yogyakarta which goes beyond earlier concerns with women's labour to also consider domestic violence outside of what is generally accepted as the public sphere. A separate extract from a paper by the Crisis Centre director *Elli Nur Hayati* also draws special attention to gender based violence in conflict and war-like situations. Conceptually the gender movement is no doubt rich and is notable in its engagement of many Muslim women. In a separate contribution, *Ita F. Nadia*, at the time of writing with the women section of the National Human Rights Commission, explains the need to have a context-sensitive approach to issues of gender-equality, drawing attention to the specific problems that different women (and men) are up against depending on where they work and live. Yet a major problem remains that of moving beyond small NGOs. Another concern is the mainstreaming of gender consciousness within the democracy movement as a whole, including within what also many leading pro-democrats tend to regard as private and thus somewhat 'out of bounds' spheres of life.

It is important also to note minor but potentially significant advances such as the emerging gay-movement. This, of course, is of special interest given that Muslims in many other settings are particularly hostile towards homosexuals (like in neighbouring Malaysia). As clearly demonstrated in *Muhammad Qodari's* story of the first Indonesian Gay group, *Gaya Nusantara*, Indonesia is far from an ideal place either. But the pioneering figure in this respect, Dede Oetomo, and the movement that he initiated, have managed to generate quite broad concerns and extensive respectability.

*In the mainstream of the democracy movement – and in the middle of chapter nine – are the human rights issues.* These organisations exist particularly in response to state violations of such rights under Soeharto; but also pertain to the post-Soeharto state driven or facilitated violations of human rights, as well as to the lack of state protection of those rights. Towards the end of the New Order regime, the human rights movement became more diversified and specialised. One of the pioneering new approaches was that of KontraS, the Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence. The first case study coordinated by *A.E. Priyono* analyses KontraS' strategy as well as the role of its renowned leader, Munir. KontraS focussed on state facilitated violence, and has continued to do so after 1998 as well. Moreover, it is more than a top-down initiative by concerned lawyers. Rather it is the combination of joint efforts between various leading human rights and democracy oriented NGOs as well as the friends and relatives of disappeared activists. From its inception, KontraS was the product of the democracy movement at large, not just of well-intending lawyers in a 'normal' NGO-foundation, or of Munir himself. In this regard, KontraS has continuously offered the possibility of combining professional work with popular organisation and activism.

By necessity, this orientation has in turn not only generated a whole set of vital experiences of how to link centralised and elitist NGOs with localised popular concerns and movements – it has also challenged the priorities and organisational structure of the historically pioneering Indonesian Legal Aid Association (YLBHI), out of which KontraS once emerged and from within which several activists (including Munir) also tried to promote reforms. KontraS has opted for making priorities in terms of serving vulnerable people, whilst the leader of the YLBHI, Buyung Nasution, believes that everybody, even general Wiranto, should have the right to benefit from its services. Moreover, KontraS has given priority to cooperation between legal professionals (who maintain autonomy in professional issues) and human rights activists as well as popular organisations on the ground, whilst YLBHI and Buyung Nasution like to retain the structure of a foundation and particularly to defend YLBHI as an organisation of legal professionals in sole control of their organisation, on the basis of which they provide legal aid.

Two of the major geographical areas where there have been severe violations of human rights are Aceh and Papua. The devastating impact in Aceh of the renewed deployment of repressive state

measures from 1989 and onwards and the nature of , the armed resistance struggle are examined in the case study coordinated by *A.E Priyono*. Interestingly, Priyono argues, there are also signs that the increasing involvement and engagement of pro-democratic oriented sections and forces in civil society may – if they are given a chance – not just pave the way for peace but also at widening the public sphere and civic engagement far beyond the elite-level negotiations between the leading parties involved in the conflict and their respective vested interests. In Papua too, it is vital to analyse the political economy of the conflict. The case study coordinated by *Sofian M. Asgart* analyses the destructive symbiotic relations between business, military and politics. Asgart emphasises how these relationships make it particularly difficult for the fragmented and divided dissident groups to improve the situation. There is a desperate need for new humanitarian based agendas.

Our initial survey confirmed the results from comparative studies (by Törnquist) that the Indonesian democracy movement is particularly badly affected by the general problems of insufficient links between central and local levels and between civic action in civil society and explicitly political work. This is the background for the two themes in *chapter ten on networks and political parties*.

The predominant way of trying to counter some of the fragmentation within the movement has been to promote networking. *Otto Adi Yulianto* has coordinated a case study of five related networking organisations. The first is *Walhi*, the apex organisation among environmentally concerned groups that have also expanded into some related fields, including democracy. On the one hand, *Walhi* has opted against comprehensive political work and representation (such as a green party and interest group representation); on the other hand, it does politicise its core issues as well as related subjects – such as regional autonomy and basic democratic questions – by way of lobbying and exposing and putting pressure on politicians, key-executives and journalists. The second is *Infid*, the joint network of Indonesian and international development oriented NGOs. *Infid* has also expanded into associated issues, though usually in a less politicised way, and stimulated additional networks. One such avenue has been the building of a broad anti-debt coalition among various groups (including *Walhi*). Thirdly, the Papua NGO forum (*Foker-LSM*) which after Soeharto combined development and similar concerns with joint interest in the issue of independence. Fourthly, the alliance of indigenous communities (AMAN) on specific issues of common concern, and finally the attempt among left oriented student-groups at a confederation (LMND) with a more comprehensive, political and ideology-driven agenda. One general conclusion is difficulty of unifying middle class NGOs and popular organisations. Another has to do with the contradiction between pluralism in terms of combining, on the one hand, various groups and concerns, consensus-building and non-binding decisions, and, on the other hand, the development of more coherent policies and conventions with regard to membership and decisions. The pluralist model (for instance the anti-debt coalition) has proved inclusive and flexible as compared to the latter more well organised format, but is also much more loose,

irregular and trend-sensitive. Quite depressingly but illustratively, an attempt by several leading NGOs and networks directly after the fall of Soeharto to foster joint discussions on how they could best expand and broaden their activities within the framework of emerging democratic rights and institutions never generated any substantial plans and concrete results.

The question of how to resolve these 'missing link problems' very much remains unresolved. In a paper given at the conference, *Joel Rocamora* shared his analysis and experiences from the Philippines. In his view, NGOs that promote a progressive social and economic agenda by way of democracy must advance by supporting social movements and people's organisations, including at the local level and in relation to their attempts at intervening in governance at village and district level. In addition, Rocamora insists, it was necessary to develop separate political parties. The Philippine example provided, *Akbayan-Citizens' Action Party*, is primarily based on community related organisations among small farmers and labourers, youth groups and a number of NGOs that have decided to harness the project. A fundamental but unavoidable problem is funding and unfavourable institutional frameworks such as money politics in personality-oriented one-man constituencies with a 'first past the post' system. These obstacles simply have to be handled in the best possible way. But a precondition, Rocamora concluded, is that the NGOs and other organisations involved already has, or first engage in building, a basis among people. 'It's not a good idea to start with a party and then try to attach people'.

So what of the political parties? In a heartfelt intervention at the conference, *Stanley Adi Prasetyo* succinctly summarised the post-1998 experience, frustration and confusion. According to Stanley, several pro-democrats initially thought that a few of the new political parties showed promise – like the PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), PUDI (Indonesian Union Democratic Party), PKB (National Awakening Party), PAN (National Mandate Party) and PRD (People's Democratic Party). But then, he added, they did not gain very many votes: PDI-P one third, PKB one tenth, PAN even less and the rest got nothing. Thus, the big parties focused on 'horse-trading' and fundraising. PDI-P embraced Golkar. PKB broke up. PAN broke up. PRD split and some activists even established a militia for Megawati. And PUDI looked like an extended family. The parties that mattered are gone and lost. In the view of people in general and committed pro-democrats in particular, political parties now look almost as bad as under Soeharto, when nobody wanted to touch them.

Beyond some leading figures, post-Soeharto political organising is both neglected and understudied, particularly by pro-democrats. In our own research team we should have done more, but at least we brought together, for the conference, some reflective activists with experience from democratic work via political parties: Panda Nababan of PDI-P, Sri Bintang Pamungkas of PUDI, Santosa with a background in PAN, Priyo Budi Santoso of Golkar and Yusuf Lakaseng of PRD. Santosa said that he had been naïve: PAN was not a new pluralist party

but only a transitional set up. Thus, he added, one has to wait for a new political generation. The news at the conference was, that there was no news, at least not that we were aware of. Consequently some warned against political corruption and distrust in parties. This might pave the way for a crackdown on basic democratic institutions, like in the mid- and late 1960s. In fact, few had anything against political parties in principle. But those who still tried to work within them felt increasingly tired and abandoned. And non-party pro-democrats remained disillusioned and frustrated too. On the sidelines many agreed that building genuine parties from top down is no option without the reasonable popular basis that Rocamora had talked of. And long term building of parties from below, whilst simultaneously fostering mass organising, is equally difficult, as illustrated by the efforts of Johny Simanjuntak, given unfavourable political and electoral laws. Hence, the option 'by default,' many seemed to note, was to abandon decaying parties, avoiding frustratingly long term organising, and trying instead another short-cut by opening up for individuals in one man constituencies and then, as extra-parliamentary civil society activists, betting on lobbying and pressurising the least worst of them. *Rachman Tolleng* is among those who calls for some reflection. In a comment after the conference he largely concurs with Rocamora in pointing to the importance of well institutionalised parties for good representation and a reasonably functioning democracy, as against personalities and individual interests. Rather, he puts the blame on the almost total lack of cleansing within the major parties of still dominating remnants from the old regime, for instance as compared to the process in the former East Germany.

*Consequently the final chapter is concerned with such celebrity-cum-vested interest politicians and their allies who, when appropriate, simply adjusts to and only consume (not produce) infant democratic rights and institutions..* We did not opt, however, for investigating the 'real' bosses, the 'small Soehartos' who now gain ground on various levels and in different sectors around the country. In the case study coordinated by *Irawan Saptano*, the focus is 'only' on four different actors that have managed to use the democratic space by mobilising popular support mainly for their own ends. One is businessman-cum-politician Musa Gurning in *Toba Samosir* (North Sumatra) who gained mass support and linked up with *Walhi* against pulp and rayon manufacturer *Indorayon*. Another is the late Papuan urban based master of favourable political ideas and opportunities Theys H. Eluay. A third is West Kalimantan anti-Chinese businessman Osman Saptan Odang who in the right moment of time turned from previously favourable New Order positions to populist support for 'reformasi,' and was able, thus, to retain and legitimate his own powers within the revised institutional settings. A fourth is the old pro-Habibie Muslim student activist and labour leader Eggi Sudjana who has skilfully combined dogmatic political Islam plus business and community connections with Machiavellian usage of democratic rights and institutions.

Even the most militant activists who relate to bosses, networks and political machineries by propelling various civil militias also try to legitimate their actions in democratic terms, but of

course their work is quite anti-democratic. Civil militias – and related henchmen, mafia and other criminal activities – are nothing new in Indonesia. But when the state is strong and centralised, as under Soeharto, those groups are more efficiently subordinated to state-led terror and crime. It is mainly when the state is decaying that they come out in the open. (C.f. van Klinken's essay in chapter two) The final case study, coordinated by *Sofian M. Asgart*, focuses on six such militia groups. Three of them draw on and relate to dogmatic and revivalist political Islam: the widespread anti-communist alliance AAK, the extensive network of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the dogmatic Muslim youth brigade (GPK – *Kaabah* Youth Movement) in and around Yogyakarta, and the veteran militia '*Banser*' of NU's youth organisation '*Ansor*' that used to kill East Javanese communists in the mid-1960s. The remaining two groups draw more on nationalism and poor and marginalized urban youth: the Golkar related youth gang with *Batak* ethnic connections in Medan and the radical pro-Megawati's militia *Brigass* around Jakarta-Bogor. All of them employ mass mobilisation, demonstrations and other forms of pressure while also serving as 'multi-purpose units,' both in terms of offering security or insecurity for leaders and enemies respectively, and of providing not always very honourable livelihood for their core activists.

### **3. Conclusions**

There is a broad agreement among analysts far beyond this book that mainstream attempts since 1988 at supporting democratisation in Indonesia have not been successful. Many people have lost faith in the process and quite a few have become utterly cynical. The attempts to craft instant democracy through pacts between reformist incumbents and moderate critics within the establishment have not only marginalized much of the pro-democrats and especially their potential constituents among the masses. As in most cases of the third wave of democratisation, these popular oriented democrats have been deemed as threatening. Nor has the pact-making been successful. In a plural country like Indonesia, where much of the political competition is based on ethnic and religious competition, it is counterproductive to start by limiting participation. But while broader coalitions and coexistence are thus unavoidable, these in turn may conserve decentralised forms of non-democratic rule. In a country, moreover, where there is a symbiotic relationship between the state and politics on the one hand and business on the other, it is equally counterproductive to offer a free hand and guaranteed property rights to business in return for political liberties and rule of law. Businessmen are too dependent on politicians, bureaucrats, the military, as well as lawyers and prosecutors – and vice versa – so they will all inevitably undermine the democratic character of the pact.

The key question posed in this book, then, is whether the largely sidetracked democracy movement still constitutes a potentially viable alternative that could yet turn things to the better? What conclusions can we draw from these essays, case studies and comments?

On the one hand our impression is overwhelmingly positive. No matter how difficult the situation and how bad the odds: several of the genuine democrats are still alive and kicking. Moreover, they are the only forces that may be able to do something where mainstream democratic shortcuts to democracy have failed. Firstly because even if some consociationalism (that is unavoidable in plural societies where ethnic and religious competition dominate) is implemented, the pro-democrats are the only ones that have some lust and clout to go beyond the conservation of ethnic and religious divisions by way of simultaneously withstanding the tide whilst promoting other forms of social and political organising. Secondly, because it is only the pro-democrats that have some will and the 'punch' to really struggle against the symbiotic economic, political, bureaucratic, military and judicial elite in favour of reasonably independent human rights based politics, governance and legal institutions. So anyone who is realistic enough to admit the failure of the attempts to promote instant democracy and have no better concrete alternative to offer would have to come up with quite detailed and convincing arguments for not supporting the pro-democrats instead – given that we do not want to give up on human rights based democracy and just sit down and wait till structures and conditions are right.

On the other hand, the essays and case studies also testify to the fact that the most potentially vital pro-democrats remain a reflection of Soeharto's 'floating mass' politics: generally speaking they are fragmented, poorly organised and rather isolated from ordinary people.

The problems are overwhelming. Firstly, the structural hangover of more than thirty years of authoritarian rule: the lack of popular organising and unfavourable institutions. Equally important, it is not just that the power relations are largely intact and that most oligarchs, military leaders, bureaucrats, and Golkar politicians are still there. Indonesia is far from the cleansing process in Europe with regard to Nazis, Fascists or Stalinists. What is more, almost all the previously extremely centralised institutions and economic units as well as networks are now drastically localised, often privatised and arbitrarily handled by increasingly corrupt and fragmented politicians and executives in collusion with all kinds of vested interests.

Secondly, the difficulties faced are not just structural and institutional but relate also to the various groups and activists in the democracy movement itself. Everybody seems to realise that fighting an authoritarian state and a dictator is quite different from continuing to further ones ideas and interests under semi-democratic conditions – but few have managed to change their priorities. Similarly, many semi-democratic rights and institutions are at work – but most pro-democrats find it very difficult to make use of them, aside from certain liberties and legal rights. Also, a number of activists agree on the importance of linking up national and local levels and to fight against decentralised despotism by supporting popular capacity to use democracy on the ground, in districts and villages – but that seem to be easier said than done. And while many talk of the need to go beyond elitist NGOs and limited civic groups in order to open up space and opportunities for membership based organisations and real attempts to promote mass organisation

in accordance with basic conflicts, interests and ideas, hardly anyone seem to have pioneered a viable idea of how to go about it. The students, for one, soon lost momentum and disintegrated. Single-issue activism is still dominating. NGOs as well as embryonic popular movements and organisations are usually dependent on strong leaders-cum-patrons and personalities (*bapaks*) – 'traditional' or 'modern'. Politics, great visions and even empirically rather than religiously grounded ideologies were increasingly widely appreciated among the dissidents during a few years before and after the fall of Soeharto. But now politics and parties are regarded as almost equally hopeless and dirty and corrupt as during the heyday of the New Order. And those who try to do something either tend to become irrelevant among principles, get lost in the mud, or focus on Americanised populism – where the ultimate aim is to establish direct links between people (with high degree of 'social capital') in small constituencies and their representatives (as if there was not anything like unequal capacities and different interests and visions among people) and enable NGO's and pressure groups (with limited capacity to mobilise voters) to lobby and influence the least worst representatives and bureaucrats.

There is a third argument, of course: that one should give priority to the organising of interest-based constituencies and mass organisations before getting involved in inevitably dirty party politics or lofty blue-prints and models. But nor is this, as we have seen, an easy task to go about. Trade unions, for one, seem to multiply with new leaders, local strongmen, access to funds and protection, and international intervention to mention only some of the divisive factors involved. The larger unions struggle over connections to central and local governments as well as international organisations. The genuine democratic groups – that do not just push economic issues but also advocate labour based politics – are more concerned with their different points of departure (central politics vs. local concrete conflicts) than of unifying as many members as possible and really go for social movement unionism. Peasants-cum-farmers, to take another example, have resumed some of their activism by reclaiming occupied land from plantations and companies. But related conflicts with plantation labour often remain unresolved and the complicated struggles between people in the villages with more or less access to various resources (land, inputs, credit etc.) are not always clear cut and often blurred by other conflicts and loyalties; problems that are getting worse when several of the people who had found jobs outside of the village economies during the New Order economic boom try to return. The question of gender equality, to take an appropriate example, should have great potential in indicating the importance of widening the public sphere as well as in including women and those issues that used to be deemed as private, domestic, and personal matters. But so far gender issues do not seem to have spread much outside rather elitist NGOs and intellectual circles that specialise on these issues, leaving much to be done within other pro-democratic organisations and activists.

### **Two interpretations**

Of course it is easy to make the list of challenges and problems even longer. But for anyone with

an interest in what could and should be done, the vital task must be to find out how the various pros and cons relate to each other and what decisive forces are involved. Two basic ways of trying to make sense of all the factors seem to dominate scholars and campaigners. One is about how liberal and/or community-based civil societies are assumed to promote democratisation; another stresses the importance of combining this with deliberate politics of democratisation. We shall proceed by presenting them one by one.

### **Liberal and/or community-based civil society as the engine of democracy**

Within the framework of the first position, there are huge differences between various conservative, liberal, and radical civil society and community related arguments, but in this case it is their basic trust in the presumed pro-democratic dynamics from within civil society itself that matters. Here we simply categorise them all as *the civil society argument*. Further, as there is no point in ridiculing the weak versions of this argument, let us go for the best. The best argument avoids two problems in the mainstream literature. Aside from adding the importance of civil society to the predominant elitist perspectives on the crafting of institutions, on the one hand, and the importance of structural factors such as the growth and crisis of capitalism on the other, the best civil society argument, firstly, focuses on the actual character of civil society instead of just believing in the blessing of its mere existence or its degree of density or vibrancy (whatever that is). Secondly, the best civil society argument goes beyond normative ‘liberal-pluralist’ notions (of writers such as Diamond) which assume that citizens in civil society find the existing political, social and economic order acceptable and legitimate – wherein they may try to improve the system and ask for favours, but do not try to promote radical change, seize power or overthrow the system. Instead, the adherents of the civil society argument apply a less normative and analytically more fruitful minimalist concept of actually existing organisational life between the state and the private sphere. The following, in a nutshell, is how they tend to interpret the problems and options of Indonesia’s civil society and democratisation:

(1) During the late 1950s and early 1960s civil society was strong but did not promote democracy since it was polarised by conflicts among the citizens in terms of class and *aliran* (or ‘traditional’ ideologies) and thus organised political parties that attempted to capture state power to their own advantage. The communist movement was the most active and expansive and that which, as the civil society argument analysts usually put it, most seriously threatened the political and social order. Thus, it is argued, followed the showdown, the massacres and the New Order.

(2) Particularly during the last ten years of the New Order then, the same scholars continue, a new civil society emerged which was much weaker but yet, in contrast to the earlier period, contributed to democratisation. This was partly due to international support, but more importantly because civil society was less preoccupied with class and other ‘internal’ conflicts. Rather, civil society (collectively, as it were) defended itself and opposed the authoritarian state without any aspirations of taking over state power to the benefit of any particular group or class. Meanwhile,

the state did not create serious divisions as it was relatively autonomous of the kind of class and *aliran* interests that had occupied sections of it during Sukarno's 'Old Order'.

(3) After Soeharto, following the same argument, civil society has grown stronger and more activist oriented. Peasant groups have even occupied land. Yet, civil society continues to contribute to democratisation because peasants who struggle for land are not as in the 1960s up against petty landlords, thus causing conflicts within civil society. Rather these peasants (or small farmers) limit themselves to reclaiming land that was expropriated by the state during the New Order (c.f. the arguments in favour of privatisation in Eastern Europe). The state, however, is no more relatively autonomous from societal forces, which nourishes divisions in civil society as well as political violence. But even the radical forces in civil society (minus, one presumes, some extreme Muslim groups) limit themselves to pressure and lobbying, stay away from politics and parties and do not aim at radically changing the existing social and political order. Hence, (and this is a crucial point in the argument) there is no major risk that civil society will undermine democracy again, as it did in the early 1960s.

Ironically, thus, the adherents of the civil society argument are not just back almost full circle in support of the 'liberal-pluralist' assumption that they began by negating – that citizens of civil society shall view the political and social order as legitimate and only opt for reforms and favours but not try to capture or fundamentally reconstruct it. What is more, according to their view, civil society should be well on the way to promote democracy in Indonesia – whilst our results points to decisive problems of 'floating democrats'.

### **Deliberate politics of democratisation**

The second, alternative, way of reading the challenges and problems of the democracy movement draws attention, instead, to more conflictual theories of civil society as a contested arena or public space, the role of social and popular movements, the importance of social and economic conflicts as well as people's own capacity and ability to stage efficient politics of democratisation. These perspectives come closer to those having informed our project: Firstly, discussions on the historical role of state and political economy in Europe and the people who did not 'exit' to the colonies but had to fight absolutism and repression, at times by way of revolutions like in France, and who therefore linked citizen actions to the development of powerful political movements as well as took over and democratised the states – like the social democrats (and partly also Christian Democrats), who partly at times even built democracy on the basis of social pacts and corporatism, like in Scandinavia, and socio-religious-cum-political pillars like in the Netherlands. Secondly, discussions on the historical experiences from third world reinvention and contextual development of these traditions in struggles against absolutist European and American colonialism and indirect rule. Thirdly, arguments which, therefore, are critical of the current wave of crafting and imposing 'the best' democratic institutions in state and society without considering the need to understand processes and to support actors in them as well as to alter

contextual power relations, so that the emerging rights and institutions make sense for the people at large, not just the elite.

Thus, if we adopt an analytical approach that integrates these perspectives, the following interpretation of historical development with regard to democratisation stands out and differs from the earlier civil society centred perspective:

(1) During the late 1950s and early 1960s, civil society did not contribute to democratisation since it had been severely weakened by Sukarno and the military, both centrally and locally. The communists continued to resist this throughout. From the early 1950s onwards, theirs was actually in many ways the most modern and comparatively democratic movement that linked civil and political society, vitalised democracy, including in relation to the elections, and aimed at altering those power relations that everyone would regard as fundamental obstacles in most processes of democratisation. But in the framework of the cold war, they (as most others) gave up the defence of parliamentary democracy arguing that other factors like imperialism were more basic threats. And in key sectors they were not able to develop analysis and strategies that could help them to unify people at large (along class-lines) and thus undermine clientelistic structures plus *aliran*- and cold-war dominated political loyalties (as their comrades temporarily succeeded in doing in Kerala, for instance). Hence, certain leaders retreated into the area of predominantly elitist manoeuvring, which exposed the entire movement to repression. Those were the main problems – not struggles between distinctively formed classes – which rarely unfolded – and not the very links between civil and political society, nor the attempts at altering power relations. Ensuing repression, including the massacres, were of course not the fault of the PKI but army-led (and middle class and West-supported) in combination with colonial-like indirect despotic rule and early modern new public management in the form of quick, cheap and efficient sub-contracting and outsourcing of much of the dirty work to militias, thugs and extremist youth in civil society.

(2) The major feature, in this view, of the 'new' civil society that emerged towards the end of the New Order was not that it received international support and that some of civil society groups managed to organise in opposition of the authoritarian regime. The most notable characteristic was that these forces got so little support from the democratic West and that they were not particularly united in their opposition of the authoritarian regime (especially not in taking on the primitive state led accumulation of capital). Even the 'new' and often more or less democratically oriented civil society reflected instead the uneven development of capitalism and was weak, fragmented, vacillating, and to a large extent quite ineffective in transforming social and economic activism into political influence and results. There were all kinds of structural and institutional reasons for this – but there was also an inherent inability to tackle those difficulties.

According to Törnquist's comparative studies of Indonesia in view of the very different contexts

of the Philippines and the Indian state of Kerala, the two major factors (in sharp contrast to those of the earlier civil society argument) involved appear to be the following. Firstly the lack of coordination between impressive and important work in being done amongst civil society on the one hand and political society on the other; in addition to the lack of coordination between central and local levels – beyond pressure and lobbying, alternative patronage, and loose networking. Secondly the predominance of important single issues and specific interests (and at times communal loyalties) – at the expense of additional aggregation of demands and collective interests for alternative policies and governance of the society at large. To a large extent our previous studies in *Aktor Demokrasi* pointed in the same direction.

(3) With the fall of Soeharto and the disintegration of the New Order regime it is true that activity in civil society at large has expanded, but aside from the primary expansion of what used to be called ‘un-civil civil society,’ the democratically oriented sections of society continue to suffer from similar difficulties. The major problem seems to be that as soon as embryonic democratic political institutions such as elections were established, pro-democracy civil society groups lost out, including the students and the radical NGOs. The same thing has happened in so many new and restored democracies. Some may point to the present advances in Brazil with the participatory local politics in Porto Alegre and the election of Lula as president. But that took very many years and called for much coordination and efficient politics of democratisation on top of widespread civil society work in close contact with informally coordinating trade unions. In Indonesia, generally speaking, even pro-democrats now find it very hard and often not even worthwhile to make use of and further develop the shallow institutions of political democracy. These institutions are dominated, instead, by those who successfully defend the positions of power by regrouping and developing localised bossism, like in Thailand or the Philippines. Hence progressive civil society groups remain confined to pressurising and lobbying from the outside and to relate to the least abusive patrons within. In addition, the fragmentation, capturing and localisation of state and politics by various bosses and international actors seem to be related both to neo-liberal decentralisation and general support of civil society without altering power relations as well as weak democratic politics and capacity to govern. Even agencies that used to be in favour of clear-cut structural adjustment programmes now seem to agree that the lack of ‘good government’ is a general problem in the developing world.

In conclusion, democracy cannot be supported by defending civil society against politics and conflicts over power relations. This approach will not generate anything but a democracy for those who are already a part of and dominate actually existing civil society. Politics and power conflicts are rather the very essence of substantial democratisation – not least in countries like Indonesia and not least after three decades of floating mass politics which have generated equally floating democrats. The problem is rather that not all conflict and not all politics are productive. Pro-democrats in civil society must be able to enhance their capacity to organise conflict and reform politics. This is in order for them (and not just those who already dominate) to be able to

base themselves on such popular organisations as well as make use of (and further develop) democratic institutions (including front-organisations and parties of their own). The ultimate purpose is, of course, to develop broad inclusive agendas for changing power relations and providing alternative policies – rather than being marginalized behind patrons and lobbyists and having to use undemocratic and at worst violent means.

### **Policy implications**

What are the possible implications for Indonesian pro-democrats? It is not for us to prescribe any blueprints, only to highlight some basic arguments that arise from the results of our study and which pro-democrats may wish to consider. One major implication is that pro-democrats may have to decide whether to continue along the same track or shift to a new one. The old track means continuous struggle in civil society against state and politics, as under Soeharto, to democratically liberate bits and pieces of society at large by way of direct action whilst slowly encircling and lobbying the state and politicians. A new track might imply giving primary attention to the support of people's organisations from below on the basis of their common interests, but also in relation to the state and politics, and then along with them, attempting step by step to implement reform and democratisation.

Maybe it is theoretically possible to slowly democratise some sections or fragments of the society in general by means of direct action and, thus, largely negate, restrict and indirectly affect the dirty institutions of the state, instead of *also* trying to get access to and change them. But no matter whether we hold on to the nation state or not, democracy (in terms of popular control over collectively binding public decisions by people who in this respect are equal) stands and falls with a clear identification of both the scope of the public decisions of the people and the members that shall decide, the demos. Even substantial democracy (in terms of people's capacity to make use of democratic rights and institutions) is not about equality and justice within all aspects of life and within all parts of the society, 'only' within a wide public and generally political sphere. Rather it is a possible way of achieving much of that through equal but binding and accountable political work and decisions. This work and those kinds of decisions, in turn, cannot only be carried out directly in all fragments and sections of society but call for some kind of political unit. And anyway: if one aims at reaching all the good things in life first and directly (including equality), what is then the need for time-consuming, frustrating and always a bit dirty democracy?

If there is something to this, pro-democrats may thus have to consider some hard choices between focusing on a liberal and community oriented civil society strategy that avoids politicisation and conflicts of power, interests and related ideologies — or more emphasis on mass organising and political engagement, as a continuation of various civil society activities; political engagement 'only' in order to aggregate single issues and specific interest, plus politicise fundamental conflicts over broad collective interests and ideologies – not in order to fall short of *alirans* and

patron-client relations but rather as a mean to resist them, and democratise and make use of local and central government.

What would this imply? A first example is that the latter politics of democratisation probably requires controversial re-studies of how such politics were attempted at by the national liberation movement; how this was partially flourishing in the first years of independence; and how this was then given up during the cold war (both in its liberal and radical versions) during the Sukarno and army-led 'Guided Democracy'; and, finally, how it was totally eliminated under Soeharto's West supported 'New Order'. In contrast, the former civil society position would rather like to avoid this (and the related conflicts) and try to 'move ahead'. A second illustration could be that advocates of the politics of democratisation position might wish to avoid the personality oriented and bossist money politics that dominate in countries like the Philippines and thus opt instead for reforming the political party system, despite the current dirty practices (in order to make it possible for people to improve their positions collectively by forming genuine democratic parties and other organisations from below on the basis of their collective interests and visions). In contrast, the civil society argument would rather give priority to doing away with the 'hopeless' parties and opt for as direct as possible relationship between people and their representatives. A third case is that while most pro-democrats may be very critical of the dirty, top-down and democratically dangerous attempts in January 2003 at politicising widespread discontent over globalised structural adjustment and the reduction of subsidies, those in favour of improved politics of democratisation may add, that the incident, nevertheless, is a sign of the increasing importance of conflicts over material resources plus politics rather than NGO-seminars, wherefore there is a need to improve the political work rather than abandon it. In contrast, the civil society position may rather recommend the more principled and cleaner work with NGOs and actions groups.

Hence, there are no simple choices. But in view of the need for 'floating democrats' to gain some ground it may be wise to discuss them and, hopefully, develop fruitful combinations.

### **Moving ahead**

Meanwhile a major conclusion from the discussion of the early results in this book (at the January 2002 conference) was that the new semi-democratic rights and institutions rarely make sense to people and not even to the most altruistic pro-democrats. Hence, it was argued, there is an urgent need for a revitalised agenda, both in general and within the democracy movement, for sustaining and deepening HR-based democratisation. Such an agenda, however, cannot be crafted by experts from the top down – if it is to be effective and legitimate. Rather it calls for detailed knowledge about the specific problems and options on the ground and in the country at large.

The best and yet neglected way, we believe, is to rely on the experience and expertise of reflective democracy activists who are engaged in several of the most vital issues (such as

corruption, democratisation of parties, farmer and labour problems) in different contexts around the country. It is not just that they should know best. They are also intrinsic actors whose positions should be a critical test of the standard of any serious effort at democratisation. This, therefore, is how we are now trying to move ahead by way of three rounds of empirically grounded democratisation assessments.

A major difference as compared to earlier is that the new programme is more than a research project. Rather, it calls for much more intensive and broad cooperation among pro-democrats. This relates not just to the preparation of the many interviews with grounded local experts that will form the basis for these assessments. It is also fundamental in deliberating and disseminating the results among the informants and concerned people in general: ‘those are the problems and options of democratisation according to experienced democracy activists around the country – does anyone else have more reliable arguments or could we perhaps accept them and discuss what should be done?’

The team that have produced and advised this book has, therefore (with the special support of ISAI, KontraS and Interfidei) formed a new membership based organisation for concerned scholars, educators and democracy campaigners called *DEMOS*, The Indonesian Centre for Studies of Democracy and Human Rights. If you share our aims and ideas, you are most welcome aboard!