

# **CIVIL SOCIETY AND DIVISIVE POLITICISATION**

## **Experiences from popular efforts at democratisation in Indonesia**

**Olle Törnquist**

Contribution to Conference on Civil Society, Istanbul October 28-30, 1996, organised by Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Gothenburg University, and Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul

\*\*\*\*\*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Only a few years ago one could say that even if the next to Castro longest serving head of state, Suharto, had built a political and economic empire on the basis of guns and oil, characterised by nepotism and corruption, Indonesia seemed to do quite well. Of course, liberty and democracy were lacking. But stability was there, and high and steady growth as well. True, crony businessmen enriched themselves excessively. But they invested much of their rents. Many other businessmen and new middle class people did also well. The poor were less poor than before. Student and intellectual dissidents survived in the margins. And reformists talked of 'modernising' the system.

Even as the conflicts accentuated, the increasingly many workers began to strike, the international wave of democracy reached the country and a domestic movement emerged, most analysts agreed that the likely scenario was one of fairly orderly elitist transition to more well regulated and less authoritarian rule.<sup>1</sup> It was simply very difficult to be more precise. Conflicts were hidden, organising prohibited, manoeuvres covert, messages cryptic.

By now, however, the picture is sharper – and things less easy. In April 1996 president Suharto's wife and foremost confidante, Mrs Tien, suddenly past away. A few months later Suharto himself flew to Germany for a medical check up. Stock markets dived and leading business journals wrote extensively about the end of stability and good fortunes in Indonesia. The question, therefore, was if Suharto and all his men would prove capable of handling a smooth transition – or if they would simply display that the old man was still in command. They went for the latter.

On June 20 a government sponsored faction of the smallest of the two recognised parties (besides the government's Golkar), the Indonesian Democratic Party PDI, met

---

<sup>1</sup>Even though some had hopes of rather extensive changes like in the Philippines; or at least that the many new popular oriented NGOs and sections of the rapidly expanding middle and working classes, if better organised, would be able to radicalise elite-lead transitions.

in Medan, North Sumatra, to do away with its legally elected leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of legendary Sukarno. This kind of intervention was not a new phenomenon – but the response was. Megawati and her increasingly many supporters around the country refused to give up. In Jakarta they held on to the party headquarters on Jalan Diponegoro and besides demonstrations arranged a daily free speech forum at the office compound. Of course, it was far from developing into a Philippine 'people power' revolution, but more and more people came out in support of Megawati, including NGOs, action groups, and quite a few of the workers who went on strike for better conditions.

The situation became increasingly tense. At about 6 o'clock on Saturday morning July 27 policemen and soldiers stood by in the streets nearby the PDI office as several army-like troop transport trucks drew up in front of the building and unloaded thugs who, assisted by the police, charged the office, and chased the PDI members inside; many of whom were seriously injured and several possibly dead. More and more concerned people came to the area and as these were forced out of the area devastating riots and new demonstrations followed. Soon enough, however, the military stated they would shoot troublemakers "on the spot" and Suharto invented a scapegoat to prevent the pro-democracy forces from uniting and capitalising on the crackdown. All the trouble, it was stated, had been instigated by the young pro-democracy activists of a new small Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) who were labelled communists. What was more, these "subversive elements" in turn had been "masterminded" by all the other pro-democrats. Thus the witch-hunt was on, no matter if even the US government, for the first time that I am aware of, expressed serious concern over the treatment of so-called communists. Either you are loyal or a crypto-communist. If somebody manages to hide, the authorities pick at the parents or wife/husband and even children instead. And as I am writing this in late-November the hunt is still on. Many are arrested, including independent trade union leader Muchtar Pakpahan. Others are intimidated – not only 'ordinary' activists but also internationally reputed human rights monitors, cultural workers, and journalists.

The open conflicts and riots in mid-96 and the following crackdown on the democracy movement disclosed, thus, if only for a brief period of time, much of what used to be concealed. I was there to follow up a draft version of a long essay on the problems of democratisation (primarily based on interviews in late-1994) before publishing. It was with mixed feelings, indeed, that I could virtually see how much of the draft analysis proved right and could be further developed. A very brief summary

of some points that may be of relevance for our general discussion on civil society and democratisation:<sup>2</sup>

### **INEVITABLE TRANSITION WITH LIMITED PROSPECTS**

To begin with, let us consider the dynamics of the dominant forces. Three characteristics stand out as the most important.

*1. Transition from the old authoritarian rule is inevitable. There is a growing inability to regulate conflicts both within the elite and in its relation to new social forces.*

The regime is lacking solid institutions to handle conflicts among the dominating groups – not to talk of broader social contradictions. By now Suharto may balance it all from the top. By now the military may crack down on protests and strikes that challenge them as well. But the problems will only grow worse when succession is really around the corner. At that time new rules of the game really have to be worked out. At that time new trustworthy institutions to regulate (with a reasonable degree of predictability) the increasingly complicated economy, and its various rival groups now conforming to Suharto, simply have to be established. So transition to a less authoritarian regime seems inevitable.

*2. Much of the additional factors which elsewhere nourished drastic middle-class democratisation are missing.*

In countries like the Philippines, with middle-class based elitist transitions from authoritarian rule, the main problem is now that democratisation lacks solid foundation; especially, I would say, in genuine popular movements and interests. In cases like Indonesia, however, where authoritarian rule still persists, the even more basic problem is that the inability of the regime to regulate conflicts and

---

<sup>2</sup>The original essay is part of a larger effort which started in 1991 to compare over time the importance and problems of democratisation for renewal-oriented popular movements and associated organisations in three very different contexts, within the Philippines, India and Indonesia. A somewhat less condensed summary is available in the second revised edition of Arief Budiman (Ed.) *State and Civil Society in Indonesia*, Centre of South East Asian Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, 1996. *For the comprehensive version and references, please see the forthcoming report* (probably through the Nordic Asia Institute, early 1997) and/or the following book with the cases in comparative and theoretical perspective.

I am most thankful to all friends cum colleagues, political leaders and activists in the Philippines, Kerala and Indonesia who in a spirit of mutual trust and interest in critical ideas, keep spending a great deal of time in informative and exciting discussions with me – including in Indonesia in July and August 1996 when so many other matters were much more urgent and important. The research in Indonesia is conducted in co-operation with Dr. Arief Budiman and with the valuable assistance of Bimo. My research is financed by Uppsala University and Sarec, the Department for research co-operation within Sida, the Swedish International Development Authority.

institutionalise sustained growth is likely to spur transition but not democratisation. Historically, of course, it is true that democratic rule has also evolved from above and through external pressure, like in Japan.<sup>3</sup> But as it is rather the forceful internal dynamics of capitalist growth that dominates the current picture, it is more relevant to relate to the 'conventional' theories about democratisation – and to point to the fact that Indonesian capitalism still develops without many of the kind of relatively independent businessmen and middle-classes, and separation between state and civil society, that capitalism in general is 'normally' associated with.<sup>4</sup> The most likely scenario, therefore, is rather transition to a slightly more open and well regulated society without democratisation – at least initially – through horse trading among post-Suharto elites.

*3. However, the 27 of July affair now indicates also that even this kind of crafted transition through horse-trading is unlikely to be a smooth and orderly one. To my understanding the real significance of the affair is rather that it signals the devastating ways in which succession may come about.*

The idea of a crafted orderly transition perspective began to fade away already as the government decided to block the attempts by the pro-Megawati people, who initiated (in mid-March) an electoral watch movement, to mobilise people in face of the 1997 elections and thus, despite everything, find a way of promoting democratisation by relating to the existing unequal political system. No divisions and no soft-liners within the regime was capable of altering or even modifying this – neither potential friends of Megawati & Co nor pro-government reformists.

It is true that Sukarnoist Megawati and her unofficial ally Abdurrachman Wahid, liberal minded leader of the world's largest Muslim organisation Nahdlatul Ulama, are not only populist oriented but also try to negotiate pacts with disenchanted factions among those in power. Those proved wrong, however, who said that the government and the army would be divided enough to not only accept Megawati as leader of the PDI (in 1993) but also tolerate that most outright pro-democrats would come along.

It is also true that less pluralistic but reformist Muslims have realised that the clientelist government Golkar party is a shell that is likely to vanish with its super patron Suharto and, therefore, try to turn instead the pro-government Association of

---

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Göran Therborn, "The Right to Vote and the Four World Routes to/through Modernity", in Rolf Torstendahl (Ed.), *State Theory and State History*, Sage, London, 1992, and his contribution to this seminar.

<sup>4</sup>See eg. Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave, Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London 1991, and G. O'Donnell and P.C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1986.

Muslim Intellectuals, ICMI, into a more genuine forum to modernise clientelism into Malaysian-like state-corporatism. But at no point from mid-June till July 27 am I aware of any sign that those reformists seriously tried and could have been able to accommodate the pro-democrats and to 'handle' them within a more open political framework.

So what happened on July 27 was 'only' that the regime (including its soft sections) displayed its total incapacity to even prepare its own reformation, having instead to crack down on the pro-democracy movement.

Of course, increasingly many reformists as well as businessmen now realise that this cannot go on, that clashes cost too much, that there must be more openness, a better regulated economy, and new institutions and organisations that allow for efficient and reliable negotiations among the elite as well as with the people at large. (It is better, for instance, to have a representative union to deal with than to have 10.000 angry workers in the street who constantly have to be repressed by the army.) But what is the use of those insights if the reformists cannot start building the institutions and allowing the organisations until Suharto is gone? What can ICMI do, if its chairman technology minister Habibie always has to be on speaking terms with Suharto? Or what can enlightened military officers do, if the only way to sustain their positions is to be loyal to Suharto? Meanwhile the fundamental social and economic conflicts are getting worse.

Some might add that sensible compromises and gradual democratisation are anyway inevitable because capitalism is flourishing and some kind of civil society emerges. But the right to consume and a few individual liberties are not enough. It is fine if people like to have democracy (recent polls testify to this), do not trust what is in the papers, and criticise the government in coffee-shop discussions. But to make a difference they must also be able to organise on the basis of common interests and ideas. And this they cannot. Indonesia today is way behind the Philippines ten years ago, not to talk of South Africa five years ago. There is no mass organisation from below. The only option is incorporation of people into politics based on populism and what remains of the old pillars – Sukarnoism and Islam. And now July 27 displayed the risks in terms of poorly organised and angry masses that run wild and invite more repression. Moreover, the regime is rather successful in dividing the Muslims. Independent and pluralist Gus Dur is probably next on the list, if necessary.

Hence I am afraid that the July 27 affair points in the direction of if not an upsurge a la Rumania so more unrest, more failures, and more crackdowns. Only when Suharto falls or steps down will the many actors who have remained loyal in order to survive try to handle transition. By then, therefore, the army remains the only solid

organisation. But the generals can no longer run the country on their own. They must look for support among businessmen and politicians – who are likely to compete with each other in offering different generals finance and mass support. And since most of the competing actors have not been able to prepare an institutional framework for a negotiated transition, they may not be able to settle their disputes in a smooth way either.

\*

Eventually some kind of elitist democracy may well evolve from this process as well. But what can be done to alter the depressing *immediate* scenario? If the main points in this analysis are accepted, the only clear-cut path, even for businessmen with a strategic perspective, is the narrow one – that is to strengthen the position of the pro-democracy forces that do *not* depend on remaining loyal to the regime till the bitter end. So let us turn then to these forces instead.

### **OF POPULAR EFFORTS AT DEMOCRATISATION**

July 27, unfortunately, testifies also to the fact that the more genuine pro-democracy movements cannot make much difference. Their honest attempt to relate to the recognised political system by mobilising as many as possible in face of the 1997 elections behind Megawati failed because of the lack of space for more openness and gradual change. However, when fighting an authoritarian regime this is a typical dilemma which dissidents simply have to come to terms with. Hence we must also – and primarily – analyse the problems of the democracy movement itself.

Of these problems, however, there are comparatively few studies and little relevant theory to build upon, besides general and often normative works on civil society and social movements. Some even say it is a waste of time studying the democracy movement. They believe instead it is only the powerful elites and their horse trading that will be significant.<sup>5</sup> But the other side of the coin – or of the rise of capital –, I would argue, is the rise of new social forces, including peasants (losing land), rural and urban toiling classes, industrial workers, and middle class intellectuals and professionals. And though it is true that upper class government and administration according to rule, as well as the very emergence of a civil society (in terms of a sphere for relatively autonomous action and association between state and individual) and sometimes external pressure, preceded most democracies,<sup>6</sup> it is widely accepted that most processes of democratisation have rested with the social forces generated by

---

<sup>5</sup>A position taken by, e.g., Richard Robison. Conversation, Copenhagen, October 26-29, 1995.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Göran Therborn, *op. cit.*

capitalism – primarily the working class but also the middle classes – and their political movements.<sup>7</sup> So why should not the democratic potential of similar forces and organisations be studied in Indonesia too, despite the fact that times have changed and conditions vary?

\*

What, then, are the problems and prospects for these forces and movements to make a difference? Given the lack of research of the new forces and movements (and the fact that recent rapid changes often make it irrelevant to deduce from earlier results<sup>8</sup>), how do we even formulate the questions, analyse basic characteristics, and put forward hypotheses?

To begin with *it is important, I believe, to abstain from negating the conventional focus upon state and elites by 'just' studying movements and institutions in civil society.*<sup>9</sup> *The key question is rather to ask about the linkages between government and civil society* – in my case by focusing upon connecting movements and parties in political society – and to look at the interplay between actors and structures/institutions – in my case by studying the ways in which the actors perceive of (and try to change) these conditions.

Secondly, if this is accepted, we need a limited universal concept of democratisation as well as a conceptualisation of the kind of associated contextual factors that the actors believe are crucial and which we thus need to ask how they relate to.<sup>10 11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Cf., e.g., D. D. Rueschemeyer, E. Huber-Stephens, and J.D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992.

<sup>8</sup>Including my own studies of the massive old popular organisations. (See at first hand Olle Törnquist, *Dilemmas of Third World Communism. The Destruction of the PKI in Indonesia*. Zed Books, London 1984; *Struggle for Democracy - a New Option in Indonesia?*, Akut 33, Uppsala University 1984; *Dilemmas of Third World Communism...op.cit*; *What's Wrong with Marxism, Vol. I: On Capitalists and State in India and Indonesia*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1989; *Vol. II: On Peasants and Workers in India and Indonesia*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1991; and "Communists and Democracy in the Philippines", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 6-13 and July 20, 1991.).

<sup>9</sup>To use the concept of civil society outside the framework of the old modernised capitalist parts of world is, of course, open to even more complications than elsewhere. In a sense one may even argue that a *modern* civil society still remains to be created in countries like Indonesia. But even if I tend to subscribe to the view that the modern civil society – both as a concept and in reality – is a product of the rise of Western capitalism, it would be wrong to exclude the possibility that the minimum analytical and empirical (but *not* normative!) meaning that I put into the concept in terms of a sphere for relatively autonomous action and association between state and individual can emerge under other conditions as well, minus, of course, where, for instance, archtypical feudal relations dominate.

<sup>10</sup>My minimum definition of democratisation is promotion of the establishment and further development of democracy as an idea and as a method in terms of sovereignty of the people in accordance with the principle of constitutionally guaranteed political equality among citizens or members who are independent enough to express their own will. (Or in operational and minimum-procedural terms: promote the establishment and further development of government according to rule on the basis of majority decisions among adult citizens or members with one vote each and freedom of expression and organisation.) And the associated contextual factors that the actors believe are essential and which we need to analyse how they relate to are: (a) the *preconditions* that the actors give emphasis to (e.g. the capacity to organise and express opinions), (b) the *forms* of democratisation that they prefer (e.g. work inside or outside the established political system, and stressing of popular

Thirdly, the lack of relevant theories and research in the field calls for thick down to earth studies of an almost explorative nature. I have opted for comparative contrasting of movements' views and actions related to democratisation in three very different contexts – Indonesia, the Philippines and the Indian state of Kerala. In each case I can draw on my earlier research on old movements,<sup>12</sup> and then add new research about new (or renewed) movements. Besides comparatively undisputed standard literature, news reports on general developments, scholarly studies and evaluations, and some documents, the new sources are mainly interviews during repeated field visits with, at each time and in each case, about fifty key-informants and leading members of the movements and associated organisations. To document problematic and unintended developments, priority is given to "self-critical" evaluations by leaders who otherwise would be expected to do their best to defend their policies.

\*

Initially it suffices to apply, in comparative perspective, the above mentioned concepts only. Actually, the Philippine and Kerala case studies have generated three clusters of factors on how previously successful popular politics tend to obstruct further advances, on how old movements still condition new, and on how the expansion of capitalism both constrain and promote democratisation. These factors may serve as points of departure for the Indonesian inquiry as well.<sup>13</sup>

---

participation/direct control or representation), (c) the *extent* to which they try to expand democracy (e.g. the spreading of democratic forms of rule beyond the state to companies and civil associations), and (d) the *content* or the policies which the actors characterise as democratic (e.g. whether democratic ends justify undemocratic means).

<sup>11</sup>Hence we are not focusing upon the introduction of democratic government at 'national' levels only but also on democratisation in other spheres and on other levels as well as its further development once established.

<sup>12</sup>See at first hand Olle Törnquist, *Dilemmas of Third World Communism...* op.cit; *What's Wrong with Marxism, Vol. I: On Capitalists and State in India and Indonesia*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1989; *Vol. II: On Peasants and Workers in India and Indonesia*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1991; and "Communists and Democracy in the Philippines", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 6-13 and July 20, 1991.)

<sup>13</sup> A brief summary: 1. Previously successful popular politics tended to obstruct further advances. In Indonesia it is quite obvious that the old massive left movement contributed unintentionally to the emergence of the present authoritarian system. 2. Old movements still condition new. In Indonesia the destruction of the previous Left meant that remaining liberal dissidents and a new generation of radical critics had to start anew. The basic problem in Indonesia is simply that dissidents are isolated from people in general – because of the destruction of the broad popular movements in the mid-60's and the authoritarian rule during the New Order. Usually it is even impossible to form membership based autonomous organisations. There are very few movements among people themselves to relate to. The same holds true in terms of critical ideologies and historical consciousness. Most of the dissident groups have to work from above and out of the main urban centres where civil society is somewhat more developed and certain protection is available from friends and temporary allies with influential positions. This way layers of fragmented dissidents have developed over the years. 3. The expansion of capitalism partly promote democratisation. Generally speaking economic and political liberalisation is a double edged sword. On the one hand, new division of labour often breaks down old class alliances and give rise to multiplicity of interests, and movements. On the other hand, liberalisation has created some space which may allow people to partially improve their standard of living by different local efforts – not having to always grab political power on a general level first, thereafter to rely on state intervention. And this local space, and the need to overcome fragmentation, have spurred democratisation from below. In Indonesia, despite authoritarian rule, there are similar tendencies. For one it has been possible for a lot of development oriented NGOs to relate to new social classes in



However, when trying also to analyse the character, limits and prospects of the new politics of democratisation there is a need for additional analytical tools. We focus on the importance of democratisation when actors read (and influence) structures and institutions in order to link up government and civil society by means of movements and organisations. *But how, more exactly, should we analyse their efforts to democratise by linking up government and civil society? The answer, I think, is to concentrate on their strategic positions: (a) where do they find most space to work; (b) how do they include people into politics; (c) how do they politicise interests and ideas?*

## **Political Space, Inclusion, and Politicisation**

### Space

There is a wide consensus among dissidents on the general prerequisites for democratisation – primarily in terms of 'more space' or freedom of expression and organisation, and the respect for human rights. All this is needed – but lacking. The major differences are related instead to how the groups read the situation (or the 'political opportunity structure' as many analysts of social movements would have called it)<sup>14</sup> and what one should do to create the much needed 'space'. So what are the prerequisites for the prerequisites? How can one pave the way for democratisation? And what forms, scope, and content of democratisation should be promoted?

Two kinds of problems seem to be fundamental. Both relate to where, relatively speaking and according to the actors themselves, there is most room of manoeuvre for the democratic forces.<sup>15</sup> Is it necessary, firstly, to oppose and break up the political system from outside (while simultaneously, of course, trying to benefit from divisions in the regime)? This is what most dissidents would argue. Or is it possible and

---

society, and a new generation of students have related to peasants (hard hit by evictions) and new industrial workers. In fact I think it is safe to say, therefore, that the new popular movements giving emphasis to democratisation are potentially significant, despite the many layers of fragmented dissidents. They are more than a product of the global wave of democracy and the divisions within the ruling coalition (which are only likely to generate turbulent transition to less authoritarian rule) – they are also conditioned by the expansion of capital and the new classes thus emerging.

For the full reports, see Olle Törnquist, "Democratic 'Empowerment' and Democratisation of Politics. Radical Popular Movements and the May 1992 Philippine Elections", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1993, (For revised version including re-study, see Manoranjan Mohanty and Partha Mukherji with Olle Törnquist (Eds.) *Social Movements, State, and Democracy*, Forthcoming, New Delhi.) and "Democratisation and Attempts to Renew the Radical Political Development Project - the Case of Kerala", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXI, Nos. 28, 29, and 30, July 13, 20, and 27, 1996 (also available through the Nordic Asia Institute).

<sup>14</sup>Cf. e.g. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1994.

<sup>15</sup>The answer to these questions, of course, is not mainly due to principles but vary with the actual conditions and the actors' ways of reading them.

meaningful to try to change the political system from within? Within the existing institutions and parties, and the representative and administrative apparatuses? Like the leaders who try to promote democracy by associating with the legally recognised PDI. On the one hand, therefore, those who claim that it is necessary to work outside the political system; on the other hand those who contend that it is possible to stay within.

Secondly, all agree the state alone is too dominant, but how should the balance of power between state and society be altered? Traditionally there are two answers to the question: either it can be done 'from above' or it has to be done 'from below'. Either, that is, by somehow toppling or weakening the state, thus creating more space for relatively autonomous action in civil society, including the possibility for people to form their own associations – or by directly trying to empower people in civil society and, at best, initiating autonomous movements.<sup>16</sup> For instance, many political activists argue that space for meaningful action in civil society must be created 'from above', since the grassroots, who may only play a role if they are organised, cannot even start organising, and the elite, who must be able to compete with ideas, cannot even run reasonable newspapers. At the other end several development oriented NGO-leaders claim that there is, despite everything, so much space for relatively autonomous action that it makes sense to give priority to the strengthening of civil society (by promoting another development, critical consciousness, human rights, and informal organisation). Thus, they say, one may favour democratisation in the society at large 'from below' without first having to topple the state – if refraining from out-rightly challenging the regime and thus from provoking devastating repression. On the one hand, therefore, those who claim that civil society must be opened up 'from above'; on the other hand those who contend that it may be strengthened from within.

The various actors, of course, must take a stand on both these issues. Hence we should cross tabulate the two dimensions. This way we may identify four basic positions with regard to political space among the Indonesian pro-democracy forces.

Fig. 1. Basic strategic positions among the Indonesian pro-democracy forces depending on their views on if there is space enough for meaningful work within the political system and civil society.

		Space for meaningful work within the established political system?	
		No	Yes
		Must work outside the system	Can work inside the system
Space for meaningful work in civil society?	No Must create space from above	Avant-garde politics to break up the regime and liberate civil society	Legal political intervention to adjust the political system and raise civil society

<sup>16</sup>On the concept of civil society, see the brief note in fn. 9!

Yes May be strengthened	Empower civil society and, some add, harness popular movement politics to change the system	Vitalise adjoining movements and NGOs to adjust the system
-------------------------------	--	--

### Inclusion

Space, however, is not enough. We also need to know how pro-democrats try to include people into politics, no matter if outside or inside the official political system.

In general accordance with Nicos Mouzelis one may separate between integration of people into politics on the basis of relatively autonomous broad popular movements generated by comprehensive economic development (like in many parts of western Europe), and elitist incorporation of people with less solid organisations of their own into comparatively advanced polities in economically late developing societies (like in the Balkans and many third world countries).<sup>17</sup>

These concepts, of course, call for further elaboration. Until early 1996 actors claiming it was necessary to work outside the system gave emphasis to integration of people into politics while those saying it was possible to stay within bet on incorporation. Let us begin with actors trying adjustment by way of incorporation.

#### *Incorporation of people into politics within the system*

Following Mouzelis one may talk of two methods of incorporating people into comparatively advanced polities – clientelism and populism. While clientelism, primarily, is associated with bosses on different levels with their own capacity to deliver patronage in return for services and votes, populism, generally, goes with charismatic leaders who are able to express popular feelings and ideas, but not necessarily interests, and whose positions are essential to the stability of adjoining leaders and their ability to support followers.

In the present Indonesian context populism, which was so important during the Old Order, is now returning to the fore with Megawati's Sukarnoism within (until recently) the political system and the comparatively pluralist Muslim NU in civil society. The undivided PDI was the only legal party with a charismatic *and* elected leader. The party itself, however, is small and made up of Sukarnoists and Christians, with some support from disenchanted officers and some liberal oriented businessmen

---

<sup>17</sup>Nicos P. Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery. Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialisation in the Balkans and Latin America*, Macmillan, London, 1986.

and new middle class people. NU is economically more independent in its mainly rural strongholds of Java. Charismatic leader Abdurrahman 'Gus Dur' Wahid has been able to sustain his leadership against intervening government loyalists. In fact, he skilfully steers this huge traditionalist cum pragmatic (some-say 'neo-modernist') socio-religious movement in turbulent waters. On the one hand he both avoids to confront the regime and to run offside in relation to his followers, "whose awareness is only emerging and who have only began to question things and to ask for better accountability etc. Democracy, he stresses, must be built from below, in civil society, "by developing our culture".<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, he both hits hard against those characterised as anti-plural, primordial, opportunistic and not consistently democratic modernist Muslims (see below), and contemplate (at least till recently) a new alliance with Megawati's PDI and certain sections of the army – in addition to what may come out of discussions, under his own chairmanship, with other leading intellectuals, including radical activists, in the so called Democratic Forum.<sup>19</sup>

While this renewed populist blend of Sukarnoism and Muslim pluralism, therefore, may travel rather well with some democratisation, the same is not necessarily true of the current attempts at reforming clientelism. After Sukarno, the new authoritarian rulers did away with populism but sustained clientelism; the kind of clientelism that has characterised much of their New Order. Since the late-eighties, however, there have been attempts at modernising the old way of incorporating people into politics by substituting more well regulated and de-militarised state-corporatism,<sup>20</sup> plus some co-optation of intellectuals and experts, for the previous more personalised, militarised and arbitrary clientelism. This, of course, is not to democratise Indonesia's polity but to make it more efficient and sustainable, especially in face the inevitable succession. This calls for more than good connections with big businessmen and leading professionals. Friendly relations with the many Muslims among the *pribumi* businessmen, and middle class people must also be added. These had hitherto been set aside as compared to, for instance, foreign and Chinese businessmen, and Christian officers and intellectuals. Consequently, a few years ago not only Muslim loyalists but also well respected dissidents and NGO activists got an offer most of them could not refuse. By linking up with ICMI and Habibie, even the former rebels would get as much resources, freedom and influence as one could possibly think of in civil society as well as within the political system to better the position of the Muslims as a corporation – not the middle-class or working class as a whole, or the poor in general.

---

<sup>18</sup>Interview with Abdurrahman Wahid 15/11/94.

<sup>19</sup>A meeting-point for dissident intellectuals and activists.

<sup>20</sup>State-corporatism should thus be distinguished from the kind of social corporatism that emerged more from below in, for instance, the Scandinavian countries. Cf., moreover, Nicos Mouzelis "Modernity, Late Development and Civil Society", in Lars Rudebeck and Olle Törnquist (Eds.), *Democratisation in the Third World ...* op.cit.

What was more, this way they got the chance to work out a formula for succession that would be comparatively progressive but yet so stable and well functioning that later on, when time had become ripe, it would rather be the present rulers who could not refuse *this* offer. Said Adi Sasono, leading 'defector', now secretary general of ICMI:

"NGOs are not enough. One must also work within government. It is not monolithic. There are progressive elements...and possibilities to push 'new emerging forces'...There must be something once he (Suharto) is gone...We must prepare for the future...(so that we can) democratise with unity and stability...(This is only possible if we) counter the monetarists and build an ecologically sustainable and growth oriented economy – which really is to the benefit of much more people than now – by way of efficient and clean government intervention, as in the NICs, before the oil dries up... OK. we can't go too far with de-monopolisation...it wouldn't be politically wise...but we can do our best to demilitarise labour relations, strengthen human rights, improve the position of the poor and the small (Muslim) businessmen... Like Malaysia? – I'm not sure... But Golkar will be instrumental to legalise reform in the representative organs of the state...I would rather compare with the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico...And ICMI is a kind of forum and powerful vanguard...both in state and civil society."<sup>21</sup>

After the 27 of July affair, however, there is less optimism: "This is a terrible setback for us as well...there are dynamics within the army which we cannot do much about...and the old man doesn't listen." And when I ask how ICMI – which is not in favour of a transition based on multi-party negotiations and elections – shall accommodate other views and forces, such as those who rally behind Megawati and Gus Dur, there is no other answer but "well, that's a good question".<sup>22</sup>

Fig. 2. Strategic positions among the 'moderates' – who trust adjustment to democracy is possible within the established political system – depending, as earlier, on different views on what space there is for meaningful work within civil society, but now also on ways of incorporating people into politics: populism or (state)corporatism.

		Forms of incorporating people into politics	
		Populist	(State)corporatist
Space for meaningful work in civil society?	No. Legal political intervention to adjust the political system and raise civil society	Negotiate pacts with those losing out under Suharto and mobilise electoral support for more equal chances and religious pluralism	Prepare 'orderly' succession by instituting pro-Muslim state-corporatism and making Golkar an organ producing pacts and mobilising votes
	Yes. Vitalise, therefore, adjoining movements	Use culture to develop critical awareness within NU and understanding with other	Use ICMI and related NGOs to counter militarisation and to mobilise the Muslim

<sup>21</sup>Adi Sasono in interview, 4/11/94.

<sup>22</sup>Adi Sasono in interview, 13/8/96.

and NGOs to  
adjust the system

groups, like Sukarnoists, Christians and NGO-activists
---

<i>pribumi</i> middle classes in advantageous corporations
---

### *Integration of people into politics outside the system*

Most of the outright pro-democracy actors, however, are on the left side of our basic matrix (figure 1) arguing that it is, at present, almost impossible to democratise the political system from within. Legal politics is tightly controlled and regulated. Political participation is limited to those who are loyal to the regime. It is indeed true, most of the radical democrats continue, that divisions within the establishment are important and should be taken advantage of, especially as they generate more space for action. Even unfair elections, many say, may turn into rallying points and give rise to change. But all agree that actual change require popular power, like in the Philippines, so genuine democratisation must still be enforced by mobilising pressure from outside.

Exactly how *this* should be done, however, is a matter of dispute and factions are abundant. To begin with we should recall the fundamental question if the balance of power between state and civil society must be altered 'from above', or if it can, and should, be done 'from below'. On a general level, of course, almost everybody say that both are necessary. But what makes most sense and what should be given priority to?

The first point (about the need to create more space in civil society 'from above') is usually made by 'traditional' activists, including those with a leftist-nationalist, socialist or communist background, but also by the new generation of radical activists who focus on state power at the central and local level. The contemporary version of the second argument (that civil society can be empowered 'from below'), on the other hand, emerged among those being 'morally' disillusioned with the New Order, as well as among progressive socio-religious movements, and grew strong within the development and human rights oriented NGO-community. Later on much of the internationally fashionable normative discourse on civil society and new social movements was also incorporated, in addition to some of the experiences from the anti-authoritarian struggles in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia.

The actual positions of the actors, however, cannot be characterised without considering how they try to include people into politics. Until early 1996, as already pointed out, those who preferred to work outside the system all opposed the traditional third world pattern of elitist incorporation of people into politics and tried instead to improve their narrow social basis by integration through popular organisations.

In general accordance with Sidney Tarrow one may distinguish between two basic methods of popular integration, one which gives emphasis to autonomous collective action and another which focuses upon internalisation of actions and movements in organisations with some leadership. Tarrow argues, and my earlier studies of Kerala and the Philippines do confirm, that the most important but often neglected element of movement organising is what he calls the 'mobilising structures'. These link the 'centre' (in terms of formally organised leadership identifying aims and means) and 'periphery' (in terms of the actual collective action in the field). The 'mobilising structures' are thus "permitting movement co-ordination and allowing movements to persist over time".<sup>23</sup> Historically, he continues, there are two solutions to the problem, one with roots in anarchist and one in democratic socialist thinking.<sup>24</sup> The anarchist approach emphasises people's natural and spontaneous willingness and ability to resist repression and exploitation through linked networks and federations of autonomous associations with, however, in reality, instigating organic leaders as spearheads. The social democratic concept stresses the need for political ideology, organisation, and intervention through an integrated structure of parties, unions, and self-help organisations.<sup>25</sup> In the Indonesian context these labels often carry different connotations. Hence, I shall talk instead of federative and unitary forms of integration.<sup>26</sup>

Thus we arrive at four fundamental positions as a starting point for further analysis of the radical pro-democracy actors in Indonesia.

Fig. 3. Strategic positions among the radical democrats until early 1996 – who all believed that democratisation is not possible within the established political system – depending, as earlier, on different views on what space there is for meaningful work within civil society, but now also on ways of integrating people into politics: a federative and a unitary.

		Forms of integrating people into politics	
		Federative	Unitary
Space for meaningful work in civil society?	No. Avant-garde politics necessary to break up the regime and liberate civil society	Networking top-down catalysts	Political leaders plus top-down general organisers

<sup>23</sup>Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements...* op. cit. p. 135 f.

<sup>24</sup>In the 'anarchist' solutions Tarrow also includes, for instance, syndicalism and guild socialism; in the second he adds, for instance, European Christian Democracy. Of course, one could also add reformist communist patterns (like in West Bengal and Kerala) to the second category.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., primarily pp. 138 ff.

<sup>26</sup>Much could be added to this. Tarrow discusses intermediate solutions or more or less attractive compromises having developed over time. For analytical purposes, and as a way of further distancing ourselves from Tarrow's European and North American context, I believe it is more fruitful to hold on to the basic ideal types and to begin by cross tabulating with our earlier distinction between different positions on whether the balance of power between state and civil society must be altered 'from above', or if it can, and should, be done 'from below'.

Yes. Empower civil society and, some add, harness popular movement politics to change the system

Networking bottom-up movement developers	Bottom-up movement organisers cum co-ordinators
--	---

### Politicisation of interests and issues

Before proceeding with a closer analysis of the character and dilemmas of the four categories of radical democrats,<sup>27</sup> however, we must also develop analytical tools to handle the question of politicisation. A major conclusion from the comparative case studies in the Philippines and Kerala is that while new actions and development work often contribute to the vitalisation of civil society, and even to the generation of a democratic culture or 'social capital', they do not in themselves converge and produce the broader issues, perspectives and organisations that may generate extended and dynamic popular politics of democratisation.<sup>28</sup> Consequently there are good reasons to look into this problem in Indonesia as well. The only problem is that there is a lack of theoretically informed tools.

On the basis of a historical and Marxian oriented understanding of civil society and democracy, however, Peter Gibbon has succinctly suggested some exciting propositions that may serve as points of departure.<sup>29</sup> If it is accepted that the contemporary emergence of civil society is related to the expansion of capitalism at the expense of extra-economic coercion, it follows that civil society primarily reflects the new 'bourgeois' social division of labour with its individualised and privatised entities. The thus generated plurality of groupings is not in itself likely to promote general interests and democratic forms of government. Rather there is a risk that even the popular organisations involved turn prisoners of the process by 'deepening civil

<sup>27</sup>And then, of course, also adding the less tricky questions about their own democratic practices, including within the movements, as well as the scope and content of democracy in terms of what they try to democratise and what they regard as democratic policies (including to what extent democratic ends justify undemocratic means).

<sup>28</sup>In the Philippines 'pure' developmentalism and 'deepening' rather than politicisation of civil society, supplemented by lobbying and pressure politics on single issues, dominate popular efforts at further democratisation. In Kerala non-party political development actions, when possible in co-operation with a Left Front Government, are in the forefront, while the outright political tasks are referred to not too accommodating established parties and movements. See Olle Törnquist, "Democratic 'Empowerment' and Democratisation of Politics..." op. cit. (For revised version including re-study, see Manoranjan Mohanty and Partha Mukherji with Olle Törnquist (Eds.) *Social Movements, State, and Democracy*, op. cit.) and "Democratisation and Attempts to Renew the Radical Political Development Project - the Case of Kerala" op. cit.

<sup>29</sup>See Peter Gibbon, "Some Reflections on Development, Democratisation, and Civil Society", in Lars Rudebeck and Olle Törnquist (Eds.), *Democratisation in the Third World ...* op.cit. As matter of fact, when Gibbon presented the first draft of his article in 1993 we were both struck by how well his own empirical findings from Africa related to mine based on research in the Philippines in 1992, see Olle Törnquist, "Democratic 'Empowerment' and Democratisation of Politics...." op. cit.



society' and are unable to combine single issues, special interests and fragmented movements by way of politicisation.

However, we still need a reasonably concise conceptualisation of politicisation. My empirical findings point to many different kinds of politicisation. There is a need for a wider definition which does not rule out politicisation through, for instance, development oriented civil society organisations. And just like pluralism, of course, politicisation is no sufficient recipe for democratisation, as recently demonstrated in former Yugoslavia, and earlier when carried out with even the best of intentions within the framework of various socialist projects. Hence, there is a need for qualifications.

To begin with, parts of the problem of new popular politics of democratisation relate to the different forms of including people into politics (within or outside the established system) that formed part of the various strategic positions in figure 2 and 3. These positions may thus be classified as different frameworks for politicisation. But no doubt, much has also to do with politicisation as such. So the additional question is how to distinguish its major aspects.

Politicisation, I would argue, is not only related to established politics, and, as many students of new movements would have it, more or less Machiavellian attempts by political parties and leaders to get in command of the state. In less biased terms and on a more basic level we may rather talk of *politicisation when interests and issues become subject to collective and societal consideration and action within or outside recognised political society*. Three aspects seem to be most important: the basis, the forms, and the content.

The *basis for politicisation* may be derived from the ideas and interests that make people come together. Let us distinguish between movements and organisation on the basis of, first, single issues and/or special interests<sup>30</sup> and, second, ideologies and/or collective interests. The *forms of politicisation* are always related to societal organs like a state or local government but vary with whether one 'only' demand that certain policies should be carried out by these organs or also really engages in promoting similar ends through self-management, for instance by way of co-operatives. The *content of politicisation* is difficult to classify but is, of course, for instance, about different ideologies and the way in which various movements articulate issues and interests as well as norms, such as democratic rights and equality, in different contexts. On the one hand, even authoritarian rulers talk of democracy and even chauvinist religious movements may legitimate their aims and means in terms of the

---

<sup>30</sup>Hence, a single issue like the building of a nuclear power station may but does not have to be linked to special interests among the people immediately concerned.

rights and freedom of their members.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand demands for democratisation may well be expressed by use of 'traditional' values and vocabulary.<sup>32</sup>

The basis and forms of politicisation may be illustrated in a simple table, whereafter one have to supplement with the content.

Fig. 4. Types of politicisation.

		Forms of politicisation	
		Via state/local govt. only	Also via self-management
Basis of politicisation	Single issues or special interests <sup>1</sup>	2	
	Ideology or collective interests	3	4

Hereby we may distinguish between four types of politicisation. In box one the kind of pluralism where many pressure groups, single issue movements, and special interest organisations try to affect state or local government policies. In box two plural self-management where various groups and organisations also handle their own business. In box three broad organisations or corporations that demand state or local government policies on the basis of ideologies and/or collective interests. In box four the case where similar organisations also, to a considerable extent, manages common affairs.

\*

Let us now keep in mind the conceptualisation of basic strategic positions among the radical democrats,<sup>33</sup> and situate the types of politicisation<sup>34</sup> within the framework of each strategic position, so that we can continue with a brief analysis the actual character, limits, and prospects of their politics of democratisation.

### **Scattered Movements and Divisive Politicisation**

<sup>31</sup>Cf. the writings of Thomas Blom Hansen, e.g. *Politics and Ideology in Developing Societies. An Exploratory Essay*, Dept. of Languages and Intercultural Studies, Aalborg University, 1991, and "Becoming a Light onto Itself: Nationalist Fantasies in the Age of Globalisation", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXI, No.10, March 1966.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. e.g. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1986, and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1990, as well as Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution. New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, M.E. Sharpe, New York and London, 1993.

<sup>33</sup>Positions incorporating much of the actor's views on preconditions and forms of democratisation – urging us to now also consider their positions regarding the scope and content of democratisation.

<sup>34</sup>Supplemented by the content of politicisation.

Character of new politics of democratisation

To begin with a very brief characterisation of the movements' politics of democratisation. Their different strategic positions indicated in figure 3 serve as a framework.

According to the *top-down catalysts* it is necessary to break up the regime and liberate civil society 'from above' by way of avant-garde politics. There is little room for manoeuvre within the established political system as well as civil society. People should be integrated into politics on the basis of federative ideas about their spontaneous ability to resist and carry out collective action – which simply has to be ignited and linked up.<sup>35</sup> Much of this thinking have deep roots in the Indonesian liberation struggle. There is also the tradition of generating 'moral pressure' to thus delegitimize the rulers. At times of recent low tide in collective action, the position of the top-down catalysts have been that of patronising various NGOs, courageously speaking up in favour of civil and human rights, and defending all kinds of activists on all kinds of issues, while also linking them up with disenchanted sections of the elite. With the new wave of radical collective action in the late-eighties and onwards, however, alternative forms of instigation emerged. Increasingly radical and restless students in covert study groups began to look around for signs in actual life of what they had read of exploited masses who could make a difference. They found local but still rather unarticulated protests among workers and among rural poor against abusive land acquisition. They left most of the 'established' NGOs and dissidents behind. They formed new action groups and unions, staged daring demonstrations, and tried to give voice to subordinated but protesting people. Some constantly hunted for new issues attracting media and were labelled 'action maniacs'. While the top-down catalysts thus demonstrated that there is some space for radical action and politicisation, they primarily focus on scattered single issues and pressure politics. Rallying points fail to appear. Some try to make up for this by simply "not talking so much about the future but concentrating on getting rid of Suharto which is the most important task anyway".<sup>36</sup> There is little ideological glue or strategic considerations, aside from general ideas about the need to promote freedom, human rights, and democracy. The collective interests brought forward on the labour front proved difficult to sustain and took an ugly turn. In the process, however, certain changes have occurred. Some journalists, for instance, who try to develop their own movement and produce alternative magazines have taken up more grounded work in civil society. Others give more emphasis to general organisation and to co-ordination. Hence we shall return to them below.

---

<sup>35</sup>Examples of top-down catalysts include H.J.C Princen, Mughtar Pakpahan's SBSI, many of the Yogya-students getting involved in the Kedung Ombo affair, and the Jakarta centred Pijar-group.

<sup>36</sup>Interview with leading Pijar activists, 7/11/94. (Similar ideas expressed 1996.)

*The political leaders and top-down general organisers* also maintain that there is a need to break up the regime and liberate civil society from above by way of avant-garde politics, but their view on how people should be integrated into politics is less based of federalist ideas than unitary preoccupation with political ideology and intervention through parties and related organisations. There are two historical patterns in the Indonesian context. One model dates back to the middle class intellectuals who tried to build 'modern' parties but ended up with elitist formations (like the former Socialist Party) or elite-led parties based on conventional loyalties (such as PNI and Masjumi). The other model is that of the reformist-communists who also made use of some conventional loyalties but still managed to build a comparatively 'modern' party with some 20 million people in attached popular organisations. However, what remains at present is leaders from the elitist tradition who initially supported the New Order but then turned critics and were deprived of their organisational base. Their main remaining asset is some integrity and legitimacy in the eyes of many people – and among Western governments and agencies. This makes it possible for them to mobilise some resources and, more importantly, to stand out as necessary partners of any slightly more liberal regime just as of all the less well connected action groups and NGOs.<sup>37</sup> The reformist-communists, on the other hand, are no more – but there are serious attempts to build again a 'modern' mass-based party. The propelling forces are young former top-down catalysts who turned against cautious NGO work in civil society in the late-80's and early-90's, tried instead to politicise single issues by daring demonstrations, but then felt that this was not enough. They now argue that a main problem was the lack of consistent work at the grassroots level, over all organising, and a long term perspective. However, they do not start by forming mass organisations like unions from below but try top-down cadre-based mobilisation. The immediate target is liberal democratisation to alter the regime; later they also like to widen the scope to include democratisation of social and economic relations. Here are thus the young radicals who began building political action groups among workers, peasants, students, et. al. in early 1994 and recently formed the People's Democratic Party (PRD) – now accused of being communist and of having instigated the 27 of July affair. To sum up, thus, on the one hand experienced leaders with some legitimacy, logistics, and ability to form part of new political pacts, but without organisation; on the other hand young activist top-down organisers who may be able to initiate some popular pressure but lack legitimacy and resources. Both parties focus on the central state to alter the regime, and thus promote better policies, rather than also on self-management to improve people's position. And both make attempts at moving from single issues to more ideological questions, and

---

<sup>37</sup>Examples of political leaders include Buyung Nasution and associates, Ali Sadikin et. al. in the Petition 50 group, many of those involved in Democratic Forum, and Bintang Pramukas, Julius Usman and others in PADI.

from special interests to more collective ones. But while the political leaders primarily prepare the ground for pacts and compromises between various actors, until the time is right for outright intervention, the top-down organisers try to work out their own concept and set out to mobilise people right now.

*The networking bottom-up movements developers* differ from the top-down catalysts, the political leaders and the general organisers by saying that there is, despite everything, some space for meaningful work in civil society; a civil society which should be strengthened and people integrated into politics in accordance with federative ideas in order to promote 'real' democratisation. People themselves, it is argued, are quite capable and willing to stand up against oppression. "They know what's happening. They can speak for themselves. They organise for immediate needs. There is no need to tell them, speak for them, and shout up their mouths. We from the outside should not intervene like that."<sup>38</sup> Secondly, the developers carry along also a good deal of suspicion, for various reasons, against 'central' leadership and integrated organisations, and prefer instead autonomous associations that may link up and federate. The movement include, firstly, new labour activists trying to ignite the spark from bottom up rather than from top down by favouring outright unionism on the basis of immediate demands,<sup>39</sup> secondly, NGO workers adhering to the classical and most widespread position that one should instead serve or facilitate many small fires that people can handle themselves. Hence we may separate between movement servers, including many supportive action groups and NGOs,<sup>40</sup> and the primarily development oriented movement facilitators.<sup>41</sup> Especially the latter are less interested in altering the regime than in creating preconditions for 'meaningful democratisation' and extending the scope for it to the society at large. The new labour activists and the movement servers primarily put forward demands to those directly concerned, like the factory owner, or the state representatives, while the movement facilitators give priority to self management. All three, however, are plagued by hierarchies between various organisations as well as within them – which is in contrast to their aim at contributing to the democratisation of the society at large. And all three focus on single issues and special interests – an orientation which seem to generate many of the problems related to politicisation. The lack of democratic relations between and within the organisations do not only generate friction and lack of co-ordination. Local issues and interests tend to be subordinated to central considerations and to be defined

---

<sup>38</sup>Indera Nababan, interview 11/11/94.

<sup>39</sup>Examples of labour oriented movement developers include many of the grassroots activists within SBSI, independent labour groups, and some NGOs involved in labour training and conscientisation.

<sup>40</sup>Examples of movement servers include much of the work carried out by Human Rights organisations like YLBHI (though some of the work within this broad association also relate to other strategic positions) ELSAM, and supportive groups like Geni and Whali.

<sup>41</sup>One very positive example among the many movement developing NGOs is Bina Desa.

according to various ideas among the organisations and activists. This nourishes additional divisions. The facilitators even get involved in complicated local conflicts and may thus generate particularistic trust rather than more general co-operation. And there is a constant risk that a kind of alternative patronage develop. There are attempts among movement developers to compensate for this through networking. For instance, local NGO forums are established in some regions and cities. On the national and international level certain issues of common concern are handled within INFID.<sup>42</sup> But while some important co-operation has thus been initiated, contacts and discussions alone have little effect on the more fundamental factors just identified behind the tendency towards fragmentation.

*The bottom-up movement organisers cum co-ordinators* are newcomers. Strategic positions related to unitary ideas (including social democratic ones) on how to integrate people into politics have usually been associated with top-down practices.<sup>43</sup> As demonstrated in our third figure, however, it is logical to allow also for a bottom-up project; a project propelled by actors who, just like the movement developers, say that there is space for meaningful work in civil society, and that priority should be given to its 'empowerment', but add then that there is a need also for political ideology and an integrated structure of various organisations; actors who conclude, therefore, that this organisational structure, just as the politics of democratisation, must be built from below. Are there any such political animals in Indonesia? One example is from the labour front and the rise of Forsol in the early-90's, a co-ordination body of various NGOs active among the workers in Greater Jakarta. As usual, the NGOs had different views, methods and spheres of interest. But then there was a big strike, and the repression hit at workers associated with all the NGOs. So these active workers demanded that the NGOs must do something together - and hence Forsol was established. Says some of the NGO leaders:

"In Forsol we get to know each other and divide the territory. But we also agree on fighting for some basic goals like the right to form free unions, getting rid of military intervention as well as obstructive government regulations, and to protect child labour". "Anyway, the basic thing is that it wasn't us that initiated this co-ordination. Rather it was active workers who began to organise the supportive NGOs."<sup>44</sup>

By 1996 this co-operation had spread to additional areas in the country, promoted by, among others, the labour units of the Legal Aid Institutes.<sup>45</sup> Another recent initiative

---

<sup>42</sup>International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development.

<sup>43</sup>See e.g. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements...* op.cit.

<sup>44</sup> Interviews with NGO labour activists Teten Masduki (Jakarta 11/11/94 and 19/7/96), Aris Merdeka Sirait (Jakarta 8/11/94 and 14/8/96) and Fauzi Abdullah (Jakarta 17/7/96 and 16/8/96).

<sup>45</sup>Another example in the more comprehensive essay is some of the work led by Johnny Simanjuntak in relation to the Kedung Ombo affair.

in the same direction is KIPP, the independent election monitoring committee established in March 1996. Leading pro-democracy dissidents and groupings with various orientations were planning to monitor the 1997 parliamentary elections, to begin with. The initiative was widely acclaimed, including among moderate democrats. There was and still is an obvious potential in co-ordinating scattered movements with the common focus on promoting whatever officially proclaimed element of democracy, and exposing everything that is abused and lacking. However, the extent to which KIPP would take root among the grassroots, and be guided by widespread popular concern rather than elitist aspirations, remained to be seen. Soon enough it was linked up with the support-work for Megawati – and now it suffers badly from the crackdown on the democracy movement as a whole. In conclusion, the still weak and few organisers cum co-ordinators tend, thus, to relate politicisation of single issues and special interests to problems of more common concern. Moreover, some of those who used to focus 'only' on putting pressure on, for instance, factory owners or the state leaders, by way of strikes or protests, are now try also to mobilise people's capacity to do things on their own. And there are signs indicating that this orientation is not merely because of intellectual considerations but the result of pressure from below; pressure generated in turn by actual conflicts in society, not in seminar rooms.

### Limits of new politics of democratisation

Much of the efforts by the few and weak movement organisers cum co-ordinators is of such a recent origin that a close and critical evaluation will have to wait. But till early 1996 a major result of all the other attempts and actors is that none of them had been markedly successful in building their different 'mobilising structures' and in propelling democratisation. In other words, the possibilities of generating social bases for the pro-democracy groupings and of inducing democratisation do not seem to vary *directly* with different strategic positions.

In seeking an answer to why it is that so many different groupings with different positions and different views of democratisation all share those problems, it should be fruitful to look out for common features. One should not exclude that the strategic position taken by the new movement organisers cum co-ordinators will be more fruitful, but as far as I can see now the primary common denominator among all the others is their pattern of politicisation, with a basic orientation towards single issues and special interests.

Interestingly enough, similar kinds of politicisation are of major importance even in the more divergent contexts of the Philippines and Kerala. Here, as we know, new actions and development work often contribute to the vitalisation of civil society, and even to the generation of social capital, but do not in themselves converge and produce the broader issues, perspectives and organisations that may generate extended and dynamic popular politics of democratisation. In the present case of Indonesia, most groupings base themselves on single issues or special interests, either by putting pressure on the state and local government in favour of alternative policies or by also promoting similar ends through self-management like the running of co-operatives. Moreover, those primarily doing so (the movement developers) are also the actors with the strongest social base – while those trying to also focus upon ideology are more isolated and tend to work from above (the political leaders and general organisers).

Finally, there is a tendency since the early-90's, and especially since 1994, to really link up alternative development and human rights work, for instance, with politics. Most frustrating, however, is that while major groupings within the three dominant strategic positions try their best to really relate specific issues and special interests to more general perspectives, they tend also, despite good intentions, to exacerbate either the limited kind of politicisation with some social foundation among the grassroots or the attempts at broader perspective without much social basis – finally even causing trouble for each other. Hence, let us examine in somewhat more detail the dynamics



of this *divisive politicisation* within the framework of the dominant strategic positions.

### *Divisive politicisation*

The networking top-down catalysts, as we know, focus on single issues, special interests and try to pave the way for popular pressure politics, primarily directed against the state. In trying to find *the* rallying point, however, they are constantly looking for a better case. When simultaneously having to attract the attention of the media, they also need new and good 'stories' and may even turn 'action maniacs'. In doing this they easily become part of Jakarta's elitist 'political theatre' and tend to split. In making up for the divisions and the lack of a rallying point, they may try to develop a short-sighted and simple one, such as getting rid of Suharto and his cronies. And when trying to ignite the sparks among the many frustrated workers, they run the risk of simply generating a popular upsurge which may easily be abused and falter or fade away. It is true that the instigators have demonstrated – through bold and daring initiatives – that there exist more space for action than what most other dissidents initially thought. But to bring up various issues to the street, and constantly try out what is possible, they have to take more and more daring steps, and neglect painstaking democratic principles and consistent work on the grassroots level, – thus running offside, far ahead of most potential followers, and dominating, alienating, and causing trouble for those who work slow but consistently among the people.

The political leaders try to put pressure on the regime but have lost their organised social base. Hence, while discussing ideological and strategic matters and preparing the ground for pacts and compromises, they simultaneously patronage instead various NGOs and movements that focus on special issues and interests. The leaders' main asset is some integrity and general legitimacy among people, as well as Western government and agencies, which make them indispensable partners of a more liberal regime and capable of mobilising some resources. It is true that this is of vital importance in the general process of democratisation. But when the leaders try to sustain their asset it makes less sense to engage in time-consuming awarenessbuilding and organisational work than to see to it that others who already do so continue to ask for support and become parts of an integrated structure of popular pressure groups. This in turn, therefore, rather uphold than weaken the leader's scepticism about the capacity of social movements to make a difference. Moreover, it tends to sustain the hierarchies and lack of democracy among and within the organisations where strong leaders sometimes act as institutions in themselves; it may even improve the leaders ability to act as alternative patrons of groups that are weak and people who are threatened. (Ironically, various scattered groupings

themselves may also encourage the rise of such leaders as the former feel that there is a need for some kind of 'locomotive'. Moreover, radical activists may do the same when trying to display that the old leaders 'are not radical and consistent enough'.)

The general organisers, on the other hand, really try themselves to build an integrated structure of mass based political organisations that can put pressure on state and capital and are based on 'scientifically identified' collective interests as well as a common ideology and strategy. In doing this, however, they tend to substitute efficient organisation, cadres, and more radical policies for lack of popular legitimacy, authority, and bottom-up organising. This way they may distance themselves from hesitant critics of the regime, for instance within the middle classes; this way they may come into conflict with both rival political leaders and with the many dissidents who try to stay away from enlightened 'cadreism' and give priority instead to the generation of ideological perspectives and less 'guided' resistance from below; and this way their emphasis on confronting the capitalist system and state in general may neglect the many groups that focus on vital special issues and try to defend and improve the position of weak sections of the population.

The many movement developers, like the catalysts, focus on single issues and special interests and try, of course, to link them up. In doing this, however, the new grassroots labour activists, on the one hand, turn directly to unionism. Hence they run the risk of causing trouble for other movement developers (and organisers cum co-ordinators) who first like to prepare more solid grounds among many more workers. The absolute majority of the movement developers, on the other hand, tend to either compile incoherent long lists of demands and attempts, or try to promote unity on the basis of different particular issues, interests, and methods. In the latter case, therefore, they frequently come into conflict with each other; conflicts which they often 'solve' by multiplying their organisations rather than developing internal democracy – as they have access to alternative patronage and do not have to rely on common efforts among the people whom they aim at supporting.

Furthermore, those among the movement developers who primarily 'serve the people' first oppose catalysts that subordinate people's immediate problems to issues that may cause as much harm as possible for the regime. Thereafter, however, the servers themselves tend to promote unity on basis of their own way of stating the problem, for instance in terms of property rights among people being evicted for 'development purposes'. Hence they do not only run into conflict with other servers with a different way of posing the problem but may also exclude all the people concerned who have no property rights. Similarly, the movement developers, who try to avoid this by 'only' facilitating men's and women's own efforts, are harsh critics of the intervention of

catalysts; actually they often add political leaders and movement organisers as well. But then facilitators are also caught in the logic of stating the problem themselves, especially when having to satisfy patrons that provide resources from above. What is more, they face additional problems of generalising the struggle on the basis of the very different local communities and interests that they relate to and sub-patronage. At worst they may even aggravate local divisions.

### Outcome

As the movement organisers cum co-ordinators<sup>46</sup> are still very weak the major conclusion is that the divisive politicisation and the radical pro-democracy groupings involved do not, in themselves, generate an opening. No doubt, they all carry out very important, sincere, and devoted work, but their own dynamics is not enough to make a difference. The likely outcome, therefore, is rather that factors which are external to their own efforts will be decisive, at least initially. This is what happened in June and early July 1996 (when I had just concluded the draft version of the original more extensive essay). The government did away with Megawati as a legally recognised and increasingly popular leader who might have caused some problems in the forthcoming elections. So at this point of time, what was the radical democrats' logical way of acting – given their character and dynamics as outlined above?

(1) Many political activists, especially among top down catalysts and political leaders, simply rallied behind Megawati and her associated populist moderate-democrats within PDI and NU since these were legitimate actors within the system and, most important of all, proved capable of incorporating a lot of people into politics.

(2) Other catalysts and political leaders – *and* (to my surprise) even the young radical general organisers of the PRD<sup>47</sup> – did much the same, while simultaneously trying to uphold some independence by striking deals with the Megawati camp on the basis of their own potential to stage actions and mobilise people. (One co-ordination body for the purpose was Mari.) As there was a shortage of time, many of them even substituted their capacity to incorporate people into politics through alternative

---

<sup>46</sup>Who feel that some intervention and organising of the movements from below is necessary both to transform special interests into collective ones and to relate single issues to an ideological perspective, but who simultaneously restrict themselves to the co-ordination of such movements and aspirations.

<sup>47</sup>At this point my prediction failed. I expected the principled general organisers (like fellow Lagman in Manila) to date unscrupulous 'traditional politicians' while simultaneously concentrating upon rather sectarian efforts at forming a kind of socialist cadre party in command of an integrated structure of top-down initiated unions and various popular organisations. Even then, of course, centralised and efficient cadres might occasionally make some difference, though this may not necessarily be to the benefit of the broader but less well organised pro-democracy forces. By now, however, I know that PRD leaders at an early point of time, at least in March when KIPP was formed, were less shrewd when supporting Megawati in trying to contribute to the rallying and people in face of the elections and (perhaps) generating a situation similar to the one that caused the Philippine 'people power' revolution which in turn opened up for democracy.

patronage of various followers for their ambitions in principle to integrate instead people into politics.

Hence we should extend our previous figure 3 of strategic positions among the radical democrats. A new column should be added indicating a kind of radical incorporation of people into politics by way of alternative patronage. This may be done from above, for instance by patronising various central NGOs and providing Megawati and influential allies (e.g. within the military) with some democratic legitimacy, but also from below where the NGOs in turn may offer patronage to their clients among the people.<sup>48</sup>

Fig. 5. Strategic positions among the radical democrats when external factors have triggered off a broad movement for transition from authoritarian rule.

		Forms of integrating people into politics		Alternative incorporation of people into politics via patronage
		Federative	Unitary	
Space for meaningful work in civil society?	No. Avant-garde politics necessary to break up the regime and liberate civil society	Networking top-down catalysts	Political leaders plus top-down general organisers	Leading radical patrons
	Yes. Empower civil society and, some add, harness popular movement politics to change the system	Networking bottom-up movement developers	Bottom-up Local movement organisers cum co-ordinators	NGO-patrons

(3) Many principled movement developers vacillated between, on the one hand, really linking up with the moderate democrats or radical alternative patrons and, on the other hand, 'only' favour democratisation through their more independent and long-standing efforts at strengthening the position of the weak sections of the people. (A typical example was Kartjono, director of Bina Desa.) This time the government soon cracked down on the rapidly growing democracy movement. But in principle one can expect that as long as there is a strong momentum for the very transition from authoritarian rule these actors are likely to thus contribute to the undermining of the authoritarian regime and to serve as important supporters of the leading moderate and radical democrats. Because they themselves are fragmented, however, their own

<sup>48</sup>Probably the best example of alternative patronage (though not in relation to NGOs) is that of the Left Front and the Communist Party (Marxist) in West Bengal since 1977 of tenants (an later on others as well) whose security and other advantages depend to a large extent on political protection. (Cf. O. Törnquist, *What's Wrong with Marxism, Vol. II* ...op. cit. or "Communism and Democracy: Two Indian Cases and one Debate" in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 23:2, 1991.)

influence will be limited, besides some special issues. And thereafter – in the process of (hopefully) having some democratic gains to consolidate and further develop – we will be back into 'normal' divisive politicisation. Like in the post-Marcos period in the Philippines, the movement developers will be politically marginalised and active mainly, again, as, for instance, single issue action groups and promoters of alternative grassroots development projects.

(4) The movement organisers cum co-ordinators could play some role in mobilising support for pro-democracy forces in general and, for instance, in bringing together various actors in plans to monitor elections and enforce more fair ones. The co-ordinating activists, however, were few, poorly organised and not capable of bridging the gap between top-down activists running offside and grassroots activists who had not yet been able to generate interest-based mass organisations from below. KIPP, for instance, failed to take root and primarily remained an elite activist project. Good intentions were set aside as so much had to be done instantly and as anyway most other activists invested instead in incorporation of people into politics.

#### Prospects

The only optimistic prospect – in the light of our analysis of the character and dynamics of the existing movements in the current Indonesian context – would be that I have underestimated the potential of the movement organisers cum co-ordinators to promote ideology- and collective interest-directed politicisation from below on the basis of the immediate needs of the classes that now emerge under the rapid expansion of capitalism. At first hand that would not be because I have misread the activists' own limited capacity, but because of an additional 'external' factor: that workers and other labouring people themselves, as well as middle class professionals, are more prepared to try common organisation against state intervention and repression (as did the workers who demanded common organising from NGO-activists) than what I have hitherto found reasonable evidence for. This, then, would signal that politically facilitated exploitation under the rapidly expanding capitalism by way of business patronage and repressive subordination really paves the way for new and radical struggles for democracy – since fighting this political intervention is necessary to improve both one's immediate conditions and one's right to have a say. Class-related struggles would thus be intertwined with struggles for democratisation.

But of course, the co-ordinators must then also be able to respond by forming the requested organs for common organising. They must be able to skilfully analyse the conditions and work out platforms for common action. They must be able to relate these joint efforts to other pro-democracy actors, including many middle class professionals. And they must be able to make it possible for these formations to form

a body that is so coherent and well anchored among the grassroots movements that it may constitute a reliable and forceful actor; an actor, that is, which can negotiate a transition-package that is more attractive for both subordinated people and liberals among the dominating forces than the 'solutions' offered by other more elite-based players, including those banking on (state)corporatism. Of course, it is difficult to even think of this in late 1996 when the crackdown is still on and basic defence is on the agenda. But times will change, so maybe it is not entirely impossible. Maybe, for instance, the initiative at forming an electoral watch body could be reconstructed into a *democratic* watch movement on the basis of not only daring top-down activists but *also* those working at the grassroots level. Between hope and reality, this is all I can say.

*Olle Törnquist, November 25, 1996.*