

Network dynamics of global CSOs in the transition to democracy in Indonesia

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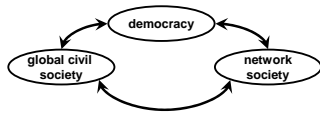
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Abstract

The study makes transparent the mutually reinforcing relationships between global civil society, democracy and network society which are often implicit in extant theories. However, very little has been said about how these apparent mutually reinforcing relationships came about. Focusing on the case of Indonesia during the fraught regime change from authoritarianism to democracy, the study investigates the role of global and national civil society organisation during the periods of pre-reform, reform and post-reform. Using social network analysis and interviews with civil society activists, a less encouraging picture of these relationships is discovered. The study accounts for this finding in terms of chequebook activism characterising the global civil society's role during an abrupt and bloody regime change.

Mutually reinforcing links?

Despite problems that might be embedded within the relationships between global civil society, democracy and network society (e.g. Edwards and Hulme, 1995; 1997; Fung and Wright, 2001; Silverstone, 1996), it is argued that essentially one can see that there is a virtuous relationship between the three. Scholars suggest that global civil societies can be seen as conducive to democracy (e.g. Anheier, et al., 2005); global civil society also goes hand in hand with global network society (e.g. Warkentin, 2001); democracy and network society are conducive to the support of each other (e.g. Sey and Castells, 2004).



But how did this mutually reinforcing relationship evolve historically? What conjunctive circumstances led to the establishment of these relationships? These are empirical questions that need addressing. The answer "has to be established by observation, not proclaimed as fate" (Sey and Castell, 2004: 364).

Objective

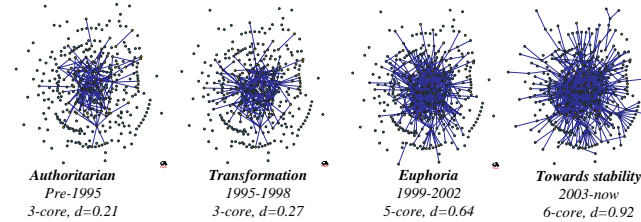
The study examines the roles of global and local civil society embedded in a network society at an instance of bloody regime change from authoritarianism to democracy.

Methods

The study maps the international network of CSOs in Indonesia during the heightened periods around transition to democracy. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are combined, aimed at giving deeper insights into the research problems (Olsen, 2003). Specifically, survey and social network analysis (SNA) were performed to provide a broad picture of the Indonesian CSOs and their international networks. In-depth interviews were then carried out to gain more detailed and specific information.

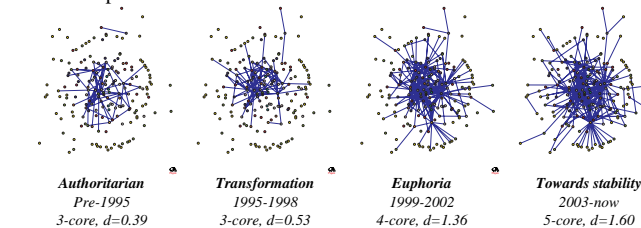
Overall dynamics over periods

International network of Indonesian CSOs grew during the four periods: significant increase after transformation

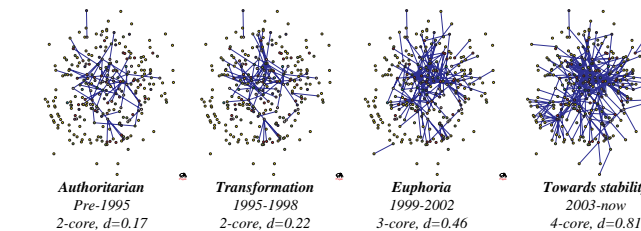


Decomposing networks

It is important to find out what drove this significant increase in global civil society involvement after the collapse of the authoritarian regime. Even more significant increase in the dynamics through donor relationships...



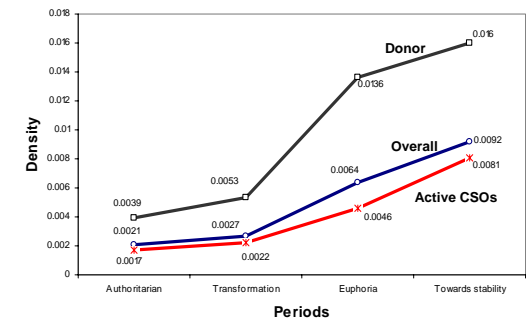
...rather than through direct activities.



Discussion

To recap the discussion the densities of networks are depicted in the figure below. The graph shows that the increase in the density of the networks after the transformation is mostly affected by the increase in the links with donors rather than the links with active global civil society. In other words, the increasing activity of Indonesian CSOs after regime change is much more a result of the increase of their relationships with international donors rather than real participation with global CSOs.

Density of networks over periods



Conclusion

It has been shown that the global civil society, during the period of study, displayed modes of activism that could be characterised as *chequebook activism*. It did not recognise the incipient democratic change and failed to take the opportunity and play its role in fostering democratisation in Indonesia. The study recognises that there are organisations that possibly do not fit this role and that have stood by their Indonesian counterparts through the difficult years. However, evidence presented demonstrates that on the whole the global civil society could be said to have missed a great opportunity.

The support from global civil society for democratic change in Indonesia is nothing new and has a considerable impact on the ideas and actions of the pro-democracy movement (Uhlen, 2000). However, it is not clear where the impacts are felt or taken up by the local civil society. The study shows that the impact or the networks are different depending on the period. Thus, the link between global civil society, network society and democracy in Indonesia in the political upheaval cannot just be taken for granted: they are not equally important. In fact, it is the link between network society (in this case Indonesian CSOs) and democracy which is important to explain and to bring about the change: in other words to animate the scheme. (*)

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