

**(Re)conceptualising Power in South-east Asia**  
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**Accepted abstract**

**Title** : **Indonesian CSO network: *Instrumentum* or *locus* of power?**  
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**Abstract** :

The proliferation of civil society organisations (CSOs) and the emergence of civil society activism across various issues have been evident in South East Asia (SEA) over the past few decades. In Indonesia, CSOs have been playing pivotal role in society, both as development institutions and as advocacy groups. On issues ranging from globalisation-led development to human rights, to democratisation to labour conditions and corporate malpractices, Indonesian CSOs and activists represent an increasingly important constituency in a non-state as well as non-business environment in the country. With CSOs being seen as power bearing actor in society, civil society is thus seen as a source of power, including power to bring about social and political change. Indonesian CSO networks are increasingly associated with values related to grassroots participatory democracy and thus have become a powerful cultural ideal. Particularly among civil society groups, networks have become a guiding logic that provides both a model of and a model for emerging forms of directly democratic politics. However, surprisingly, only few scholars have begun to realise and consider CSOs and their networks in their scholarly works on Indonesia.

This research is an attempt to empirically portray Indonesian CSOs as a power-bearing actor in Indonesian society, based on a country-scale fieldwork involving survey, workshops and interviews. Informed by theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984) and literatures in civil society and social movements (Deakin, 2001; Crossley, 2002; Della-Porta and Diani, 2006; among many others), this research investigates the proliferation of CSO movement and network in the country. Engagement in power contestation in Indonesian society is a two-way process for CSOs. It both affects and is affected by CSO network, which evolves from time to time. While societal setting changes (as outcome of power contestation) Indonesian CSOs themselves evolve, including their internal dynamics. The landscape of Indonesian CSOs is thus a result of the engagement in power contestation, and at the same time, of the dynamics of the organisations themselves. Here, as time-space is not only an arena where the change takes place but a constitutive element of change, Indonesian CSO network too has ‘evolved’ from a mere instrument for organising movements and actions into a locus of power itself.

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