Introduction
Research-based Democracy Promotion:
Lessons from Indonesia

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Abstract

This article summarises and reflects a more extensive analysis about the experiences of attempts to develop and apply analytical tools to comprehend the transformation of Indonesian democracy over 15 years. Such attempts can be retrospectively classified into four phases: (1) conducted in the mid-1990s to the fall of Soeharto in May 1998 by focusing on the anti-Soeharto democracy actors; (2) participatory case studies of the post-Soeharto democracy movement; (3) the development of an alternative framework for national surveys of the problems and options of democratisation from below that began in 2003; (4) institutionalisation of the previous surveys and case studies of power and democracy. These prolonged experiences have opened up the possibilities for academics and practitioners to develop and apply an alternative framework for a less elitist and more inclusive model of democracy in Indonesia.

Introduction

The predominant thesis since the 1980s in the social sciences, as well as among practitioners, that it is possible to foster democracies around the world by crafting liberal institutions by way of internationally supported pacts between moderate elites and civil societies, is increasingly subject to critique. Counter arguments point to the importance of stronger state institutions and more favourable social and economic circumstances. This may well be right, but does it mean that democracy must be restrained while enlightened rightist or leftist elites create better conditions? A third and less extreme position which is advanced in this essay is that

even imperfect and early elements of democracy may generate more favourable opportunities for popular engagement in improving the structural conditions for democratic routes to human development.

However, as this gradualism, or transformative democratisation, is based on the primacy of politics, it presupposes the best possible knowledge of the problems and options available. So what can scholars, students, journalists, aid experts and civil society activists do to increase the understanding of democratisation and, therefore, promote it?

This essay summarises a more extensive analysis published separately about the experiences of pioneering attempts over a period of 15 years to develop and apply analytical tools for academically rigorous, yet participatory, nation-wide surveys and representative case studies on the transformation of the third largest democracy in the world, Indonesia. Although not initially planned, in retrospect we can identify four phases of this work to date: the first from the mid-1990s to the fall of Soeharto in May 1998, which resulted in case studies focusing on the anti-Soeharto democracy actors and based on the activists' own experiences (Budiman and Törnquist, 2001); the second focusing on participatory case studies of the post-Soeharto democracy movement (Prasetyo et al., 2003); then from 2003, the development of an alternative framework for comprehensive country-wide surveys of the problems and options of democracy from below – again, on the basis of activists' own experiences (Priyono et al., 2007; Samadhi and Warouw, 2009); finally, since late 2008, the attempts to institutionalise broad surveys and case studies of power and democracy within the kind of public universities where the whole process originated back in the early 1990s, before state repression ended this only for the whole process to be rescued later in partnership with civil society organisations. In addition to outlining the results themselves, particularly those from country-wide surveys, this essay will also, and primarily, focus on organisational and analytical lessons that may be useful to concerned scholars, activists and international supporters of democracy operating in other contexts.

Towards an alternative

The Soeharto regime collapsed because of mounting contradictions between autocratic rule on the one hand and, on the other, primitive accumulation as a basis for capitalist expansion which rested with dictatorial privileges but could no longer be managed due to increasingly deregulated markets. As the crisis became urgent, an increasing number of actors realised that the regime was about to lose control and began to abandon the ship. At the same time, an increasing number of ordinary people became affected by price increases and unemployment, forcing open

enough political space for huge demonstrations to be spearheaded by students. Finally, by late May 1998 Soeharto had to give up. His power was transferred to vice-president Habibie, whose swift crisis management, which included sweeping decentralisation and the preparation of swift elections and elite-led democracy, delivered more radical changes. The pro-democracy movement was ill-prepared for mass politics. Its members were scattered and soon opted primarily for extra-parliamentary action, the return to civil society work, or to enter as individuals into top-down organised parties. With the 1999 elections, most activists had either given up organised politics, lost out in elections with their own top-down parties or as individual members of mainstream parties.

Tracing the dynamics of the anti-Soeharto pro-democracy actors

Did this mean that the conventional framework of elitist democracy building was well under way and that there was no feasible alternative? A number of concerned academics and, in particular, human rights and media activists suggested otherwise. The first step was to finalise a book of democracy-oriented political actors beyond the general development of various middle-class civil society groups (Budiman and Törnquist, 2001). Although this research was initiated already in 1994, it was immediately waylaid – firstly by the crackdown in 1994 on the press and the dismissal of Budiman and others from their university, and, secondly, as the potential to oust Soeharto and the New Order regime became increasingly clear in 1996.

There is a major organisational lesson here, in that it is not easy to do research with reflective activists and journalists who need to adjust to constantly changing political developments. But given the subordination of the academic communities, journalists, and activists, they were, however, well placed to mobilise the best possible sources as well as writing about case studies. The major problem then was the nature of the cooperation between them and the academically trained analysts and editors in the team. One of the main conclusions from this experience was the need for firm senior direction.

The delayed study nevertheless contributed to the understanding of which actors had enabled the student uprising against Soeharto in 1998 and the rapid, yet limited, democratisation. The research focused on a number of movements and actors that were crucial to the democratisation processes in Indonesia. The conclusion was that in making a difference it was the occasional combination of otherwise quite divisive citizen action groups and more 'traditional' movements and leaders behind anti-authoritarian and generally democratic demands. Protests grew out of various

socio-economic and political grievances, and protests against repression. But as the growth of capitalism intertwined with the state a major – yet often unspecified – demand was for democracy.

The only movements that survived, however, were those organised in a structured and democratically oriented way beyond celebrated and often traditional leaders, as well as loose networks. The existing pro-democracy positions were rarely defined even by the most advanced actors, with the movement remaining scattered. In one respect, however, the positions converged and boiled down to something very important – to an agreement. Such advances included the development of rule of law, freedom of the press, more human development. In other words there was an agreement that there was a need for a democratic breakthrough ahead of stable institutions and improved development towards less inequality.

Mapping and analysing the post-Soeharto democracy movement

As already mentioned, the most advanced democracy groups failed to build a broad and well-organised movement even as Soeharto was losing power and as he was forced to stand down. The second major attempt at research-based democracy promotion was, therefore, a survey of the scattered democracy movement followed by some 40 thematic reviews and case studies of experiences, problems and options. To qualify as a pro-democrat in the survey, the key informants – in the form of reputed and generally accepted activists – had to agree that the actor was both 'producing' and 'using' democracy to reach its aims, not just 'consuming' and, of course, nor 'abusing' democracy.

The approach was very much inspired by the popular education movement in the Indian state of Kerala a few years earlier. This movement had managed to mobilise and guide reflective and often well-educated activists in telling the stories of their attempts at alternative development policies. These activists also analysed problems and options, and then convened to discuss and agree on a powerful joint agenda that caught people's imagination and gained political importance.

The extensive book based on the survey and case studies may have been unique in terms of the combination of, on the one hand, basic academic supervision and editing, and, on the other hand, the engagement of the activists themselves and, thus, access to good sources (Prasetyo et al., 2003). But there were similar organisational problems, and signs during the first phase and the conclusion phase were not encouraging. Following the broad unity against the dictatorship, it became obvious and had to be stated very clearly that the movement had not been able to come together behind a clear alternative. Some leaders of groups opted instead

for linking up with the 'traditional' politicians and largely became co-opted, while others decided to hold on to principled civil society work in usually quite scattered and single-issue groups. They were often held together by a specific project – at times with some foreign funding. The situation was best illustrated by the title of a summary analysis 'Floating Democrats' (Törnquist et al., 2003). While ordinary people under Soeharto had been prohibited from independent organising to, thus, constitute a 'floating mass', which would not undermine authoritarian economic growth, It was now the dissident movements that were 'floating' by being confined to civil society, politically marginalisation and isolation from popular concerns and social movements.

Surveying democracy from below

There were two possible policy conclusions: (1) strengthen the movement itself; (2) try to enter into and improve the fledgling democratic system. The scholars and activists involved discussed the matter at a conference in early 2002. Most of the participants opted for the latter position. There were two major aims. The first was to provide an alternative assessment of widely defined democratisation. Most importantly, these assessments would be academically solid and theoretically and empirically inclusive enough to challenge the elitist and hegemonic framework that had relegated popular aspirations and pro-democrats to the sidelines. Consequently, the research would be carried out not as a development aid project with an external advisor, but in the form of a partnership based on academic principles between Indonesian researchers and the academic co-director together with the University of Oslo. The second aim was to offer challenging and unbiased facts and assessments for more effective democracy promotion. It was hoped that the committed intellectuals, human rights activists, and journalists, who had played such outstanding roles in Indonesia's democratisation, and had contributed to the previous projects, would then engage in disseminating these facts and assessments and, thus, open space for a reasonably unbiased public discourse in lecture rooms, meetings, and the media.

The only question was how this would be possible. There was a shortage of almost everything – time, funds, committed academics, educated researchers, reliable previous research, and data banks. Once again, a major source of inspiration to move ahead was the concerned scholarship and participatory practices in the Indian state of Kerala in the 1990s.

The people's educational movement in the south-western Indian state of Kerala, the Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), had developed a scholarly framework for participatory mapping of local resources. As soon as local students, teachers and other

activists had then collected the data and analysed it, the tentative results were put on the table for wider discussion with civil society activists, trade unions, farmers associations, political leaders, government officials, and others. Drafted local plans were scaled up and supported in numerous meetings and at a major international conference by the people and the parties that mattered. Leading progressive experts and politicians committed themselves to the proposals. A few years later, when the same politicians won election, the method and the programme was turned into a blueprint for state-wide and world-renowned efforts at decentralisation, combined with a People's Planning Campaign (Törnquist with Tharakan, 1995; Issac with Franke, 2000).

The Indonesian was, of course, quite different in comparison with Kerala's long history of progressive popular action for citizenship rights, political independence, land reform against caste oppression, colonialism, and landlordism. In addition, much of the mass-based educational movement that was crucial in Indonesia during the struggle for independence had been suppressed or domesticated by socio-religious organisations. But various associations of journalists, human rights and peace/reconciliation activists had been crucial in the democracy movement and were prepared to engage. Others who were prepared to engage included widely trusted leaders, a few Indonesian and international academics, Scandinavian donors and, in particular, The Ford Foundation.

The model which was developed and improved along the way allowed for concerned academics to begin by designing an inclusive draft framework for data collection and analysis. The framework had to be specific enough to enable a team of committed investigative journalists with some basic academic training to guide and coordinate experienced and critically thinking activists across the country in collecting reliable local information as quickly as possible. It was hoped that this would provide good locally rooted information far beyond which could be provided by experts in the big cities and the mushrooming number of simplistic opinion surveys.

The other sources of inspiration were, of course, the lessons from comparative studies of social and political movements, assessments of liberal democracy in general and, more specifically, studies of the rule of law, 'good governance' and civil society. David Beetham's definition of the aim of democracy on the level of political philosophy was accepted as a point of departure because it was widely accepted by most scholars (Beetham, 1999; Beetham et al., 2002). It enabled the identification of which elements of democracy were universal and which were contextual beyond simplistic disputes about west versus east. It is true that the mainstream assessment models were confined to the evaluation of preconceived aspects of liberal democracy that were taken out of their western

European and American contexts. Moreover, the models focused on formalised rules and regulations. Yet, it would be possible to develop a more plural alternative strategy. The researchers and activists would have to collect information of all the key variables in the various theories and strategies of democracy deemed to be crucial in the scholarly and public discourse. This meant that basic variables related to supplementary theories of social democracy, actors of change, power relations, and social movements were added to the existing parameters focusing on liberal institutions. Accordingly, it would be possible to compare competitive theoretical interpretations of democratisation and strategies in order to draw conclusions and move ahead.

By giving priority to theoretical interpretation of the data, it would also be possible to avoid two other common fallacies. First, one could avoid conclusions on the basis of empiricist statistical correlations. Second, one could abstain from attempts to aggregate the information about the various indicators and to construct the kind of indexes that have been so attractive in media and among executives by instead weighing the relative importance of the different factors in relation to arenas and principles of governance (Bappenas and UNDP, 2008). Any such aggregation and weighing of data could be based instead on comprehensive and competing theories of democratisation.

Although the alternative method was drawing on mass data, it remained qualitative in being based on transparent theoretical arguments about how different factors were related to each other. All calculations and figures based on the mass data were 'only' made to discuss the validity of these different arguments. A core team of researchers would do the basic analysis and then help the activists to supplement contextual studies. Scholars and students in universities might examine the data in more detail at a later date and thus improve the conclusions.

In addition, Beetham's definition paved the way for a separation between, on the one hand, the aims and principles of democracy and, on the other, the number of institutional means that must be contextualised but which are, anyway, intrinsic to fostering the broader aims and principles of democracy. According to Beetham, the generally accepted aim of democracy is "popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality" and the basic principles are participation, authorisation of representatives and executives, representation, responsiveness, accountability, transparency and solidarity. These, in turn, presuppose basic civil and political rights and means of survival. The institutional means include human rights, rule of law, free and fair elections, representation, good governance, and civil society. Thus it was also possible to ignore debates about minimal or extensive definitions of

democracy as well as sweeping qualifiers such as formal, substantive, illiberal or oligarchic democracies. On the contrary, it enabled a focus on the development of democracy in a more disaggregated and more specific way. But was this sufficient? No, it was not. We also paid special attention to the substance and spread of the institutions. What was the actual substance in the politics of equal citizenship, and how well was it spread beyond the middle classes in the cities? Most importantly, it was necessary to go beyond the fashionable focus on institutions (the rules and regulations) by also considering crucial dimensions of theories on the role of actors and their capacity (or, more broadly speaking, their power) in the processes of using and promoting – or abusing and avoiding – the instruments of democracy. This meant the addition of a number of vital factors in theories of power and social and political movements that had proved important in previous comparative studies of popular engagement in democratisation (Törnquist, 2002; Harriss et al., 2004). Ideally, it would, therefore, be possible to study the political dynamics and processes of democratisation rather than the state of affairs as measured against internationally prescribed criteria.

We shall return to the details when addressing lessons and possible improvements. The important point here is that it was possible to construct a better framework. The next question, however, concerns whether and how it could be put to use.

Acquiring grounded information

It was also necessary to get hold of the facts. Research on power and democracy had been held back under Soeharto. Moreover, knowledge of local conditions was particularly poor and fragmented. Most assessments of democracy were based instead on the opinions of metropolitan, 'air-conditioned' experts, journalists, NGO leaders and reliable politicians. This was simply not good enough. One shortcut to better knowledge was the use of opinion surveys. But aside from the problems of reaching out and asking good questions, the most important information needed was not people's views of democracy (even if that was interesting), but how the existing democracy was developing and what mechanisms, actors and relations of power were involved. In short, there was a need to substitute the missing detailed research in a number of crucial fields. One should, of course, add such close research, but for now the central questions concerned what informants would be the best substitute and who would know best.

Our answer lay with the reasonably well-educated and experienced pro-democracy activists on the ground, with their long track record and reputation for being able to reflect critically. If a sufficient number of such expert/informants could be identified

around the country, we would have gained access to the best possible sources. These people would be capable, moreover, of understanding and answering our insufficiently contextualised questions. The main problem was how to identify and engage all the informants. Why should they trust the integrity of the team enough to commit to answering hundreds of sensitive questions in a country with a rather dubious reputation in terms of civil and political freedoms?

As in the case of designing a comprehensive and inclusive framework, it was hard but not impossible to build a team and establish a research organisation, known as Demos, which came to be considered trustworthy within academia, the public sphere and, most importantly, within the democracy movement. The organisers included the most widely respected human rights activist, a leading investigative journalist and media educator, a former general secretary of the national human rights commission, and a major reconciliation theorist and campaigner. The academic director (this author) and several of the researchers had proved their commitment and capacity in previous studies on the democracy movement.

It was possible, therefore, to build a national network – spanning all 33 provinces – of experienced and reliable key informants who were prepared to have their track records scrutinised publicly. These key informants in turn began to mobilise some 900 reliable informants along the 15 or so major frontlines of democracy work identified in the previous survey and case studies. They also recruited and trained reliable field assistants. The long-term plan was to repeat surveys over a number of years in order to identify and analyse some of the rapid changes over time. In addition, the team prepared a series of local surveys to be carried out by the grounded activists themselves, with Aceh as a test case and a number of thematic follow-up studies of the key problems identified in the surveys.

The harsh reality

The first major stumbling block was how to reduce all the variables and indicators to a manageable number, and then to train the team and local key informants on the logic and possible theoretical interpretations. This would allow them to train local participants and contribute contextual examples that related to each of the 33 provinces and 15 frontlines. Ideally, the team would have ended up with some 33 ×15 contextual versions of about 300 questions – a total of about 148,500 specific questions, which, of course, would have been unrealistic.

Thus, attempts were made instead to develop Indonesian examples of the general questions, which the key informants and field assistants could then use as points of departure for developing

local examples. This process was not sufficiently well managed, but the informants remained engaged and the team muddled through. As well as limited funds, there was also simply not enough time, energy, or capacity. Remarkably, however, as we shall return to, very few informants dropped out, and it was possible to consolidate almost all the overwhelming mass of data gathered from around the country without much delay. The second and most serious dilemma was less expected – the actual analysis of the data and writing up of reports. In hindsight, the problem boiled down to the lack of committed Indonesian supervisors with relevant academic training, coupled with insufficient organisational involvement of the key democracy groups among journalists, and human rights and reconciliation activists.

The shortage of committed Indonesian supervisors was due in part to having not put enough effort into identifying and engaging available scholars and senior students from the outset. An additional structural factor was that very few competent scholars and senior students were actually available. There were two reasons for this: (1) the weak standard of democracy studies at the universities and research institutes; (2) good scholars tended to be on low incomes and, thus, sought higher remuneration for consultancy-type work on expert markets and/or career possibilities which we could not offer. Additionally, as work progressed, some of the journalistic commitment to public democratic discourse – in addition to basic freedoms and professional work ethics – got lost with the increasing commercialisation of the media and the purchase of and investment in major media outlets by corporations with vested political interests.

This lack of local supervisors was a major hindrance in the production of the first general analysis of aggregated data. This analysis had to be carried out and published as quickly as possible. To make sense, the analytical reports had to point to the implications for the major contending arguments about democratisation – were these arguments refuted or vindicated and were there alternative and more fruitful perspectives?

Quick and clear-cut results were crucial for the committed journalists and local informants who were expected to engage in public discussion and provide supplementary input. Ideally, these discussions in turn would have been followed by more thorough political deliberation among civil society and political groups convened by the key informants in each province (and clusters) to initiate joint agendas – as was the case in Kerala. Meanwhile, the central-level research team was to have written up more comprehensive reports.

In reality,however, this was not achived. Although the team understood well the data that had been collected, tabulated and systematised it was not so well read in the various existing theories

and arguments that members would need to confront the data with – to thus judge the pros and cons of these often contending theses. And while the main academic director was available electronically on a daily basis for such discussions, he was only engaged on a part-time basis and only physically present with the team during three and, later, five intensive work periods per year. On top of this, these discussions only took place in English. All these drawbacks were well known from the outset but no-one could find a better alternative. Thus, the plan was to use regular translations and good local supervisors and editors. Although the academic director saw this as a priority, in reality much too little attention and resources were made available.

Given the problems of translation, local supervision and editing, quick and sufficiently robust reports were not produced for the local informants, activists and journalists to work with, except for the general executive summaries which were largely designed by the academic director. Otherwise, there were constant delays. The full potential of the results, therefore, could not be utilised in local democracy promotion. The team, the academic director, and a committed external editor (Teresa Birks), who was finally brought on board, had to engage in permanent rescue missions that were highly frustrating for all parties involved. There was also little time to involve additional supervisors with good ideas during the quick rescue missions.

Meanwhile, most of the local surveys and the thematic follow-up studies had to be shelved completely. It is true that a special test case in post-tsunami Aceh was initiated in early 2005. This was to foster civil society participation – by way of local democracy surveys and studies – in the local democratisation that was envisioned in the report from the initial part of the first national democracy survey (published in January 2005). However, the project was delayed for a year primarily because it was deemed politically sensitive by potential Swedish and Norwegian donors. Following this, it then suffered from poor management.

Instead of commenting and correcting, and commenting again, in the manuscripts, the academic director could instead have written the report on his own (and gained the credit for it). But that would have been to abandon the whole idea of participatory research and capacity building. Finally, however, a rewritten concluding report from the first survey was produced that was up to international academic standards (Priyono et al., 2007). Also, a few case studies generated preliminary results that could be drawn upon in concluding reports. But up to this juncture, the importance of close supervision and editing was never acknowledged. The delays meant problems for the democracy promotion work, caused friction in the joint work, and called for major changes in the design and organisation of the project.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there were huge improvements in the conducting and reporting from the second survey carried out in 2007-2008. By then a core team of committed researchers had received sufficient training and experience. They knew how to master the process and make sufficient use of instructions and advice, as well as good editing. This testified to the fact that the roadmap was feasible, with sufficient training.

Despite the progress made, however, the two strategies to tackle the basic problems of analysing the data and writing reports had generated additional problems and conflict that were difficult to manage. The first strategy to address the problems was consolidation, in terms of enhancing the abilities of the research team. Unfortunately, this also implied that the research organisation become introspective in trying to manage problems that were actually rooted more in the insufficient involvement of external translators, editors and supervisors than in the individual qualities of most of the members of the team itself. Moreover, the journalists, human rights groups, politicians and many others in the democracy movement who had initially viewed the project positively lost some of their own momentum in their own work. As a result, their activities were confined to citizen associations and continued to operate in isolation from popular movements, thus finding it difficult to use the delayed results that did not relate to their own specific tasks and contexts. Faced with these difficulties, the research organisation tried to manage more tasks on its own. Ironically, in doing so it transformed itself into the archetypical non-government organisation (NGO) that was identified as a major hurdle in pro-democracy work. According to both the previous case studies on 'floating democrats' and the new survey results themselves (to which we shall soon return), such atomised associations nourished their own networks and advocacy projects rather than paving the way for broader and more unified agendas and campaigns.

The second strategy was to work more closely with supportive scholars and students within academia. There were three fundamental reasons for this. The first was the much needed continued professional development of key researchers. They had to be able to understand and apply the theories and arguments of democracy to the data collated. They needed more knowledge of the methodologies available to carry out surveys and research case studies on their own. They had to be able to write good reports on their own. The second reason was the need to engage local supervisors in order to speed up the pace of the work, improve quality, integrate new results from the rapidly expanding university studies of democracy, and reduce the workload and dominance of the main academic director in order to facilitate more equal academic

partnership between him and other international scholars. The third reason was the parallel efforts to rebuild democracy studies and research at university level – especially at the major University of Gadjah Mada (UGM) – in cooperation with practitioners, who had been temporarily located within civil society organisations under Soeharto. This attempt was intensified in late 2006 with the building of a Masters and PhD programme in democracy studies at UGM, the launch of an associated journal, and publishing house (www.pcd.ugm.ac.id), and joint work with additional supervisors at UGM on the production and publishing of the comprehensive report from the second democracy survey – a task that was satisfactorily carried out in due time (Samadhi and Warouw, 2009).

The plan from late 2008 was to further develop this cooperation between civil society and university-based researchers. Inevitably, however, the university strategy meant that academic advisors and students would become more influential than had previously been the case. By early 2009, Demos group leaders no longer wanted to sustain a partnership based on academic principles, especially not with the University of Oslo, and opted instead for the use of academics as supporting consultants. This was, of course, unacceptable to the academic partners – both at the University of Oslo and UGM. Moreover, Demos' primary researchers also opted for sustaining the original model, now in cooperation with colleagues at UGM.

At best, the survey work and the originally planned case studies will continue within a more comprehensive UGM research programme on 'Power, Welfare and Democracy' that retains extensive joint work with practitioners on the ground and develops cooperation with other Indonesian universities and international academic partners, including the University of Oslo. With the transition of the work to major public universities, however, a number of new organisational problems have appeared. These relate in particular to how to combine comprehensive project work with regular education and research, the challenges of organisation, leadership, wages, divisive side jobs, financing, and more. To be able to move ahead, these challenges call for additional hard work and tough decisions in view of international experiences from conducting similar projects at public universities. In particular, the project work must contribute to public knowledge, education and research, rather than being in the hands of scattered private institutes, think tanks or NGOs.

In this context, it is crucial to recall that designing and conducting democracy assessments has, within a short period of time, become an industry in its own right, parallel to that of measuring economic development. The dominant focus is on evaluating the sectors, institutions, and measures that donors deem

to be fundamental in their attempts at crafting liberal democracy. These include aspects of human rights, civil society, the rule of law, elections, and good governance. It is true that parties to this internationally financed industry, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), now emphasise the involvement of national stakeholders such as influential actors and government agencies (Nahem, 2010). The alternative framework under review in this essay has even been complimented for having acted similarly by being rooted among pro-democrats. Yet, this is only partially correct.

The ownership and engagement of the alternative framework by committed scholars and the democracy movement was *not* intended to foster partisan studies to be adapted to certain preconceived norms or needs. As became obvious later on, some of the activists involved may well have wished that this was the case and, thus, opted out of the academic framework. However, from the outset until late 2008, the principle remained the combination of the efforts of the researchers, who considered experiences of pro-democrats but did not compromise basic academic quality, *and* the pro-democracy groups, with an interest in unbiased results, an ability to compare contending perspectives and to counter the hegemonic assessments of the elite. The committed researchers would ensure academic rigour and the democracy movement would identify the sources and disseminate and use the results. This principle was wholeheartedly agreed on at the time by both the executive and academic directors, even if there were insufficient procedures in place on how to make joint decisions and insufficient understanding of the aims and nature of the programme on the part of the major donor. The same principle continues to be sustained by the researchers and related activists who now work at the UGM.

There must be no compromises made with quality and academic principles. Facts, issues, and experiences that have been set aside should certainly be included. But precisely because this often calls for cooperation with democracy activists on the ground, it is particularly important that all concepts, variables, and questions are formulated as clearly as possible in order to avoid misunderstandings. It is essential, therefore, that the capacity of the producers/researchers is improved through extended cooperation and integrated work with committed students and scholars – and their education, research and publication programmes – at public universities that honour academic principles. This is particularly important when there is a need to initiate the work within NGOs or separate institutes outside public universities during periods of authoritarian political rule. Also, foreign donors need to support and adjust to these principles.

The survey results

Despite the challenges, substantive and pioneering research results with policy implications were produced. Almost all the informants in both surveys went out of their way to answer the questions. This often called for several sessions and six to eight hours work – a remarkable indication of the trust in the organisation. Reliability, in terms of the consistency of the answers to several related questions, was high. Sceptics who pointed to the likelihood that pro-democracy activists would make overly critical assessments, were proven wrong. That the responses of senior activists were generally quite balanced and nuanced in comparison with the regular outcries in the media by expert/celebrities, was remarkable.

The initial executive reports on the results in relation to different arguments about democratisation in Indonesia were produced in time. The main findings and analysis of the first two reports were also republished in a series of popularised articles in the leading weekly news magazine *Tempo*. The same applied after the second survey, although on a lesser scale. There were also reports in other media by journalists and in the editorial and opinion sections of news publications. Generally speaking, however, the public discourse was less widespread than expected given the initial engagement with the project by journalists and cultural workers. However, the executive reports were also used as a basis for a number of seminars attended by several informants and local activists in regional centres of the country.

Despite the serious delay of the first more comprehensive report and the thematic follow-up studies, attempts were also made to develop and foster research-based recommendations. The academic director designed initial memoranda on possible recommendations. There were two main arguments. One concerned the need for civil society based pro-democrats to engage in organised politics, not just in civil society. The other way in which this might be best achieved was considered through so-called political blocs (see further below).

The proposals were thereafter discussed by the research team and a group of particularly interested key informants and related activists in Jakarta and the provinces. During 2008, the conclusions from these discussions were supplemented by the results from the second survey, ongoing case studies, and the conclusion of the studies in Aceh (Törnquist et al., 2010). Thus, the full report from the second survey featured a special chapter on a so-called political bloc strategy. Later, there was also a separate training manual produced – although without the involvement of the researchers themselves and the academic director. The major conclusions from the surveys, thematic studies and recommendations referred to above, may be summarised in the following nine points:

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Impressive but deteriorating freedoms

One of the most remarkable conclusions from the first survey was that critical democracy activists around the country, with the exceptions of Aceh and Papua, reported substantial advances with regard to civil and political freedoms, including in media and civil society. After more than three decades of authoritarianism and much emphasis on 'Asian values', Indonesia stood out as the beacon of freedom in South-East Asia. The general standard of the freedoms was outstanding compared to the other institutional dimensions of democracy. Four years later, by 2007, assessments became less favourable. The less positive results related to party building and participation in elections, as well as the freedoms of religion, belief, language, and culture, in addition to those of speech, assembly, and organisation. Similarly, freedoms had also been reduced in relation to the press, the arts, the academic world, and civil society.

Efforts to improve governance

By contrast, the informants reported general improvement since 2003/04 in top-down efforts by government institutions to improve the miserable performances of the rule of law, the control of corruption, and also the struggle against paramilitary groups, hoodlums, and organised crime. However, the improvements were made from very low levels. This indicates that most of these crucial problems remain and that even the president seems unable to act decisively and demand state authorities come forward with the truth.

Country-wide political community

The disintegration of the centralistic New Order has not led to the 'Balkanisation' of Indonesia through separatism or ethnic and religious cleansing that many observers and politicians had predicted. What has emerged instead is a unitary *political* (rather than ethnonationalist) community with extensive space for local politics. It is true, however, (as has been reported by a number of scholars) that this local space implies huge inequalities between the provinces and regions, and that it is often occupied by predatory powerful groups.

The relative stability of democracy rests with elitist inclusion of people

At the same time, politics in general continue to be dominated by powerful elite groups. These groups, however, seemed to be more broadly based, more localised, and less militarised than under Soeharto. Thus, the surveys and associated research qualify the general thesis that the powerful elite from the New

Order has simply captured democracy (Robison and Hadiz, 2004). Remarkably, it is instead a broader range of elite groups that have adjusted to the more democratic institutions. This is indeed not to say that there are no abuses, but the surveys lent support to the argument of van Klinken (2009) that decentralisation and elections have enabled more diverse sections of Indonesia's elite to mobilise popular support. Of course, elites often mobilise such support by making use of their clientelist networks, their privileged control of public resources and their alliances with business and communal leaders. Yet, such elite groups have gained influence by being able to win elections, which has not been possible for many of Soeharto's oligarchs on their own. This interest in elections is *both* a crucial basis of the existing democracy *and* its major drawback. Without this elite support, Indonesian democracy would not survive. With powerful elite support, Indonesian democracy becomes the domain of 'rotten politicians' who prosper and entrench themselves through corruption.

Monopolised representation

The first four conclusions indicate that much of the minimum infrastructure of democratic institutions is in place and is, in spite of serious weaknesses and biases, solid enough to accommodate powerful actors and, at least partially, alternative actors as well. Theoretically, this is the bottom line and the reason why Indonesia may be called an emerging new democracy. The major problem is that the system of representation and elections is not open enough for the possible inclusion of major interests among the people at large, and also erects high barriers to participation by independent players. Civic and popular organisations are prevented from taking part in organised politics, both because it is so difficult to build new parties and because of the lack of institutionalised democratic channels through which to influence daily politics. These groups, moreover, remain hampered by the heritage of previous repression and the continuous monopolisation of representation. Further blocking them are their own mistakes, fragmentation, and weak mass organisation. Supplementary research clearly indicates that these weaknesses in turn are related in particular to problems of representation (Törnquist et al., 2009; Nur, 2009).

The risks: A return to politics of order

The monopolisation of representation nourishes a general lack of trust in democracy and public institutions. Most worrying, upper- and middle-class groups that rarely manage to win elections may well use the general discontent with power-elite democracy to gain wide support for alternatives to democracy and to promote 'better preconditions' through politics of order. Supporters of

middle-class coups typically say that they aim to prevent disruptive populist rule and build stronger preconditions for democracy. Their views find an echo in the current international support for proper 'sequencing of democracy' (Carothers, 2007a; 2007b). A concrete example is the alliance in Thailand between metropolitan middle classes (that fail to win elections), the king, and the military. Indonesia has been down this path once before in the 1960s, and it gave rise to Soeharto's New Order regime.

The challenges: overcoming the constraints of popular representation
It is imperative, therefore, that civic and popular organisations be able to scale up their ideas and alliances. By connecting communities and workplaces, and local and central levels, it is possible to challenge elite control over politics. The surveys and case studies suggest, however, that the scaling up into organised politics is not only hampered by elitist monopolisation of politics but also by the civic groups and political activists themselves. One problem is their poor presence within state, politics, and business, as well as related workplaces. Another is that the sources of power and the ways of gaining authority and legitimacy remain focused on knowledge and public discourse at the expense of organisation and attempts to gain public mandates and win elections. Moreover, the issues placed on the agenda typically focus on specific rights and complaints while neglecting broader perspectives on how to promote better governance, development, and public welfare. Similarly, civic groups remain poorly connected to social movements and popular organisations and vice versa. Collective action is mainly based on individual networking and popular leaders or alternative patronage as opposed to broad and representative organisation. Also, attempts to relate to elections, parliaments, and the executive remain primarily by way of the media, NGOs, pressure and lobby groups, and individual contacts.

The Aceh lessons: undermined democratic peace and local parties
The initially successful peace by way of democratisation in Aceh was not primarily due to the tsunami, given that the war in similarly devastated Sri Lanka continued. On the other hand, the more positive outcome in Aceh did not prove entirely right either of the two major theses about the role of democracy in peace building. These are: that elitist crafting of economic and political liberalisation, and democracy, prevents conflicts and fosters peace; that liberalisation and democratisation generate conflicts and that solid institutions of rule of law and governance must, therefore, be introduced ahead of democracy. Actually, alternative attempts at transformative politics to improve the conditions by expanding democracy were more crucial. It was not a liberal-oriented civil

society, in general, but mainly the more political-oriented groups that made a difference. The Helsinki negotiations were more inclusive and political oriented than the elitist and 'economic carrot driven' negotiations held in other parts of Indonesia and in Sri Lanka. The initially successful implementation of the democratic roadmap to peace was largely thanks to the political capacity of former rebels and civil society activists on the ground to engage in organised politics and win elections. This is in sharp contrast to the liberal crafting of democracy and the experiences in other parts of Indonesia. The main and current problem is the deterioration of governance and democratic politics since the remarkable elections in late 2006. Common Indonesian practices of abusing political power and making profits from rents rather than production have gained importance. In Aceh, new local parties that were supposed to facilitate more inclusive democracy have been marginalised except for the GAM-based Aceh Party, which won the 2009 elections in an unofficial power-sharing alliance with President Yudhoyono's Democratic Party. It remains to be seen if the reformist leaders with governor Irwandi in the forefront, who will now run as independents in the forthcoming elections for a local political executive (because they have again been pushed aside by autocratic GAM leaders), will now formulate a clear agenda to not just win but also transform politics and development.

The recommendation: democratic political blocks

There are two major lessons to be learnt from Indonesia at large as well as from Aceh. First, basic popular and civic groups must coordinate on an intermediate political level between the specific grass-roots issues and the top-level perspectives. This is in order to form political blocs to develop joint platforms, broad support and alliances, and control genuine politicians – rather than being the victim of fragmentation and dominated by various parties or political actors. Second, this may also be the level on which it is possible to combine parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities, as well as representative and direct participation. Thus, there is a special need to demand the introduction from above of such forms for interest- and citizen rights-based representation – in addition to regular party elections – to favour broader and more unified organisation on the intermediate democratic level.

Drawbacks of the results and the way ahead

Despite the important results, there were also drawbacks and lessons. What was overlooked in the survey or poorly analysed in the reports? Four analytical challenges stand out.

Firstly, a major benefit of the surveys so far has been that the informants with experiences from the frontlines of democracy

work have been identified in all the provinces, with most of them having assessed democratisation from a local point of view. Yet, it is methodologically dubious to aggregate such local assessments and claim that they reflect all Indonesia. Local- and central-level contexts with related institutions and the actors must be defined more clearly. Moreover, such results only make sense if they are related to the nodes of the local political dynamics. In Indonesia, that equals the some 500 districts, which of course are too many for a realistic study. Thus, the future focus should be on a number of representative and politically crucial districts in addition to some central-level institutions, considering all Indonesia.

Secondly, how many crucial dimensions of democracy can be covered by surveys? The critique by statisticians that representative sections of respondents among the people at large had not been included was, of course, irrelevant. The survey focused on experts and tried to include the best possible informants in relevant fields around the country, although all vital fields do have to be included. Others argued that contextual factors and ordinary people's experiences could not be included in a survey. This is of course correct. There must be a number of supplementary thematic inquires, too – just as in the first case studies of the democracy movement. But the major challenge is to combine them. This cannot be done by NGOs or research institutes, but calls for broader programmes and an academic base at fairly large universities in cooperation, of course, with the best possible informants and practitioners.

A third subject of debate is if the framework's conceptual basis in western political philosophy and in related normative reasoning means that the framework is less suitable in the global South. There is rather broad agreement behind a substantive definition of democracy, rather than in terms of vital institutions. This is also a precondition for identifying ideal types such as liberal democracy and the institutions and practices – from free and fair elections to rule of law, human rights or civil society – that need to be promoted. Yet, there are two objections. One is that the aim of the alternative framework to measure Indonesia not just by the standards of liberal democracy but also by crucial dimension of, for instance, deliberative and social democracy, has not been implemented sufficiently well. The other is that the assessments have not considered but, rather, taken for granted a number of factors that did not constitute a major problem when modern democracy evolved in Europe and the Americas. State building, for example, had largely been concluded, so there already existed state apparatuses through or with which to implement decisions. Also it was fairly clear what people constituted the *demos* that was supposed to control public affairs, according to the principles of democracy. With this, a general understanding existed of the

meaning of public affairs, even if socialists defined it more widely than liberals and communitarians. These three basic dimensions of democracy cannot be taken for granted in the post-colonial world.

The critiques of not having gone much beyond assessing the ideals of liberal democracy and of having taken certain fundamentals of democracy for granted are certainly valid, but the simple answer is that the framework must thus be improved in these respects – and that this is a fairly straight forward matter which does not call for overly complicated discussions. To begin with, the list of institutions to be analysed should extend beyond the liberal-democratic ones and also include interest- and issue-based representation, direct citizen participation, deliberation and multi-level and sector governance – not just geographical but also, for instance, a combination of customary and liberal systems, and direct and indirect democracy. Equally important, to prevent the list from being too exhaustive (even Beetham's original list included some 82 indicators and the original alternative approach specified 32 factors), one may focus on a reduced number of universal institutions to foster different versions of democracy and then specify critical contextual aspects. Such a reduced list, which remains to be detailed in each context, may include 14 factors: equal and inclusive citizenship in relation to well-defined public affairs; governance in line with international law and UN-conventions; rule of law; equal justice; civil and human rights, including social and economic rights; basic needs and education, including citizens' rights and democracy; democratic political representation through parties and elections; citizens' constitutional and legal rights-based participation; democratic decentralisation without compromising equal citizens' rights; democratic control of instruments of coercion, including private forces; transparent, impartial, and accountable governance; government independence and capacity to implement decisions; freedom of, and access to, public discourse, culture, and academia; and democratic civil society.

Similarly, one must certainly pay more attention to the constitution of the *demos* and the specification of public affairs and state building. The former relates, of course, to issues of civil citizenship versus ethnic and religious community in public matters, and additionally to the fragmentation of the citizenry along blurred territories, sectors and issues.

With regard to state building, moreover, a particularly vital but often neglected issue is that democracy is not just about decisions based on political equality but also the capacity of the state to implement them impartially – that is, the output side of democracy (Rothstein, 2005). This is not the same as the outcome or effect. That the outcome is neo-liberalism or socialism does not have a direct bearing on whether one can talk of a democracy or

not, only outcomes that severely undermine the fundamentals of democracy as defined in the 14 dimensions listed above. But if there is a democratic decision about land or health reform or an unemployment scheme which is, for example, not properly implemented, then democracy is not real. This is not just about corruption and accountability – as often emphasised by the UNDP and the World Bank – but also about sufficient state capacity as well as actors' political will and popular representation to enforce powerful scrutiny. In short, the quality of the output side of democracy is not simply if it is decided that there should be proper social security for all, but whether such a democratic decision can be implemented.

In principle, the problems discussed so far are vital but not overly complex. The fourth major weakness, however, is less easy to address – that is identifying democratic deficits does not help to fight them. As a consequence, there is a need to add studies of the *processes* and *dynamics* of democratisation to analyses so far of the state of democracy. This challenge will be addressed in the remaining sections of the essay.

From normative assumptions to empirical analysis

The definition of the aim or substance of democracy and the directly related principles that were adopted from Beetham and others are grounded in political philosophy with normative elements. The benefit of this approach is the potential for identifying models such as liberal or social democracy and what kind of basic institutions and practices are necessary. Without further elaboration, however, this kind of reasoning may take us in the wrong direction. This happens, firstly, when the actual shape of the theoretically identified intrinsic components of democracy are not identified empirically and contextually before being assessed and analysed. Democratic representation, for example, including the electoral system, may come in so many more or less developed and formalised versions that, in turn, may be contained or promoted in numerous ways.

Secondly, the fact that certain means of democracy may be necessary on the level of theory does not mean that they serve the aim of democracy in reality. Citizen rights-based organisations, for instance, may be assumed to be a vital part of democracy. But if normative assumptions substitute for empirical analysis and deem such organisations to be pro-democratic and worthy of support, one forgets that Nazism and fascism, for example, emerged among such associations (Berman, 2006). Similarly, many citizen groups oppose democracy in contemporary Thailand. Conversely, if only pro-democracy groups are considered 'real' or 'good' civil society organisations (Paris, 2004), one forgets that many existing

associations promoting the interests of subordinated castes, as well as ethnic or other communal groups that initially are not so democratic, may well come to foster democracy depending on the character of their demands, such as equal rights for all rather than special benefits for various groups (Tharakan, 1998; Davidson and Henley, 2007).

Thirdly, there are the problems of tracing the processes and understanding the dynamics. It is true that democracy assessments, including the alternative framework tried in Indonesia, could proceed from assumptions that institutions like elections or civil society could or should foster democracy, toward studies of their actual quality as compared to their ideal functions. And it may well be argued that these identified deficits should be attended to. In the new Swedish strategy for democracy promotion, liberal democracy and its theoretically deduced components are normatively deemed to be most important and worthy of support. So, whenever these basics are missing or dysfunctional, development support is held back or improvements and remedies promoted, such as with respect to the rule of law (Sida, 2010). But neither the normative theoretical assumptions of what is necessary for democracy nor the quality of such rights and institutions say anything about when and how such components develop, how they actually foster or contain democracy, and how they may thus be promoted.

In short it is not sufficient to assess the extent to which a country or district measures up to certain universal democratic standards. Also, one must identify what actors, institutions and processes hold back or promote – or could promote – the development of the general universal dimension of democracy in the specific context under review and then proceed to analyse these dynamics.

Locating and mapping the processes

If this is accepted, there are three clusters of additional means and dimensions of democratisation to be considered in more dynamic studies: (1) the dynamics that affect the development or stagnation of democratic institutions; (2) the actual politics of the important actors in these regards within crucial issue areas such as welfare measures; (3) how the main dimensions of actors' power and capacity interact and affect actual politics. These means and dimensions will be discussed one by one.

The alternative framework began by identifying a broad range of crucial formal and informal institutional means of democracy. It also identified contextual examples of such institutions and asked local experts-cum-practitioners to assess their quality in terms of performance, spread and substance. *There were, however, no follow up questions about what factors, actors, and processes either*

held back or promoted the performance, spread, and substance. These should be included in order for the assessments to provide meaningful guidance towards improved democratisation.

It is true that the alternative framework also considered the basic dimensions of the politics of powerful and dissident actors. The informants were first asked to identify the major dominant and alternative actors and then how these related to the supposedly democratic institutions. Did they abuse, use, or both use and promote them? This was in order to get a critical indication of the widely accepted litmus test for the consolidation of democracy – the extent to which crucial actors deem democracy to be 'the only game in town'. Interestingly, as we know, the quite critical pro-democratic informants claimed that most actors at least use the institutions.

Although this was most revealing and negated simplistic conclusions about democratic failure, *there were, however, no direct follow-up questions about the actual politics and policies of the actors in various contexts and in relation to specific issue areas such as welfare measures.* The same applied for the execution of promises and policies. This must also be added in order to trace the processes, dynamics, and the degree to which adherence to democratic institutions makes a difference when it comes to implementing policies.

Political will is insufficient without power. The alternative framework also considered the capacity of the actors to avoid and abuse, or use and promote the democratic institutions. Having reviewed previous studies on power and democracy with reference to both dominant and aspiring actors, priority was given to theories about political and social movements, the sources and legitimacy of political power, and popular representation – all of which partly overlapped and partly supplemented each other. Taken together, there seemed to be five arguments about necessary capacities in order for people to be able to promote and use democratic institutions. These have been discussed elsewhere in more detail (Törnquist, 2002; Harriss et al., 2004; Törnquist, 2004, 2008; Törnquist et al., 2009a).

According to the first argument, people may not be excluded from vital parts of the terrain of politics, namely within business and the workplace, civil and popular associations, movements and means of knowledge and communication, political parties, parliament, the political executive, and public and military administration. At a fundamental level, this argument relates to theories of unequal citizenship and the subordination of people through various techniques of post-colonial governance (Mamdani, 1996; Chatterjee, 2004). A special area of concern is theories on marginalisation within the framework of the elite-led democracy building of popular-based movements, including gender-based

ones, plus interest organisations such as trade unions, issue groups, and various citizen associations from organised politics.

Second, people must be able to transform what Pierre Bourdieu called their economic, social and cultural capital in various fields into authority and legitimacy – such as symbolic political power (Wacquant, 2005; Stokke, 2002; Stokke and Selboe, 2009). Coercive capital or force, in terms of militarily as well as people's power, may also need to be included. Bourdieu's framework for analysing power may be particularly useful in contexts of multi-layered and uneven development, in which different sources of power are combined and transformed, as well as in in-depth studies on the construction of the *demos* and public affairs.

Third, any actor must have some capacity to turn non-private concerns into public political matters – to put their issues, interests and ideologies on the political agenda. This is the locus for in-depth studies of technocratisation, judicialisation, privatisation and communalisation (for example, religious and ethnic communities). This also covers the direction of certain issues and problems that many people deem to be of common concern – from public governance to self-management and charity in civil society. Similarly, one may also focus on attempts at re-politicisation of such issues, for instance by way of public regulation, delegation, the development of public discourse/public service media, the combination of customary rules regarding certain matters and democratic rules based on equal political and civil rights. This relates to theories inspired for instance by Habermas on the public sphere (Seidman, 1989), Gramsci on hegemony (Ransome, 1992), Bourdieu on 'habitus' (internalised norms, understandings, and patterns) and the general importance of culture (Wacquant, 2005). But the same indicators connect also to analyses of increasingly fragmented priorities and agendas, especially among actors in civil society, and the related difficulties in generating common platforms (see Törnquist, 2002; Harriss et al., 2004; Törnquist et al., 2009).

Fourth, politics is about collective action and all actors must, therefore, be able to mobilise and organise support for their demands and policies. This goes to the core of theory on political and social movements in relation to democracy. These include the arguments of Mouzelis (1986) and Tarrow (1994), distinguishing between incorporation into politics by way of elitist populism, clientelism, alternative patronage, and related political financing, or more integration by way of networks and or comprehensive organisation from below. One basic element of this dilemma is the inclusion of citizens, subjects and denizens without the capacity to use most other rights than to rally behind and vote for or against leading politicians (Mamdani, 1996; Chatterjee, 2004; Houtzager, 2005; Houtzager et al., 2005 and 2007; Harriss, 2006). Previous

comparative studies point to the specific problems of combining civil society work, social/popular movements, organised politics, the predominance of localisation, single issues, and the problems of combining special interests and transforming such issues into broader matters of public concern. Such studies also suggest that the dilemmas relate to three fields of scaling up: (1) scaling up (and coordinating) local to central (and combining the two); (2) scaling up issues, interests, ideas; (3) scaling up groups, organisation, and coalitions (see Törnquist, 2002, 2004; Törnquist et al., 2009).

Finally, people must be able to use existing means of participation and representation and reform them or develop new ones in order to approach and influence governance institutions. The main source of inspiration is the growing consensus that the key problem of democracy in the global South, in particular, is the dominance of powerful elites and the poor standard of popular representation. This was also one of the prime results from the alternative surveys in Indonesia. The main focus needs be on different types of representation and how they are legitimised and mediated through traditional leaders, parties, interest organisations, corporatist arrangements, and institutions for direct participation (Törnquist, 2009). A fruitful follow-up question, inspired by Harriss (2006) and Houtzager et al. (2005), is to ask people and their organisations which institutions they turn to with their various problems.

The collated indicators of people's will *and* capacity have allowed for fruitful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the powerful and, especially, alternative actors. *However, the major – and serious – remaining dilemma is that even this more comprehensive framework has not enabled studies of the political dynamics of domination and resistance, or attempts to foster alternatives. The main parameters have been analysed, but their interaction has not.*

The dynamics of the politics of democratisation

The remaining puzzle concerns how dominant and alternative actors in different contexts compete and cooperate by *combining* their will and capacities to avoid and abuse, or use and promote the institutional means of democracy in order to foster their different ideas and interests. But this is easier said than done. The dynamics are multi dimensional and the question is too broad to guide specific studies. Thus, information from the surveys and case studies needs to be analysed both with the help of competing theories on political dynamics and in the specific context of the most important processes and political fields. And given the empirical results so far, these processes and fields are no doubt the problems of democratic popular representation, especially in the struggle for welfare measures.

What characterises this field and what are the major arguments on related political dynamics? An attempt has been made to develop a framework for the study of the major dimensions of democratic representation (Törnquist, 2009). The fundamental of democratic representation is the construction of public affairs and the people, the *demos,* who will control them on the basis of political equality. A fruitful analytical framework must facilitate analysis of the generation, as well as the implementation, of public policies and the attempts to bypass the democratic system.

The dynamics of democratic representation is primarily about authorisation and accountability, which presuppose transparency and responsiveness. What is represented may be substantive, descriptive and/or symbolic. Substantive representation is when the representative acts for the represented. This occurs for instance, when a leader advances the interests of workers. Descriptive representation is when an actor stands for the represented by being objectively similar. This occurs, for instance, when a woman represents women and a resident in a village represents fellow villagers. Lastly, symbolic representation is when an actor is perceived by the represented to once again stand for them. However, in this instance it occurs in terms of shared culture and identities. Yet, symbolic representation may also be understood in the wider sense, as by authors like Bourdieu (Wacquant, 2005; Stokke, 2002; Anderson, 1983), of constructing the *demos*, groups, and interests that are being represented and in claiming to be a legitimate authority as a representative.

There are two main approaches. The first may be called the 'chain of popular sovereignty' approach. It is typically students of political institutions who adhere to it, focusing on formally regulated politics, government and public administration. The second is what shall be labelled the 'direct democracy' approach. This is more common among political sociologists, anthropologists, and students of rights and law who emphasise the importance of informal arrangements and the need for alternative participation through popular movements and lobby groups, as well as citizens' action in, for instance, neighbourhood groups and associations for self-management.

There are two related tendencies towards deteriorated representation within the 'chain of popular sovereignty' in old and new democracies, albeit from different levels of democratic development. One is that public matters and resources have been reduced and fragmented under neo-liberalism and globalisation beyond democratic representation. The other tendency is that almost all of the links in the chain itself are tarnished. This is especially with regard to the intermediary representative institutions – from civic organisations to political parties.

While the advantage of the 'chain of popular sovereignty' approach is precision and conceptual consistency in relation to democratic theory, the major drawback is that practices outside the formally recognised chain tend to be set aside, such as attempts at participatory governance and struggles over public affairs that have been privatised or informalised.

Unfortunately, however, the 'direct democracy' approach does not provide a good alternative, but focuses on the other side of the coin. Interestingly, supporters include representatives of otherwise quite diverse groups. One is market oriented, supported by the World Bank (1997), for example. This group favours user and consumer participation rather than citizenship and popular sovereignty. Another includes Tocquvillians, who suggest that democracy works when citizens make use of their associational capacities and recognise each other as rights-bearing citizens. A third comprises communitarians in favour of local government based on ethnic, tribal, and similar communities against authoritarian post-colonial governance (see Escobar, 2009; Davidson and Henley, 2007). A fourth consists of critics of globalisation such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000), who argue that state and power has been so dispersed and localised that there is no decisive unit left to fight and that, increasingly, many producers are regulating their own social relations. Thus, strong parties and representative democracy are unnecessary and even irrelevant.

In short, a common denominator in all these positions is that they are congruous with the idea of Putnam (1993), that the 'real' *demos* develops not in relation to ideologies, institutions and political engagement, but organically from below and from self-managing and cooperating citizens who foster social capital. Representation, thus, becomes redundant since the people act directly through the same contacts and associations that have constituted the people (*demos*) in the first place. As a result, almost any 'civil' organisation becomes 'part of the people itself'. There is no need to analyse, therefore, differences between organisations that relate to rights-bearing citizens and people who lack sufficient capacity to use and promote their rights.

Furthermore, the importance of intermediary variables such as politics and ideology need not be discussed. The fact that Scandinavian democracy and welfare states, as well as contemporary participatory budgeting, for example, have all been politically facilitated and then sustained is conveniently forgotten. Many civil society activists are, however, more anxious now than before to legitimise their work in terms of who they aim to represent (Houtzager, 2007; Houtzager and Lavalle, 2009). Moreover, the new institutions for direct participation such as participatory planning, are – just like previous Scandinavian experiences of combining

liberal political democracy and interest-based representation, and cooperation between government and associations – attempts to initiate a new layer of representation between electoral chains of popular sovereignty, on the one hand, and associational life and populism, on the other (Avritzer, 2002; Baiocchi, 2005; Baiocchi and Heller, 2009; Esping-Andersen, 1985; Berman, 2006). But a number of questions remain to be answered, such as how to guarantee authorisation and accountability, and, even more harder, how to identify and agree on what parts of the *demos* should control which sections of public affairs on the basis of political equality.

As emphasised in Törnquist (2009), there is a need to combine the two main tendencies in the study of representation – one emphasising the formal chain of popular sovereignty and the other, more or less, direct participation and deliberation – by focusing on the development (or restriction) of the principles of democratic representation in both formally organised politics and government, on the one hand, and other forms of governance, including in civil society, on the other (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *An integrated framework for the study of democratic popular representation.*
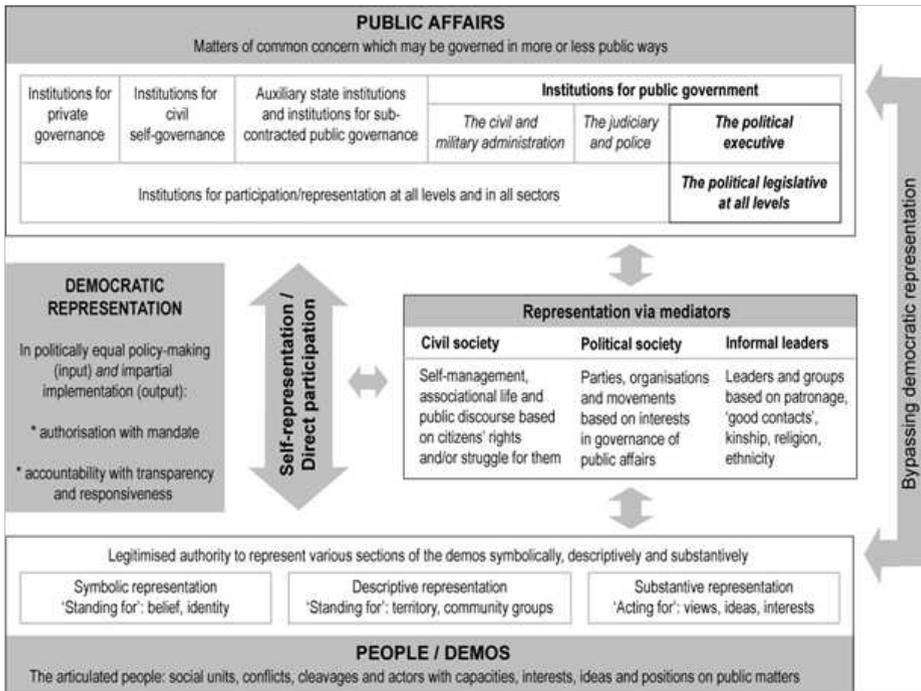
Representation and the struggle for democratisation

Let us now return to the challenge of studying the dynamics of democratisation in relation to the information collected in our surveys and case studies and, particularly, the main remaining puzzle of how dominant and alternative actors in different political fields and contexts combine their will and capacities over time to avoid and abuse or use and promote the institutional means of democracy. We are particularly interested in the specific problems of the pro-democratic actors, who obviously suffer from insufficient links between civic and more popular oriented groups, on the one hand, and problems of relating to organised politics, on the other. Most importantly, the crucial problem of fostering such links relates to democratic representation.

The problem of democratic popular representation may be identified on three levels: (1) links between the popular based actors themselves; (2) relations between the popular actors and the democratic system at large; (3) links between the public institutions for popular representation and policy implementation.

At the first level, in relation to people's capacity to mobilise and organise support, initial attention may be given to what individuals, groups, and organisations the people turn to and how this is legitimised. With this as a base, one may then focus on the efforts, if any, to scale up fragmented and poorly rooted groups: (1) geographically from local to regional and central; (2) policy-wise from separate to more public issues, interests, and agendas; (3) organisationally from separate groups and associations to alliances, coalitions, and unified movements and organisations (Törnquist et al., 2009).

The second level focuses on how NGOs, trade unions and political organisations relate to the wider political system. The principal forms of institutionalised representation are: (1) citizen judicially regulated rights-based democratisation, primarily through direct citizen participation and civil society groups; (2) interest- and issue-based representation through, for instance, trade unions, women's organisations or environmental groups and, also, democratic institutions, for example participatory planning; (3) political-based representation, usually through political parties and independent candidates.

At the third level, the main issue concerns the capacity of public institutions to implement democratic decisions effectively and impartially. Most importantly, the three levels of representation interact. For example, the popular groups may demand favourable forms of institutions for representation to be designed and implemented from above. And such favourable channels for collective democratic participation may in turn be designed in such a way as to foster popular representation, including, for instance,

special measures for women, and to contain fragmentation to the benefit of more effective scaling up by the democratic actors themselves (Webster et al., 2009).

Projects, strategies and recommendations

The most crucial step is the analysis of the politics of democratisation in terms of the dynamics of various political strategies and practices. This should be possible by studying specific political projects to foster democratic popular representation to promote, for example, welfare-based sustainable economic wealth. Therefore, different projects and strategies may also be compared over time and in different contexts in order to learn from other experiences and discuss the pros and cons of various recommendations.

Another crucial issue is the question of how to promote better democracy. Recommendations are often produced in an ad hoc fashion and not seen as a solid scholarly exercise, but rather the business of consultants and political advisors. This can be avoided. Credible research-based democracy engagement is not impossible. Having identified the problems of institutions, the balance of power and the dynamics of projects and strategies in democratisation, recommendations tend to be based on knowledge of the roots of the problems. But knowing the causes for a problem is not the same as to know how to fight the causes. If the root cause for elitist democracy is poor popular organisation, the insights say little about how to foster such organisation. The challenges and their roots, therefore, also need to be compared systematically with experiences in contexts that have faced similar dilemmas and managed to tackle some of them. Having considered dissimilar conditions, this forms the basis for academically transparent research-based recommendations.

Conclusion

In short, it has proved possible for academics and practitioners to develop and apply an alternative framework for a more inclusive and less elitist design of a democratic order than the mainstream roadmaps. This would entail a democratic order that would facilitate gradual improvement of the conditions for improved democratisation through transformative politics. The major organisational challenges include firm leadership, a focus on efficient project work in involving sufficient editorial expertise and scholarship, and sustaining both academic quality and activist insights and engagement. The main analytical insights include the need to focus more on the processes and dynamics of the politics of transformative democratisation to, therefore, also be able to learn by comparing projects and strategies in various contexts.

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