Keynote speaker

Democracy, Politics and the Contribution of Anthropology

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The election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as president of Indonesia in September 2004 has by many been seen as a milestone in Indonesian democratic politics. It is important to remember, however, that ever since the early 20th century, democracy has been one of the major political discourses in Indonesia. Democracy was a cornerstone of nationalism and of the sovereign government emerging out of the war against the Dutch in 1949. President Soeharto used Pancasila Democracy as a main legitimizing discourse during decades of authoritarian rule. The civil society movement that forced Soeharto out of power was based on principles of popular democracy. All of these understandings of the political are different from each other, and different from how democracy is articulated in other countries and at different times. Each country, each regime, has its own form of democracy. No two forms of government are the same. In a democratic state, this form is realized trough a contestation of political discourses. In this paper, I will try to outline what I believe that anthropology and cultural studies more broadly could contribute to our understanding of these processes. It is a tentative paper that I hope will form the basis for a more extensive analysis. I welcome comments and critique.

One of my first papers after *reformasi* in Indonesia outlined the challenges for the new democratic regime (Antlöv 1998). I put Indonesia in a larger context, arguing that state bureaucracies in many parts of the world are being challenged, not only in Indonesia. Some people are even arguing that it is a global crisis for the nation-state. People around the world are experiencing a growing disillusionment with state, government, and public policies. In the United States, disrespect for government politics and everything public have been growing over the past decades. The main reason for this is that government power is by many is seen to serve personal or narrow political interest at the expense of more legitimate concerns. The power and autonomy of the nation-state is being eroded on four levels: authority has moved down the political system to sub-national units (decentralization), up the political system to supra-national institutions (globalization), away from state monopolies to private companies (privatization) and away from government institutions to citizens (democratization).

In Indonesia, I argued, the lack of trust was deep, and needed urgently to be addressed. This could only be done by construing a new relationship between state and civil society, including that between the powerful centre and "the regions" (meaning, the actual lived-in communities, anywhere from Senen to Sabang, from Menteng to Merauke). The basic point of this, as I saw it, was to build checks-and-balances. Governing authorities must be constrained and held responsible by law, by an independent and autonomous judiciary and by additional countervailing powers (political parties, civil society, the press, lobby groups, etc). I ended the paper by saying: "The wind of reformation is blowing over the country. It is now a matter of creating mechanisms within civil society to monitor and hold accountable public policies and public servants, at the same time as a new legal and administrative culture is moulded which guarantees the rule of law and the efficiency and transparency of the public service. The difficult first steps have been taken, but we must not be satisfied yet."

Seven years later, it is easy to conclude that the processes of democratisation and decentralization have been shallow. Political parties do not have any meaningful grassroots basis. Only the top layer of the bureaucracy has been replaced. Most state officials have not embraced the idea of new procedures and standards accompanying decentralization and democratic reforms. Civil servants maintain

old work patterns and attitudes, and are as corrupt as ever. Powerful positions within the government and in legislative bodies in the national, province and municipal levels are still held by members of a narrowly-based elite. Politicians recruited into parties are those with a skill of fund-raising, since it is expected of them to collect money to contribute to their parties. In short, the basic political tensions and power structures underlying the crises were not addresses. In an article a couple of years back I thus argued that "the present form of democracy in Indonesia…benefits local bosses, thugs and corruptors" (Antlöv 2003: 72). This is very much in line with studies by Vedi Hadiz (2003a and 2003b), Olle Törnquist (2002), DEMOS (2003) and Mochtar Pabottingi (Jakarta Post, 9 July 2005), who argue that local elites have cleverly captured the new democratic spaces provided by the dismantling of the Soeharto empire and the centralised state. Many of the people who lived comfortably under the New Order are still in power today, albeit under new political arrangements, and often wearing different party shirts. They have been joined by a new class of "predatory interests" (Hadiz 2003a) or *preman politik*, "political thugs" (Suaedy and Simanjuntak 2000), people that have emerged since the demise of Soeharto. The result, in the words of Olle Törnquist (2002), is a "bad-guys democracy", a weak democracy dominated by politicians and bureaucrats, and in which the decentralization process has been hijacked by interests that have little to gain from greater accountability.

However, there are also different stories to be told, giving a more complex picture of local politics and democratization. In my 2003 article I thus illustrated how new leaders are emerging around Indonesia who are challenging old power structures and creating local democracy. This is the story of changes taking place at the local level and often outside of formal political structures, with new leaders challenging old power structures. Some of these are activists within nongovernmental organizations, others are leaders of newly emerging social movements. But some are also government officials who support local-level reforms and democracy. The recent round of PILKADA elections have also provided positive results: reformist leaders such as the bupatis of Kebumen, Bantul and Solok have been re-elected (the latter even to governor) while unpopular leaders (e.g. Gunung Kidul and Solo) finished way down the list. This shows a high degree of political maturity, as issue I will return to later when discussing the 2004 general elections.

What we need to do, I would argue, rather than jump to conclusions or advocate our pre-defined ideological positions on the state of Indonesian democracy, is to be careful in our assessments. To what extent elite capture is happening cannot be determined *a priori* but must be subject to empirical verification. Who has actually have benefited or lost out of the opening up of political spaces through democracy and decentralization? Is the new post-*reformasi* leadership (national and local) legitimate in the eyes of people living in the town? Are there better public politicise? Who (what categories of people) have emerged out of the crises as winners and losers? What strategies and sentiments do these leaders use to legitimise their power? What do people understand the democratic institutions? What are the variety of democratic ideals towards which people are striving?

What Can Anthropology Contribute to (the Debate about) Indonesian Democracy and Politics?

I believe that there are two important contributions of anthropologists to the understanding of democracy and politics. The first is to insert into the body of knowledge ethnographic details about local politics. Politics is more than elite manoeuvring, and democracy is more than the development of national-level political institutions. The local dimensions of politics are often neglected or simplified by political observers. The second contribution of anthropology is to further our understanding of political culture and the meanings of democracy: how people perceive their leaders and how they express their feelings through a variety of low-key and everyday means. Crucial to our view is the interaction between politics, identity and local issues, and an appreciation of how people perceive and interpret local events. Let us take a closer look at each of these two points.

Fascinating details about democratic and political ideals are revealed in the mix of the local and the national. To grasp Indonesian politics and political behaviour in all their complexities it is not enough to observe politics from Jakarta or to count votes on the macro level. National politics often focuses on specific local issues (such as the corruption of a party representative), and local politics often refers to national issues (such as what kind of development candidates are promoting). It is impossible to understand people support for the state without taking into account the local setting and political sentiments, the everyday issues that matters to people. This might be true of many countries, but is accentuated in Indonesia where personal relations and communal feeling are still strong. Politics in Indonesia are much more than ideology and party programmes. A lack of knowledge about deep sentiments, symbols and political culture might

explain why the political reform movement came as such a surprise to many commentators in 1998.

Traditionally, much political science in Indonesia focussed on figure-watching and speculations about the future personnel of the regime. We seldom learnt what ordinary people thought about the authoritarian regime and the state of democracy (except as regime critic, but that was also often as seen through NGO leaders), or how these sentiments were transformed into political forces. Few studies told us about what was going on in the countryside and in the townships during campaigns and elections. A few years back I co-edited a volume (Antlöv and Cederroth 2004) comparing the general elections in 1997 and 1999 in which we argued that a study of elections makes for a better understanding of the many ways in which authoritarian rule operated in Indonesia – not only as repression and manipulation, but also related to cooptation, developmentalism and patronage. We looked at how the authoritarian government could maintain its authority for so many years, and what the local and historical foundations were for the future. By taking the 1997 and 1999 elections seriously, through a couple of case-studies, we were able to come to the conclusion that on the local level, the two elections were in many ways rather alike, and carried similar meanings for people: making conscious statements about political preferences. This is obviously not to discount the grandeur of gerrymandering or the large-scale repression that took place during the 1997 elections or the money politics and vote manipulation in the 1999 elections. But it showed the emerging political maturity of the 1997 elections that pre-empted the events to follow a year later. People talked a lot about leadership, they argued over ideology and they discuss the central precepts of governance – all questions that are at the heart of political struggles.

If all politics is local, and democracy starts at home, we need to understand the dynamics of local politics. It is in the mix of the local, the national, the political and the cultural that the most fascinating details about democratic and political ideals are revealed. If the expected order is not maintained, there can be violent reactions, from the state as well as from the citizens. This goes back to the question of political legitimacy and the quest for moral authority (Alagappa 1995). If we start to investigate the meaning of democratic institutions (such as elections) for ordinary people, we might come up with new findings on political behaviour. By looking at national events through the prism of local issues, and by constructing our understanding of Indonesian politics through empirical studies of local politics, we can extend our knowledge of politics in Indonesia. How do people explain how they vote? What are the obstacles to and motivations for free and fair voting? What do people think when they place their vote in the ballot box? What are the local issues that inform their choices? What are the local issues that guide people's political behaviour? How do political parties mobilize voters? Questions such as these might provide a corrective to the prevalent view of Indonesian voters as "political robots" who vote as the authorities or charismatic figures tell them.

We thus need to look beyond the national scene to understand some of the sentiments and values that motivate people's political behaviour. This leads over to a second contribution of anthropology to the study of politics, namely that of political culture. Since there is an extensive literature on this field already available, let me take a closer look at some of the more prominent studies (to which I am quite critical). The most well-known of the political culture studies in Indonesia have looked at how the idea of power in Indonesia has informed conceptions of leaders and followers. This line of analysis can be exemplified by two quotes. The first statement is from Karl Jackson, editor of one of the more influential books on Indonesian political culture (and who became U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific under Reagan), and the second is from Clark Neher and Russ Marlay, whose book *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia* includes a chapter on Indonesia. The two studies, written more than 15 years apart, illustrate a common approach in studies of the Indonesian national ideology and understanding of politics.

> More specifically, in Indonesia every man is perceived as having his station and his duties. Social justice is interpreted as carrying out the responsibilities of justly unequal roles. Because of God-given high status and wealth the patron must lead, educate and care for the material and spiritual needs of a large group of clients. Great satisfaction and psychological security are derived from the act of giving deference and respect to persons of higher rank in the social hierarchy. (Jackson 1978:35)

> The primary pattern of social exchange in Southeast Asia is between unequals. And although these transactions are between a superior and a subordinate, dealings are personal, face-to-face, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial. Patron-client ties are the very foundation of society and politics all over Asia. (Neher and Marlay 1995:15)

The most influential statement on the cultural construction of domination in Indonesia and the study that many others use as a point of departure is Benedict Anderson's "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture" (1972, reprinted in 1990), in which Javanese political thinking and its effect on modern statecraft were convincingly outlined. Anderson argues that the concept of power in Java (*kasektén*) is closer to spiritual potency than to European ideas of relational power. In opposition to Western ideas of power, this *kasektén* is "something concrete, homogeneous, constant in total quantity and without inherent moral implications as such" (Anderson 1972:8). Power may be possessed and exercised by individual persons, but it is never created or altered by them. Spiritual power flows from a radiating centre and spreads like circles on the water, or like a cone of light cast downwards by a reflector lamp. Relations between the ruler and the ruled are characterized by patronage:

> The administrative structure, while formally hierarchical, is in effect composed of stratified clusters of patron-client relationships. Both in the regions and in the centre, officials gather around them clusters of personal dependents, on the model of the ruler himself. These dependents" destinies are linked with the success or failure of their patrons. They work as administrative and political aides, and have no real autonomous status except in relation to him (Anderson 1972:22).

The radiating power built on patronage corresponds to what Clifford Geertz in discussing Bali calls the "exemplary centre" (1980), the idea of an omnipotent centre of impressive performance and grand ceremonies that through its sheer existence deters opposition and attracts potency. The closer one stands to the centre, the stronger the *kasektén* will be sensed. In order to gain power one would thus subjugate oneself to powerful persons and hope that some of their authority and wealth would be transferred onto oneself. Another way of putting this is that the Javanese regard social standing as an expression of the cosmic power available to the person. The more spiritual power one has, the higher the social position one will be able to attain (Wessing 1978:170). To voluntarily submit oneself and acknowledge the righteous superiority of powerful leaders, who in turn can transfer *kasektén* to their followers, is therefore the most powerful way of founding a political career in Java (Jackson 1980:185). Domination is not based on formal jurisdiction or economic resources, but on natural subordination to the exemplary centre (Keeler 1987:85). To be sure, wealth provides a source of political and economic control. However, the mere possession of wealth is not enough to attain authority: "Wealth is an attribute of Power, not its provenance" (Anderson 1972:48). Only those who are powerful can become rich. To become rich while in office is a sign of being powerful, a conception that is at times used by the elite to explain the high degree of corruption in Indonesia, and perhaps to justify it. This is also taken up by observes – more than one high-level IMF and World Bank official has said that corruption seems to be deeply ingrained in Indonesian culture.

Although political culture might not be the latest fad within political science, the tradition of interpreting Indonesian politics in Javanese terms is alive and well. In an interview in 1998, Clifford Geertz noted that Soeharto's last years in power "eerily" recalled the staged scenarios of traditional dynastic transitions: "The king loses his power, and there's disorder in the realm and there are attacks on him. And then slowly the old guy goes out and the new guy comes in" (Kristof 1998). Benedict Anderson has a similar perspective, arguing that as people saw "bad things happening these last two years the idea easily arises that Soeharto's time of glory is ending. And indeed many think that the sun now is setting on the New Order" (Anderson 1998:17).

Through these discourses – and to them we could add domestic studies such as those done by BP7 and various research centres around the country during the 1970s and 1980, including the heated debate in the early 1990s on *Negara Integralisik* – a particularistic conception of the Indonesian state and national ideology was created, variously denominated as neo-patrimonial, bureaucratic, *bapakism*, Asian-style, rent-seeking, or *Demokrasi Pancasila*. This was for a long time been characterized by political stability, administrative monopoly, centralized political control, strict regulations for the activities of citizens and a complex hierarchy of state-based officials. Access to political patronage was the main means of acquiring information and wealth.

I do not necessarily have a great problem with these characterizations of the Indonesian polity. It holds true of most authoritarian states. But I am critical of this school of analysis when observers interpret Indonesia's bureaucratic polity *primarily* in cultural terms, taking these characterizations as historically or sociologically given facts. By giving primacy to culture, they narrow politics down to patron-client relationships and traditional authority, as if these were native to Indonesia and Indonesia only. We need to remember that the Soeharto regime used these concepts very cleverly in its cultural engineering: as the norms of political stability and acquiescence necessary to enact

an authoritarian, quasi-democratic polity.

The Soeharto regime and the *Demokrasi Pancasila* did thus not emerge because of Javanese culture. But it did thrive within a culture of acquiescence, patronage and social appearances of harmony that rulers could use as symbols of legitimacy. To be sure, thus, there is a relationship between politics and culture. Cultural representations are potential instruments for political discourses. Political symbolism, ritual, normative representation, etc., are employed for the legitimate execution of power and domination. Anthropological theory suggests that politics should be viewed not only as competition over scarce resources, but also as representations of historical practices and local knowledge (Cannadine and Price 1987, Kertzer 1988, Vincent 1990, Keesing 1991, Gledhill 1994). Societies must be understood in their cultural environments. The so-called "hard" realities of political power are often represented through "soft" notions of ideas, metaphors, and semantic fields. Concepts such as *demokrasi* and *kasektén* are cultural representations that not only are instruments in the political arena but also are used for people to make sense of their lives. Cultural representations of democracy are good points of departure for a broader understanding of power and domination, in which we need to mirror discourses with practices. This constitutes a contribution to the debate opened in the book by Shore and Wright on the *Anthropology of Policy,* which argues that an "anthropological approach to policy treats the models and language of decision-makers as ethnographic data to be analysed rather than as framework for analysis" (Shore and Wright 1997: xiii). Public policy, democracy and political behaviour should not be taken as ethnographical givens. The debate on the impact of policy must be extended by exploring its mechanism, disguises, and its implications for cultural practices in different societies. Policies construct their subjects as objects of power, in the same way as ritual or kinship would do.

Political discourses are thus culturally construed, with an emphasis here on the second word. There is clearly a danger in taking cultural ideas of power at face value and in viewing power as an exclusively cultural concept, as something that can be possessed, without morals. We should avoid taking a deterministic cultural view of power, with formulations such as "every people gets the politics it imagines" (Geertz 1972:321). In such views, surrounding structures of power and domination enter only as general framework, if at all. The cultural analysis of ideas of power, for me, begs the question of how these cultural constructs are empowered and carried over into the realm of public politics as, for example, policies to limit human rights. The distribution of cultural knowledge and the ability to impose on others a proper interpretation are central to the execution of power. The question is not what symbols and concepts mean, but what people do with them. What implications do such ideas have? Who has the means and power to assert their interpretations of these ideas? To what extent do people find it necessary to appeal to such concepts – or accept them? Such a Gramscian critique of Geertz's conception of culture must examine the hegemonic force and ideological power of cultural symbols and see the social construction of meaning as multiple, ambiguous, and contested (cf. Keesing 1991:45).

The relative strength of these various interpretations of political culture is related to the abilities of institutions to present their version as the ultimate one, and even more importantly to the extent to which these interpretations are allowed and promoted by state agents. Already existing relationships of dominance are reinforced by the privilege to interpret symbols and rituals. As noted above, crucial are the capacities of actors and groups to assert their interpretations, and to have their assertions accepted as legitimate knowledge. It is not that Indonesian politics under Soeharto was in some Machiavellian sense directly legitimized by reference to Tradition. Tradition can work its wonders exactly because it is perceived as such, not as something ideological or quasi-modern. The beauty of it was that even the rulers believed in the ideas of Tradition, ritual, harmony, and a shared cultural inheritance. National policies need to be read as "cultural texts, as classificatory devices with various meanings, as narratives that serve to justify or condemn the present, or as rhetorical devices and discursive formations that function to empower some people and silence others" (Shore and Wright 1997:7).

Take for instance the "justly unequal" relationships in Jackson's quote above. For him they do not form the basis of exploitative relationships, since they are part of culture. However, by using a multi-dimensional approach to power (in which discipline and ritual subordination are also means of domination), they could rather be seen as *more* effective. As noted by Simmel, Foucault, Lukes, and others, the more domination is embedded within the cultural universe of a society, the more effective it is. Power, as a relationship of dominance between unequal persons, is not homogeneous, unchanging, or without morals. And it is certainly not evenly distributed. Power is not for everybody's exercise – it is always contested. Some people have better access to the knowledge and resources necessary to enforce or inspire a particular interpretation of power and domination. Meaning is a social construction – empowering some people,

silencing others. The ability to shape or determine rules of exclusion and access is a particularly important power. This is related to the observation by Pierre Bourdieu that when a relationship cannot directly be made exploitative, it must be "disguised in the form of enchanted relationships, the official model of which is presented by relations between kinsmen; in order to be socially recognized it must get itself misrecognized" (Bourdieu 1977:191). Conscious ideological engineering is not always necessary. There is something self-fulfilling with systems of power themselves that structures the beliefs, interests and conditions for subordination and domination (Beetham 1991: 60-2). Those who hold power are believed to possess certain ascriptive qualities lacking in those subordinate to them, the construction of a social identity of which people of a certain character (those holding power) are seen as the legitimate bearers of societal norms. It is not a circular argument: it is rather that the political domain is structured in a manner which benefits the powerful.

In order to conform to cultural norms, unequal relationships are thus often disguised as intimate and enchanted bonds and presented in public as harmonious and natural. But public consent may mean either that disagreements have been worked out and bargains struck behind the scenes, or that for some other reason the public occasion is understood not to be the proper forum for the expression of serious conflicts (Moore 1977: 152). One typical example of this is patron–client relationships. At first sight, patron-client relationships might be seen as intimate and egalitarian, with a flavour of reciprocity and equanimity – "justly unequal." However when these relationships are sociologically analyzed, a picture emerges of relations that are not very balanced (for a case, see Antlöv 1995:76). Landlords retain their relationships with their workers through economic bonds, through moral obligations maintained by different forms of exchanges, through an ideology of natural domination that through the process of culturalization described above is played out as a symbolic strategy of misrecognising kinship relations. It is easy but dangerous to take public patron-client relationships, often presented in kinship terminology, at face value without a closer examination of the sentiments, rationality, and exchanges that guide them. And as we have noticed, some researchers even find the explanation for patron-client relationships in Java in a submissive and servile Indonesian culture. But can oppression ever properly be called "culture"? Since social misrecognition is part of the relationship, we must see through the enchantedness of socially intimate relations. In theories of power, voluntary submission is ultimately based on dependency, a situation of relative powerlessness under which the weak sees the protection of the poor (Beetham 1991: 45). To say therefore that there is not power in such a relation is utterly to misunderstand the relationship – the way the powerful want to have the relation misrecognized. But since we are social scientist, it is our duty to see through such notions and examine critically the various forms of domination and subordination empirically taking place.

Culture is a powerful legitimizing instrument. A common view of culture by political scientists is that it is shared and normative, internally uniform, and hermetically discrete. But this view of culture is a relic from anthropological societies in the early 20th century: isolated islands or desert tribes with functionally coherent and symbolically unitary and discrete systems. In this view, culture becomes a rigid and discrete matrix: people are programmed to operate within a political culture and have few options and little freedom. Every part of social life, including politics, is a mirror of the norms and values of the society and its culture. But we have come a long way in refining cultural theory – and of our knowledge of Indonesian politics. I think we can agree that people in Indonesia do not live within a single cultural universe. Rather, they have contesting interpretations of how power ideally should be executed and how the dominant and subordinate should relate to each other.

Bringing it Together: the 2004 Elections

In the section, let us briefly try to fold the factors of community, leaders, culture and politics into an analysis of voting behaviour in the 2004 presidential election. Voting behaviour is not easy to analyze. What motivates people to vote for a particular party or candidate is based on a number of factors: ideology, influence, personal choice, intimidation, gains. Voting is at the same time immensely personal (we cannot really know how a person will vote) and structural (particular parties are supported by persons with particular backgrounds and positions in society). Let us start with the role of religion and other entrenched forms of primordial sentiments in determining voting behaviour and why people support particular leaders. The theory of *aliran* politics would hold that people choose how to vote because of religious and/or primordial affiliation – it is basically a variety of the political culture school. In the language of one of the proponents of this view, Arbi Sanit, the "irrational" sentiments of religion in the countryside makes people vote for religiously based parties, in contrast to the "rational" urban

dweller (*Media Indonesia,* 6 April 2004). A similar view is put forward by Ichlasul Amal, former vice-chancellor of Gadjah Mada University, who notes that the presidential campaign is a return to the old paradigm of nationalists vs. Islamists (*Kompas*, 2 May 20040). Stephen Sherlock has also noted that parties in the 1999 and 2004 election defined themselves in relation to an *aliran* pattern of affiliation, between secular parties, modernist Islamic and traditionalist Islamic (Sherlock 2004:18-19)

I have two things to say about this view. The first is that I believe that the notion of *aliran* in relation to voting behaviour is empirically wrong. Take for instance Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim organization in the country (and the world), with a claimed membership of up to 40 million members. They organize traditionalistic Muslims, and its charismatic leader (and later short-lived president) Abdurrahman Wahid established ahead of the 1999 election PKB. Had the *aliran* principle been in operation – as well as that of personality politics (with Wahid as chairperson) one could have expected all NU members to vote for PKB. But in 1999 the party only received 13.3 million votes and in 2004 around the same. Remaining NU members voted for other parties.

I also think that it is wrong to argue, as would Arbi Sanit imply, that NU members voting for PKB are "irrational". This is seriously to underplay the role of symbols and sentiments in politics. We need only take a single look at any US party congress to see that politics (in a narrow sense) is not at the front, but rather the capacity to touch people beyond rhetoric and promises. Deeply entrenched sentiments as well as popular symbols encourage people to vote for particular parties. I do thus not believe in the "rational voter" in the first place. I think that voting behaviour is a result of a number of factors, not merely a cold and logical programmatic evaluation. We are drawn to a party because we feel some form of non-political association with it, whether that is because they use language and symbols we can relate to, or simply because they have sympathetic (or even good-looking!) leaders. A traditionalist Muslim will view as more sympathetic a party that is organized through a network of traditionalistic Islamic mosques, and that uses such symbols and language in campaigning. This is a highly rational behaviour and no hocus-pocus. One of the most Americanized commercials during the parliamentary campaign was for the National Mandate Party (PAN), with chairman Amien Rais walking up a small village road and an old man hugs him, with a tear coming down his cheek and the narrator saying softly – "This one I would trust!" It was full of sentiments and symbols while saying absolutely nothing about what type of policies that PAN would carry out were it to win the election. Likewise, one of the reasons why people in 2004 voted for the new Democrat Party was the "SBY factor" when founder Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono promised change and renewal and people felt they could trust him. He was also seen as a unitary figure for the country, standing above partisan politics (NDI 2004:6).

One important factor in electoral voting behaviour in all societies is the general orthodox and conservative nature of voters. Swing votes always exist, but there is a resilience and slowness in the way that constituencies move between parties. In Indonesia, this has meant that people, tired off economic crises, personal uncertainties and political instabilities, look towards figures of authority for instant solution. The SBY phenomenon in the 2004 general election is instructive. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is the founder and figure-head of the newly established Democrat Party. The party dos not have any cadre or a clear political program. It was only established some 6 months before the election. Its national chairman is virtually unknown (Subur Budhisantoso), and so are many of its legislative candidates in the provinces. However, this new party could still get eight percent of the votes, through the SBY effect. In times in uncertainties, people look for stability, especially in Indonesia which had for 32 years a military dictatorship that managed political stability and economic growth (unlike many other dictators around the world, the problem with Soeharto was not instability or the lack of growth, but corruption and absence of freedoms). So when SBY emerged as the figure head for the Democrat Party, many people supported him. He was supported by many poor people in the countryside, the ones that have been hardest hit by the extended economic crisis and who care more about basis economic security than freedoms of assembly and expression. In him, the poor saw a way to get out of the present problems. There are some people who are nostalgic about the Soeharto regime, but the party led by his daughter Siti Hardijanti "Tutut" Hastuti Rukmana received only around 2 percent of the votes, so it is not Soeharto that people are longing for (it spite of Tutut speaking on TV commercials with a picture of an elderly Soeharto in the background, asking people to "pray for my father"). It is rather a stable and strong government that can fight poverty and unite the country (*makmur dan aman,* "prosperity and peace", as one older Golkar supported told me in Sariendah.

Some observers have interpreted the look for strong national leadership as a cultural heritage: "It must be admitted that socially and culturally our nation is still holding on to the patron-client relationship. A leader's strength and capabilities remain an indication of

whether or not we can get out of the crises" (Benny Susetyo, *Jakarta Post*, 10 May 2004.) Given what we said above about the limits of political culture, I would not be so sure. I think that it is rather nostalgia and lack of knowledge of what actually happened during the New Order. Yes, there was economic growth. And yes, political stability was maintained. But most common people would not see how this was achieved: through exploiting natural resources in the outer provinces, international investments and subsidies, an intricate system of rent-seeking and loyalty, and tight control over people's thoughts and actions, marginalizing (as the best) people of different opinion.

What motivates people to support those who call for stability and steadfastness is rather fear for the unknown and a wish for order. People have lived through turbulent times: independence war, religious conflicts, fighting communists, hyper inflation, dictatorship, economic crisis. And in 1998, the world was again turned upside down, with political speculation, regional violence and political uncertainties. Several parties used these conservative sentiments quite consciously during the campaign: strong men, standing tall, presenting themselves as the saviours of the nation. In turbulent times, Golkar and the Democrat Party, with their four-star generals, represent some form of stability and hope for a strong government.[2] During the past six years, Indonesia has seen four presidents, and the last three years with Megawati Soekarnoputri as president has not meant any great change: the judiciary is still corrupt, the rupiah is still depreciated, and people are still killing each other in various parts of the country. People went out *en masse* in 1999 and voted for change with PDI-P. But since that this did not happen, they are no looking for something different. Because of the poor performances of the Megawati administration, she has come to symbolize the weak and inefficient leader. And if a civilian could not do it, perhaps a military figure would be better. There were not many alternatives in the 2004 elections.

That leads us to another key aspect of gathering support: the role of local leaders and notables in producing support for particular politicians. Given the history of patrimonialism and the presence of strong local elites, one would think their role to be quite prominent. Indonesia is to a large extent as rural society, with people living in tightly-knit communities with face-to-face interaction. Golkar during the New Order manipulated this system very cleverly: they would local leaders as "clients of the state" (Antlöv 1995) and use them to gather support for Golkar, the New Order and Soeharto. There is a prevalent view in Indonesia that leadership is crucial. It has its roots in some of academic literature on political culture, but is also rooted in political practices. The success of PDI-P in the 1999 is thus attributed to the name of Megawati Soekarnoputri. Other parties too, as we have seen, also mobilize well-known charismatic leaders as figure-heads. We saw it in the case of the neighbour leaders in Jakarta above.

We noticed above that some observers would explain this in reference to a particular social organization and political culture in Indonesia which favour the social appearance of harmony, the absence of conflicts and patron-client relations. Democratic forms and politics all around the world are the result of historical, political, economic and cultural processes. We need to be sensitive to local conditions and circumstances if we are to understand politics. But not uncritically so.

I would thus want to argue that the reason the present democratic deficit in Indonesia is not caused by its culture or social relations, but, on the one hand, by the continued monopolisation of politics by state officials, local power holders and thugs, and the fragmented character and weak political interest of civil society actors, on the other. Both of these are legacies from an authoritarian rule that quite successful penetrated local communities and closed down politics. On the part of civil society, there is a depoliticization, distrust in government, and a lack of political skills. Their impact on public policies is limited – they are floating in-between, with neither grassroots ties nor political voice (Törnquist 2003). For the elite, on the other hand, rent-seeking and patronage remain favoured strategies, with little risk of being exposed (and if caught, the non-functioning judiciary will mean that they can buy their way out).

The massive domination of the Golkar during the New Order or PDI-P in 1999 should thus not be misinterpreted as being due to a blind belief in what Max Weber called the sanctity of the order and the attendant powers of control as they have been handed down from the past. That would be grossly to underestimate the ability of powerful individuals to force compliance, the persuasive powers of the leaders and the strategic choice people make when they support a particular leader or join Golkar or PDI-P.

If traditional authority and charismatic leadership were the main moving forces in Indonesia politics, than PKB or PAN would be the largest parties with their access to NU/Abdurrahman Wahid or Muhammidiyah/Amien Rais. But as already noted, something else is at play here. Endang Turmudi has looked at the Islamic votes in the 1999 election in Jombang, the NU heartland (Turmudi 2004). He argues that national leaders and even local Islamic teachers are not at all as important as personal belief: "PPP votes during the New Order were

to a large extent influenced primarily by voters" perceptions of Islamic ideas, and only secondarily by the influence of *ulama*s [religious teachers]. A good Muslim will follow an *ulama*'s request and his political lead, but more important than that, he has certain basic principles that guide his actions." (Turmudi 2004:56). I believe that this is a much more nuanced explanation of voters" behaviour than many other studies or newspaper articles that simply refer to the "irrational" behaviour of people who vote only because of their religious belief or what their teacher or patron tell them.

This is obviously not to say that religious teachers, local notables, village heads, or other powerful figures are not important in determining how people vote. They are, all over the world. Perhaps they are even a more important in Indonesia than in modern industrialized and highly complex societies such as Sweden or Japan. But primordial sentiments and leadership are not the only determinant of how people vote (as little as intimidation and manipulation alone would reveal the entire story of why people voted for Golkar during the New Order). People are not "irrational" or "ignorant". Indonesian voters are as rational as voters elsewhere, within their cultural universe and conceptual framework. For an Indonesian peasant, security and stability might be more important than for a US factory worker with a retirement account, and therefore he might vote for what he sees as the stability and continuity provided by Golkar. People often rationalize their political behaviour in cultural meanings, in order to downplay their personal interests and avoid sanctions. Observers should not take what people say as evidence of the historical inevitability or cultural accuracy of the social norms they express

For the individual citizen, voting behaviour is always determined by a variety of factors, in which party program is only one determinant. Crucial for leaders in Indonesia, as we have already alluded to, is their generosity and willingness to support their constituencies with various forms of material and non-material goods. A Sunday column in Jakarta Post (22 May 2004, page 1) provides a good illustration. The author describes three of her relatives running for parliaments in the 2004 election, and who all ruined themselves by doing so. She describes vividly how well-wishers and supporters came to the home of one of he candidates "with different motives, some did want to meet him and know his visions, while others asked for freebies of T-shirts and stickers. There were also those in search of a handout, whether it was to build a local mosque, provide sports facilities, even those who wanted him to build toilets for their homes or pay their childbirth costs. At the very least, they expected him to provide them with the costs of their fare home". Such is quite common behaviour – through personal, face-to-face and reciprocal relations, the rich patron is expected to provide guidance, security and even money in exchange for the political support of the subordinate. Village headmen are elected directly in Indonesia, and there are numerous stories of candidates spending hundred of millions in the campaign, providing cigarettes, food, sponsored sports competitions, even envelopes with cash (*particularly* envelopes with cash!) to neighbours in the village.

We saw above that a power-holder should ideally not need to display power, since power is something that is believed to be inherent in a person. The esteem of peers will follow naturally from a person's possession of power, not from any demonstrative action. However, I believe there is more than one competing conception of power in the Indonesia. Besides the enchanted power in which gentle hints and an exemplary attitude are the norm (and the public display of power and authority should be avoided) exist a second more instrumental conception of power, built on patron-client relationships, in which power is seen as flowing from the exchanges of goods and services. (A third is an authoritative form of power, personified by the armed soldier placed in the countryside and the government official in his offices). The first, ideal form is thus challenged by common villager who would rather say that authority is rather achieved instrumentally, through correct morals and the ability to yield results in terms of protection, order, good harvests and money. This quality – *jasa* in Indonesian – can perhaps best be translated as "service-mindedness". Generosity is a key word: largesse with time, knowledge and resources. Elections form one arena at which *jasa* can be displayed and verified. This notion is close to the idea of accountability within democratic theory: leaders should face their constituencies and be responsible for their policies and acts, although in a more crude and instrumental manner. The appropriate use of authority is thus, in conception, fairly instrumental: providing protection, security and funds. Leaders should show their worth through *jasa* by putting their own interests below those of clients and the community. *Jasa* means something a person earns or merits. It is thus closer to esteem than power, someone that can not be claimed, but a quality ascribed to power-holders. A person with *jasa* speaks with authority. But there is nevertheless a measure of accountability. It is not traditional authority in Weber's sense of devotion handed down over generations, but rather subordination that comes with mutual benefits (e.g., economic security for political loyalty). If the flow of resources (goods, protection or development) is cut off, it will negatively affect the enchantedness

of the relationship. A NDI report on voter's perception thus concludes that "Honesty and values, but not necessarily religion, are key issues for many prospective voters" (NDI 2004:2).

More entrepreneurial people, knowing their power as voters, would try to use this system to its maximum, visiting different candidates and promising their support. The author of the Jakarta Post column ends her story with the one candidate who actually won the election, and who already just a few days later had been visited by numerous people who feel they are owed something for his success: Says the wife: "I am just afraid my husband couldn't stand the temptation to be corrupt…You know, 37 supporters have already come by, urging him to find them jobs". And the writer ends the story: "And them I silently thanked God that my other two relatives had not been elected". The expectations on those who are elected into power is thus not always that they produce good policies: for those surrounding them (which form the core support groups) it is rather the expectations of goods and services to be delivered. Thus, although candidates might want to present themselves as disinterested, paternalistic leaders, for common people, it is rather their ability to support and protect that is important, not their God-given authority.

Maybe this instrumentality partly explains the low number of politicians visiting their constituencies in 2004: it is more common that people visit politicians, asking for favours. This might also be a reason why so many of the DPD candidates were businessmen and so few were "poor" NGO activists. But importantly, for out study here of leader-followers relationships, it is one important factor to explain the drastic decline in support for PDI-P and Megawati. Many people were very disappointed with the performance of the party. In 1999, they had voted for reforms and change – substantive matters! – but they had not be delivered. The charismatic appeal of the Soekarno name and the *forza* of the PDI-P campaigns were not enough to maintain the momentum of 1999. PDI-P is still the second largest party, and that is mainly due to its riches and party-apparatus, but could this time not appeal to swing-voters or those strongly in favour of changes.

The Re-emergence of Politics

What we have seen in the past few years is the re-emergence of politics. But depoliticization remains strong. One of the legacies of the New Order is that *politik* is something of a dirty word, used to describe the motivations behind unwanted and unpopular decisions (as in *dasar politikus,* 'typical politicians'). There is a lingering view among state elites that there is too much mass participation in politics in Indonesia, and that politics should remain the prerogative of the ruling class. This explains the calls in 2001 for a "political moratorium", with Golkar leaders stating that Indonesia would be better off if there was less politics. Calls for a more restricted political space have come not only from Golkar but also from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), the party that really emerged into power on a wave of popular protest in 1996-99. In the view of at least some PDI-P figures in the government (the president, unfortunately, among them), NGOs should confine themselves to community development and refrain from engaging in politics. In November 2002, thus, President Megawati Sukarnoputri warned against excessive democracy – she used the term "ultra democracy", quoting Mohammad Hatta's original description of the "liberal" 1950s – saying that political parties should not misuse their democratic mandates (*Jakarta Post*, 26 November 2002).

Depoliticization has also had the effect of depriving ordinary citizens and prospective leaders alike of critical knowledge about how to engage in politics. For three decades, people learnt that the only way to solve conflicts was through violence; that the only way to reach decisions was by monopolising power; that the only way to gain promotion was through connections; and that the only way to organize politics was through patronage. Many people today do not know how to construct programs around important principles, build and educate constituencies around political issues, lobby for their interests, engage the public in debate, produce alternative public policies or solve conflicts peacefully.

If politics in Indonesia were to be more visible, pervasive and unrestricted, power would become more evenly distributed. An open political space forces elites to relate actively to ordinary people as constituencies or as oppositions, rather than manipulating them or mobilising and dividing them along religious or ethnic lines. I am not referring primarily to the high politics of elections, constitutions and parliaments. *Society* as such needs to be politicised, in the everyday form of "low politics". It is above all at the local level that Indonesia must begin to rebuild its political life and basic institutions. Local, everyday politics is the foundation for other form of politics – opening up the spaces that have been monopolized by rent-seekers. Without grassroots democracy, it is impossible to sustain democracy at the

national level. (The opposite is also true; if the central government does not protect rights of assembly and expression, it is difficult to democratise the grassroots.) Politics needs to be built from below, because this is where social forces are at their most dense, where political recruitment and the building of constituencies takes place, where people can translate national policies into local programs, and where local issues become national ideology. It is on this level that politics matter to people, where they can be free to determine their destinies, express their views and participate in the decisions that shape their lives. The greater competition that politics entail enhances the likelihood that elites will seek political support from disadvantageous groups – diversifying the political arena and engendering pro-poor policies.

Distrust remains an obstacle for the re-emergence of politics. Many people in Indonesia would possibly want to get rid of the "corrupt and useless" political parties and electoral politics (the present move towards direct elections of heads of government is a move in that direction). But doing so would further depoliticize society. I would rather suggest that there should be *more* political activities and struggle, not limited to political parties, but certainly not excluding them. The constituency-building achieved by deliberative forums must ultimately feed into formal politics. This does not necessarily mean the civil society groups must establish political parties (such as Akbayan in the Philippines). However, linkages between civil society and political struggles must be strengthened. Through collective action, pro-democracy groups can challenge existing political elites and become a political force to reckon with. As argued by Sandercock (1997), transformative political action often begins with a "thousand tiny empowerments", not grand designs. The are hundreds and thousands of miniature efforts happening around Indonesia in *kabupaten* and *desa,* shifting power to the people, of learning political skills and challenging the authoritative way of managing the community, promoting social justice and a substantive democracy, rather than the weak democracy endorsed by the elite (for some examples, see Antlöv 2003 and 2005, and Sumarto 2003). It is a way to bring people back into politics and government back into public life.

But it is not enough simply to open up political spaces, since history shows that market and societal forces will allow these spaces to be captured by elites, whether market-based or traditional. Let us not be naïve and simply herald (as have many international democracy promoters, see Carothers 1999) the diversity of voices within the new (and often depoliticized) civil society as the panacea to a country's democratic deficit. There is also a need to strengthen the capacity of popular groups to organize around their political interests, and to reform power structures. There must therefore be a mechanism to allow the poor and vulnerable to make their voices heard, one that equalises decision-making power and permits people of all backgrounds take an active part in politics – and not just at election time. The Toquevillian notion of a "depoliticized" democracy which ignores social justice outcomes and organized political interests is not capable of providing pro-active policies for disadvantaged and marginal groups, and therefore will increase the gap between common people and political institutions. Public trust must be regained by improving government performance, involving citizens in the political process, and identifying practices and innovations that contribute not only towards more effective government, but governments that serve society better – the form of politics that allow the disenfranchised and poor to be represented and included.

Conclusions: Is Indonesia Ready for Democracy?

There are people in Indonesia in 2005 who still believe that democratic values such as accountability, human rights and citizenship are not indigenous to Indonesian society, and that foreign governments, through donors and multilateral organizations, are imposing them onto Indonesia. But democracy has been at the core of political discourses in Indonesia for more than half a decade. Democracy is not something new or foreign to Indonesia. During a period at the end of World War II when there were only a handful of democracies in Europe, leaders in Indonesia were busy building their new country around political justice and people's sovereignty. Even though there were restrictions on democratic practices, the public debate was never between authoritarianism and democracy, but between what form of democracy the country should have, and how far it should reach.

I believe strongly that that every society must find its own form of democratic rule, based on its own values and history but relying on non-negotiable principles of fairness and equality. Each society has its seeds of democratic and authoritarian practices. Each culture contains elements of its own freedom but also of its own oppression. Every society and culture thus contains the possibility of a democratic version of itself. More or less democratic practices can be found in all cultures and communities. The fight for democracy is not one of "the

West versus the rest", but one of domestic power and politics. We have recent seen democracy regressions in the oldest modern democracy, the United States. There are growing democratic deficits in many countries in Europe, with right-wing populist coming to power. A century ago, no country in the world had democratic elections with universal suffrage. Democracy was only achieved in Europe through political struggles. Likewise, democracy in Indonesia has also been achieved through power struggles and political agreements, not through foreign crafting or global diffusion.

Soeharto was fond of saying that Indonesians are not ready for democracy. Indonesia proves that the notion of democratic prerequisites is not correct. Democracy can exist in all countries; it has nothing to do with culture. People are not undemocratic or politically inept in Indonesia, They know their rights and responsibilities. Indonesia was much more ready for democracy in the 1950s than America was in the 1780s, and the 2004 election could certainly measure up to the standards of electoral manipulation in Florida in 2000 and religious fundamentalism in Iowa in 2004. It is thus not about trying to introduce democracy into a society based on a different culture. Indonesia does not have a culture lacking in democracy. (It does not "have" any particular culture at all, but competing discourses and practices, as I argued above). The government of the day might want to promote a particular political conception, but we must treat them for what they are: political ideologies and cultural constructions. Cultures and societies are never static: they embrace new traits, which might be invented from below or adopted from outside. With globalization and modernization, we are subject to a variety of laws, rights, and ideologies for which it is impossible to say that one is more authentic than the other. They exist side by side. But in that process of translation, they are also given local meaning.

Democracy is not an institutional design or blueprint, but a concept constantly under construction through contestation among actors in different settings with different understandings (Gaventa 2004). Partnership and collaboration can only be done on a firm foundation of trust. Trust – just like prestige and authority – is not something than can be claimed, but must be won and conferred. At the core of citizen trust is a common understanding and meaning of what constitutes the nations. And at the core of this is a political struggle over legitimacy.

According to the British political scientist David Beetham, political power can be said to be legitimate to that extent that first, the power is acquired and exercised in accordance with established rules, second, that these rules are justified by reference to shared beliefs (including that power serves the general interest and not simply that of the powerful), and third, that there is evidence of consent by the subordinates to the particular power relation (Beetham 1991:16-18). If we look at the New Order, power derived from valid sources of authority (Soeharto was careful in ruling by law, including the 1966 and 1998 transitions) and there was perhaps also some degree of consent, built on an ever growing economy. But we can question whether the second condition – belief in the system – did exist. There were constant measures of cultural and social engineering to create such beliefs (the P4 Pancasila promotion program being but one such method), but at the end of the day, the state lost is legitimacy when it could no longer deliver on its promises. By the 1990s, people did not believe that general elections were reflections of the political will, they no longer believed that political restrictions were necessary for growth to occur, and they no longer believed in the Pancasila indoctrination. So they reacted by not consenting. It was a legitimacy deficit that led to a delegitimation and an acute political crisis. The 1997-8 crises might have started as a financial crisis in Thailand, but it took on a whole new dynamic when it hit an existing de-legitimized regime in Indonesia. That is why eight years later, Indonesia is yet to fully recover from the crises.

Democracy is sometimes defined as a "state of being" rather than a set of institutional arrangements, thus not limited to any form of nation-state (cf. Lummis 1996: Ch. 5). Crucial to this condition is that we hold certain democratic virtues in common: *trust* (not in individual politicians or governments, but in human relations and in the community); *faith* (not in the nation-state, but in each other as human beings); *hope* (that change is possible); and *happiness* (of being free among other free people). We can only remind ourselves of the relief and happiness people that felt when Soeharto stepped down to see that democracy is exactly these virtues. Only if we are true to these ideals can we call ourselves democrats and thus hope that that the nation we together make up is a democratic one. And this is perhaps what Soekarno meant when he spoke in 1930: "We hear the promise of a life for our people that will be happy and secure, of social welfare which will meet and fulfil our needs, of an open and democratic organization of our political life, on unfettered artistic, scientific and cultural progress" (Soekarno "Indonesia Accuses", 1930, quoted in Feith and Castles 1970: 32).

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[2] For a local-level study of how Golkar could win over Islamic votes during the New Order and maintain their position in the 1999 election, see Cederroth 2004.