

Responding to Elite Consolidation: the Anti-Cement-Factory Movement Resisting Oligarchy in an Indonesian Local Election

Arif Novianto¹, Anindya Dessi Wulansari²

¹Institute of Governance and Public Affairs, Master of Public Administration,
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia (email: arif.novianto@mail.ugm.ac.id)

²Public Administration, Universitas Tidar, Indonesia (email: anindyadessi@untidar.ac.id)

Abstract

This study demonstrates resistance to oligarchic forces with a case study from Pati Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. The movement started with a protest against the expansion of the internationally financed Indocement Tunggal Prakarsa Ltd in the Kendeng Mountains. The anti-cement-factory movement lived on and 'defeated' the oligarchs in the electoral districts where the movement happened in the 2017 Pati local election. This study uses a qualitative method. Data were collected from in-depth interviews between December 2016 and July 2017 with 16 social movement leaders and three regional leader's election campaign team members. The findings show that oligarchy as a power relation system can be challenged, putting into question the belief that oligarchy as a power relation system in democracy is unchallenged. This case study in Pati Regency has shown that resistance on the grassroots level, albeit sporadic, was able to challenge the oligarchy.

Keywords:

social movement; oligarchy; elite consolidation

Introduction

The intertwining between general elections and business interests is an interesting research subject in the context of democracy in many parts of the world, including Indonesia. Few powerful people, i.e., the political elites, the political cartels, and the oligarchs, often put their economic and political interests above the public interests, tarnishing the spirit of democracy. Concerning this, people view social change on the grassroots level from two perspectives: pessimistic and optimistic. For example, Winters (2011) and Hadiz and Robison (2004) are pessimistic about impeaching oligarchic power because the oligarchs have great economic and political power. Meanwhile, Aspinall (2014) believes that change is possible. For example, the anti-oligarchic labor movement in the Jabodetabek area, Indonesia, shows how movements managed to drive various changes.

Nonetheless, the two perspectives indicate the same phenomenon: few elites in democratic countries hijack democracy by putting their vested interests above all and leaving citizens in a disadvantageous position. This also happens in countries that previously held a socialist/communist ideology. For example, during the reign of President Leonid Kuchma in 1994-1999, the post-Soviet state Ukraine underwent a change in the economic system towards a liberal direction. The emerging patron-client government increased the presidential authority, which severed the societal economy. As a result, in 2002, the Orange Revolution rose against the oligarchy that dominated 300 of the 450 Rada Agung representatives (Pleines, 2016).

In Indonesia, after the corrupt clientelism during Suharto's New Order era, the reform era started, allowing small rulers in the regions to rise, marked by a change in power relations from centralization to decentralization.

However, the neoliberal ideology remains in power. The decentralization is dominated by neo-institutionalism, which does not make an ideal governance (Hadiz, 2004). It changed the power map in the regions, giving rise to local elites. These new regional elites fought over development budgets and concessions that they could not do during Suharto's centralization of power, which limited any economic and political activities (Lane, 2008). As such, a new oligarchy emerged in the regional executive or legislative institutions (Hadiz, 2004).

Research on power transfer in Indonesia through the general election in the post-Suharto era shows that Indonesia's democracy, although progressing, is still entangled in the interests of the elites. A democratic transition has taken place from an authoritarian state controlled by bureaucratic elites (Suharto's cronies) to an oligarchic democracy that is patrimonial and driven by business forces (Fukuoka, 2012). Hadiz and Robison (2004) show how business oligarchs dominate the democracy in Indonesia, rendering the state predatory, and how the multiparty system in the Reformation era remained a cartel. Political parties survive pragmatically by following the flow of power and rent-seeking (Ambardi, 2009). Political parties in the post-Suharto era tended to be non-ideological, not people-centered, elitist and driven by figures. The inability of political parties to respond to societal problems gave rise to anti-party sentiments and anti-political attitudes (Choi, 2009; Tan, 2006).

However, the domination of the elites in Indonesian regional politics is not without resistance. Data from the UGM International Relations Department (2019), which compiled non-violent actions from 1999 to 2007, show that there were 13,000 actions aimed at opposing the domination of the political elites that did not represent the community's interest. Some of these actions failed due to the intense domination of the elites, but some were successful. In Pati, Central Java, for example,

a study by Novianto (2016) shows that the people's movement successfully thwarted the construction of the cement factory by Semen Gresik Ltd in 2006-2010 and Indocement Ltd in 2010-present, which was backed by the local-national political elites.

The momentum and power garnered in the movement later transformed into opposition to the elite consolidation in the 2017 Pati Local Election. People started the resistance because they considered Haryanto, the incumbent regent and the only candidate in the 2017 Pati Local Election, not keeping his word. When he was a candidate in the 2012 Pati Pati Local Election, he supported the protest against cement factory construction. Haryanto, who partnered with Budiawan at that time, pledged that he would reject cement factory construction if elected. However, when he served, he facilitated the construction of SMS Ltd (Sahabat Mulya Sakti, a subsidiary of Indocement Ltd) in the regency. Considering this, the people's movement that began from the cement factory rejection expanded to mass mobilization to vote for a blank box¹ in the 2017 Pati Local Election. In other words, they chose not to vote for the single candidacy of Haryanto (and his partner, Saiful Arifin) by voting for the blank box.

Previous studies argue that the uncontested election in the 2017 Pati Local Election was a form of elite consolidation to build dominance (Tawakkal & Garner, 2017; Lay et al., 2017). The studies also indicate that the resistance might have been futile because Haryanto's single candidacy was backed by the political elites in Pati. In contrast, we found that the resistance to the oligarchy at the local level was strong, especially in the areas where the movement against cement factories was

¹ The term "blank box" is derived from the balloting system introduced in 2016 by the General Elections Commission (KPU), which allowed voters who rejected the sole candidate to instead vote for a blank box on the ballot.

based. Almost all local polling stations in the 2017 Pati Local Election were dominated by the blank box votes. Therefore, this study examines the resistance in the 2017 Pati local election that went against elite domination.

We arrive at two conclusions. First, the uncontested 2017 Pati Local Election is due to elite consolidation that led to the formation of a local oligarchy. Hadiz and Robison (2004) and Mietzner (2010) refer to this as hijacking democracy at the post-decentralized local level. Second, although the movement that began as a protest to cement factory construction defeated the electoral candidate successfully, it remains sporadic at the political stage. The anti-cement-factory movement did not imagine and attempt to build alternative politics. Most still believe in other elites in the government (besides Haryanto). Their resistance was more like a personal opposition to Haryanto because they felt betrayed by his policies while he was in office.

This research contributes to showing that forced development may create resistance. Our findings differ from the previous studies by Tawakkal and Garner (2017) and Lay et al. (2017), stating that the 2017 Pati Local Election was not resisted by the people. Both studies explain how an economic elite, i.e., Saiful Arifin, consolidated with a political elite, i.e., Haryanto, as a regent and vice-regent uncontested candidates. By contrast, our study found that resistance to the local oligarchy in the form of a single candidacy emerged in the Tambakromo and Kayen districts, where the movement was based in. The resistance was carried out by mobilizing the masses to vote for a blank box during the 2017 Pati Local Election in all regions that rejected the cement factories.

Literature Review

The decentralization and democracy in Indonesia are problematically intertwined. The devolution of power to the regions in its development encouraged transparency

and accountability for a brief moment, but then the predatory network patronage was decentralized to the regional level (Hadiz, 2004). The unequal power relations create interest-seeking bureaucrats and political elites, while business people hijack the democratic process at the local level (Hadiz & Robison, 2004). Lane (2008) shows how the post-Suharto decentralization was a manifestation of the changing balance of power between his crony capitalists and the elites at the local level. The shift of power from the center has given local elites the space to consolidate and scheme for corruption of the development budget and funds. Mietzner (2007) refers to this condition as the emerging kings at the local level.

In other words, the implementation of decentralization in Indonesia has led to an oligarchy at the local level, which Hadiz and Robison (2004) define as a system of power relations that allows the concentration of wealth and authority and its collective defense. Winters (2011) states that the prerequisite for an oligarchy is the imbalance of economic power and ownership of substantial wealth by a few people, which translates to inequality in politics. In Indonesia, oligarchy emerged during the growth and expansion of market capitalism in the New Order era. It is a product of personal and corporate wealth accumulation and control over public institutions and state authorities to suit their interests (Hadiz & Robison, 2004). When decentralization took place, power relations suppressed by the centralization of power were released, allowing oligarchy to emerge locally. Predatory in nature, the local oligarchy seeks to accumulate as much wealth as possible by consolidating with the political gangsters (interest-seeking bureaucrats, thugs, and business people).

However, the perspectives of Hadiz, Robison, and Winters on oligarchy using structural analysis were criticized as too pessimistic. They view economic power as the driving force of political decisions aiming to maintain and expand

the oligarchs' economic interests. The analysis minimizes the possibility of other factors that may create changes beyond the oligarchy's control. Aspinall (2014) highlights agency and mass mobilization factors, indicating that changes in political decisions may be encouraged bottom-up. Aspinall provides cases at the regional level, such as Aceh and Bekasi. The social movements and resistance, coupled with divisions of the oligarchs, resulted in the community winning their demands. In Pati, the resistance to the cement factory's construction shows how the agency of the masses at the regional level thwarts the capital expansion driven by an oligarchy.

Methods

This research was conducted using qualitative methods by collecting and analyzing primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews between December 2016 and July 2017 with community leaders in Tambakromo and Kayen (a total of 16 people) as well as various figures in social community alliances around the Kendeng Mountains, Pati Regency, which were affected by the construction plan of a cement factory, such as Independent Alliance of Kendeng People/ *Aliansi Rakyat Kendeng Bedaulat* (ARKB) (six people), Kendeng's Inheritors/ *Ahli Waris Kendeng* (AWK) (two people), and Community Solidarity for the Kendeng Mountains/ *Jaringan Masyarakat Peduli Pegunungan Kendeng* (JMPPK) (three people) and their affiliations.

We also conducted in-depth interviews with three members of Haryanto and Saiful Arifin's election campaign team. We used a semi-structured technique, and each of our informants was interviewed twice, on average, for three hours. We used this data collection technique to obtain information about various actors' methods, perceptions, beliefs, aspirations, and motivations in the 2017 Pati Local Election political contestation. We also use the data triangulation technique to verify each data alignment between informants

by utilizing secondary data obtained through public documents, and news published online, in print, and electronic media.

Results

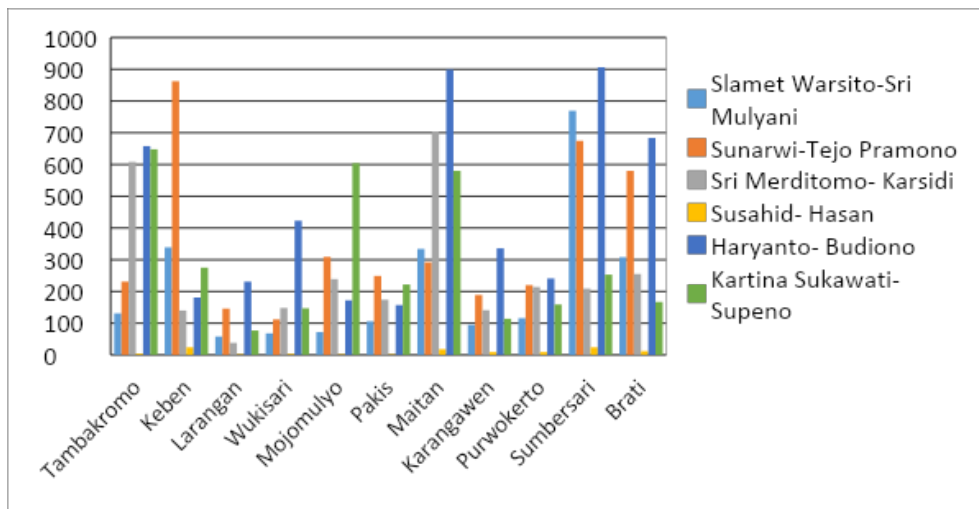
Social Movement: the Anti-Cement-Factory Movement in Pati

The scheme to build a cement factory in Pati began when Tasiman served as the Regent of Pati between 2001 and 2011. Pati's local government cooperated with Semen Gresik Ltd to explore the North Kendeng Mountains region in Sukolilo Subdistrict in 2006. The construction of a factory by Semen Gresik Ltd was planned on a 2000-hectare land to produce 2.5 million tons/year. Almost all oligarchs at the local level agreed with the factory construction plan, considering the potential economic benefits (Novianto, 2016). Most businessmen, contractors, political elites, religious leaders, community leaders, and government officials approved this development project. However, the plan was firmly rejected by the activists within the Community Solidarity for the Kendeng Mountains. The movement thwarted the plan to build a cement factory in 2010. Somehow, this did not discourage the construction plans of another cement factory in Pati. In 2010, the government allowed SMS Ltd to expand to Tambakromo and Kayen Subdistricts.² This was possible due to the changes in regional government and electoral districts. The protest continued just like when they resisted the expansion of Semen Gresik Ltd in Sukolilo.

The protestors used various mass movement strategies to pressure the local oligarchy to cancel the construction plan of SMS Ltd. The actions were successful, just like the effort to cancel Semen Gresik Ltd. The strategies include giving

² The Plan for development and mining projects of SMS Ltd was located in Tambakromo and Kayen Subdistricts. The total area was 2,868 hectares, with 2,025 hectares allocated for limestone quarries, 663 for clay mining, and 180 hectares for factory construction.

Figure 1.
Recapitulation Results of Pati Local Election in 2012 in the Directly Affected Villages by SMS Ltd Expansion Plan



Source: KPU (2013)

public speeches, demonstrations, cultural events, art performances, and environmental actions. The action involving 11 villages impacted by the factory site plan³ could mobilize six and eight thousand residents to the streets. Most of the residents in the villages impacted by the factory site joined the movement. In this case, social sanctions may be conducted to discipline the residents considered pro-cement factories (Novianto, 2018). The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) data from SMS Ltd compiled by MAP Ltd shows that 67% of the residents refused the cement factory's construction, only 20% accepted, and the remaining 13% abstained (Novianto, 2016). Some politicians took advantage of the intensity of public resistance to the cement plant's construction. In the electoral context, they openly campaigned to reject the cement factory construction to sway the protestors.

In the 2011 election campaign, the candidate pair, Haryanto-Budiono, pledged to reject the cement factory construction plan in the Kendeng Mountains. Many protestors were

swayed by this political stance. Wardiman, one of the leaders of the movement in Tambakromo Village, gave his full support to Haryanto-Budiono in his village by forming a success team, and so did Janianto in Brati Village, Kayen Subdistrict, and other residents who rejected the cement plant in Karangawen, Maitan, Wukirsari, and Larangan Villages.

Haryanto and Budiono succeeded in defeating the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP, supporting the pair candidate Sunarwi and Tejo), which almost always won the post-Suharto elections in the areas affected by the construction of SMS Ltd. Haryanto and Budiono were supported by PKB, PPP, PKS, Gerindra, Hanura, PPI, and PKPB, winning the votes of the citizens of Tambakromo, Larangan, Wukirsari, Maitan, Karangawen, and Brati. They only lost in Keben Village and other villages, with only a few citizens rejecting cement factory construction, such as Mojomulyo, Pakis, Purwokerto, and Sumbersari villages.

The political contract between the anti-cement-factory movement and Haryanto and Budiono resulted in increasing votes. Wardiman stated, "We formed a success team, and I went out to the people to convince them that

³ Eleven villages included in the SMS Ltd expansion Ring-1 region are: Tambakromo, Keben, Larangan, Wukirsari, Maitan, Pakis, Karangawen, and Mojomulyo (in Tambakromo Subdistrict); Brati, Purwokerto, and Sumbersari (Kayen Subdistrict).

the cement plant will not be built if they (Haryanto-Budiono) win." (Wardiman, 14 July 2017). Meanwhile, Murtini revealed that Haryanto signed a written agreement to reject the cement plant if elected (Murtini, 12 December 2014). Most people believed in this political stance of Haryanto-Budiono.

The results of the 2011 Pati Local Election were annulled by the Constitutional Court due to a dispute over a recommendation letter between Sunarwi and Imam Suroso. In the re-election in 2012, Haryanto and Budiono won. The votes from the protestors remained intact as they believed in Haryanto-Budiono. They participated in the victory celebration and hoped the construction of SMS Ltd would be canceled immediately by the newly elected regent.

After being inaugurated as Regent and Deputy Regent of Pati, Haryanto and Budiono did not cancel the construction of SMS Ltd and allowed the administration of the licensing process. The pledge made during the campaign was not delivered, causing rage among the people. They urged Haryanto to cancel the construction of the cement plant. However, some people still believed in the genuineness of Haryanto (Kosasih, Jumani, & Kohar, 10-12 May 2017). Some might refuse to join the action to demand the cancellation of the construction, and some might even try to stop the protests.

Over time, Haryanto increasingly favored SMS Ltd, as shown in the issuance of an environmental permit number 660.1/4767 on 8 December 2014. The community began to question Haryanto's true stance in the dispute about the cement plant construction. The anti-cement-factory protestors, who volunteered as Haryanto's success team during the election campaign, were disappointed. They also became more aware of politics, how to address electoral politics, and what it means for social movement struggles.

The lack of experience in political movements made them easily influenced by election manifestos used to gain votes by

local elites, as Haryanto did with his pledge about the cement factory cancellation in Pati. Their political leaning is easily swayed by the apparent kindness of a figure of authority. Oligarchs like Haryanto take advantage of this soft spot to advance their political agenda. Then, instead of fighting for the people as promised in the election campaign, Haryanto showed his true color, i.e., his interest in his social class and approved activities supporting capital accumulation. The anti-cement-factory protestors learned a valuable lesson from entrusting their interests to the oligarch.

Single Candidacy as an Elite Consolidation in the 2017 Pati Local Election

After Haryanto's five years of service, the regional election in Pati was held in 2017. In the 2012 regional election, Haryanto gained votes from the anti-cement-factory protestors. However, in the 2017 regional election, he could no longer expect their support. The undelivered promise dropped the community's trust in Haryanto to the lowest point.

In the 2017 election, the incumbent was expected to win the election. When Haryanto was paired up with Saiful Arifin, a capitalist, most of the parties with seats in the Regional House of Representatives turned their support to this pair. Other candidates, including Budiono, attempted to gain support from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP). However, at the end of the nomination, only Haryanto-Saiful was registered with the Regional Election Commission. They were supported by a large coalition with diverse ideologies from eight parties occupying 46 seats (out of 50) in the Regional House of Representatives. The coalition includes PDIP, Democrats, Gerindra, Golkar, Hanura, PKB, PKS, and PPP. Without other candidates, Haryanto-Saiful ran against a blank box in the 2017 Pati Local Election.

Our analysis shows that the single candidacy in the 2017 Pati Local Election was possible because the single-pair candidate

consolidated with the elites to form a local oligarchy. It was also possible because no other forces (for example, an alternative political movement) challenged the elite consolidation. According to Lay et al. (2017), with such economic, political, and social power, Haryanto-Syaiful was unrivaled, so no other candidates dared to challenge them. Lay et al. (2017) and Tawakkal and Garner (2017) concluded that the single candidacy resulted in zero contestation in the local election because the winner had already been determined, i.e., the sole candidate.

Haryanto-Saiful's ability to consolidate these elites was influenced by their economic-political background. Haryanto had a strong elite network up to the village level, which he built during his political career, starting as the Village Secretary of the Juwana Subdistrict between 1996 and 1998. In addition, in 2000-2001, he served as the Head of Sukolilo and Trangkil Subdistricts, and in 2002-2006, Juwana Subdistrict. In 2007-2009, Haryanto served as the head of the Pati Regional Employment Agency (BKD), then in 2009-2011, the secretary of the Pati Regency.

In addition to the network within the local elites and regional bureaucracy, Haryanto had a network with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)⁴ as the Deputy Chair of *Majelis Ta'lim*. While serving as the Regent of Pati in his first term, in January 2017, ahead of the regional election, he conducted political maneuvers by making transfers and appointments of 671 ASN (civil servants). Although Haryanto was not active at the time, he was able to create allies and reduce potential enemies to ensure that the bureaucracy campaigned on his behalf (Lay et al., 2017).

Saiful Arifin, the Deputy Regent candidate, is a businessman. According to Lay et al. (2017), Arifin's experience began in 1993 when he

ran a Video Compact Discs (VCDs) shop in 1998. He then started selling mobile phones and phone accessories with cash and credit. This business grew rapidly, so he founded a telecommunications-based company, Arifindo Mandiri, a Telkomsel Voucher Ltd distributor. His business bloomed, and he expanded into the property sector by establishing Arifin Firma Putra, owning popular hotels in Jakarta, Bogor, Bali, and Yogyakarta.

In Pati, Saiful Arifin's business expanded into the fisheries, shipping, and livestock sectors. He also established a hotel incorporated into the Safin Group. During this career, Saiful Arifin accumulated not only capital but also a wide network. He is a member of the Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association (HIPMI) and the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce (Kadin). Arifin also has connections to the PDIP party through his participation in the Banteng Muda Community (KBM), which is the ideological group of the PDIP. He is also influential because of his involvement in the football community. He finances a local football club, Persipa Pati, and in March 2018, he was elected chairman. Saiful is the wealthiest person in Pati, with a total net worth of 154 billion rupiahs (around US \$ 11.6 million). Meanwhile, Haryanto was reported to own 4 billion rupiahs (US \$ 295,000) (Lay et al., 2017).

Sporadic Movement to Oppose the Single Candidacy

When Haryanto re-ran in the 2017 Pati Local Election, he faced resistance from the anti-cement-factory movement in Pati. The undelivered pledge from the 2011/2012 election manifesto to reject the cement factory construction was deeply ingrained in the people's psyches. It has given a valuable lesson for the social movement. From this experience, the community in Pati can no longer be easily swayed by promises during electoral campaigns.

The sentiment toward Haryanto culminated in the 2017 election campaign when

⁴ NU an Islamic organization in Indonesia, founded in 1926. Its membership estimates 90 million (2019), making it the largest Islamic organization in the world.

the anti-cement-factory movement resulted in the public voting for a blank box as a form of resistance. Kasmaun, one of the activists who rejected the cement factory construction in the Kendeng Mountains, campaigned to the residents to vote for the blank box. For him, it was a way to counter Haryanto's policies during his first office term, as they did not at all favor the people (Kasmaun, 26 January 2017). Wardiman, an avid campaign team member for Haryanto-Budiono in the 2012 elections, turned against him in the 2017 Pati Local Election. He said, "Leaders who break their promises are not suitable to be leaders." (Wardiman, 14 July 2017).

The emergence of these blank box voters is sporadic, as a response to the elite consolidation manifested in the single candidacy in the 2017 Pati Local Election. Disappointed with the political elites such as Haryanto-Arifin, the community hoped other elites would contest them, so they would not be left with a sole candidate pair. Pardi, one of the protesters of the cement factory construction in Keben Village, refused Haryanto and would have supported Budiono, the Deputy Regent of Haryanto in 2012-2017, if he had run for Pati's Regent Election. The public had the same view, expecting a rival to challenge the sole candidate pair.

The mobilization to vote for the blank box was supported by establishing the Regional Election Democracy Safeguarding Alliance (*Aliansi Kawal Demokrasi Pilkada*, AKDP). One of its roles and strategies was to focus on the incumbent policy failures. However, only a small part of the electoral districts that supported the anti-cement-factory movement was involved in the AKDP. Most of them acted in silos in their villages without a coordinating system or organization. Such individual initiatives in voicing the agenda of voting for the blank box were more common than those in the structured ones. None of the organizations of the anti-cement-factory movement, such as JMPPK, ARKB, AWK, and organizations at

the village level, declared their support for the blank box vote in the 2017 election.

The resistance to Haryanto in electoral politics was not as strong and structured as the resistance to the expansion of the cement plant. One of the leaders of the JMPPK we interviewed stated that although they support the blank box, they don't want to use the JMPPK organization to fight of the incumbent in the 2017 Pati Local Election. The consideration was that the anti-cement-factory movement should not be tangled in a practical political vortex. JMPPK emphasized the "purity of the movement" to avoid involvement with entrepreneurs whose motive was mixed with political interests. Another reason is because the movement had been subject to black campaigns before, stating that it was controlled by foreign-funded NGOs to subordinate and subjugate this social movement (Novianto, 2016).

Forced to Submit: Confining the Campaign of the Blank box Team

The Constitutional Court's Decision No. 00/PUU-XII/20151 allows a sole candidate pair to compete in the electoral contestation with a blank box in the 2017 Pati Local Election. However, the blank box sympathizers are not allowed to express their voices to the campaign. The Regulation of General Election Commission (PKPU) No.8/2017 concerning Socialization, Education, Voters, and Community Participation, stipulates that the campaign for winning the blank box is illegal. This regulation refers to Law no. 7/2017, stating that a campaign is an activity of eligible participants. Since a blank box is not an election participant, the campaign for the blank box is prohibited.⁵

⁵ Much Nasich (the Chairman of the Pati's General Election Commission) stated, "in our interpretation, the blank box is not an eligible participant to be facilitated. If the rules and orders are there, then we are ready to facilitate it." (Koran Sindo, 18/01/2017).

Democratic rights were silenced through two mechanisms. First, the power of the apparatus and the bureaucracy complicate the blank box campaign. AKDP found challenges in obtaining permits from the declaration up to the campaign activities. Any activities relating to the blank box were also scrutinized and complicated by the Election Oversight Committee (Panwas), the General Election Commission (KPU), and the police. For example, there was an overlapping of authority in the bureaucratic domain as KPU stated that licensing campaign activities was the domain of the police (WartaPati, 2017).

Second, the blank box campaign tools were prohibited and removed legally and illegally. Not only did they make licensing difficult, but the blank box campaign tools, such as banners, were also banned in public spaces. The blank box banners were removed by the Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP), but unknown perpetrators might also damage some banners (Interviewed Saryadi, 09 May 2017). The prohibition, removal, and destruction of the blank box banners allowed the Haryanto-Saiful campaign tools to dominate public spaces.

The available open spaces to campaign for the sole candidate were optimized by the success teams, especially because they had the resources. Although they had already overpowered their political opponent, they continued to build a large and costly campaign.

They even recruited prominent figures, elites, and brokers to join the success team to prevent leaders in the sub-district and the village level from voting for the blank box. Four success teams were supporting the incumbent: 1) the winning team, 2) the volunteer team, 3) the entrepreneur team, 4) the religious team, and 5) the stealth team, whose task was to monitor the loyalty of brokers and their supporters (Tawakkal & Garner, 2017).

Seven days before the regional election was held, the sole candidate's success team distributed money (money politics) between Rp5,000 and Rp20,000 to voters, referred to as "cigarette money" or "work substitute money" because voters must spend half a day to cast their votes in the regional election. Residents reported this case to Pati General Election Commissions, but they received intimidation. Fearing the consequences in the future, most reporters and witnesses revoked the reports.

Haryanto-Arifin finally won the 2017 Pati Local Election with 74.52% valid votes, equivalent to 519,688 voters. The remaining 25.48% or 177,682 votes were for the blank box. The total legitimate votes in the 2017 Pati Local Election were 696,310, with 15,195 invalid votes. From the total permanent voter list of 1,035,663 people, only 711,402 used their voting rights. Those who chose to abstain were 324,261 voters, or 31.3%.

Despite winning the 2017 Pati Local Election, the single candidate pair was poorly

Table 1.
Result of Pati Local Election 2017

Village	Sub-district	Vote Blank Box		Participation	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Brati	Kayen	1,242	71.6%	-	59.9%
Lemahbang (Sinomwidodo)	Tambakromo	322	71%	2.180	47%
Karangawen	Tambakromo	556	70%	823	57.2%
Keben	Tambakromo	1,068	71.9%	1.571	52.3%
Larangan	Tambakromo	280	56.2%	529	68.3%
Maitan	Tambakromo	1,644	59.1%	2.873	63.5%
Ngerang	Tambakromo	-	86%	-	-
Mangunrekso	Tambakromo	806	59.7%	1.419	48.5%

Source: KPU (2017)

that oligarchic power is difficult to shake. This finding also refutes the arguments of Tawakkal and Garner (2017) and Lay et al. (2017), stating that the strength of a single candidate in the Pati 2017 Election was unmatched. In fact, the votes for the incumbent couple were defeated by the blank box votes in most of the villages that would have been affected by the cement factory construction.

In other words, oligarchy is not as strong as shown by Winters (2011) and Hadiz and Robison (2004). In the context of the 2017 Pati Local Election, the local elite consolidation is not unchallenged, as shown by Tawakkal and Garner (2017) and Lay et al. (2017). If Aspinall emphasizes the existence of agencies such as trade unions (formal organizations) in the fight against oligarchic politics, this research shows that the resistance agencies can be carried out by fluid and informal mass movements. AKDP was involved in the blank box movement, but only a small part of the resistance joined the AKDP. At the grassroots level, they also joined a local organization that focused on rejecting cement factories, but they also did not use the organization to fight the elite consolidation in the 2017 elections. The reason was that they wanted the anti-cement-factory organization remains unspoiled and apolitical (Interviewed Bramantyo and Suhendro, 05 January 2017). They fear that using the organizations in electoral politics may cause a backlash. The elites may attack the anti-cement-factory movement with an argument that they have been spoiled and invested with practical political interests.

The mass movement to reject cement factory construction shook the power of elite consolidation. However, it could not form alternative politics. Their moves are sporadic and responsive because their organizations are informal and fluid. Nonetheless, they could consolidate the masses against the elite consolidation in the context of formal democracy. This indicates that the power of

oligarchy or elite consolidation can be shaken or even overthrown when social groups outside of the oligarchy or who are threatened by the oligarchy organize themselves and fight back.

Conclusion

The 2017 Pati Local Election with a single candidacy is deemed a display of absolute victory because there is no meaningful resistance from the blank box. This study shows the opposite. The resistance was strong in the electoral districts where people rejected the cement factory construction. They established an agency to campaign for the blank box because they considered that the incumbent did not deliver their electoral manifesto in the 2012 regional election. The anti-cement-factory movement calling to vote for the blank box is in the framework of the sporadic movement. They took political action based on personal disappointment with Haryanto, not because of structural problems such as a social movement that led to alternative politics.

We draw two conclusions from the study. First, the single candidacy in the 2017 Pati Election resulted from a battle in the local election starting at the elite level, which led to a consolidation, a formation of a local oligarchy, and eventually a single candidacy. This condition allows the oligarchs to hijack democracy at the post-decentralized local level. Second, although defeating the incumbent in the electoral areas, the anti-cement-factory movement is sporadic in the electoral political stage. They do not imagine and try to move to build alternative politics. Most still believe in other elites in the government (besides Haryanto). Their resistance is more of a personal opposition to Haryanto because he took advantage of and betrayed them.

This study has two practical implications. First, the power of the oligarchs or elites, which past studies considered an almost undefeatable force due to their dominance, can be defeated through collective action from the grassroots

community. The same collective movement could also thwart the efforts to expand the cement factory in Pati Regency, which would threaten the ecosystem around them. Second, the resistance is sporadic and targets personal elites, hence unable to encourage a more holistic change. This condition also leaves the movement stuck in the locality of issues and personal elite problems. As such, although they won in the villages, they lost at the district level.

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