

Contextually-Grounded Democracy: Broadening Pathways for Democratisation

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Abstract

As norms and mechanisms, democracy has been set in place and the democratic political system is in operation, while the practical standard for expressing democracy is tightened, to make monolithic global governance. Those who fail to comply with the standards are subject to a kind of punishment. At this end, democracy becomes undemocratic, as opportunity to propose alternative ways of expressing commitment to democracy is hindered by the specificity of the prevailing regime. In response to this inclination, contextualized expression of democracy is inevitable. Context does matter, as important as the democratic values. The fact that unanticipated issues of democratisation keep emerging, signals the importance of reconciling the prevailing global regime with the particularities in matching local and national contexts. Yet, the contextualised expression is vulnerable to local and national subversions by the predominating power. Democratisation, then becomes a detailed craftsmanship nurtured by a testable commitment to democracy, in so far the country is endowed with commitment to the ethics of democracy. By using the case of Indonesia's still ongoing democratisation this article maps out the challenges in meeting the standard with the particularity. The analysis in this article provides insights in fostering the contextualized democracy movement in the Asia Pacific Region.

Keywords: *democracy; context and contextualisation; discourse; discursive engagement*

Introduction

For centuries, democracy might be the most popular word on this planet, yet unanimous consensus on what this term constituted has never been reached. This is in contrast to a little more than a decade of optimism toward liberal democracy as the only available and practical alternative following the end of the Cold War. Nowadays, more and more people become more sceptical toward democracy, especially in its liberal variant. The scepticism is levelled either at the claim of democracy as a set of universal values or the feasibility of a certain institutional design of applying it.

This paper aims to elaborate the unattainability of the completeness of this universal claim and the necessity of the contextualisation of democracy. As reflected in the title of this article, the elaboration presented departs from the myth of democracy as a universal value. Its current central position in the global political discourse comes as a result of continuous hegemonic practice, made possible amidst contingent and fluid situations.

Reflecting on the Indonesian case of democratisation, this article aims to elaborate how contextualisation of democracy becomes necessary if it is to succeed in a specific historical moment. In doing so, it starts with a generic definition of democracy from Michael Saward, who defines democracy as a matter of correspondence in state-society relationships. This simple view will be contrasted to the currently dominant discourse of democratisation including its application.

The issue this article aims to address is more crucial nowadays than ever. Amidst the seemingly hegemonic position of liberal democracy, there has been a growing sphere of dissension about whether it is universally applicable and effective. This situation leads into two trajectories of democracy: one with specific objections and the second, outright rejection of the idea of democracy. The former indicates the need to specify the application of democracy in specific historical moments while the latter indicates disillusionment of democracy as an effective mode of governing public matters in a polity.

The liberal model of democracy endorses the maximisation of individual freedom to pursue his/her interest in order to achieve what he or she perceives as the good life. In this regard, the state's intervention is expected to be minimum as any state's intervention is considered to potentially infringe the individual freedom. This is the underlying premise of liberal democracy as articulated by liberal political philosophers such as Hayek (2001) and Nozick (1999).

There has been no single commonly agreed upon model of liberalism and its relations to democracy among the liberal

proponents. One of the greatest liberal political philosophers of the 20th century, John Rawls (1999), argues that distributive justice, thus state's intervention, is necessary for liberal democracy to succeed. Despite such differences, however, most of the liberal proponents agree to see the individual as the starting and end points for democracy.

Furthermore, it is important to note that there has been a process of homogenising through standardisation of the way to practice democracy based on this idea of primacy of the individual, for example, the application of a particular democracy assessment scheme. The standardisation takes place by applying a set of fixed criteria indiscriminately all over the world. The applicability of the fixed criteria makes sense, at least to make the score or the level of democracy comparable. But, by fixing the criteria, those countries which are not yet meeting the criteria are discouraged to see the best way to pursue the idea according and in response to their given specific context.

As jargon such global governance increasingly becomes a specific standard to impose, and does not leave much space for manoeuvre. In this regard, the notion of 'good governance' and 'democratic governance' are interchangeable and not mere popular buzzwords. In the name of good or democratic governance, a set of requirements are imposed either by the international community or by reform-minded activists. An indexing system, which implicitly applies the same criteria of democracy for every country, is applied unilaterally to impose a uniform standard all over the world. The point to make here is that democratising countries are not only facing serious challenges in arriving at the democratic ideal, but also overburdened with the indiscriminate practical standards.

In this regard, democracy becomes a matter of prescription, i.e. to follow the footpath left by those countries which happened to establish the claims to be democratic (Harris, Stokke, & Törnquist, 2005). The fact that each country faces different types of constraints and dilemmas in bringing about democracy is excluded since

democracy becomes merely the adoption of certain prescribed procedures and mechanisms.

Bearing that in mind, this paper clearly differentiates democracy as a set of values, which are universal, and democracy as an institutional set-up which is contingent. This is in contrast to the widely held belief that democracy in its liberal interpretation is the only available alternative, especially since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. Following the end of the Cold War, which liberal democracy came out of as the victor, it has been presumed that the disagreement has been more about the way the ideas or values of democracy are expressed, instead of what democracy really is.

This reflects an assumption where the meaning of democracy seems to be taken for granted. Most people tend to overlook that democracy is an umbrella term that conveys multiple concepts, values, and principles which are not always necessarily congruent to each other. Mouffe elaborates these paradoxes of various principles associated with democracy in the larger extent by garnering the underlying paradox of the two core democratic principles of liberty and equality (Mouffe, 1993).

Mouffe argues that these paradoxes are insurmountable and always potentially disrupt any attempt to constitute democracy as a complete reality. Thus, she further argues that it is necessary to abandon the obsession of constituting democracy as a universal and complete reality and focus more on reiterating the need to constantly adapt democracy to address the specific situation in a given historical moment. In doing so, she argues that we should not abandon liberal democracy altogether but to expand its application in broader aspects of social life through the constant tensions between the principles of equality and liberty.

The main critiques against the liberal democracy and its emphasis on the individual comes from the communitarian discourse. It argues that a society cannot be constituted without a common reference on what are certain notions of common good. The communitarian camp in this debate backs its argument with

notions which can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle.

Mouffe, with Laclau, attempt to address this debate by opening up a new horizon, thus it does not end up in the chicken/egg debate. They propose radical democracy as a new alternative to deconstruct the underlying assumptions from both the liberal and communitarian camps. They argue both premise that any given individual interest and notion of common-good are basically socially constructed through an ensemble of articulatory practices which make those individual interests and notions of common-good meaningful. Thus, neither individual interest nor collective common-good is prior to the other.

The continuous tension between equality and liberty, that is, between individual freedom to pursue their interest and the collective pursuit of common-good becomes more apparent in present day democracy, characterized by a multiplication of demands and identifications hardly reducible into the conventional surface of democracy. Michael Saward's suggestion for defining democracy as a matter of correspondence in state-society relationship is put to test here since among these growing demands there are some that reject democracy altogether while at the same time demanding equal recognition as a justifiable demand in the name of democracy.

Using the same logic of insurmountable paradoxes between liberty and equality in shaping democracy put forward by Mouffe, Saward's generic definition of democracy would facilitate us to understand why diversity in expressing the idea of democracy is attainable, yet opportunity to keep improving the quality of democracy prevails. In the former, the articulation of individual interest is only meaningful when perceived against some sense of an ontological horizon such as liberty and equality that provides partially fixed universality of the term. Yet, the same articulation is only equally comprehensible within the corresponding particular context. The latter, the corresponding context, i.e. its social context is not something which is complete but constantly changing. In Tilly and Goodin's terms, context does matter (Tilly & Goodin, 2008).

The interplays between these two fluid aspects of democracy are the conditions that make democracy and democratisation meaningful. Hence, the process of transformation toward the truly democratic life depends on various aspects which this paper aims to deal with.

The author has exposed the necessity and challenges to contextualize the democratic norms and principles in another paper (Santoso, 2014; see also Huntington, 2012). This following article aims to further pursue this issue by seeking and enriching alternative trajectories on how to address the necessity for and how to carry out the contextualization.¹ In setting up the trajectory, this paper elaborates the dynamic of democratisation as an open-ended process while pinpointing the locus and time for contextualization. The process inevitably involves both deductive and inductive processes, and at the same time involves internal as well as external factors. Revealed in these combinations, democratisation involves a large degree of uncertainties and risks to the public life.

The main point here is that the contextual approach about democratisation would allow the democratising countries to learn among themselves in making their own more democratic state, as opposed to following suit with the pathways set by the more mature democratic countries. Democratisation is a collective and ongoing project of human mankind on this earth, instead of a process of merely implementing a set of uniform international standards for each and every country.

In order to elaborate that topic, this article is written in three sections. The first section elaborates the underlying assumptions and theoretical framework laid out by Laclau and Mouffe in their radical democracy project based on their theory of discourse and hegemony. The second section elaborates the aspect of context within those

¹ As this paper is written with underlying assumption of avoiding the danger of essentialisation, the alternative trajectory here has to be carefully formulated in order to avoid falling into the same trap. In doing so, this paper understands and treats democracy and democratisation as a socially constructed phenomenon. They become attached and associated to certain meanings and practices through continuous and varied processes which are discursive in nature. This paper also sees social formation in any given context through this lens.

concepts of hegemony and discourse and its constitutive role in defining democracy. The third section presents the applications of that framework on the Indonesian case of democratisation in order to flesh out some lessons that we can learn from.

Justifying Contextualization: Democracy as Discursive Engagement

No matter how democracy is defined, it has been expressed as a specific set of norms, mechanisms, and practices in a particular country. It provides a platform or institutional setting to solve public affairs in that country. But, disagreements on this matter are likely to happen from time to time. In fact, democracy becomes relevant mainly due to its claim as the best way to manage this disagreement.

Managing disagreement becomes central in our discussion on democracy because, *first*, we follow Saward's generic definition of democracy as the correspondence between the state and the society. *Second*, we also follow Laclau and Mouffe who see the society, as social entities, are comprised of various diverse elements who sometimes are in conflict against each other. Further, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, the constitution of these diverse elements into a single entity is only possible as a partial and contingent totality (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Laclau, 1990).

The entry point here is the shared meaning of the society or what the society stands for to each of its diverse constituents. The partial and contingent totality of the society is what Laclau and Mouffe mentions as hegemony.

In advocating contextualisation of democracy, this paper sees that the realities of democracy and democratisation are socially constructed, and democratisation involves deconstruction as well as reconstruction of people's collective memory pursued through, in Dryzek's term, a discursive design (Dryzek, 1994).² The point is that, the democratisation process has been set in a particular

² In advocating the contextual approach to democracy, the authors borrow the term "discursive design" here from Dryzek. However, the same term used in this paper refers to a broader

discursive design, but the design has not been seriously taken care of, and has not been consciously articulated by those who take part in the process. The control has been on those who are in the position of reproducing democratic practices, while ordinary people are easily misled. The design is within the domain of discourse, and it basically requires those who think and talk about democracy to ensure their thinking and their actions are democratic in the first place. If imposing a particular idea is undemocratic, so is imposing a particular model of democracy. The challenge is to uncover democracy as a discursive engagement or discursive practice.

The term ‘discourse’ in this regard refers to any kind of articulation that arranges certain symbols in a certain pattern in order to ascribe specific meanings to those symbols through their differential positions to each other in that specific arrangement (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Articulation here does not merely refer to oral or written statements but also includes acts as long as they are intended to construct and transmit certain, specific meanings. Through discourse we make sense and construct our realities since it covers ‘multifarious practices, meanings, and conventions’ ‘through which a certain sense of reality and understanding of society were constituted’ (Celik, 2000).

Discourse is produced through articulation, through which a set of symbols are arranged in certain ways and through their differential positions in those arrangements where each symbol acquires a specific meaning. The articulated differences are called moments, while those are not the elements. Laclau and Mouffe’s

conceptual framework, beyond that initially intended by the original author. Dryzek defines discursive design as a social institution around which the expectations of a number of actors converge. He further describes the feature of this institution as belonging to the conscious awareness of the participants as the site for recurrent communicative interaction among the involved actors who act as citizens rather than representatives of broader entities such as the state, corporate or any hierarchical bodies. Dryzek also describes that this institution should be open to all concerned parties and enable them to freely engage in discursive practices without restriction of any formal rules, though debate may be governed by informal canons of free discourse. One interesting and important feature of this institution is that all of those aforementioned features should be redeemable within the discursive design itself where the participants are free to reflect on them and discursively override any or all of them.

ideas (2001) of discourse and hegemony necessarily bring us to the notion of nodal point. Nodal point is a moment that enjoys a special position through which other moments acquire their certain positions and, thus, their meanings in a discourse. Within the context of democracy and democratisation, its conception and application in any certain country always implies association of democracy with other core ideas which are perceived to be what democracy stands for among the public in that particular country. These are the nodal points of the democracy discourse in that particular country.

If we are to follow Saward's definition of democracy, it is necessary to take into account that the society, to which the state is supposed to correspond to, is constituted in such a discursive way which is necessarily fluid and contingent. As democracy and democratisation do not take place in a vacuum, the values and principles they aim to introduce inevitably have to interact with the specific context that surrounds them. If the standard is to be in the implementable fashion, and they are intended to direct the inevitable process of transformation, they need to be flexible enough to adapt with the specific context they are engaging with.

This is the critical point that Laclau and, especially, Mouffe try to address in their radical democracy alternative. Mouffe, starting in her "The Return of the Political", exposes the paradox of the coexistence of two core principles of democracy, namely equality and liberty. With the ascendancy of the notion of pluralism democracy the latter is currently having the upper-hand in the constant tension between the two.

Liberal democracy comes with this particular discourse of democracy that emphasizes on individual liberty, in the sense of freedom for pursuing the good life as one perceives it. This is based on the assumption that there are multiple interpretations of what the good-life is and there is no natural or moral law that dictates one is superior to the others. Thus, collective arrangement in this discourse is arranged as an instrument to safeguard that one's attempt to pursue his/her good life does not become an impediment

for others to pursue their own good-lives.

On the other hand, the communitarian camp has been the main source of major critiques toward the liberal model of democracy, especially its emphasis on the individual. The communitarian camp comes with the notion of civic republicanism which emphasizes that one's good life is only attainable in and through attaining the collective-good of the corresponding society in which he/she is a part of.

The constant tensions between these two core principles of democracy evolve into antagonisms at many points of the history of democracy. Mouffe (1993, 2013) argues that these constant tensions are the very factor that enables democracy to expand as we know it today and it is still expanding. Thus, she endorses a more positive view toward this antagonism, and antagonism in general, to harness the resulting progressive inertia and transform the antagonism into *agonism* to curb the potential negative impacts of the antagonism. In doing so, Mouffe argues the importance of acknowledging and embracing the political aspects, the antagonism and its positive and constitutive function in the constitution of social realities, including democracy.

This is the point where she is critical of both the liberal model of democracy and its communitarian counterpart. Both see either individual interest or collective common-good as essentially and immediately existing without social-discursive engagement with the other and as a complete totality prior to its counterpart. The emergence of any discourse, either one emphasizing on liberty or equality, is the result of hegemonic intervention which is discursive and, thus, contingent in nature.

Mouffe argues that it is through continuous discursive battle over hegemonic position in the field of discursivity democracy as a social reality comes to the form that we know it today. Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge the positive and constitutive role of antagonism, the radical negativity. The challenge then is how to ensure that the antagonistic engagement does not slide into

annihilation while harnessing its productive energy. Mouffe (1999) endorses the concept *agonism* as a political relation that, in contrast to antagonism, more positively relates the political force in adversarial relations instead of outright enmity.

Dryzek (1994) conceptualizes the discursive design as a social institution that serves to unify diverse and ever expanding constitutive elements while at the same time gives flexible space for these diverse elements to freely engage one another discursively on whatever matters they consider to be important in whatever way they consider proper. The effective operation of these seemingly paradoxical operations is crucial for this discursive design. He further adds the paradoxical conditions of his idealized discursive design concept by stating that even the whole ideal feature should be able to be discursively altered by the engaged participants discursively. This premise also implies that whatever the involved participants discursively consent upon as the norm and consensus among them are the norm and consensus.

Dryzek's discursive design shares many common features with Laclau and Mouffe's notion of hegemony and Mouffe's agonism. Shortly speaking, Laclau and Mouffe's conception of hegemony is best described by Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, p.14) as "the articulation of different identities and subjectivities into a common project ... to create new forms of social order from a variety of dispersed or dislocated elements". It specifies the course of discursive practice in its nature, and hence is able to unify as many as possible elements as its moments and make such configuration to seem natural. The hegemonic formation, as any other discourses, is a closure that always implies inclusion and exclusion through logic of difference and logic of equivalence, thus it necessitates dislocations. However, a discourse becomes hegemony when and by keeping the boundaries to be flexible enough to shift when it is necessary while maintaining its strength to cohesively unify the diverse and ever expanding moments that constitute it (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.139). It also owes its hegemonic position to its ability to neutralize

the potential and actual articulation of dislocation as antagonism, thus nullifying their ability to destabilise the hegemonic discourse. The full implementation of the whole idea of democracy would lead to a hegemonic structure. This is what the theorists at the other theoretical stand refer to as: “democracy becomes the only game in town”.

At the methodological level, Laclau and Mouffe also stress the transient nature of hegemony and hegemonic formation as an ever on-going and open-ended process. Arguably, democratisation operates in an open-ended process, since no one really is in a full control of the process, under which democracy is reaching a hegemonic stage. Accordingly, the logic of equivalence and logic of difference which: (1) define the boundaries between the elements and the moments; and (2) govern the relations among moments; are also contingent. This is due to the discursive nature of the relations between the signifier and signified. If the discourse on democratisation is influential enough to signify problem-solving of each country as opposed to compliance to international standards, and democracy means the best solution to public affairs, then democracy would open up new opportunity structure for pursuing.

Dryzek’s discursive design and Laclau and Mouffe’s hegemony highlights the constitutive role of differences and even antagonism for social realities such as democracy. Furthermore, their notions expose the necessity to maintain and expand the contingency and fluidity of the space for dispersions of demands and identities if democracy is to be sustainable. The acknowledgement of the constitutive role of the radical negativity and the contingency of the trajectory of democracy in every historical moment is the main critiques made by Dryzek’s discursive design and Laclau and Mouffe’s hegemony and agonism toward the essentialism tendency in both the liberal and communitarian models of democracy.

Referring back to Saward’s generic definition of democracy as matter of correspondence between the state and society, reflections on Dryzek and Laclau and Mouffe’s notions show that

the correspondence between the state and society is a discursively constituted phenomenon amidst contingent situations. The correspondence achieved at one particular historical moment is constantly threatened by dissolution and never totally is complete and fixed. This contingency plagues both the individual interests and the collective common-good.

Applying this framework into a concrete case, the contingent and dynamic nature of social realities are obvious when we observe the situation in any particular country. The principles of liberty and equality acquire different meanings and practical expressions. This is because those principles are empty signifiers, thus subject to multiple interpretations and meanings (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The concept of liberty that has been associated with democracy in countries such as the United States and France have varying connotations in each country and from one period of time to another. However, even when both might refer to different meanings from time to time, the associations between the two are relatively intact in their respective public's perception.

Putting this dichotomy into the issue of contextualizing democracy and democratisation, it becomes necessary to adapt and interpret how democracy is designed and implemented to address the articulated dislocation in a specific social context. For democracy to be a stable regime it requires the acceptance from the relative majority of its subjects. This acceptance should be earned through an ever-on-going process of addressing the expectations, or articulated dislocations, which circulate among its public.

In addressing these issues, two potential biases immediately strike the forefront. The *first* bias comes from the predominant discourse that sees democracy as something essential and, hence, treats democratic transition pathways as something prescriptive. The *second* bias potentially comes from the counter-discourse, including some discourses which favour contextualisation of democracy by essentialising the current existing situation as apriority fixed and complete. The former represents the universalist interpretation of

democracy while the latter represents the particularist view. But the fact of the matter is that, both interpretations coexist and deserve mutual respect from each other. What is really important in this regard is, the willingness to promote the particularist interpretation for allowing the sovereign in the particular country to explore the best way to express democracy, as well as the willingness of each country to learn from each other on how the considered universal democratic values are put into practices in each of their specific particular contexts.

Contextual Matters

Democracy has become a global norm. More countries nowadays aspire to be able to make a justifiable claim to be democratic than ever before. However, current time has also been marked by more serious challenges toward democracy resulting in the deterioration of the state of democracy and freedom—in the liberal sense—as was noted in the Freedom House Report 2016. In its report, the Freedom House mentions three factors as the main cause for the dire challenges against democracy in 2015, namely xenophobic responses in democratic countries; deteriorating economy in natural-resource dependent countries; and the growing eagerness of authoritarian regimes to crack down on dissent and all of these concerns are attributed to the overlapping crises that took place prior to and in 2015.

This challenge is not a sporadic phenomenon. Freedom House mentions that in the last decade the net numbers of countries which underwent retrogression in the field of freedom exceeds the net numbers of countries with positive gain, thus proving that this is more than merely a sporadic challenge. The Freedom House Report in 2017 report mentions Populist and Autocrats as the two main sources of threat for democracy globally, further showing the long-term nature of this challenge.

The discursive nature of social realities for Laclau and Mouffe means the constitution of those realities are a result of articulatory practices through which meanings are produced. The production of meaning requires a dual process of inclusion/exclusion, in which a certain set of signifiers are arranged in a certain order while some others are not.

This logic is also applicable to describe the constitution of democratic society in any given society. It ranges from defining who the members of the society are; what the society as a collectivity stands for; how it should be arranged democratically; by what means, etc. Those whole ranges of mechanisms, procedures, and deliberations are basically articulatory (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.113). Each and in their ensembles of those practices produce meanings. It is produced through the process of including certain meanings by simultaneously excluding some others. It is these excluded signifiers that constantly pose the constant potential of dissolution of the articulated discourse, in this case democracy.

In concrete cases of democratisation, we never find it takes place in a vacuum. Its articulation always takes place in pre-existing criss-crossing discursive formations. Such is the case of democratisation in most of the newly democratised countries nowadays. In fact, presently for some, the democratisation in many newly democratising countries seems to happen as something that is externally imposed.

Unfortunately, since democracy is adopted rather as an imposition than as internally driven and organically constituted the discursive formation tends to overlook the contextual peculiarities in each country or region. As stated above, the proponents of this model of democracy and democratisation tend to believe that the adoption of democracy as prescribed would eventually solve and address all currently existing and potentially emerging problems.

This essentialist view perceives the only possible solution for existing and potentially emerging problems all lead to the further adoption and institutionalisation of the prescribed model

of democracy. Thus, democracy and democratisation are reduced merely into procedural and administrative matters (Harris, Stokke, & Törnquist, 2004). Those studies argue that this tendency much contributes to the stagnant state, or even worse, a backlash against democratisation in some of the newly democratising countries. Overconfidence in the capability of the newly established democratic institutions to tackle the articulated dislocations becomes a serious liability for the further establishment of democratic norms, values, and practices themselves. When the democratic regime fails to satisfactorily address the articulated dislocations it reduces the legitimacy of the democracy discourse before the public in the related country.

Such a case is not exclusive among the newly democratising countries. Freedom House 2017 report shows how in countries with much better-established democracy, disillusionment about and backlash against democracy have also been taking place. In many regards, this backlash occurs as the existing hegemonic liberal discourse regime is unable to satisfactorily address the emerging dislocations. These dislocations manifest as multiple crises in the European case, ranging from job opportunities; reduction of public spending through the austerity regime; refugee and immigration; and to questioning the efficacy of the European Union itself.

As democracy and democratisation, in this case its liberal variant, as prescription, it comes with an assumption that the ethico-political values or as we may say 'virtues' they offer are unquestionable, should not be questioned, and superior to other values. The liberal variant of democracy which has been introduced is based on the notion that there are multiple values and moral principles of the good life; none is superior to others; and every individual should be free to pursue the good-life as he/she perceives it as long as it does not impede others in pursuing their own. This pluralist view serves as the ethico-political foundation that stabilises and regulates the dispersions of multiple and diverse individual interests.

Unfortunately, as pointed out by Mouffe, such pluralist views blur and exclude the political nature of the constitution of the ethical foundation that underlies it. Mouffe points out that liberal democracy excludes the actual and potential antagonism among the plural elements of the society in the private domain as the result of the regulation and modification of their meaning as articulated in the pluralist liberal democracy discourse.

The minimal state endorsed by most proponents of the liberal democracy discourse follows these pluralist and individualist basic assumptions. The state intervention in public life is limited in ensuring and regulating that in their attempts to pursue their specific good life, each individual does not violate others' freedom to pursue their own. The state is supposed to be neutral (Mouffe, 1993, pp.124-128).

Full neutrality in its practice, however, is impossible, just as full and total liberty and full equality are. Mouffe points out one liberal political thinker, Joseph Raz, who argues that the state cannot be fully neutral. It has to allow some forms of good life and the attempts to pursue them and forbid some others. Following the liberal principle, Raz puts personal autonomy as the criterion to distinguish which forms of good life should be permitted or forbidden (Mouffe, 1993, pp.125-126).

What exactly the existing and potential dislocations and antagonism are varies from one historical moment to another. What matters here is the space created for the dispersions and regulations of various articulatory practices to take place within the discursive formation of liberal democracy and the necessary exclusion it implies. Thus, designing the formula to establish and operate democratic structure is something beyond promulgating new laws and rules in accordance to a certain prescribed model of democracy. It requires careful attempts to identify the articulated dislocations in the democratising society and design the democratisation process to address them. Such attempt requires a discursive design to ensure that various complex and interconnected processes of democratisation

are directed and implemented accordingly. This topic of discursive design is discussed in the following part of this paper.

Now let us use this framework to see a specific case of democratisation. In the following part the Indonesian case illustrates how the failure of the existing discursive design to cope with the circulating articulated dislocations contributes to the emergence of phenomena perceived to be defective as a product of democracy and democratisation.

How to Contextually Shape Democratisation: Lesson-learned from Indonesia

This part presents the Indonesian experience with democracy and democratisation. It covers both its past and current experiments with democracy. Indonesia carried its first experiment with liberal democracy in the 1950s. It met abrupt halt in 1959 and since then authoritarian regime ruled Indonesia up to 1998. The Indonesian case illustrates how the absence of discursive design to safeguard the democratic procedures and mechanisms leads to democracy backlash. This result is because democracy has been perceived merely as a set of formal institutions, procedures, and mechanisms established and implemented strictly without the flexibility to cope with the changing dynamics of Indonesian socio, economic, and political landscapes.

Reflecting upon the Indonesia's recent history especially on the oscillating historical path between the discourses of democracy and authoritarianism, this part elaborates how the emergence and potential re-emergence of an authoritarian regime actually has its roots in the in/ability of the democratic regime to discursively engage them.

Looking at the current trajectory of democratisation in Post-1998 Indonesia will remind us about the depiction of the Liberal Era of the 1950s Indonesia. One feature with the most striking resemblance between these two eras are the strong articulation from

the locals for broader autonomy, some even leading into separatism, and the heating ideological debates and conflicts. The Post-1998 Indonesia is arguably characterized by the much less explicit intervention from the military into the civilian political life and internal rivalries in comparison with the Liberal Era of the 1950s.

Another similarity is that the model of democracy adopted in the 1950s and Post-1998 Indonesia mostly refers to what is claimed to be the 'normal model' of democracy by the global communities.

To some extent, each regime in these two periods also comes with a similar strategy to respond to the challenge of handling autonomy and devolving power to the local communities. Local administrations in the 1950s underwent major reconfiguration with establishment of new provinces and districts/municipalities, intended not only to expand the state's presence through civic and public services but also to put the administrative arrangement in-line with the ethno-cultural boundaries as much as possible. Similar phenomena also became common with the reconfiguration of local governments units, known as *pemekaran*, in the Post-1998 Indonesia. For some scholars and commentators, the decentralisation in Post-1998 Indonesia has been deemed as a best practice that other newly democratising country should refer to as a model (World Bank, 2003; Kurtlanzick, 2011).

The reconfiguration of the local government and administrations in both eras follow uniform general principles and mechanisms. A uniform model of government and administration structure is generally imposed on the established units with minor exceptions, such as the grant of special status for the Province of Aceh and Yogyakarta in the 1950s and special autonomy status for Papua and Aceh in Post-1998 Indonesia.

The ideological differences during both eras, formally, have been dealt with through the democratic institutions, mechanisms, and procedures involving political parties, elections, national and local parliaments and many other means. The liberal multi-party system was in its full swing during these two periods based on

the notion of liberty as one of the main values and principles of democracy. Formally, the prescription of liberal democracy has been followed to the letter in both periods.

These two eras have also been characterized by similar counter-discourses levelled against the democratic regime such as the portrayal of high demands from the locals for broader autonomy and their respective local dynamics as potential threats to national unity. The model of liberal democracy is framed as the source of these perils due to their incompatibility with the Indonesian cultural context and it has been associated with the international and global powers that intend to use it as part of their strategy to maintain their control over Indonesia. These counter-discourses have been common in the Indonesian daily life, and reproduced in private and public domains, both in informal and formal engagements.

The counter-discourse proposes a more centralized model of government, relying more on command and control mechanisms of governance, with a strong tendency to equate harmony with centrally imposed uniformity. In 1959, this counter discourse prevailed to deconstruct the liberal democracy regime and Indonesia entered a new period of centralized turned authoritarian regime until 1998 with the downfall of Suharto's New Order.

The re-emergence of the similar counter-discourse in the Post-1998 Indonesia should be taken cautiously. The cautionary measures taken are not directed to antagonize or silence these counter-discourses, since that will be outright undemocratic and thus further tarnish and deconstruct the democratic discourse that Indonesia has been trying to institutionalize, but gives opportunity to make self-reflection on whether the current discourses of democracy have been able to effectively address the dislocations it causes and accommodate them as their internal components.

One particular demand from the Indonesian public throughout those two periods is better economic and welfare conditions. Broader autonomy demanded by the local public in various regions in Indonesia is always based on the argument and

demand for more equitable welfare between central and periphery areas or between Java and the outer islands. The socio – political dynamics of the Liberal Democracy period was also articulated as the cause of hindrance for economic development in the 1950s. In turn, economic underperformance has always been part of the counter-discourse against the ruling regimes of Sukarno’s guided democracy and Suharto’s New Order in 1966 and 1998 respectively.

Economic and social welfare keeps its hold on the imagination of Indonesian public as what the state should provide up to this day. The latest survey of Power, Welfare, and Democracy shows that despite the high distrust among the public toward the state, they also expect the state to provide them with basic welfare services (Santoso *et al.*, 2014). Such demand directly contradicts the prescribed model of liberal democracy adopted in Indonesia since 1998 which dictates minimum state’s intervention in public matters.

Furthermore, the emphasis of the liberal democracy model on the individual and its uncritical application in Indonesian society have encouraged some of the Indonesians to articulate their dislocations through the discourses of collectivities based on various ideas such as religions, ethnicities, or multiple combinations of those two.

Unfortunately, the democratic regime in the 1950s and Post-1998 has put this issue of welfare more within the liberal discourse, relying much on the market mechanism for welfare provision, and giving more emphasis on the formal regulatory adjustment to comply with the prescribed model of democracy (Nordholt, Schulte & Van Klinken, 2007, p.21; Tapiheru, 2011).³ Ironically, though it might be debatable and we always need to cautiously counter-weight it with its corporatist motive, the authoritarian regime of New Order has been the only regime that put more emphasis on the state’s role in

³ See also Harris, *et al.* (eds.), *Op. Cit.* In the case of managing the diversity and growing identity politics the democratic regime in Post-1998 Indonesia also overconfidently relied on the formal arrangement.

welfare provision in their policies.

Both the discourses of democracy and its counterparts are articulated in essentializing manners. The former reduces democracy as merely administrative matters and turns democratisation into a top-down process instead of the intended bottom-up participatory one. It falls into the trap of uniformity that sidelines the necessity to conform the general model to the existing specific context in which this model is applied. The latter presents the particular discursive formations and identities as something predetermined prior to its insertion into the specific historical moment.

The situation of post-1998 Indonesia becomes more complicated as the side-lining of the welfare issue from the broader discourse of democratisation and decentralization takes place in situations where citizenship, as articulated in civic republicanism discourse is also relatively absent (Nordholt *et al.*, 2007). The communitarian counter against the individualism of liberal democracy discourse then manifests in the form of various “grey” activities which from the formal and legal perspective may fall into the category of illegal, or informal at best, through which the public articulates the dislocations they cannot inscribe on the surface of the condoned discourse of democracy (Aspinall, 2011). Though informal or illegal, the parallel structures of these shadow state aspects have been able to define the formal political dynamics in the Post-1998 Indonesia and sometimes twist the democratic regime into oligarchy (Robison & Hadiz, 2004).

The research on citizenship in some resource-rich regions in Indonesia shows that the public in those regions articulate their counter-discourse against the extractive industries through the discourse of indigenous rights and indigenous identities. They, however, address their demands to the state indicating that these demands are articulated as citizenship discourse mediated by indigenous discourses and identities. While such phenomena have their positive effects to renegotiate the application of democratic principles to address the particular dislocations and antagonisms,

still it should be borne in mind that these discourses of indigenous identities always potentially slide into some sort of chauvinistic discourse which may incite conflicts against other elements of the society. In other words, such articulation does come with positive impacts for democratisation since it constitutes the democratic relations between the state and its citizens. However, we should also be aware of its negative potentials (Tapiheru, Capriarti, Nudya, Lestariningsih, 2017).

The current democratic regime has made many innovative measures in comparison to the previous experiment in the 1950s to address the counter discourse against democracy. There are many alternative channels besides the formal ones such as political parties and the parliament for the public to articulate their aspirations ranging from civil society organizations to a wide array of state auxiliary institutions such as the Ombudsman and many others. Under the current regime, the central government has also been relatively more responsive for demands from the local level.

The crucial challenge that is yet to be addressed is to regulate these dispersions of demands while maintaining the delicate balance of democracy—liberty and equality—as the nodal points. Many attempts have been made. Most of them, however, are still restricted within the domain of formal democracy. As indicated in the works of Harris, Stokke, and Törnquist (2014) and Nordholt, Schulte, and Van Klinken (2007) there is a strong tendency to reduce all of these dynamics of democratisation and decentralisation into administrative matters. The reforms that take place instead are following the dictated prescription rather than as a result of deliberative process involving the Indonesian public.⁴

In so doing the substantive aspect of democracy is barely touched and institutionalized into the public life. The reforms that take place are superficial at best and thus contribute to the emergence

⁴ One startling example is the program of bureaucracy reform as discussed in Santoso, Purwo and Joash Tapiheru, 2012, *The Absence of Public in Indonesia Bureaucracy Reform*, paper

of the phenomena of the persistence of patronage and shadow state in Post-1998 Indonesia. In turn, the absence of transfusion of democratic principles and values to the broader public prompts the articulation of counter discourse and becomes ungovernable and, at many instances, puts democracy as the main target of these counter discourses.

One startling and contemporary example is the polemic that divides Indonesian public's opinion on the policy of Jakarta's Governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, in evicting the shanty town at the Kampung Pulo Jakarta. The governor insists that his policy is oriented toward the common good and the inhabitants of this shanty town are illegally occupying state property. The eviction process itself has somehow turned into a violent one because some of the inhabitants refused to be evicted. As a result, some criticisms have been levelled toward the Governor and his policy of eviction citing him as being partial, preferring the haves and oppressing the have-nots. Some criticisms are levelled at his repressive approach in implementing this policy. Going through these counter discourses, we may find some ambiguities. *First*, there is a widespread usage of the concept of class amidst the paranoia against communism and among Indonesian society. *Second*, the relative absence of counter discourse based on the same nodal points the Governor's has cited to back his policies with such as the Constitution and the Law. Counter discourses that articulate the evictees as citizens whose rights are ensured by the same constitution the governor claims to enforce are still minor.

This indicates that the current democratisation and the accompanying decentralization occur within considerable distance from the very life of Indonesian public. The absence of a discursive design makes it harder for the public to participate in these processes and have their demands accommodated into the practical policies under this regime. Thus, their dislocations are easily consolidated

into a counter-discourse which is levelled against democracy, and constructed as the opposite camp. When not properly anticipated, this tendency will potentially weaken and obstruct further institutionalization of democratic principles and values into the daily social life of the Indonesian public and, in the worst case, produce a democracy backlash.

Conclusion

Contextually grounded democracy is part of the methodological consequences for maintaining the sustainability of democracy through opening up the space to question the already well-established forms of expression of democratic values and principles. Referring back to Saward's definition of democracy as a matter of corresponding expectations between the government and the public, counter-balancing the top-down democratisation from the bottom-up becomes crucial. What the public expects from or associates democracy with may differ from what the text-books on democracy have defined. However, this is exactly what we should expect when we decide to adopt democracy since it champions the principles of freedom of expressions as one of its underlying values.

There are limits and boundaries to this space though. Dryzek envisions that such limits are consensually defined by the participating agents. Since everyone should be allowed to participate in the discursive design process the limits and boundaries are rather dynamic and fluid. Hegemony is a necessity to make the field relatively more stable. Practically a group of people who engage in a common social interaction are commonly bound and refer to a certain structure of signification through which messages and meanings are communicated to each other. Thus, hegemony should not be seen as something negative here. Instead, the ultimate challenge is to manage the paradoxical demands. On the one hand, it is necessary to maintain a certain hegemonic structure to enable the participants to communicate with each other and make sense

of their social realities and, on the other hand, equally opening up space for deliberation.

Democracy has unlimited potential meanings. Some have been relatively more firmly associated to be something that this term stands for and considered as the principles and underlying values of democracy. At this point, this paper has no intention to question them. In fact, this paper suggests that those values and principles should be set as the boundaries for the would be discursive design for democracy and democratisation in a specific country. The space for deliberation is opened up to negotiate and re-negotiate their social and institutional expressions. By doing so, the discursive design is intended to safe guard the ends of democracy and democratisation instead of the means.

Nonetheless some institutional expressions and manifestations have become deeply sedimented and become synonymous with democracy itself such as election and political party just to name a few. The opening of space for deliberation through discursive design will surely imply that these expressions, manifestations and beliefs which underpin the notion of them as representations of democracy would be put into question. The implied framing/reframing process leads to re-evaluation of all systems of category related to democracy which most people perceive as something given. The consensus produced has also been soon followed with institutional adjustment, thus saving the discourse from spiralling down into merely political jargons.

Thus, the discursive engagement this paper just discussed necessitates exponents who are able to continuously address the issues at hand both at ideological or philosophical levels and provide practical solutions simultaneously. For doing so, these exponents need to gain and gather as much knowledge as possible by learning through the past and others' experience and from there formulate possible breakthrough solutions.

The discursive design presented in this paper sees and defines one's commitment to democracy as something measured by one's

commitment to continuously question and open further variations of democracy. It offers a breakthrough solution to overcome the stagnation of democratisation in many newly democratising countries by encouraging people to always question what democracy means and what it should mean through the lens of their specific contextual experience.

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