

The Politics of Civil Society Forms: Urban Environmental Activists and Democracy in Jakarta¹

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Abstract

Despite the ongoing debate regarding how and to what extent civil society enhances democratic practices, it is generally agreed that there is a reasonable link between civil society and democracy under certain conditions. This paper aims to explore the politics of civil society forms and understand their contribution to the maintenance of democratic practices in Jakarta. Building on a neo-Tocquevillian understanding of civil society, this article analyses urban environmental activists' strategic adoption of voluntary associations and environmental spin-off campaigns as forms of civic engagement to improve public policy. This paper asks how and to what extent these forms of civic engagement provide alternative understandings of civil society's efforts to promote local democracy. We argue that urban environmental activists' spin-off campaigns and voluntary associations represent a particular form of civil society politics, and thus provide different routes to understand local democracy by facilitating diagonal accountability mechanisms. However, further analysis found that the forms adopted by urban environmental activists suffer horizontal and vertical accountability problems similar to those frequently found in more established forms of civil society (e.g. non-government organisations). Nonetheless, the discussion in this paper illustrates civil society's ingenuity in pushing for democratic practices amidst Indonesia's 'democratic recession'.

Keywords: *civil society; democracy; environment; forms; strategy.*

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Introduction

The role of civil society in democracy is one of the most studied topics in the literature on political science. The seminal publication of Diamond (1994) pushed political scientists to further investigate the potential role of civil society in promoting democratic values. In Indonesia, this has led scholars to spend their time investigating various forms of civil society, such as social movements (e.g., Nyman, 2006) or scrutinising civil society through the works of non-governmental organisations (e.g., Antlöv, Brinkerhoff, & Rapp, 2010; Hadiwinata, 2003). Other scholars have held that the most appropriate interpretation of civil society's role in Indonesia lies in mass faith-based organisations such as Muhammadiyah (e.g., Fuad, 2002) or Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) (e.g., Bush, 2002).

The choice to focus and emphasise particular forms of civil society is somehow linked to the malleability of civil society as a concept. Civil society is often defined as encompassing everything except the state and market, and thus is quite expansive (Jensen, 2011). There is nothing wrong with such an open-ended idea of civil society, so long as the analysis is sensitive to the different configurations of power relations between various civil society entities (Hadiz, 2004). Although previous studies have offered an often synonymous understanding of civil society and unstructured activism in Indonesia (Harney & Olivia, 2003), the use of the lens of civil society to understand informal activism—especially this activism's implication for democracy—remains limited in the literature. This article scrutinises urban environmental activists' use of voluntary associations and spin-off campaigns in

Jakarta. It asks how, and to what extent, these forms of civic engagement provide an alternative understanding of civil society and its efforts to promote local democracy.

Using two Jakarta-based organisations—the voluntary association *Koalisi Pejalan Kaki* (literally Pedestrian Coalition, henceforth KPoK) and the spin-off campaign *Koalisi Penghapusan Bensin Bertimbang* (literally Coalition to Abolish Leaded Gasoline, henceforth KPBB)—this paper aims to explore the politics of civil society forms and their contribution to the maintenance of democratic practices. Jakarta has been chosen because the city is often considered the centre of civil society activities in Indonesia (Antlöv, Ibrahim, & Tuijl, 2006; Lay, 2017). Data collection was conducted between October 2020 and June 2021. Primary data for this paper were collected through online interviews with KPoK and KPBB activists, while secondary data were collected by reviewing relevant literature, including news stories, social media campaign posts, and other documents available online.

Despite receiving little acknowledgement in key publications regarding the environmental movement and environmental non-government organisations in Indonesia (e.g., Nomura, 2007), we argue that urban environmental activists' spin-off campaigns and voluntary associations represent particular forms of civil society politics, and that they provide an alternative route for understanding local democracy through their ability to facilitate diagonal accountability. Aside from expanding the horizon of civil society in Indonesia, this discussion is important given the bleak assessment of democracy in Indonesia (Mietzner, 2020). In a way,

scrutinising civil society activities outside the major non-government organisations and the other 'usual suspects' is necessary to advance the idea of a more contextually grounded democracy (Santoso & Tapiheru, 2017). Furthermore, without totally rejecting critical assessments of democracy's current state in Indonesia, this article proposes maintaining 'cautious optimism' (Weiss, 2020) regarding environmental activists' creativity in pushing for democratisation.

At the same time, it should be noted that voluntary association and spin-off environmental campaigns in urban settings are relatively forgotten in discussions of civil society for reasons that are not related directly to its inherent democratic quality. Rather, their omission is triggered mostly by practical concerns. For example, scholars simply focus on the most obvious entities that can be easily understood as representative and uncontested manifestations of civil society. In the context of civil society and environmental activism, it is easier and more obvious to discuss popular non-governmental organisations such as WALHI, KEHATI, etc. This problem is exacerbated by the tendency to study environmental issues that are perceived as occurring mostly in rural areas (e.g., Lee Peluso, Afiff, & Rachman, 2008). This is not to say that the focus or choices of previous studies are wrong; rather, we reckon that it is time to end the simplification and take voluntary associations and spin-off campaigns as subjects of inquiry.

Alagappa (2004) explains that contemporary understandings of civil society fall into two major categories: neo-Tocquevillian (or liberal-democracy) and the New Left. Where New Left scholars

examine civil society by emphasising its role in preventing the expansion of state and capitalist market forces into the social realm, the neo-Tocquevillian tradition does not necessarily see the state or market as intrusive (Alagappa, 2004). In the neo-Tocquevillian tradition, civil society does not simply safeguard the interests of society but balances the interests of the state and market with those of society. As such, many of the academic works that use a neo-Tocquevillian lens focus on civil society's contribution to democratisation within state institutions—particularly in policymaking.

At the core of the neo-Tocquevillian notion of civil society is the notion of civic community, which refers to the "patterns of civic involvement and social solidarity" (Putnam & Leonardi, 1993: 83). Unlike studies that emphasise social capital as the most important tenet of the neo-Tocquevillian tradition (e.g. Alagappa, 2004; Edwards & Foley, 2016; Siisiainen, 2003), this paper focuses more on the notion of 'civic community' because it is concerned directly with the way scholars interpret the boundaries of civil society. Putnam and Leonardi (1993) identify the civic community as having several characteristics, i.e. civic engagement; political equality; solidarity, trust, and tolerance; and associations. Although these components are equally important, this paper—drawing from the case of KPBB and KPoK—will focus primarily on the question of association, as the social structure that facilitates cooperation (civic engagement). The other three characteristics are discussed only as starting points.

The paper proceeds by explaining KPBB and KPoK as "horizontal networks of

civic engagement" (Putnam & Leonardi, 1993: 176). Subsequently, KPBB and KPoK are analysed within the context of Indonesian civil society to understand these movements' political forms within the broader typology of such movements. Afterwards, matters of accountability and urban environmental activism are elaborated to understand the movements' potential for and pitfalls in enhancing democracy at the local level. This article concludes by summarising the overall discussion.

Spin-off campaigns and voluntary associations

Putnam emphasises the importance of associations and social networks in practising and reinforcing the norms and values of the civic community. To do so, associations must be horizontal, "...bringing together agents of equivalent status and power" (Putnam & Leonardi, 1993: 173). As will be explained below, KPBB and KPoK provide examples of distinctive social structures that facilitate civic engagement 'internally' (amongst members) and 'externally' (throughout the broader polity) (Putnam & Leonardi, 1993).

KPBB was conceived in 1996, after environmental NGOs such as WALHI and Yayasan KEHATI strategized different means of advancing environmental protection in Indonesia. Interviews with one activist revealed that, during that time, activists started to develop a plan for managing air pollution—one of Indonesia's most pressing environmental problems. Some activists were subsequently tasked with adapting and operationalising this strategic plan in an urban context, and these activists chose to focus on

controlling air pollution through traffic and transportation management. To tackle this issue, it was then agreed that the environmental NGOs would establish a coalition—under the banner of the Coalition to Abolish Leaded Gasoline (KPBB)—that focused on abolishing leaded gasoline.

Despite tracing its roots to environmental NGOs, KPBB has such a niche focus that its activists sought to build and strengthen an identity independent of their parent organisations. Taking into account KPBB's very specific focus and flexibility in defining its advocacy strategies, as well as the interim nature of its form, it is fair to say that the coalition has become a sort of spin-off campaign for urban environmental activists. Even years later, KPBB remains very active, at least through the activists who continue to carry its banners during discussions with various parties in Jakarta. As observed in other cases by Harney and Olivia (2003), activism can create vibrancy in civil society organisations; as such, regardless of its nature as a spin-off campaign, KPBB has as much value in facilitating civic engagement through activism as more established organisations.

To understand the environmental issues involved in urban traffic management, KPBB draws extensively from existing academic literature. To support its cause, it even conducts independent studies and collects secondary data. From these studies, by citing studies that elucidate air pollution's effect on the health of urban populations, KPBB has made explicit some implicit problems, including the exponential growth of motor vehicles in Jakarta, the increased fuel consumption of these vehicles, and the severity of air pollution (Cohen et al., 2005).

At the core of their position is the ambition to develop a more sustainable form of urban mobility. This requires a fundamental change in city dwellers' behaviour, from mobility practices that depend heavily on fossil fuels to ones that reduce or limit the use of gasoline, as well as promoting more environmentally friendly modes of transportation (such as public transportation) over the more individual mobility choices popular among the public.

From a presentation given by a KPBB activist, it is apparent that they understand the structural barriers that limit the public's willingness to embrace more sustainable mobility practices. In other words, they do not simply attribute the unsustainability of urban mobility problems to the city's population, but rather lament the public policy directions that contribute to air pollution in Jakarta. Therefore, in addition to conducting public campaigns, KPBB has actively criticised local government policies that undermine their cause and promoted the improvement of public urban transportation management. This is another important trait of neo-Tocquevillian civil society that can be observed in KPBB.

One of the most significant results of KPBB's advocacy to improve public policy is the adoption of Car Free Day (CFD) in Jakarta, a policy that was later followed by Indonesia's other major cities. It started by limiting motor vehicle access to some of Jakarta's streets during holidays. Taking into account activists' familiarity with public street demonstrations, they began their campaign by unilaterally closing several streets in Jakarta and campaigning to raise public awareness. Such efforts were not successful; the authorities immediately reprimanded the activists for

disrupting the busy traffic of Jakarta's major streets.

Regardless of such setbacks, KPBB activists believed that successful street closure would set a precedent for limiting the number of vehicles, thereby reducing air pollution in the city. In a further bid to promote this policy, in 2001, KPBB held several meetings with Jakarta's municipal administrators and proposed a CFD programme that also included public awareness campaigns. Although their ideas were not well received by the Office of Transportation in Jakarta, this did not stop them from continuing to promote their ideas to government authorities.

One KPBB activist recalled that, at that time, the Coalition worked with the Directorate of Traffic Management Control at the DKI Jakarta Police to increase clean energy uptake in public transportation. Through these activities, KPBB floated its CFD idea to the police leadership. Activists argued that temporary street closure and public awareness campaigns would also benefit authorities, as it would provide them with an arena to promote safe and responsible driving to the general public. Such a creative frame suited the interests of the Jakarta police, and they agreed to begin implementing a CFD policy on 22 September 2002.

During the initial implementation of CFD, KPBB received financial support from the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and other international organisations. By 2004, KPBB began to limit its involvement in the direct arrangement of CFD and transfer this role to the Jakarta municipal government. To attract crowds, the government began providing free entertainment and shows for visitors; street vendors also began selling

various food and non-food items to visitors. Today, CFD activities on Sudirman and Thamrin Streets—though initially seen as another disturbance by Jakarta's citizens—bring together thousands of bicyclists and pedestrians. These activities offer an important social venue for holidaymakers as well as a profitable source of income for street vendors.

Despite the Jakarta government's adoption of CFD, KPBB activists are still far from satisfied with the programme's implementation, as the current manifestation does not reflect the public awareness campaign that had been originally proposed. According to a KPBB activist, CFD has been reduced to a ceremonial and recreational event without any educational value. Instead of providing a venue for public education, CFD is sometimes used by political elites as an arena for demonstrating their strengths (Santoso, 2018). Perhaps the most famous example is the 'Action to Defend Islam' (commonly known as the 212 Movement) during the 2016 gubernatorial election, which took place in and around the CFD area (Susilowati, Yunus, & Sholeh, 2019). Moreover, activists have yet to see any serious improvement in public infrastructure development, let alone improved urban mobility in Jakarta. This has led KPBB activists to explore other avenues for continuing their agenda and developing a more sustainable urban transportation management policy.

This has included the aforementioned Pedestrians' Coalition (KPoK), established on 22 July 2012 in conjunction with public transportation users in Jakarta. According to our interviews with one of its founders, KPoK is a voluntary association established by

people who frequently use Jakarta's public transportation. This includes activists who were already members of KRLMania (a community of commuter line users) and environmental activists deemed by their peers to have expertise in matters of sustainability.

The decision to form KPoK was a culmination of activists' collective disappointment with the difficulties they faced when walking from their homes to commuter line stations or from said station to their offices. It is quite common in Jakarta to see motorcycles that drive on the sidewalks rather than remain stuck in the city's frequent traffic jams. This situation is further aggravated by street vendors' competition for the same roadside spaces.

Against this backdrop, KPoK was established to ensure that pedestrians' rights on the streets are taken into account by policymakers and respected by others. To do so, it has directed several campaigns at other users of the city streets. For example, KPoK often conducts public campaigns on Friday afternoons to raise awareness about pedestrians' rights on the streets by gathering their members (Antara, 2018). It has also developed an application for pedestrians to submit complaints about the difficulties that they encounter when walking. At the same time, social media campaigns play an important role in raising public awareness about pedestrian rights by exposing the problems faced by pedestrians (such as the misuse of sidewalks by motorcyclists). KPoK activists believe that walking is the most basic means of transportation, and can be performed by almost everyone. Although not urban residents can buy a motorcycle or automobile, most can use their legs to

move from Point A to Point B by simply walking.

KPoK activists became the centre of public attention in 2008 when they uploaded a video to YouTube showing one of their activists who, while campaigning for pedestrians' rights on a city sidewalk, was hit by a motorcyclist offended by the campaign (Mardiastuti, 2008). On this occasion, the coordinator of KPoK clarified that the activist in the story had already reprimanded motorcyclists politely about their misuse of pedestrian spaces, but the harassment continued, ultimately resulting in the incident. Another incident that highlighted the tense and adversarial relationship between activists and motorcyclists, who are often seen as violating the rights of pedestrians, occurred when activists deliberately used the seats of motorcycles parked on zebra crosses to walk across these intersections (Nanda, 2021).

As with KPBB, KPoK has also actively pushed the local government to pay greater attention to the well-being of pedestrians. KPoK's policy agenda revolves around improving infrastructure for pedestrians by improving the sidewalks of Jakarta. Through an independent study, for example, KPoK identified more than 100 areas that are deadly for pedestrians, and noted that only 900 kilometres of Jakarta's 7,200 kilometres of road have sidewalks. KPoK also criticised the local government's policy of allowing street vendors to use sidewalks and pedestrian zones in South Jakarta (Kusumaputra, 2018). Through their informal networks, activists also tried to push the members of the provincial legislature to allocate funds for pedestrian development in Jakarta. As a result, the government of Jakarta promised to build

approximately 2,600 kilometres of sidewalk.

Compared to KPBB, which consists mostly of environmental activists, KPoK's membership is relatively broad. Its members include public transportation users from all walks of life, from lecturers in private universities, IT staff in private companies, to professionals with full-time jobs. KPoK has managed to broaden its support base partly by building its agenda around practical grievances that public transportation users in Jakarta face every day. KPoK's voluntary nature is also emphasised by identifying its members as volunteers. Activists also claim that they often use their own financial resources, free time, and skills for KPoK activities, without receiving any compensation in return.

To some extent, the different settings of KPBB and KPoK illustrate the need for flexibility in urban environmental activists' responses to the dynamics of their situation. This includes the ability to reinterpret their values (i.e., sustainability) and identify new focuses to broaden support for their cause. They managed, for example, to translate the very technical problem of leaded gasoline into the topic of pedestrian rights, which was more appealing to the urban population. Furthermore, though KPBB mainly involved environmental activists with very limited social support (for elaboration of this problem, see Nomura, 2007), it remedied this problem by reaching out to the emerging group of middle-class pedestrians. In other words, the problem of limited representation—prominent in environmental NGOs and movements in the Global South—was rectified through the establishment of KPoK. At the same time,

inviting further participation from specific groups such as pedestrians from various walks of life increased KPoK's legitimacy in front of the policymakers (Rother, 2015).

Notwithstanding these differences, KPBB and KPoK have two significant similarities. First, both emphasise activism, thereby representing civil society's role in ensuring the diagonal accountability of the state (Mietzner, 2020). Second, both have taken the theme of sustainable transportation and mobility as their core norm. As such, both voluntary associations and spin-off campaigns can be understood as forms of urban environmental activism that use similar strategies for conducting public policy advocacy. To further locate this urban environmental activism within the broader literature on civil society in Indonesia, the next section analyses these coalitions' position vis-à-vis more established understandings of civil society in the literature.

The politics of civil society forms

Rother (2015: 8) contends that "when organisations choose one of these labels for themselves, it might be not only to identify who they are, but also to distance themselves from others: for example, self-proclaimed grassroots migrant domestic worker organisations in Hong Kong explicitly distance themselves from the 'NGOism' of other migrant organisations." In this sense, each claimed identity—be it an organisation, an association, or a grassroots movement—serves as a boundary-defining terminology. This section shows that KPBB and KPoK have not simply taken random forms, but rather made deliberate choices. To explore this point further, it is

useful to start with Beittinger-Lee's (2013) typology of civil society in Indonesia.

Disregarding the concept of 'uncivil society', which is beyond the scope of this article, Beittinger-Lee (2013) identifies three models of civil society in Indonesia, based on their potential role for political change: 1) civic associations, professional associations, etc.; 2) development NGOs, tolerant religious organisations, etc.; 3) movements and non-government organisations. She held that the first and second models are both politically ambivalent, while the third model is pro-democratic, reformist, and fosters political change. The distinction between the first and second models is made based on their capacity to affect political change: the first model "may benefit the building of social capital", whereas the second "foster[s] civic virtues and empowerment" (Beittinger-Lee, 2013: 117). It is obvious that, according to Beittinger-Lee (2013), the civic values deemed to be most potent for political change are attributed to the third model of civil society. The first model, meanwhile, is relatively less likely to generate political change, and the second model falls somewhere in between.

On the surface, urban environmental activism such as KPBB and KPoK seems to fit Beittinger-Lee's first model of civil society. KPBB is a spin-off campaign that, from an institutional standpoint, does not seem well-suited to the traditional definition of development (Hadiwinata, 2003) or environmental NGOs in Indonesia (Nomura, 2007). Meanwhile, KPoK is seen ostensibly as a mere voluntary association. Furthermore, these urban environmental activists do contribute to fostering social capital via their civic engagement and activism. However, the results of such

environmental activism should not be reduced to simply 'fostering social capital', as explained in the first model of civil society. KPBB's ability to advocate for CFD, despite its shortcomings at the later stages, demonstrated that these activists could instigate concrete policy changes, which became even more important after CFD policies were subsequently adopted by Indonesia's other major cities. KPoK's advocacy, similarly, increased the local government's commitment to accelerating the pedestrian development of Jakarta. Its objective of improving and realising pedestrians' rights through volunteer activities was also replicated in other cities; KPoK activists note, for example, that similar voluntary associations have emerged in cities such as Yogyakarta and Bandung. Furthermore, urban environmental activists' ability to alternate between KPBB and KPoK demonstrated their strategy's potential for policy change. As such, placing KPBB and KPoK within Beittinger-Lee's first model of civil society does not really do justice to the ingenuity of their urban environmental activism.

Observers have criticised civil society in Indonesia for several reasons. For example, directing their criticism primarily towards the second model of civil society, Antlöv et al. (2010) mention that civil society in Indonesia has several acute problems such as 'overreliance on confrontational strategies' and 'inability to cooperate to leverage impact'. Similarly, and again focusing on the second model of civil society, Antlöv, Brinkerhoff, and Rapp (2008) lament that civil society operations are heavily dependent on international donors, which results in most NGOs collapsing once they can no longer secure funding. In the context of KPBB and KPoK,

however, such criticism does not seem applicable. In promoting CFD policies and budget allocation for pedestrian development, both KPBB and KPoK worked closely with the state institutions. Neither shied away from working with authorities to leverage their impact, and thus did not rely solely on confrontational strategies. Furthermore, KPBB continued its activism even after it stopped receiving foreign funding (i.e., from UNEP). KPoK has gone even further, mostly funding its own campaigns and advocacy independently. These experiences suggest that it would be problematic to include KPBB and KPoK in Beittinger-Lee's second model of civil society.

To frame their third model of civil society, Beittinger-Lee borrows the distinction between development (*pembangunan*) NGOs and social movement (*gerakan*) groups made by Hadiwinata (2003). Where development NGOs focus on "improving equity and people's participation by promoting small-scale business and professional management in partnership with the government", social movement groups typically have "the goal of strengthening, empowering, and mobilising the grassroots for popular resistance against injustice" (Beittinger-Lee, 2013: 60). Neither KPBB nor KPoK could be said to fit this description. To start, neither necessarily has a legitimate claim to represent environmental social movement in Indonesia vis-à-vis other environmental organisations that explicitly convey their environmental principles to the public. Furthermore, rather than using the discourse of 'resistance' and 'injustice', KPBB and KPoK enjoy close collaboration with authorities, including the police—who

are essentially expressions of the state's banal authority in Jakarta's busy streets. In other words, the third model of civil society, which draws mostly from New Left understandings, does not fit KPBB and KPoK well. These coalitions are much more suitably understood as part of the liberal neo-Tocquevillian civil society.

Turning to a point made by Rother (2015), it is fair to say that the forms of KPBB and KPoK do not neatly fit into any of Beittinger-Lee's models of Indonesian civil society. This could be explained as part of urban environmental activists' strategy of defining their activism while simultaneously distancing themselves from the more traditional notions of (environmental) civil society in Indonesia. The environmental activists of KPBB and KPoK took forms that presented their activism as surpassing that expected from the first model of civil society. At the same time, environmental activists also demonstrated that they do not suffer the same problems as the second model of civil society, and—in contrast to the New Left-leaning third model—employed a liberal approach to activism. These urban environmental activists' strategies could be interpreted as part of a liberal–progressive experiment in an urban setting, as demonstrated in another case. As in a case studied by Savirani et al. (2021), Jakarta's urban context, with discontent middle-class youths who are supportive of popular environmental causes, made it possible for environmental activists to experiment. Such an experiment would be difficult in rural settings, predominantly because of the relative absence of middle-class professionals in such areas (Ito, 2011).

This analysis does not intend to portray KPBB and KPoK as ultimate forms

of liberal civil society, or as silver bullets for democratisation in urban contexts. It simply seeks to point out that, despite being compatible with neo-Tocquevillian civil society, KPBB and KPoK do not sit well with the existing typology of Indonesian civil society. Both manifest as strategic choices made by the urban environmental activists to define and distance themselves from the other civil society entities. As will be discussed below, it is worth noting that both KPBB and KPoK suffer several of the accountability problems that characterise broader Indonesian civil society.

Accountability and Democracy

Discussing civil society in the Global South, Bryant and Bailey (1997) make an important distinction between those that work on environmental issues and those that focus on more general questions of development. While development NGOs try to increase the productivity of society and ensure that marginalised communities are better integrated into the economy, environmental civil society has the normative stance of conserving or protecting the environment (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). Sometimes, this position has placed environmental civil society at odds with communities oriented towards exploiting natural resources for development regardless of its environmental effects. Comparing environmental NGOs in the Global North with those based in Indonesia, Nomura (2007) also notes differences in terms of resource mobilisation. Most environmental NGOs in the Global North have the ability to anchor their activism in the domestic community, and they thus receive individual donations or support through business activities (e.g., charity shops and

the second-hand markets established by environmental NGOs). On the other hand, environmental organisations in the Global South do not yet have the ability to mobilise resources from the broader domestic community, and rely mostly on foreign donors (Nomura, 2007). The combination of environmental NGOs' relatively weak linkages and their occasional position at odds with broader development discourses have raised legitimate concerns about their representation of and, in turn, accountability to the broader polity.

The issue of public representation is more apparent in the case of KPBB, which consists mainly of urban environmental activists, than in KPoK, which mobilised a broader section of urban public transportation users. Unlike KPoK, which claims to fund its activism independently, KPBB has received financial support from international donors in some of its advocacy agendas. As such, it is reasonable to question the extent to which KPBB's activism represents the aspirations and concerns of the broader Jakarta community, and to which extent they merely reflect the objectives of international donors. For example, when facing setbacks in its promotion of CFD policies to the Jakarta government, KPBB chose not to expand its popular support (thereby increasing representativeness and legitimacy) but to reach out to another state agency. Furthermore, despite having stimulated policy output through advocacy, KPBB also acknowledged that it lost the battle to use CFD to transform the urban community's mobility practices, and thus failed to realise its goal of conducting public awareness campaigns and improving efforts to reduce air pollution in

Jakarta. This can be seen as a consequence of KPBB's inability to establish vertical accountability (through popular support) in advancing its cause (Newell & Wheeler, 2006). As such, KPBB's promotion of the CFD policy suffered from the same elitist tendencies that are often found in more traditional civil society organisations (Hadiwinata, 2003); indeed, KPBB's elitist tendencies and problems with vertical accountability could even be considered graver, as at least development NGOs have an obvious basis in particular marginalised communities and promote the relatively less contentious norm of developmentalism.

As we have discussed above, the form taken by KPoK was designed to solve these problems of representation and vertical accountability. By appealing to pedestrians, who were deemed to be marginalised in Jakarta society, KPoK sought to increase popular support for its cause. Rather than using purely environmental concerns as the basis for its norms and activities (as in KPBB), KPoK generated support through the rights-based approach that is commonly employed by development NGOs and does not directly oppose the ideas of developmentalism and modernisation. Nonetheless, despite its relative success in cultivating the participation of urban pedestrians, KPoK's activism also resulted in adversarial reactions from the motorcyclists and street vendors who used the sidewalks for their own interests. Such tensions, regardless of the substantive debates between KPoK, street vendors, and motorcyclists regarding 'the appropriate' use of sidewalks, indicate that KPoK's campaign failed to secure horizontal accountability (Newell & Wheeler, 2006). In

other words, by strengthening its own basis to support its advocacy, KPoK also diminished its accountability toward other social groups that were actively competing to claim their rights over the city's sidewalks. Such problems with horizontal accountability are common in more established development NGOs (Harney & Olivia, 2003).

Understanding KPBB's vertical accountability deficit and KPoK's problem with horizontal accountability offers an understanding of the trade-off between the particular forms of civil society adopted by urban environmental activists and accountability problems that arise from this choice. A spin-off campaign with a representation problem had vertical accountability issues, while a voluntary association with fewer problems of representation faced problems with horizontal accountability. Arguably, Jakarta's urban environmental activists did not necessarily choose one form over another in their work; rather, they employed these forms simultaneously, depending on the situation. Furthermore, these urban environmental activists' willingness to adopt different forms of civil society demonstrated their capacity to ostensibly address the criticism directed toward more traditional forms of civil society.

Discussing Indonesia's transition to democracy more than a decade ago, Heryanto (2004) noted that detached foreign analysts and Indonesian scholars or activists who were actively involved in democratisation held diverging views about the fate of democracy in the country. Foreign analysts, he wrote, tended to be more sceptical about the future of democracy in Indonesia than Indonesian scholars, who were generally more

optimistic. Although changes have occurred, such discrepancy seems to persist today. Claims of "illiberal democracy" in contemporary Indonesia are prominent among foreign analysts (e.g. Bouchier, 2014; Diprose, McRae, & Hadiz, 2019; Hadiz, 2018), while Indonesian scholars—despite understanding the risk of particularism—continue to plea for a contextual and more substantial measurement of democracy (e.g. Santoso & Tapiheru, 2017).

In this matter, we believe that the argument of Heryanto (2004) holds merit. He explains these disparate analyses by noting that foreign analysts, most of whom come from already established democratic countries, hold different understandings of democracy than Indonesians who had just been freed from Soeharto's New Order. Indonesians tend to understand democracy as "social change that is more immediate in effect, concrete in manifestation, and short-term. Understandably such considerations are prompted by a sense of exigency in their living circumstances. In other words, their conception of democracy is a lot more modest, and they demand a lot less from the process of democratisation in comparison to their distant observers" (Heryanto, 2004: 69). To some extent, this argument provides a basis for understanding the Jakarta government's commitment towards CFD policies and pedestrian activities as part of the urban environmental activists' 'success' in policy advocacy: facilitating diagonal accountability has been chosen as a more modest way of realising democracy in Indonesia.

Nonetheless, while recognising such modesty, we can also argue that

Indonesian scholars and activists have recently been more cautious in understanding the current state of democracy in the country. As Santoso and Tapiheru (2017) warn, there are serious risks in using particularism as a 'blank check' for practising democracy; this has been demonstrated, for example, in our discussion of KPBB and KPoK, whose activism suffered from deficits in vertical and horizontal accountability. Indonesia's democratic future, at least from the point of view of the civil society elaborated in this paper, is neither bleak nor rosy. This paper concurs with Weiss (2020): by delving deeper into the heterogeneous forms of civil society, their creativity, and their strategies, we maintain a 'cautious optimism' that civil society can still contribute to Indonesia's democratisation.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article's discussion of KPBB and KPoK has highlighted the ingenuity of (liberal) civil society in performing urban environmental activism in Jakarta. Understanding these urban environmental activists' strategies is necessary to interpret the politics of civil society forms, which problematise the existing typology and illustrate its limitations in describing contemporary Indonesian civil society. As demonstrated above, analysis using a neo-Tocquevillian framework can provide an alternative understanding of civil society's strategies amidst the ubiquitous 'democracy deficit' often cited to explain the situation in Indonesia. Theoretically, this paper highlights the relevance and value of the liberal neo-Tocquevillian approach in exploring civil society's inclusivity by focusing on associations that facilitate

civic engagement. By scrutinising the politics involved in the forms of civic engagement, their potential and pitfalls for democracy can be explored.

The conclusion reached in this paper echoes Ding and Slater (2020), who argue that it is necessary to connect the literature on democratic backsliding with the literature on institutional change theory. They note that one of the latter's most important insights is that "institutional complexity and multiplicity provide opportunities for political entrepreneurs to foster institutional change" (Ding & Slater, 2020: 64). In this context, the politics of civil society forms illustrate the complexity of Indonesian civil society, including the means through which urban environmental activists have acted as political entrepreneurs and seized opportunities. In this sense, we can see not only the 'democratic decoupling' caused by increased electoral quality and decreased rights protection, as argued by Ding and Slater (2020), but also show that urban environmental activists—more of their ambiguous impact on democracy—can nevertheless foster institutional changes.

With such a broader understanding of civil society and its forms, previous investigations of Indonesian civil society's declining capacity to prevent democratic backsliding (i.e., Mietzner, 2020) seem to paint only a partial picture. The cases of KPBB and KPoK show that civil society can still create diagonal accountability in both the executive and legislative branches of the provincial government. Furthermore, these urban environmental activists seem to be less influenced by the tendency towards 'politico-ideological polarisation' that has increased partisanship and

contributed to the declining democratic quality of political institutions.

It is worth noting that the spin-off campaign and voluntary association in this paper are only two examples of recent evolutions in civil society activism in Indonesia. Similarly, these political forms are not unique, nor can they be claimed to represent the origin of politicised forms of civil society. Different forms of activism that are parallel to the cases elaborated in this paper could be drawn from the realms of animal rights activism (Resolute, 2017), open data/transparency activism (Purwanto, Zuiderwijk, & Janssen, 2018), etc. Such activism shows similar tendencies, yet at the same time has its own particularities that deserve to be investigated. As this paper highlights only the most basic aspects of civic engagement, with a particular focus on association, a deeper analysis of solidarity, tolerance, and trust—all important traits of the neo-Tocquevillian tradition—is necessary. Just to provide an example in the context of this paper, the role of 'trust' in urban environmental activism in Jakarta is not necessarily limited to facilitating collaboration between individual members of KPBB and KPoK, as described by Putnam

and Leonardi (1993), but also relevant to explaining these environmental activists' decision to work with formal political institutions at the local level through their public policy advocacy agenda (Siisiainen, 2003).

Another direction that warrants further consideration is the contribution of Indonesia's emerging information technology infrastructure to civil society activism in the country. Despite its middle-class and urban biases, internet-based and social media campaigns have heavily characterised environmental activism in recent years (Kurniawan & Rye, 2013), and thus a certain politics of form must arise at this particular conjuncture. Moreover, there is a growing literature on the relationship between the internet and social media (on the one hand) and democracy and social movements (on the other), as well as several cases where the internet/social media have been instrumentalised by civil society organisations and activists to foster policy changes by mainstreaming particular discourses. Further endeavours in this direction may help scholars obtain a deeper understanding of the contingent nature, potential, and pitfalls of civil society and the politics of their forms.

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