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Civil society in Jepara Fractious but inclusive

Introduction

From the early 1980s to the mid 1990s a thriving Jepara civil society emerged alongside a relatively responsive, development-oriented, 'Powerhouse' State. This chapter explores the character of New Order Jepara civil society and then looks at how that civil society has responded to the opportunities and constraints that accompanied the collapse of the Suharto regime, the rise of the Reformasi movement, and the democratization that followed.¹

Jepara is a district (*kabupaten*) on the north coast of Central Java with a population of 1 million. Its capital, also called Jepara, is 90 km from the provincial capital, Semarang, and 30 km from any major trunk road. Between its glory days in the sixteenth century and the emergence of a major furniture industry in the 1980s, it was a relatively isolated and under-developed region. Since the growth of that industry it has become one of the most prosperous non-resource rich districts in Indonesia. The prosperity is not equally shared, but many ordinary Jeparans have done well. In 2002, it had the second lowest percentage of families living below the poverty line in Central Java. Jepara is 93% Muslim. Even under Suharto the 'traditional' Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), was and is the hegemonic social institution, with considerable capacity to influence society and to confer or deny legitimacy to the state and its actions. While it frequently has accepted state patronage it has also maintained a degree of autonomy from the state. Muhammadiyah – NU's modernist Islamic rival – has a more recent and much smaller presence.²

¹ Flinders University and the Australia Research Council funded fieldwork in Jepara. My thanks to Achmed Uzair who has been a diligent and capable research assistance. Earlier versions of some parts of this essay appeared in Schiller 2001.

² Its political party (Masjumi) won 5% of the vote in 1955 and PAN – a post-Suharto political party with strong connections to Muhammadiyah – won 6% of the vote in 1999. NU won 55%

Map 13. Jepara in Central Java

Jepara in the New Order

During the New Order, the strong NU presence, the blossoming of a self-confident, non-crony, indigenous commercial elite around the furniture industry, and the electoral success of the overwhelmingly NU-based party Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP, Unity and Development Party) resulted in a community, and a district assembly, more capable of making demands on local government and uncovering corruption or mismanagement than any other I have encountered. (I have observed and visited with state officials, politicians, civic leaders, and journalists in more than thirty districts and towns.) The commitment of many state officials to development ideology and the reality of a 'people not afraid to shout' (their complaints) led to a relatively more responsive and effective state.

I first studied state-society relations in Jepara in 1980-1982. I found a rather active local assembly (*dewan*), receiving numerous letters and delegations from aggrieved Jeparans, using assembly sessions to embarrass corrupt officials and sometimes modifying legislation to better suit their constituents. Assembly activism was led by PPP representatives who made up 40% or more of the elected members. The PPP representatives were more interested in assembly business than the Golkar majority who mainly had other jobs as state officials. The PPP minority was more willing to attend sessions and committee meetings and more willing to engage in protracted debate to make their point. Ideologically opposed to voting and unwilling to 'waste time', the Golkar forces often compromised with PPP proposals or acted on PPP complaints. As a result Jeparans got a somewhat more diligent, cautious and responsive local government. In today's terminology we would say the Jepara came closer than most districts to achieving 'good governance'.

My explanation for Jepara's activist civil society and developmentalist state was three-fold. First of all, NU had very wide and deep roots in society. NU's hegemony and its web of connections across Jepara and beyond provided those critical of the state with some shelter from official sanctions. NU demonstrated its community standing by winning more than 55% of the vote in the free elections of 1955 and then gathering 40% or more of the Jepara vote campaigning as NU in 1971, while using PPP as its political party in the next four New Order-controlled elections. NU had village elite support in most of Jepara's villages. Its religious teacher, landed elite, and small business leadership, in turn, provided the ongoing organization, patronage and activities, including *pengajian* (Islamic group religious studies) that sustained PPP between elections. It also mobilized financial and popular support for PPP in campaigns.

of the vote in 1955 and its constituent parties PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, Party of the Awakening of the Nation) and PPP won 56% in 1999.

Secondly, Jepara's economy began to grow as Indonesia's oil boom economy led to mushrooming domestic purchases of Jepara's ornately carved teak furniture. Most of the businessmen involved were Muslim Jeparans with NU connections. After the oil boom ended, national policy promoted non-oil and gas exports and a thriving export furniture industry emerged alongside the domestic industry. Local state officials began to see that support for a business agenda and cooperation with business leaders was essential for success in their careers and could prove lucrative.³ They also perceived that development projects could be successful if they cooperated with NU landed- and religious teacher-elites. At the same time the materialism of the New Order improved the status of NU landed elites and businessmen who could afford the consumer goods (cars, televisions, motorbikes and so on) that marked higher status. This increased their self-confidence, their influence in society and their sense that they could make demands upon the state and its officials. Like small business entrepreneurs everywhere, most saw themselves as the engine of development and saw the state more as an obstacle than a partner.

The third explanation is reputational and relates to the perceptions and actions of individual government officials. In the entire Suharto period Jepara never had a military district head (*bupati*). Some retired officials thought that the position of Jepara district head was not lucrative and that moreover Jepara was a hazardous (*rawan*) posting requiring more sensitivity and less coercion. Jepara earned a reputation as a difficult place to be a state official, a place where the people were not afraid to speak out about official misbehaviour. As Jepara's military commander put it: 'The unrest that occurs here is a sign that the people of Jepara are certainly critical [...] Jepara people dare to react to every decision of the regional leadership'.⁴ On the other hand its people (or at least its community leadership) were seen as capable of cooperating with state officials for their mutual benefit, if they were treated properly. For example, cooperation with NU community leaders could help keep order and assist in achieving development targets and winning development awards. These awards often led to promotion. The outsider bureaucratic elite that managed Jepara's government – mainly from culturally less Islamic southern Central Java – could have chosen to ride rough-shod over the local, more Islamic commercial and religious elite. Instead district heads

³ The best example of this is New Order elections in Jepara, in which local government officials tried to reduce conflict with local Islamic elites officials by resisting pressure from their provincial and central government superiors to deliver massive Golkar victories. The Golkar vote ranged from 15% to 30% below the provincial average.

⁴ *Suara Merdeka* 14-7-1999. This idea of Jeparans' critical and vocal character is also described in a series on Jepara identity published in the Jepara local government monthly magazine, *Gelora Bumi Kartini* in 2001.

and other senior state officials often chose to compromise and cooperate with local community leaders.

In short, I saw New Order Jepara as a place with a relatively strong civil society as well as a strong but relatively responsive local state apparatus.

However my research up to Suharto's fall in 1998 left several unanswered questions about the nature of relations within Jepara civil society and between that civil society and the local state. Did Jepara have a battle-toughened, fractious, and antagonistic civil society? Was it dominated by a strong social organization (NU or the PPP part of it) to which neither the local state nor the society could easily say no? Or was it a civil society that had built up social capital, in the form of civility between social organizations and individuals and civic trust between civil society and the state? Was Jepara's civic culture based more on respect for what cooperation could achieve or fear of what other community leaders or state officials could do to you? The answers to these questions would determine how Jepara's civil society would respond to uncertainty and a changing political, social and economic environment.

Civil society

Robert Putnam (1993) defines civil society as the entire voluntary – not for profit – sector. He excludes the family, businesses and organizations whose main purpose is to win votes and elect politicians. That is a common practice but it seems fruitless to set artificial boundaries between political parties and other social organizations. This seems especially so in a place like Jepara where the hegemonic social organization, NU – surely the core of civil society in Jepara – had its own political party until 1973, and Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB, Party of the Awakening of the Nation) and PPP competed in 1999 over which party was the legitimate offspring of NU. For the purpose of this essay political parties are seen as a part of civil society. Only families and businesses are excluded. All other non-government organizations – big and small, altruistic or self-interest oriented – are a part of civil society. The focus here will be on how civil society influences politics and how Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) interact with the state.

Civil society is often seen as the key to achieving democracy and to making democracy (and economic development) successful. Unfortunately, civil society is an ambiguous concept. It refers to at least two different circumstances. In the first case strong social institutions deeply rooted in society are able to resist control by authoritarian regimes. This is sometimes called the counterweight concept of civil society. In the second case there is a dense web of social organizations that model or impart civility, cooperation and tolerance and create linkages between sections of society that encourage partici-

pation, civic trust, and cooperation. This is sometimes called social capital.⁵

Both of these manifestations of civil society are problematic. If civil society consists of strong institutions able to resist the will of the authoritarian state, what is to stop those same institutions from overpowering democratic processes and capturing democratic systems? Organizations that are powerful enough to resist authoritarian rule may be powerful enough to dominate weak states and to exclude the rest of the population from participating in or benefiting from democratic rule. On the other hand, if civil society is a dense web of social organizations encouraging civic trust and cooperation, how does that dense web come into being and how does the social capital it creates translate into the political cooperation and constraint necessary to make democracy or development work?

The civil society I have seen in Jepara most closely resembles this second, social capital type. Jepara has seldom fiercely resisted the state, rather choosing to bargain with the authorities for its cooperation. Whatever its shortcomings in Jepara, I will argue (as Putnam does for civil society in northern Italy) that it embodies real social virtues.

NU and Jepara civil society

In 1999 I wondered whether or not NU might be able to function as a core institution around which a tolerant but participatory democratic civil society could coalesce. Would it be able to provide a tent large enough to hold its PPP conservatives and its PKB reformers? Would its hold on the state continue to grow and would that diminish its willingness to act as a check on state excesses?

My picture of New Order Jepara depicts local civil society as interacting with national political and economic forces, including globalization, and influencing the actions of Jepara's community leaders, bureaucrats and politicians to create a relatively benign – and yet lively – climate for development and political participation. Here I would like to consider the ways that a CSO like NU can shape civil society and state-civil society relations.

Putnam sees two ways that CSOs may function to create civic trust and encourage civic engagement. Internally, they can instil habits of cooperation, solidarity and public spiritedness in their members. Externally, they can create a model of the pursuit of enlightened – or at least self-limited – self-interest. Under some conditions this can create a dense network of activist groups that have civic competence (that is, the style and skills necessary for public social and political activity), and some empathy for other community

⁵ This discussion of civil society types and argument about the ambiguity of 'civil society' takes off from ideas advanced by Foley and Edwards 1996.

groups. In other words it can create a culture in which demands are communicated and moderated. In such a climate political participants can afford to be 'good losers' or generous winners. This is much easier when many people belong to diverse organizations, have multiple divided loyalties, or have a world view shaped by a reference group with a diverse range of interests.

Alexis de Tocqueville famously described civic associations as 'free schools' of democracy,⁶ in which people learn to cooperate while also competing. This is the opposite of 'amoral familism', which has been described as a way of thinking that emphasizes efforts to 'maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family and assumes that all others will do the same' (Putnam 1993:18). 'Amoral familism', which Putnam quoted from a study on Italy by Banfield, certainly has a place in Indonesian political culture too. The Javanese concept of *aji mumpung* – taking advantage of one's office – suggests that it is well known. The widespread application to Indonesia of the concept of patrimonialism – a system in which there are no fixed rules and everything depends on the relations between the ruler and the supplicant – also suggests that civic trust is not widespread. Neither the pursuit of short-term material gain, nor unbridled demands on the state when civil society that is too dominated by one world view or one interest group (the inadequate 'counterweight' concept) permits the promotion of healthy social cohesion and common goals.

Jepara NU

What I want to do now is to briefly describe how I think NU as a hegemonic, civil society organization plays a role in shaping civic culture in Jepara. After that I will look at the 1999 democratic election in Jepara and how the election reflected and in turn influenced Jepara's civil society. Finally, I will briefly consider how Jepara's civil society and state are interacting in post-1999 election Jepara. Six years into the 'Reformasi Era' does Jepara more closely resemble an inclusivist, trust-building civil society or an exclusivist, aggressive, civil society?

Jepara NU is a large and complex organization. It is reminiscent of what Alfred McCoy (1993), writing about the Philippines, evocatively called 'an anarchy of families'. Its leadership structure includes a chairman and executive board (Tanfidziyah) and a council of religious scholars (Syuriyah). It has district, sub-district and village branches across Jepara. It has numerous affiliated male and female, adult, youth and student organizations. It has educational foundations – Lembaga Ma'arif and Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyah

⁶ '[G]reat free schools to which all citizens come to be taught the general theory of association' (De Tocqueville 1969:193).

(RMI). Its members manage more than a hundred *madrasah* (non-residential Islamic schools at all levels), dozens of *pesantren* (residential Islamic schools), some Islamic secondary schools, a Timber Technology Academy (Akademi Teknologi Industri Kayu, ATIKA), an Economics Academy (Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi, STIE), and a university, Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama (UNISNU). Its Institute for Mobilizing Human Resources (Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia, Lakpesdam) runs community development programs and has initiated reconciliation programs between NU and Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party) families who had been victims of the 1965 massacres and mass detentions. The same organization runs forums for poor and marginalized groups. NU members also control numerous small credit cooperatives and a hospital.

Above all, NU provides its members – and many other Jeparans – with a shared religious experience and discourse, including prayer and religious study. Many future Jepara leaders meet through NU schools or youth organization activities. This shared life experience makes communication easier and, under the right conditions, encourages trust. Secondly, NU provides opportunities to develop organizational and leadership skills. Thirdly, success in raising money and completing projects teaches self-confidence and empowers local leaders by demonstrating that there are considerable resources and altruism in the local community. Fourthly, NU provides its members with the opportunity to learn how elections work. This includes the discovery that candidates may need to compromise to win elections and that winners need to consider the desires of those who have lost. (Of course, they may also learn that elections can be rigged!) For the entire New Order period, NU provided a counter-hegemonic model by successfully holding competitive internal national and local leadership elections.

NU also models a decentralized notion of power, with limits on what one faction or individual can control. Its division of power between its council of religious scholars (Syuriah) and its executive board (Tanfidzyah) and between leaders of NU and affiliated organizations means that it speaks with multiple voices and seems to tolerate a wide range of views. It also sometimes acts as a reservoir of trust able to negotiate within society and between society and state.

This sounds very promising for democracy. But Jepara NU also has some weaknesses as a ‘free school of democracy’. Banfield’s description of ‘amoral familism’ in Italy describes a world view that also has a place in the NU community. There are frequently problems with lack of transparency, nepotism, collusion and corruption in NU and its affiliated organizations. There is a fairly constant flow of rumours about school budgets being misspent, money for mosque building disappearing, and candidate lists being altered without authority. NU Jepara has never had a woman on its executive board

and many of its younger members consider it to be patriarchal. However, there are also a substantial number of reformers in NU that criticize and try to overcome NU's 'weaknesses'.

So how did NU, Jepara's civil society, and state-society relations change amidst the economic and political crises that accompanied the Suharto regime's collapse?

The economic 'crisis' in Jepara

Rather, Jepara people felt good fortune because the dollar rose. Because they got a lot of money they prayed for the crisis to continue.⁷

Many Jeparans did well in the economic crisis. At least 80,000 Jeparans are directly employed in the furniture industry, in 1999 worth 400 to 500 million US dollars. The falling rupiah in 1998 actually spurred furniture exports and increased local employment and incomes. At the peak of the Asian economic crisis, the district was full of new furniture showrooms, fully occupied hotels, restaurants, and new shops. In 1998 Jepara sent more than 900 people on the *haj*, three times the number sent by the neighbouring district of Kudus and more than any other locality in Central Java. In 1999 it sent more than 2300, more than any other district in Indonesia. It has more motor vehicles (55,000 in total) than any district or town in Central Java except the capital, Semarang. Commercial and residential land prices are said to be the highest in Central Java and the cost of living comparable to Java's largest cities.

The furniture boom of the 1980s and 1990s continued with some ups and downs until 2000. My point is that economic decline was not the immediate cause of unrest and conflict in the 1998-2000 period. While Jeparans who did not work in the furniture or other export sectors were badly affected by the economic depression and inflation, jobs and wages in the furniture and other export industries increased and Jepara became a place where people moved to look for work.

⁷ Interview Pak Ali Irfan, NU educator, PKB leader and Deputy Chairman of the Jepara District Assembly, 14-12-1999.

Reformasi and the weakening of a 'powerhouse' state

I have elsewhere described the New Order local state in Jepara as a 'powerhouse' state.⁸ A powerhouse state is one that is constantly growing in resources, in the scope of its power (the range of human activity it influences), and the weight of its power (the force and consistency it can bring to bear to influence its people's behaviour). A powerhouse state rests upon its citizens' belief that it will have ever more power and resources and that tomorrow it will have even more patronage to reward or deny you than today. For nearly 25 years the New Order government in Jepara had seen regular growth in its budget, its number of personnel, their salaries, their management skills, and its infrastructure (phones, computers, cars, offices).

How could such a strong state weaken? The answer is that the hopes, expectations and fears that accompany the national collapse of a long-standing authoritarian regime are likely to make for testing times even for its more responsive and competent local state apparatus. Reformasi in Jepara was no exception. It was clear by the end of 1997 that the Suharto regime was in desperate economic difficulty. By May 1998 Suharto was gone and the notion that state-society relations would change was widespread. Even before Reformasi, Jepara had a reputation (like much of the north coast of Java) as having a fractious, belligerent society with a history of anti-Chinese rioting, campaign violence, demonstrations, suspicious furniture warehouse fires, and angry deputations to the district government offices. While the local government had been more responsive to its populace than most districts, it had made a number of enemies. Its most divisive actions had probably been its efforts to manufacture election victories by Golkar (the New Order state party) or victories by pro-Golkar village heads.

The euphoria that followed the fall of President Suharto saw the rise – across Indonesia – of a host of protests and ad hoc organizations, large and small, with reform goals. Jepara's local and village government leadership were targets of demonstrations and riots. Government records indicate that there were 1060 demonstrations (*unjuk rasa*) in Jepara in 1998-1999, peaking in mid-1998.⁹ Protests occurred in 95 of Jepara's 192 villages and 120 of 136 village officials targeted were dismissed, placed on the non-active list, or

⁸ Schiller 1996. I borrowed the term from Geertz 1972, who in turn borrowed it from De Jovenel 1962.

⁹ There were only three in 1997-1998 – just before the political crisis – and three just after it in 1999-2000. PEMDA Kabupaten Jepara, Jepara, 'Laporan pertanggungjawaban akhir masa jabatan Bupati Jepara kepada DPR-D Kabupaten Jepara 1997-2002', 2002:90.

reprimanded.¹⁰ I am told that village head elections were held in more than three-quarters of Jepara's villages, many of them to replace unpopular New Order era heads, and to prevent demonstrations in still other villages.

The most important protests were the 5 July 1998 riots in which district government buildings including the library were burnt to the ground. This attack followed the government's decision to ban KH Afifuddin – a fiery, Islamic religious teacher – from leading a public religious lecture (*pengajian*) in Jepara. His preaching had previously been followed by anti-Chinese riots in Pekalongan and Demak. NU and PKB activists had appealed to the local government and local assembly to ban his visit, but PPP supporters were aggrieved by that decision and rioted.

Violence, or the prospect of it, was consistently read by government officials as a warning to lift their own act or face the consequences. Even before the July riots the district head tried to demonstrate his reform credentials by issuing a document entitled 'Report on the implementation of reform in every field'.¹¹ The report named a committee responsible for Reformasi and spelled out processes and legal charges for common government services. It warned officials that they would be held responsible for complying with these regulations. The district head also noted elsewhere that a legal system seen as corrupt, unfair and unresponsive was a major cause of discontent.¹²

As in many parts of Indonesia during the most turbulent months of Reformasi, Jepara civil servants feared wearing their uniforms in public or travelling in cars with government license plates. The police disappeared from the streets and the army withdrew from controlling mass demonstrations or riots. Civil service salaries fell in real terms and prospects for local state officials and state budgets did not look good. Civil service morale was at its lowest. For a time the local state almost shut down.

The Jepara government's inability or unwillingness to prevent the looting of its state teak forests, to put an end to violence between villages and against sub-district offices, as well as its failure to prosecute rioters, signalled a government that was no longer dictating to society, and perhaps, no longer in charge of society. In this vacuum, whatever fragile order was to be maintained depended upon the interaction of strong social organizations. It was a time in which mobilization of youth groups, militias and gangs connected to village and local patrons seemed to be increasingly important and the local state authorities, police, forestry police and military increasingly impotent. It was a time in which the civility and tolerance of civil society was tested.

¹⁰ Nota Dinas from Kepala Bagian Hukum of Jepara local government to the Jepara district head, 4-9-1998.

¹¹ PEMDA Kabupaten Jepara, Jepara, 'Laporan hasil pelaksanaan Reformasi di segala bidang', 17-6-1998.

¹² PEMDA Kabupaten Jepara, Jepara, 'Laporan pertanggungjawaban akhir masa jabatan Bupati Jepara kepada DPR-D Kabupaten Jepara 1997-2002', 2002:28-9.

The 1999 election expectations

It was in this setting, with a weakened state and a strained civil society, that the 1999 election was held in Jepara. This first post-Suharto election could be expected to be a formative one for the democratization of Jepara. I want to consider what the election tells us about the character and working of civil society in Jepara.

The consensus among journalists, activists, politicians and state officials was that PPP – the old NU-connected party – and PKB – the new, more liberal NU-connected party – would compete for local dominance. Golkar's vote was expected to drop sharply and Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) was expected to finish a distant third. The focus of the election watchers was on the contest between PPP and PKB. Would the new PKB party be able to attract votes away from PPP? In 1997 half of the vote had gone to Golkar. Which party would attract most of the 1999 Golkar voters?

Whether it would be possible to implement a fair election, free of violence, was also a matter of public concern. The danger that the election would be a disaster was made clear even before the official campaign began. On 30 April 1999, PKB attempted to establish a branch in Dongos, a poor, overwhelmingly PPP village in the sub-district of Kedung. The PKB supporters clashed with a much larger PPP crowd. It ended with four dead and more than a dozen people hospitalized. A number of houses and vehicles were also burned. The incident was widely reported in national and Central Java papers. The violence resulted in considerable fear that the election might spin out of control in Jepara. Newspaper stories worried that other districts with a potential for violence might be 'Jepara-ized' (*diJeparakan*).

Election results

Twenty-eight parties competed in the Jepara election. PPP (the old party of NU) won easily with 46% of the vote.¹³ PDI-P (a successor party to PNI and the party of Megawati Sukarnoputri) came second with 20.2% of the vote. PKB (the new party of NU and Abdurrahman Wahid) was a close third with 18.9%. Golkar was a distant fourth on 8.7% and Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN, Party of the National Message, the Muhamadiyah-connected, coalition of Amien Rais) was fifth with 3.9%.

PPP was the clear winner, coming first in all but two of Jepara's 12 sub-districts and taking in more than double the votes of its nearest rival. PDI-P, despite its splintered organization, did a little better than expected, winning in

¹³ Election data was supplied by the Kantor Pemilihan Umum Daerah in Jepara.

Keling and Jepara sub-districts and coming second in five other sub-districts. PKB did less well than expected, coming second in Jepara sub-district and placing behind both PDI-P and its main rival PPP in eight sub-districts.

In reality PPP's victory was not as dramatic as it looked at first sight. Its vote only increased about 2% from 1997. The Golkar vote fell 46% from 1997, but only 2% of that went to PPP. PKB and PDI-P each obtained about 20% of the votes lost by Golkar. PPP's share of the vote in urban Jepara district and the furniture industry centre of Tahunan fell by 20% and 12% respectively. PPP actually finished fourth in Jepara town with about half the votes of PKB and PDI-P and slightly less than Golkar. Generally the data suggests that it was in the poorer rural villages near Demak that PPP did best and its vote declines closer to Jepara and to the agriculturally richer and less devoutly Muslim north.

PPP won 18 of the 40 elected seats in the 45-seat district assembly (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD), PDI-P 8, PKB 7, Golkar 4, PAN 2, and Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB, Crescent and Star Party) 1. The army and police were awarded the other 5 appointed seats. PPP emerged as the largest party in the assembly. However, it fell short of a majority and had to gain the cooperation of one or more parties to pass legislation or elect the assembly leadership.

Jepara perceptions of the election

So how were the campaign and election results received, and what explanations were proposed for the PPP victory and the PKB loss? These narratives on the election suggest a local state and civil society that was bruised by the campaign but still optimistic about the future.

Local state officials were generally enthusiastic about the election and the results. They felt that they had regained respect for their neutral, supporting role in a fair election and that the election result would take them off the hook as being responsible for all of Jepara's problems. As one middle level official put it to me: 'We can now appear in public in our uniforms'. They were also relieved that campaign violence was not as bad as had been feared. While some officials, who had been stung by PPP criticism in the past, would have preferred any other party (even PDI-P or PKB) to be the dominant party they also knew that 12 of the 18 successful PPP candidates – including the leader – had served in the previous assembly. Local bureaucrats may have had some difficulties with the criticisms they had received from the old assembly but there also had been some mutually beneficial cooperation. So, the bureaucracy, for the most part, seemed willing to accept a slightly diminished role and trust the new democracy with greater accountability to a PPP-lead legislature.

Many young community activists, most of whom supported PKB, were despondent about the PPP victory. Unlike the officials, they thought PPP was not too radical but too conservative. One comment was that the 'party which was fierce won'. Another comment in a village where there had been violence was: 'It's just the same, we only changed masters'. Several activists said: 'PPP won, they used the old ways'. By the old ways they meant the coercion, intimidation and vote buying which they believed Golkar had used in previous elections.

In fact, one of the surprises of the election was that there were so few serious incidents after Dongos. However, most people seemed to believe that the impact of Dongos was negative for the liberal NU party (PKB) even though most of the responsibility for the violence had lain with PPP. Dongos was said to have worked against PKB in three ways. Firstly, some NU leaders tried to distance themselves from PKB in order to restore peace in the NU community. Secondly, PKB curtailed its campaign in areas where PPP support was overwhelming and the risk of violence high. Thirdly, in some respondents' eyes, the impunity with which PPP followers were able to attack NU frightened away many waverers who might have been considering supporting PKB. It seemed that only PPP could protect their followers.

PPP was reported to have used strident campaign slogans and stories. PPP banners proclaimed: Islam is my religion, the *kabah* is my orientation, PPP is my choice, *jihad* is my struggle. PKB countered with slogans proclaiming that PKB was the 'sole child' or the 'legitimate child' of NU. PPP reportedly responded by spreading stories that PKB was 'the child of Golkar', 'supported by Israel' and 'supported by America'.

Everyone pointed to the role of *pengajian* (public lectures) in the PPP campaign and many noted the animosity expressed in PPP-sponsored public lectures. The leader of PPP countered that their *pengajian* had started way back in 1997, and argued that PPP activities were simply more popular than NU. A PKB leader noted that as early as 1998 PPP was holding *pengajian* two to three times a night in every sub-district.

Reports on the campaign by the Independent Election Observer Committee (Komite Independen Pemantau Pemilu, KIPP) listed numerous cases of intimidation by PPP crowds or by uniformed militia. The latter were said to be connected to Jepara underworld gangs like Sadigo (an acronym meaning 'a little wrong and I'll kill you'). Very few had been committed by other political parties. PKB leaders claim that religious teachers (*kiai*) associated with PPP banned their villagers from attending PKB rallies, and sent spies to see who went to PKB activities.

Stories about the PPP victory and PKB defeat emphasized the strength of PPP's organization and its hold on Jeparans. In tone this was remarkably similar to a 1997 Golkar analysis of the strong PPP performance in that elec-

tion which stated that the problem was 'not enough NU *kiai*', meaning too many religious teachers whose loyalty was to PPP rather than NU (even though in reality all PPP *kiai* are also NU members).

Pak Ali Irfan, the deputy district head and a member of PKB, saw the election as a defeat for PKB but a victory for NU, whose elite chaired three of the four major parties: PPP, PKB and Golkar which shared about 70% of the vote.¹⁴ He suggested numerous causes for PPP's strong showing. Firstly, he noted that some popular NU leaders either supported PPP or remained neutral. Secondly, he thought that Jepara's traditional population remained suspicious of change, including the new party PKB. Thirdly, he noted the effectiveness of the PPP campaign techniques and its hold over the population. He thought *pengajian* was more effective than media coverage and campaign rallies that preached to the converted. He said that the PPP hold on some villagers was so strong that, for example, the populace believed stories from their *kiai* that PKB leader (and later president) Abdurrahman Wahid was not really in Jepara or that they shouldn't go to hear him because infidels or Jews would be there. While he mentioned the role of intimidation it was not a major focus of his explanation for PKB's defeat.

PPP leaders saw the election result as due to their superior organization, their political experience and the gratitude of the Jepara people for their decades of standing up to the local government and its Golkar political machine. When interviewed, the PPP head and assembly chairman emphasized the cultural and religious activity of PPP. He said:

It should have been in Jepara, with an NU absolute majority, yes it should have been that PPP was finished lost badly [...] We used *dakwah* (religious lectures) continuously so that our party activities became the culture of Jepara. [We used our] NU character so that compared to NU activity, there is more PPP activity in Jepara.

Three points are noteworthy about these views of the election results. Firstly, leaders of both PPP and PKB saw PPP's hold over the population through *pengajian* and through the village *kiai* network as central to PPP's victory. Reformist losers of this election, many of whom were involved in education and change-oriented CSOs, might be heartened by the thought that further education, better communications, and social change would weaken the village *kiai*'s hold on the population and ease the way for a more civil, less intimidating future election. In a climate of civility their chances of winning might improve.

¹⁴ The Chairman of Golkar was a dean from one of the faculties at UNISNU, Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama in Jepara.

Secondly, the willingness of PKB leader, Pak Ali Irfan, to see an NU victory within a PKB defeat suggests that their NU loyalties might offer losers of future elections a notion that they still had a stake in whatever political coalition dominated local government.

Thirdly, the observations by CSO and community activists about the importance of intimidation and violence in the outcome reflect a liberal impatience with injustice. These reformers are a force for keeping violence – and the state's inability or unwillingness to prevent or punish violence – on the public agenda. Campaign and election violence and intimidation do indicate the presence of combative and exclusive groups in civil society, but the presence of groups and mass media willing to talk about violence might help to make that civil society more capable of compromise and cooperation.

Responses to the election

So far I have been arguing the case that, even though the campaign and election showed signs of suspicion, combativeness and aggressiveness within society, elite perceptions of the elections provided some signs of trust in society and some cause for optimism about future civility in politics. Discussion with PPP and PKB leaders about post-election politics generally supported the argument that there was sufficient trust so that politicians could compromise and work together.

A good example of this was the competition for chairmanship of the new local assembly (DPRD). PPP had won 18 seats but needed 23 votes to guarantee its candidate would win the chair. Pak Ali Irfan, the head of PKB explained that:

At the time of the selection of the assembly chairman, there was a kind of competition between me and them [PPP]. Some championed me [...] it appears there was an effort to engineer things so I became chairman [...] I didn't like that because the result of the election should not deviate from the composition of the assembly [...]. If I became chairman of the council, while the one who received 18 [seats] became deputy chairman, that wouldn't be fortunate for Jeparā.¹⁵

In the end the PPP candidate for chairman and the PKB candidate for deputy chairman were elected unopposed. Both the PPP and PKB assembly leaders report that afterwards there developed a spirit of cooperation and a combined effort to attend quickly to the many letters and deputations which the 1999-2004 assembly received from its aggrieved or hopeful citizens.

The network of NU friends and respected patrons continues to stretch across party divides. Among the PKB leader's close friends was Pak Jubaedi

¹⁵ Interview, Ali Irfan, 4-6-1999.

Ali, an extraordinary NU leader who stuck with PPP in 1999.¹⁶ Pak Irfan said he meets Pak Jubaedi Ali frequently and also continues to meet a number of PPP-politicians on informal occasions. So it seems that the existence of an NU community has enabled Jepara's politicians to trust each other enough to withstand or repair the election damage to civil society.

The 1999 election as a snapshot of civil society

The breakdown of a long-standing authoritarian regime, the uncertain politics of Reformasi and the first democratic election in over 40 years is not an ideal time to see the best face of civil society. Most Jeparans had no experience with democratic elections or resolution of disputes. Many expected that Reformasi and democracy would quickly bring justice, prosperity and opportunity. Many others feared that it would bring revenge and chaos. Given such trying times and given that the election campaign began with massive violence at Dongos, Jepara civil society held up reasonably well. During the campaign there was some small scale violence and some intimidation, but the election was well received, especially by the leaders of the major loser, PKB. Furthermore, the post-election political responses by both the winner, PPP, and by PKB were conciliatory and cooperative.

It appears that at the district elite level there had been sufficient interaction so that both NU-based political parties had enough trust and shared enough civic culture to work together. However, a tolerant, cooperative, trust-building civil society is more closely approximated at the district elite level. At the village level, elite competition seems more severe and civil society more divided along party lines. Usually, the divide is between PPP and PKB but sometimes between those two on one side and the less well-organized followers of the secular PDI-P on the other.

A number of Jeparans described the village level struggle between PKB and PPP as a conflict between *kiai pesantren* and *kiai langgar* (charismatic Islamic teachers who run residential schools and Islamic religious teachers who are paid to give sermons or public lectures at privately owned small mosques). Their argument was that the *kiai pesantren* are less self-interested and more politically naïve, while the *kiai langgar* (called by one activist *kiai bayaran*, *kiai* for sale) are more worldly-wise and more connected to private interests. Behind their generalization was an important issue, namely the connection between religious identity politics and individual interests. While nearly everyone agreed that the individual interests of competing vil-

¹⁶ Pak Jubaedi Ali led NU from the 1960s to the 1980s. He briefly became acting district head in 1966. Pak Jubaedi resigned as district head when forced to give up NU for Golkar. He led PPP in 1982 when they narrowly defeated Golkar in the local election, and stuck with PPP in the 1999 election.

lage-level patrons were a substantial reason for the conflicts that did occur, it was religious and organizational symbols and loyalties that were used to mobilize supporters. PPP used every opportunity to paint its PKB rivals as the instrument of Golkar, or Israel or America, and as weakly committed to Islam. PPP tried to paint itself as on a *jihad* to defend and advance Islam. PKB, meanwhile, tried to portray itself as the official party of NU. One reference in a speech by Abdurrahman Wahid, PKB's leader and affectionately known as Gus Dur went: 'If NU is the chicken, it has two products. PKB is the egg and PPP is the shit'.

Gus Dur's rhetoric aside, what the PKB wing of NU was pushing was a nuanced view of Islam. As Pak Ali Irfan put it, PKB 'looks at people's conduct not their hats'. Its image – as a party that was 'liberal', willing to cooperate with Chinese and Christians, and willing to ally itself with Megawati's PDI-P – didn't work as well in the villages of Jepara as PPP's simpler message that it was the party of Islam.

The 1999 election's impact on civil society

So what effect did the first post-Suharto election have on Jepara civil society? Did it lay a solid foundation for deepening Jepara democracy? Three aspects stand out.

Firstly, the PPP victory was not as bad for democracy as many have claimed. In victory they could afford to be magnanimous. If they had lost they would continue to be aggrieved. Faced with a share of power over local government they were compelled to do what governments do, to figure out how to make things work. That would make it possible for them either to win or to alienate supporters based on their policies and performance. Either result would encourage voters to offer support to parties based upon perceptions of their interests rather than loyalty to religion or organizational identity. This could be expected to take away some of the heat of identity politics.

Secondly, the role of various members of the NU elite as the main backers of PKB, in the leadership of PPP and Golkar, and as neutral public intellectuals, helped to break down identity politics, and this is likely to increase voters' sense that they do have freedom of choice. In 1955, if you were part of the 55% or so of Jeparans in the NU community, you voted for NU. In 1999 if you were an NU member you could vote for PPP, PKB or Golkar and still believe that you were demonstrating your support for an NU-led party. Divisions within the NU leadership may be worrisome, but one of the things they can do is to teach voters that authority figures can disagree or change their mind and that nothing terrible happens to a voter who makes their own choice, even if their local patron disagrees. As voters come to have multiple

and cross-cutting loyalties, civil society will be enriched and campaigns and election outcomes will be less threatening.

Thirdly, while the Dongos incident was appalling, the response by the NU community was generally constructive. The NU and party elites from PPP and PKB seemed genuinely upset by the breakdown of order. The meetings called in response to Dongos by the civil and military authorities and by NU leaders from Jepara and from the province impressed on NU leaders as well as PPP and PKB politicians that violence could easily get out of hand. This led to a winding down of campaign intensity and rhetoric and taught some lessons about civic responsibility. Perhaps PKB retreated further than PPP, but both pulled back from the abyss.

I have argued that in 1999 Jepara's civil society was more inclusive at the district level and combative and exclusive at the village level. To some extent NU has been able to build and sustain a sense of trust and respect between political actors. Reformasi and the 1999 election challenged that inclusiveness. The conflict between PPP and PKB led to violence and considerable tension. However, the response to that violence – and to the election results – by NU and PKB have helped to restore a civic culture in which there is a degree of trust between political party and community leaders.

The 1999 election was the first democratic election in more than 40 years. In the uncertainty and euphoria of Reformasi that followed the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime it is not surprising that there was political violence in Jepara. The state party Golkar was clearly going to collapse, but it was not clear whether NU's old guard in PPP or its new, more liberal wing in PKB was going to fill that vacuum. The PPP-leadership felt that they had struggled for decades to represent Jepara's NU community against the Golkar juggernaut. They saw the PKB-leadership as upstarts plotting to harvest the fruits of years of PPP effort.

After the violence in Dongos, despite the invective and intimidation of the campaign, the election occurred without further major incidents. Perhaps civil society having learned from the 1999 election that the winner did not take all would be able to build a growing support base for democracy in Jepara. There were many challenges, for NU, and for the civil society it dominates. NU, its leadership, and its affiliated and spin-off organizations needed to be a source of community activism and remain critical of the state and political parties, while maintaining its capacity to be a conciliatory force. It needed to provide space for liberal critics and conservative religious teachers and party officials alike while maintaining its mass legitimacy.

¹⁷ One legislative election in 2004, two presidential elections in 2004 and one district head election in 2003.

2004 and beyond

Six years, four elections,¹⁷ and a lot of political conflict and collaboration have gone by since the end of the Suharto era. Gone too is the furniture industry boom and the teak forests that made Jepara prosperous. Employment, production and exports fell, largely due to the shortage of quality timber, the shipment of poor quality furniture, and the fear of foreign buyers to travel to Jepara because of Indonesian's terrorist problems. Weakened as well is the Jepara state, no longer such a 'powerhouse', and no longer able to count on rising budgets or selective patronage and repression to attract popular support or ensure community compliance. These have been far more demanding times for Jepara's civil society and state. However, I want to argue that on balance, a more tolerant, inclusive and participatory civil society has emerged. I also want to argue that under some circumstances a civil society that is tolerant, inclusive, and trust-building can contain within it elements that are fractious, critical, and argumentative.

The Jepara state continued to show signs of reaching out to civil society and trying to be more participatory. One sign of this was the Forum Lintas Pelaku (FLP, the Inter-Actor Forum) which brought together many of the district's development-oriented CSOs to implement or evaluate government programs and services. More than 30 organizations and most of the senior state officials attended regular meetings, which were often quite boisterous and critical of the state.

The state's acceptance of the growing role of civil society was perhaps most visible in the 2004 election. Nearly one year before the election the Jepara government appointed a five-member team to choose the Local Election Committee (Komite Pemilihan Umum Daerah, KPUD-kabupaten) nominees. The local government's choice for the selection committee included a lecturer at the NU university, a respected NU leader who was also the head of the Jepara branch of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesia Muslim Scholars Council), a medical doctor, and a Muhammadiyah patron who is a major furniture entrepreneur. The selection committee chose ten nominees from the more than one hundred applicants in a transparent selection process. The provincial election committee (KPUD-propinsi) named the five appointees. Four were from an NU background and three of these were former activists in the NU student organization Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII, the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement). One KPUD member was a Muhammadiyah leader. Two were businessmen, two were academics and one was a religious teacher. Two had monitored the 1997 elections for the independent election monitor, KIPP and two others had been involved in the implementation of the 1999 election.

The Jepara electoral commission KPUD and its election oversight com-

mittee (Panwaslu, Panitia Pengawasan Pemilu) were respected community figures and they managed the campaign and election strictly, even-handedly, and without incident. Parties were provided with clear instructions about where, when and how they could campaign. Parties that violated campaign rules were warned and fined. For example the PKB leader, Gus Dur, arrived late for his scheduled campaign rally and was only allowed to lead a prayer.

The local 2004 legislative and presidential elections showed no signs of the violence and intimidation of the 1999 elections. Competition was keen and the dominant party PPP's share of the vote fell from 44% to 31%. My own analysis of voting patterns in village Jepara shows a large number of competitive villages where no party got more than 50% of the vote and many villages in which the party winning the legislative election did not win the presidential election. This indicates that voters felt a high degree of freedom to make their own choice.

It is interesting that there could be a 13% decline in the PPP vote without a strident campaign and without cries of foul-play from PPP. No one seems to have thought that the elections were won by intimidation or money. No one suggests that religious symbols and identity were important campaign tools. Civil society had guided Jepara through what could have been a stressful election year.

An inclusive civil society

Civil society has been enriched by a growth of reform movements and CSOs concerned with development, social justice, corruption and empowering people. Most of these organizations are led by people with NU backgrounds and degrees from universities in Yogyakarta or Semarang. Some of them focus on advocating the rights of fishermen, forest villagers and salt farmers. Others deal with property development, land rights, and environmental concerns. Several see their task as uncovering mismanagement and corruption in government or law enforcement. Some work together with local government in implementing and evaluating development projects. Others work as part of programs supported by national or provincial CSOs. They raise money from foreign donors, CSO networks, private individuals and the local government.

There is a running debate between 'soft' CSOs that accept state funding, accompany assembly representatives on 'junkets' or privately report corruption or mismanagement to local state officials, and 'hard' CSOs that organize public protest and report corruption to the media or to the prosecutor's office. However, despite the harsh words between them, there seems

to be room for both radical and 'co-opted' CSOs in Jepara. Their leaders overwhelmingly share the same lifestyle, the same education, and the same religious, cultural and organizational experience. They also can choose levels of protest in their efforts to influence the state. For example, they fought for a local people's participation law (actually a freedom of information act) by sending letters from their CSO to state officials or the media. For further pressure they can mobilize supporters from several CSOs for public rallies. For example, when pressing for corruption charges against local assembly members they brought in national and provincial CSO dignitaries to their rallies to urge prosecution. Finally, they can gain public support from NU mass organizations and their leaders.

I am arguing that, so far, Jepara's civil society has managed to continue a 'big tent' format. It continues to be an inclusive arena for condemning, criticizing and sometimes cooperating with local politicians and the local state. It seems to have reduced the stridency and alienation of PPP, allowed the PKB supporters to find a role for themselves after defeat (for example as reformers in NU and in other CSOs), and spawned – or at least allowed room for – a new generation of boisterous reformers and radicals.

Those fractious radicals and reformers will pose new challenges for Jepara's NU-led civil society, as will the efforts by the state to coopt would-be critics or whistle-blowers. However, it seems likely that NU's ability to appear to rise above the fray of everyday politics, NU's habit of speaking with many voices, and its place in the community leadership all will sustain a fractious, lively and inclusive civil society.