IQAS Vol. 55 / 2024 ii, pp. 137–153

Politics of Marginalisation in Indonesia: The Jokowi Era

Editorial

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This special issue critically discusses the experiences of marginalised communities in Indonesia under the Joko Widodo (Jokowi) government (2014–2024). Adopting an analytical perspective from below, it questions how top-down government policies have affected these sidelined groups in their daily lives, assessing whether they have been empowered or further weakened over the past decade. It also looks at how the communities' agency and struggles within and against persistent inequalities have played out from their institutionalised position of marginality. We therefore do not perceive of marginalised people as passive victims, but look at their acts of resistance and rights-based mobilisation against unjust circumstances and policies. Drawing on Gatzweiler et al. (2011: 3), we understand marginality as "an involuntary position and condition of an individual or group at the margins of social, political, economic, ecological or biophysical systems, preventing them from access to resources, assets, services, restraining freedom of choice, preventing the development of capabilities, and eventually causing (extreme) poverty". Accordingly, the contributions in this issue zoom into the life-worlds of different marginalised groups in Indonesia. They critically ask how Jokowi's grand narrative of modernisation and (infrastructural) development has affected these people living at the margins – the majority of whom are confronted with a multiplicity of simultaneous and unrelenting marginalisation, thus struggling with what we would call "intersectional marginality".

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DOI 10.11588/iqas.2024.2.27205

Hence, the four contributions, written by engaged Indonesian scholars and their collaborators, draw attention to issues of precarious livelihoods, unfair treatment and discrimination, rural poverty, land tenure and natural resource (mis)management, environmental degradation, populist politics, community resistance and health justice. All contributions share a common concern with issues of social inequality, exclusion and the protection of human rights in the context of drastic social, political and economic transformation introduced by the Jokowi government. The case studies presented are situated at the national, sub-national and local levels, including "peripheral" and disadvantaged places that are geographically and culturally distant from the political and economic centre in Jakarta and the island of Java. Specifically, the authors analyse the national legal situation of people with disabilities, the trajectory of rural social movements across the country, the struggles over territory of the Ata Modo community in West Manggarai on Flores Island and the political turmoil and economic struggles of West Papua. This special issue is complemented by a research note and a commentary that examine the politics of rapid legal change and the challenges of promoting and protecting human rights in Indonesia under Jokowi, respectively.

Through these contributions we aim to provide insights, particularly by close observation from below, into the social, economic, political and legal legacies of the Jokowi era, upon which future governments will have to build their policy decisions. Based on these in-depth field assessments we argue that Jokowi's "new developmentalism", a mix of strong state intervention into the market and selective liberal economic strategies (Warburton 2019), has resulted in an increased marginalisation of local and/or disadvantaged communities across the country, which in many cases has included a rise in poverty and struggles with livelihoods. In some instances, Jokowi appeared willing to negotiate and appease these people's needs and demands as long as these did not directly challenge existing power relations. More generally, however, in its efforts to meet mainstream indicators of economic performance and development, the government employed and pushed for what we call here a "politics of marginalisation" that directly affected already marginalised groups or newly created marginalised communities. The Jokowi era's prime goal of economic development and infrastructural modernisation at the expense of the wellbeing of local communities has left crucial imprints in Indonesia. Over the next decades, the state narrative on crafting an advanced nation dependent on strong economic performance and developmental achievements will in all likelihood be continued, as showcased by the vision of "Golden Indonesia 2045".

The vision of "Golden Indonesia 2045": Between high ambition and reality

On 15 June 2023, in an extensively mediatised event, Jokowi delivered a speech on the launching of the final draft of the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2025–2045 (see Kementerian Sekretariat 2023). The RPJPN constitutes the government's strategic road map for realising its "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision (Indonesia Emas 2045). The speech was an important political act for several reasons. Delivered at the end of Jokowi's time in office (2014–2019 and 2019–2024), it was addressed to the entire Indonesian nation and communicated both the government's development achievements of the Jokowi decade and its vision for the future. Having inherited the RPJPN 2005–2025 from his predecessor Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Jokowi was emboldened to articulate his own long-term dirigisme plan for an advanced and globally competitive Indonesia. Jokowi listed series of achievements, such as infrastructure development, investment in human resources to capitalise on the country's demographic dividend and the importance of government policies for downstream industry,[1] all of which would support Indonesia on its way to becoming a high-income country by 2045. The speech thus conveyed a narrative of government promises fulfilled, and focused on the legacy Jokowi intends to leave for the nation and future presidents.

Set for 2045, the centenary of Indonesia's independence, the vision of "Golden Indonesia 2045" is for the country to join the rank of Asia's superpowers and to become one of the world's top five economies, by increasing the GDP per capita from approx. USD 4,900 in 2023 to USD 21,000 by 2037 and USD 30,000 by 2045. Based on a set of macroeconomic assumptions for future revenue surpluses, "Golden Indonesia 2045" aims to create a robust middle-income population and abolish extreme poverty. It also envisions the country as a regional power with strong leadership and rising leverage in international affairs, also through increased soft power capabilities. The latter conforms to crafting an internationally attractive image of Indonesia as a Muslim-majority nation that is modern and technologically advanced, democratic, peaceful, culturally diverse and protects its religious minorities. According to the governmental narrative, the realisation of this vision of an internally and externally strong country depends on the achievement of a high level of annual

1 Under Jokowi, Indonesia has enforced a so-called downstreaming policy of its oil and gas, agribusiness, coal, mining and mineral-based industries, as applied in many resource-rich countries across the world. This policy centres on decreasing the exports of such raw materials in an effort to promote the country's processing and refining industries, create value added and render the country's economy more competitive. The objective is to process raw material into finished goods for export, thus diversifying the country's economy. However, the benefits of downstreaming for Indonesia have remained merely part of Jokowi's rhetoric, as the policy has come with many negative side effects, including weak implementation of labor rights and environmental standards (see Roussey / Balas 2024).

national economic growth. Jokowi's strategy for building up the economy has been the development of specific manufacturing industries, in particular the so-called renewables-based downstream industry, as well as aiming for a poverty rate close to zero per cent (Theodora 2023, Facal 2024).

The National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) has designed the long-term development plan as a comprehensive state-led growth strategy – a key concept in the history of Indonesian development policy and indicative of the idea of a top-down "developmental state". The RPJPN sets out a wide range of economic, societal and ecological transformation strategies, formulated in a complex interplay of "Four Main Goals", "Eight Development Agendas", "17 Development Directions" and "45 Main Development Indicators" (Government of the Republic of Indonesia 2023). In doing so, it is not only the most detailed development strategy ever put forward by Indonesia, but also consciously refers to and partially mimics current global development discourses, such as those found in the UN's "2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development" (United Nations 2015). In particular, the RPJPN mirrors the official UN understanding of development that is explicitly multidimensional in that it includes economic, social and ecological elements, thus presenting development in an alternative way that is – supposedly – human-centred, holistic and sustainable, rather than (solely) driven by capitalist interests and a Western vision of modernity. However, the RPJPN's more sustainable approach to development appears fragile and will have to prove itself in the coming years against a multitude of increasing global challenges and economic competition. Against the backdrop of the Jokowi era and its classic capitalist development orientation, an economy-oriented notion of development is likely to prevail and shape Indonesia's future.

This concern has already materialised in the construction of the new National Capital City (Ibu Kota Negara, IKN) Nusantara in Kalimantan, on the east coast of the island of Borneo. While Nusantara has been designed as a smart and green city, the local population bemoans the widespread ecological and societal destruction caused by this urbanisation project from scratch (Ratcliffe / Hariandja 2024). This raises questions about the human and environmental costs of "development" – whether framed as economic, sustainable, smart or green – under the Jokowi government and how it will be continued under president-elect Prabowo Subianto.[2] Interrogating the narratives and practices of development in Indonesia and elsewhere is also important because of the epistemological ambiguity of the term. Even global development policies have changed over time, adapting to newly emerging challenges and per-

2 Targeting the international audience in the West, in an op-ed article in Newsweek, Prabowo Subianto (2024) notes: "Under the enlightened leadership of my friend and colleague, President Joko Widodo, Indonesia has undertaken a host of reforms that have set the country on the path of dramatic transformation. I intend to carry forth this mission."

ceptions of what development means, from an early parochial economic understanding of development to the current more holistic and sustainable approach of the UN, which claims awareness of local and context-specific perspectives (see United Nations 2015, Baker 2022).

In practice, however, economic development based on concepts of capitalism and modernity has remained the key objective in all mainstream development strategies and continues to silence alternative bottom-up and Global South-centred concepts of how to live "a good life".[3] The development of society is made measurable and internationally comparable through clear quantitative indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI), which assesses and aggregates life expectancy, years of schooling and gross national income per capita. In terms of this understanding of human development, the Jokowi government is said to have performed well. Since 2016 Indonesia's HDI has been classified as "high". From 2014 to 2019 its HDI rose steadily, declined until 2021 and then rose again the following year. As of 2022 the country ranked 112 out of 192 countries (United Nations Development Programme 2024). Still, the HDI can be criticised for being a superficial measure of development as it counts, for instance, years of schooling without looking at the qualitative aspects of education. On the other hand, apart from the Bhutan-crafted Gross National Happiness index, currently no alternative measurement exists that would allow a global comparison of countries' progress.

In its focus on a more pragmatic and classical approach to development, informed by narratives on financial success and modernity and legitimised by quantitative data, Indonesia is not very different from other middle-income countries in the region. Malaysia, Vietnam and India have similar economic development goals and rhetoric (Tran 2023: 172). Compared to its regional neighbours within Asia, however, Indonesia under Jokowi has placed a particularly strong emphasis on infrastructure development and has, in a relatively short period of time, created new infrastructural realities within the country. During his ten years in office, Jokowi has launched a number of mega infrastructure projects, including the construction of highways, railways, airports and seaports to improve connectivity across the archipelago, reduce logistic costs and attract more businesses to invest in the country. In Jakarta, the country's first underground metro line began operation in 2019, with a second line in planning. This ambitious project has been realised in cooperation with Japan. Since October 2023, the capital has been connected to Bandung through Southeast Asia's first high-speed rail service – the "Whoosh" – built with Chinese support as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. An extension of the line to Surabaya in East Java is currently in the planning phase, again in close cooperation with China. In general, official Indonesian sources state that future

3 On critical and alternative approaches on development, such as degrowth, Buen Vivir and Ubuntu, see Kothari et al. 2014, Freston 2019, Taringa 2020, Sartorius 2021.

relations with China should be strengthened (Biro Komunikasi 2024; see also Liu / Lim 2023). Overall, with its "new developmentalism" the government has prioritised an economic policy characterised by an activist state and supplemented by selective liberal strategies to achieve growth and elevate Indonesia's status as a major emerging economy in the region (Warburton 2019).

This self-confident economic agenda is underpinned by Indonesia's G20 membership, which began in 2008. As of 2024, Indonesia is ASEAN's sole representative within this club of the world's largest economies. Well aware of its exclusive and strategic position within the Southeast Asian region, Indonesia hosted the G20 summit in Bali in 2022, proudly showcasing its decade-long economic achievements to an international audience and seeking to enhance its image as a prosperous country (Kawamura / Mizuno 2023). Moreover, since July 2023 Indonesia has been working on a strategic bid to become the 39th member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) by 2027 (Cabinet Secretariat 2024, OECD 2024). Notwithstanding some setbacks in its economic development, the country has demonstrated a relatively reliable financial stability over the decades. After 20 years in the lower middle-income group, Indonesia succeeded in achieving upper middle-income status in early 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic years (2020–2022), Indonesia's economic progress was sluggish, resulting in a downgrade to middle-income status. But the country recovered quickly and regained its upper middle-income status in July 2023. Since then, it has remained stable, supported in part by the ongoing infrastructure projects, as well as large-scale mineral exports (Morishita 2023) and strong domestic consumption, especially by the Indonesian middle class (Suhanda / Swasono 2023).[4]

The continued growth of the middle class has been a key objective under Jokowi and will continue to be so in the future. "Golden Indonesia 2045" aims to increase the middle-class population from the current 20 per cent up to 80 per cent (Antara 2023, Kementerian Perencanaan 2023). According to the World Bank, the middle class is the fastest growing segment in Indonesia, with around 52 million economically secure individuals, or one in every five. Over the past 20 years, the majority of the poor have moved out of poverty and into the so-called aspiring middle class, with approximately 115 million people who belong in this category. However, 35 per cent of Indonesians are poor or vulnerable (The World Bank 2019), and even the existing middle class is considered fragile and in need of better social protection programmes (Fauziah / Febrianna 2024). Notwithstanding these challenges, "Golden Indonesia 2045" aims to escape the so-called middle-income trap and join the club of high-income countries, by capitalising on its demographic dividend, with 70 per cent of its population aged between 15 and 64 years in 2023 (Statistics Indonesia 2024).

4 On the rise of halal consumerism see Millie / Baulch 2023.

To ensure that the nation is on the right track to become a high-income country, the new president-elect, Prabowo, is formally obliged to implement the RPJPN 2025–2045, in addition to his own election promises. According to the Bappenas the achievement of "Golden Indonesia 2045" should be guaranteed if the next government maintains an annual economic growth of between 6 per cent and 7 per cent during the period 2024–2029 (Antara 2024). Demonstrating the centrality of economic growth in political discourse, two months after winning the presidential election, Prabowo himself announced an ambitious growth target of even 8 per cent by 2026. This is to be achieved largely through the development of "downstreaming" (Subianto 2024).

While "Golden Indonesia 2045" may provide a national aspiration for developmental goals, Indonesia faces various economic challenges with unclear outcomes. For instance, the construction of the new capital Nusantara has experienced setbacks as some international investors have resigned from the project. Also, after the 2024 elections in February, the country experienced a notable increase in volatile food prices. Inevitably, in this era of "compressed development" (Whittaker et al. 2020), Indonesia has to deal with a demanding policy stretch between investing in physical infrastructure, developing a robust social security system, and implementing environmental protection measures. Given the infrastructure priorities of the Jokowi government, Indonesia faces an immense challenge in formulating and implementing effective policies to protect the environment and reduce the poverty levels, especially for those living in absolute poverty.[5]

Raising the population's level of education is traditionally seen as a key policy for decreasing poverty as it is understood as paving the way towards a middle-class income, increased tax income and, ultimately, a better national economic achievement. While the Jokowi government has invested heavily into education,[6] Indonesia's performance still lags behind regional comparison:[7] by 2022, almost 10 million people aged between 15–24 years (23 per cent of the total population) are not in employment, education or vocational training at all (Statistics Indonesia 2023a). Instead, Indonesia's economic growth has been mostly driven by a series of ambitious projects largely funded by fossil

5 As of March 2023, Indonesia's poverty rate was 9.36 per cent, which is still high compared to the government's target of between 6.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent as set in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024 (Statistics Indonesia 2023b).

6 This also concerns Islamic education. In Depok, one of Jakarta's satellite cities, the country's first International Islamic University (UIII) was constructed to position Indonesia as a new and modern religious knowledge hub within the Islamic world. The campus opened its doors in 2021 and is financed and operated by three Indonesian ministries (Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology). It self-identifies as an alternative to prominent Islamic universities in the Arab region, Iran as well as Malaysia, thereby challenging the dominance of established centres of Islamic knowledge production.

7 Based on the PISA score of 2022, Indonesia ranks 69 while Vietnam 34, Brunei 42, Malaysia 55, and Thailand 63 (Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022). Indonesia faces major challenges in the education sector, also caused by the country's geographical complexity that hampers equal access to quality education (Suryani et al. 2020).

fuel that, however, poses serious threats to the country's biodiversity and the population's health (Myllyvirta et al. 2024, Yuli 2024).

Democratic resilience

Doubts on the sustainability of Indonesia's economic success may be backed up by the fact that in another major field of systemic transformation the country has shown a disappointing performance: the democratisation of state institutions. While in comparison with the rest of Southeast Asia and the Islamic world, Indonesia's democratic quality still holds up well, the country shows signs of being an illiberal democracy with limited religious freedom, a lack of the rule of law, and weakly institutionalised parties (Setiawan / Tomsa 2022). This democratic backsliding has accelerated and deepened under the Jokowi government, as illustrated by international measurements of democratic quality. For instance, the Freedom in the World index of the Freedom House confirms a general decline in political rights and civil liberties in Indonesia under Jokowi: in 2017 the country scored 65 out of 100 points, and in 2024, it scored 57 out of 100 points, classifying it as "partly free" (see Freedom House Indonesia 2017–2024).

A major reason for democratic decline in Indonesia is the continued flourishing of anti-reformists elites and a deeply institutionalised oligarchy, i.e. the fusion of political authority and economic power. Against expectations, the introduction of democracy has not led to the abolishment of the oligarchic structures established by Suharto (1966–1998). Instead, Indonesia proceeds to be a country where extreme material inequality produces extreme political inequality. Oligarchs like owners of mining companies and media houses hold economic and political power and are able to influence policymaking. Other elite groups, like political, economic and bureaucratic elites, can easily transform into oligarchs through networking and patronage across different elite milieux and by that advance their specific political and economic interests while marginalising the concerns of the common population (Winters 2013, Robet 2023). In this context, the decision of the Jokowi government in 2024 to grant mining concessions to religious mass organisations is controversial as it opens up the way for religious civil society elites like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah to directly get involved in a business known as dominated by oligarchs and for its high extent of corruption (Maulana / Mubarok 2024).

Corruption indeed remains widespread in Indonesia. This includes, amongst others, the country's private economic as well as public economic sector and the judiciary and hampers transparent, just and equal economic progress. In the end, corruption may constitute a serious challenge for the realisation of

the sustainable and holistic vision of national advancement as articulated in "Golden Indonesia 2045". According to the Corruption Perceptions Index, between 2014 and 2019 Indonesia's corruption decreased with its score steadily rising from 34 to 40 out of 100 points. From 2019 to 2023, however, corruption increased and fell back to a score of 34 (Transparency International 2024). This development reflects the events that unfolded in 2019 when the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK), established in 2002 during Indonesia's democratisation process and initially hailed as a bulwark against corruption, was systematically weakened by the undermining of its independence and investigative powers by the House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR) (Mudhoffir 2022).

Another emerging area of increasing state control and repression is the digital sphere, where the Jokowi government has used laws and regulations to intimidate and prosecute critical journalists, civil society activists, and academics (Juniarto 2022, Wiratman 2022, Rambatan 2024). The 2024 elections, with its massive use of TikTok and artificial intelligence to vin votes, marked another turning point for Indonesian democracy, as in this context political elites supported the undermining of democratic control of the executive power (Garnesia 2024, Okamoto 2024). Furthermore, most recently Jokowi has attempted to secure high-profile political positions for his family members, thus paving the way for dynastic politics. In 2023, in a controversial move, the Constitutional Court under the leadership of Jokowi's brother-in-law, Anwar Usman, lowered the age requirement for the position of vice president, thereby allowing Jokowi's eldest son Gibran Rakabumi Raka to become Prabowo Subianto's running mate. In May 2024, in a similar vein, the Supreme Court decided to revise the Regional Electoral Law to lower the age of eligibility for candidacy in gubernatorial elections. In doing so, it attempted to permit the electoral candidacy of Jokowi's youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep. However, after massive public protests and the occupation of the Indonesian parliament and roads in Jakarta, on 22 August 2024, the revision was halted. Nevertheless, these developments have further undermined many Indonesians' faith in the independence of the judiciary.

Although scholars have noted that the political developments in Indonesia over the past 10 years may run parallel to the general trend of democratic regression in Southeast Asia (Bünte / Weiss 2023) and elsewhere in the world, the particular political situation in Indonesia deserves attention. In contrast to Thailand and Myanmar, political stability in Indonesia during the Jokowi era was backed up by the legitimising power of steady economic growth. While in Thailand the opposition parties Pheu Thai Party and Future Forward Party / Move Forward Party at least temporarily succeeded in undermining the military-appointed senate rule by their strong turnouts in the 2023 election (Jatus-

ripitak / Ricks 2024), in Indonesia, similarly strong progressive opposition parties have not emerged.

In addition to the above-mentioned increasing governmental intimidations and control mechanisms as well as the oligarchic fusion of political authority and economic power, other factors may explain this Indonesian exception. For instance, the political elites have been successful in incorporating and by that weakening oppositional forces through their strategy of offering perks and power-sharing in an Indonesian cultural style of *gotong royong* (mutual help). In parliament, this strategy resulted in the formation of large coalitions that left no significant parliamentary opposition – a phenomenon termed "party cartelization" (Slater 2018). This strategy also worked out because Indonesian political actors, both at the local and national level and across ideologies, share a strong belief in the importance of economic growth. As a result of these processes, only a form of procedural democracy is in place in Indonesia, which has become even more entrenched during Jokowi's second term of office (2019–2024). Thus, even when political opposition to Jokowi emerged, it was only momentarily and failed to develop effective instruments and alternative platforms to channel, broadcast, and represent strong dissenting voices and aspirations for change.

Notwithstanding these setbacks on democratic quality, we would like to argue that Indonesia showcases an example of democratic resilience rather than a clear-cut democratic backsliding. As the contributions to this special issue demonstrate, when we turn to the local level of everyday political contentions, many examples can be identified where citizens who find themselves in marginalised positions do remain actively engaged to fight for their democratic rights. Local communities have developed a wide range of forms of everyday resistance against their ongoing marginalisation and as taxpayers they have become more attentive to the fate of their country. For us, these are case studies of strong democratic resilience practiced by marginalised people. They should not be overlooked, but must be included into the overall assessment of the status quo of Indonesian democracy.

Although scattered and often unorganised, these people express raw grievances and with the assistance of progressive NGOs often further develop them into larger mobilisation and collective public struggle. However, in line with the Indonesian cultural context, they are often "making claims modestly" (Berenschot et al. 2024) so as not to directly disturb the national credo of *kerukunan* (harmony; political, social and religious) and the procedures of *musyawarah dan mufakat* (consultation and consensus) – deeply institutionalised modes through which existing power relations are oftentimes reproduced rather than reshifted.

While these cultural arrangements constrain the agency and power of local marginalised communities to a significant extent, the contributions in this spe-

cial issue demonstrate how the latter manage to still confront the government with their demands and discontents. They act from within an entrenched position of marginality and by weak means and low resources, however not fully powerlessness and potentially able to raise a critical mass. We term this phenomenon "politics of marginality" – a form of political resistance against the structural governmental "politics of marginalisation" these communities are subject to in the wake of national goals of economic growth and infrastructural development. To our assessment it is between the complex dynamics of the Jokowi government's top-down development policy and the bottom-up resistance of society where noteworthy democratic resilience can be observed.

The contributions

By engaging with the diverse systemic economic and political transformations that evolved during the Jokowi era, this special issue illustrates the workings of the "politics of marginalisation" that also trigger a "politics of marginality" in current Indonesia. Collectively, the articles show that asymmetric power relations have intensified during the Jokowi administration, pushing already marginalised communities into an increasingly unfavourable position. While the articles presented here are case studies from specific localities within Indonesia, they provide more general insights to understanding the broader political and economic changes the country experienced under Jokowi and how these changes have impacted on several disadvantaged communities across the country. Hence, the research findings point towards general patterns of increasing marginalisation processes that can be found elsewhere in Indonesia where communities are confronted with the central government's grand development projects and economic objectives.

More specifically, the authors critically discuss how the marginalisation of specific communities operates in terms of social position, spatial life, and ecological conditions and how these violent processes threaten peoples' safe livelihoods. The politics of marginalisation restricts the communities' access to resources, especially in areas where land and other natural resources are considered important and used by the central government for its development projects. In doing so, the politics of marginalisation excludes the communities from certain opportunities or limits their potential to exercise their rights. However, while the Jokowi government reinforced their marginalisation as powerless subjects, bottom-up resistance has remained vivid. In many cases it is actually the painful experience of being marginalised subjects that shapes and enforces the communities' internal cohesion and resistance vis-à-vis the government. We trust the articles' findings relevant for raising greater awareness on the crucial

side effects on marginalised communities that inevitably come with Indonesia's current economic and infrastructural transformation, and especially within the context of the future "Golden Indonesia 2045". Furthermore, with this special issue we hope to inspire future research on how everyday resistance of communities situated at a multitude of marginalised social and geographical positions plays out empirically and to further conceptualise these communities' "politics of marginality".

In his contribution to the current debate section, Usman Hamid explains how the human rights situation has deteriorated dramatically during the last ten years. The government failed to investigate past human rights violations and to protect vulnerable groups from increasing intimidations and harassments, especially religious minorities and the LGBTQI+ community. Hamid argues that overall the Jokowi government's initial promise to implement a progressive approach towards human rights did not materialise, which was also due to Jokowi making compromises with old military power and oligarchs.

Mahesti Hasanah and Longgina Novadona Bayo show how the local Ata Modo community in West Manggarai on the island of Flores, with the support of local NGOs, defends and reclaims its legitimation over the territory around the Komodo National Park. As this territory has been turned into a tourism area by the central government, the Ata Modo community is eager to protect its own livelihood. The article demonstrates that despite the absence of an official land ownership certificate, the community has voiced and strengthened its claims addressed at the central government. The Ata Modo draw on traditional knowledge-based ecological engagements in order to remind the central government of its indispensable role in the region's conservation plans.

Hatib Kadir discusses the realities of accelerated development programs in the "frontier area" of West Papua. Settler domination in the region's economic sector, combined with continuous military operations and environmental degradation over the last 10 years, has made the local situation unbearable for Indigenous Papuans. Kadir shows that the Papuans have felt resentment at being left behind in the face of profound changes in their lives, and have therefore resorted to strengthening their identity as *orang asli* (Indigenous people) in order to improve their status vis-à-vis the central government.

Drawing on case studies in Java and Sumatra, Iqra Anugrah discusses the trajectory of rural social movements under the Jokowi government. He examines the dynamics of state-rural social movement relations in the context of the democratic rollback during the last 10 years. His analysis shows that the expansion of oligarchic concession in the rural areas under the blessing of the Jokowi government has aggravated the livelihood of the rural marginalised. Although fragmented, rural social movements have been working in cooperation with various other actors to push for more inclusive politics.

In their analysis on Indonesia's disability policy reform under the Jokowi government, Antoni Tsaputra, Gianfranco Giuntoli, and Damri examine the common institutional challenges faced by persons with disability to exercise their right to education, health, and employment, despite the promulgation of Law No. 8 Year 2016 on Persons with Disability. They identify a combination of factors that contribute to the government's weak engagement in the protection and empowerment of people with disabilities such as the lack of national budget commitment, regulatory discord, and the general lack of awareness towards the right to inclusion.

In his research note on the legal changes during the Jokowi government, Shimada Yuzuru discusses the political background and contents of nine controversial legislations enacted during the last ten years. Six out of these nine legislations were adopted by the parliament during Jokowi's second term: the amended marriage law, the amended KPK law, the amended constitutional court law, the omnibus law on job creation, the sexual violence crime law, and the new criminal code. The enactment of these laws sparked widespread protests and in the case of the so-called omnibus law, caused violent clashes between protesters and the police force. Examining the processes behind the enactment of these laws and their contents, Yuzuru shows how the president has pursued legal policies that weaken restrictions on the executive power.

The way ahead

As demonstrated in the individual articles, local communities have often been ignored and sidelined by the Jokowi government's development priorities in order to achieve rigid governmental targets. Beyond the detailed discussions in the articles, this special issue may provide an interesting case for comparison with other middle income-countries in Asia, such as Malaysia, Vietnam, and India, which are pursuing similar narrowly focused developmental goals and rhetoric that negatively affect specific communities. We thus hope to encourage future comparatively oriented research on the dynamics and interplay between the politics of marginalisation and the politics of marginality in Asia and beyond. For the Indonesian case, it is likely that the politics of marginalisation will further profit from the country's deeply institutionalised oligarchic structures. Oligarchs have a shared concern to maintain a low level of political and economic equality in order to advance their own interests. Given this entrenched oligarchic power and its influence in politics and the economy, local communities in Indonesia face a hard time ahead. Research on processes of top-down marginalisation and bottom-up resistance must thus take account of the oligarchic elite and its powerful networks and include it as a crucial analytical factor.

In order to meaningfully cater for the needs of all its social classes and protect its democratic system, Indonesia must soon come up with a more responsive government that strengthens citizen's rights, alleviates social contention, reinforce social protection programs, and ensure economic equality in the distribution of the nation's wealth along its development path. Our thread of hope is that the new political elite in power will pay better attention to the multifold social-economic problems caused by the ongoing politics of marginalisation, as highlighted in this collection of writings. This surely won't materialise without a rising critical mass of local voices and stronger grassroots movements, especially by young Indonesians.

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