1 Governing urban Indonesia: Trends and challenges

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Indonesia is an increasingly urban society. In 2011, for the first time, the number of people living in Indonesia's towns and cities exceeded those living in rural areas. That number is steadily increasing. By 2020, 56 per cent of Indonesians were urban dwellers (Malamassam and Katherina, this volume). In 2045, when Indonesia will celebrate 100 years of independence, it is estimated that 220 million people, or 70 per cent of the population, will live in towns and cities (Roberts et al. 2019: 2).

Recognising this reality requires a shift in perception. For much of the past century, Indonesians have viewed their national identity as reflecting the overwhelmingly rural composition of Indonesian society. The country's political movements have mostly competed for support in the villages. National governments have focused on servicing and securing the country's vast rural population. Back in the 1920s, when the young nationalist leader Sukarno imagined an archetypal Indonesian, he thought of 'Marhaen', a small farmer living in West Java (Soekarno 1960). Two decades later, when Sukarno proclaimed independence in 1945, only 12.5 per cent of the population lived in urban areas (Roberts et al. 2019: 1), more than 70 per cent were peasant farmers and 75 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) was derived from agriculture (Metcalf 1952: 7). Indonesia's national revolution played out mostly in the countryside and, over the subsequent two decades, the political parties that fought for control of Indonesia's government did so mostly by mobilising rural supporters. When Suharto assumed power in 1966, initiating his 32-year authoritarian New Order regime, still only 16 per cent of the population lived in towns and cities, a figure that had risen to 40 per cent by the time

he resigned in 1998.[1] Even so, Suharto's regime focused single-mindedly on securing its rural base, promoting agricultural and infrastructure development in the villages while celebrating achievements such as self-sufficiency in rice production. Even during the post-Suharto *reformasi* era, as Indonesia has become an increasingly urban society, its presidents have practised forms of 'agro nationalism' that emphasise 'Indonesia's agrarian identity in policy and propaganda' (Graham 2020).

While Indonesia's rural identity retains significant purchase over the imagination of both ordinary Indonesian citizens and national leaders, that orientation is no longer grounded in the sociological reality it once was. Not only is Indonesia already a majority urban society, and is set to become more so, but the urban population increasingly sets the pace for the country's economy, culture and politics. In 2012, for example, the consultancy firm McKinsey estimated that the urban economy contributed 74 per cent of Indonesian GDP, and projected that figure would rise to 86 per cent by 2030 (Oberman et al. 2012: 3). Meanwhile, Indonesian national culture, while always having been shaped by urban dwellers, increasingly has an urban middle-class tone, with everything from new religious movements to new popular music, artistic, linguistic and lifestyle trends emanating primarily from the country's urban centres.

This volume zeroes in on the political and governance consequences of Indonesia's urban transformation. These consequences are profound. To consider how urban Indonesia is changing Indonesian politics, we need look no further than the career of its most recent president: Joko Widodo (Jokowi). Jokowi had a path to the presidency that would have been hard to imagine in any earlier era of Indonesian politics. He came to the presidency not as a member of Indonesia's traditional political elite, nor as a military officer, bureaucrat or party-machine man, but as mayor of the town of Surakarta (Solo), in Central Java (2005–2012) and as governor of Jakarta (2012–2014). In both places, Jokowi built a can-do reputation as a problem-solver who could improve the everyday lives of the residents of his city (Mas'udi 2016); in this regard he was widely viewed as a representative of a new generation of reforming local government leaders (see, for example, the cover story of *Tempo* magazine, 22–28 December 2008). As mayor of Solo, Jokowi took various popular initiatives to improve the town's amenities, including negotiating the relocation of unauthorised vendors from its streets and parks, removing informal riverside settlements to reduce flooding, and renovating traditional

1 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=ID, viewed 30 March 2024.

markets (Bunnell et al. 2013: 863–67). He then used this reputation to run successfully for election as governor of Jakarta in 2012, promising in his campaign to deal with many of the longstanding and chronic problems that afflicted the city. During Jokowi's brief term in office as governor, he took steps to improve service delivery and infrastructure, including by accelerating the development of a modern transportation system (complete with a subway) and cleaning up the city's waterways in order to reduce flooding. Some of these initiatives were tougher in Jakarta than in Solo; notably, removing informal settlements along rivers encountered greater resistance and ultimately led to widespread social conflict and forced relocations (see Siagian, this volume).

As is well known, Jokowi went on to leverage his record of achievement as Jakarta governor to win the presidency in 2014. From there, he turned his attention to national development, including a major focus on rural areas (Warburton 2016). But he also threw his weight behind various infrastructure projects in the capital and other major cities, and inaugurated a new high-speed train between Jakarta and Bandung. Most famously, he developed a new signature project: planning and initiating construction of a new national capital (Ibu Kota Nusantara) in North Kalimantan. Jokowi described this new capital as a means of reducing the compounding 'burdens' associated with the almost 30-million population of the Greater Jakarta region: 'Those burdens are very, very heavy, causing problems that keep coming up and are hard to solve, problems to do with traffic congestion, problems to do with floods, and now, on top of all that, problems to do with air pollution' (Erwanti 2023). By moving central government offices to a new capital, Jokowi said he hoped to lessen such burdens on the Jakarta megalopolis and provide Indonesia's bureaucrats with a city that was environmentally sustainable and had world-class amenities. It would be, in other words, a city that avoided the shortcomings that afflict other Indonesian cities. When critics said the government's money would be better spent fixing Jakarta, and would give rise to new forms of inequality (e.g. Wiryono and Rastika 2023), the government responded that fixing Jakarta would be more expensive than building a new capital (Intan 2022; on the new capital plans, see Lau et al. 2023).

In this brief survey of the career of Jokowi and its entanglement with urban life, urban planning and urban politics, we already see many of the main themes that animate this book: the old and new problems of urban Indonesia that increasingly occupy the energies and attention of Indonesian politicians and planners, the emergence of a new generation of Indonesian politicians trying to come up with new solutions to these problems, and how structural challenges such as inequality and informality can both impede these efforts and shape the nature of the

solutions ultimately arrived at. Our volume, in short, uses an urban lens to reflect upon the question of Indonesian democracy. Discussing how urban Indonesia is governed, and will be governed in the future, means discussing the future of Indonesia itself.

The remainder of this introductory chapter comprises four main sections, each corresponding to a major theme addressed in this volume. First, we briefly discuss the governance challenges—both old and new—that arise as more and more Indonesians pack into urban areas: these include classic problems of urban life such as traffic congestion, air pollution, inadequate waste disposal, poor water supply and emerging ecological problems such as flooding, land subsidence and inundation linked to sea level rise, as well as all the normal problems of service delivery in fields such as housing, health care, education and social welfare. Second, we highlight that city governments confront not only technical, planning and financial obstacles when trying to overcome these problems: many of the key underlying challenges they face are *political*, and are associated with corruption, policy capture and collusion between government officials and powerful business interests. In a third section, we sketch how Indonesian cities are responding. We note that a new pattern of political reform has emerged, with city mayors in many locations developing a new governance style that emphasises responsiveness, technocratic planning and a more livable urban environment. We consider what factors may be driving this new trend, and why it is not emerging uniformly across all urban areas. In a fourth section, we zero in on a key social feature of Indonesia's urban areas—their persistent and growing inequality—and discuss the ways in which this inequality shapes urban governance, and complicates the picture of urban democratisation discussed in the preceding section. Finally, we conclude by pointing to some of the major lessons to be drawn from the volume.

Urban governance challenges

In mid-2023, during the weeks and months leading to the conference upon which this book is based, Jakarta was in the grip of an air pollution crisis. For weeks, smog levels in the capital were among the worst in the world—sometimes the very worst in the world. President Joko Widodo—himself with a month-long hacking cough observers speculated was caused by the pollution—called in ministers and told them to take action, without offering much in the way of guidance on how to do so (Haizan 2023). Environmental experts say that the pollution, which has been worsening year by year, is mostly caused by road transportation and industrial combustion in and around the city (Lestari et al. 2022). It is more than

a mere inconvenience: it has recently been estimated that air pollution causes over 10,000 deaths a year in Jakarta alone (Syuhada et al. 2023: 1). While forest fires have previously been, and remain, a major contributor to air pollution in Indonesia, the increasing severity of urban-sourced pollution is a sign of Indonesia's urbanisation, and a symptom of the kind of problems it will increasingly encounter as it becomes a more urban society.

Air pollution is only one of the problems urban Indonesians face. Daily life can be a real chore for residents of Indonesia's towns and cities, especially those who live in the biggest urban centres such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan and Bandung. In Jakarta especially, traffic gridlock is never far away. As Muhammad Halley Yudhistira and Andhika Putra Pratama show in their contribution to this volume, Jakarta consistently ranks as one of the worst cities for traffic congestion in the world, with almost a quarter of commuters spending at least 90 minutes commuting (one-way) to their workplace every day; cities like Surabaya, Bandung and Medan, they warn, are less congested but are only a few years behind (see also van Mead 2016). Walking through Indonesia's major urban centres is often equally challenging, with absent or poor-quality pavements meaning that pedestrians have to dodge motorbikes, cars and other vehicles.

Another massive challenge, the focus of Nur Azizah's chapter in this volume, is management of solid waste. Much of the huge amount of garbage produced daily by urban residents (8 million tonnes per day in major urban areas alone: Aprilia 2021: 5) is burned, dumped in rivers or accumulates in mountainous open dumpsites. Jakarta alone sends around 7,000 tonnes per day to the massive Bantargebang waste site located in Bekasi to the east of the city (Dean and Paddock 2020). Providing clean potable water and effective sewerage systems is equally challenging—it has recently been estimated that only 2 per cent of the households of Jakarta proper are connected to the public sewerage system (Prevost et al. 2020), while overall 'only 1 percent of wastewater in urban areas [is] collected and treated properly' (Eng et al. 2020: 269). Meanwhile, in 2017 it was estimated that only 37 per cent of urbanites had access to a piped water supply, but with that piped water itself generally considered not drinkable without boiling (USAID 2017). Most urban people, if they do not buy bottled water, get most of their water from groundwater wells, though this is itself a health hazard given pollution of the watertable (though much of the refillable bottled water on the market is also poor quality: Komarulzaman et al. 2017).

Urban Indonesia also faces mounting ecological problems, made worse by climate change. Periodic flooding, much of it caused by deforestation

and construction in water catchments, is a serious hazard in many urban areas, as Yogi Setya Permana explains in his chapter in this volume. Large tracts of many towns, especially those that line the north coast of Java such as Jakarta, Cirebon, Pekalongan and Semarang, already experience periodic inundation during king tides and/or heavy rain, and are predicted to sink into the sea over coming years and decades (Kimmelman 2017; Ley 2021). Jakarta itself has been called the 'fastest-sinking city in the world' and is experiencing land subsidence at a rate of 1–15 centimetres per year, with about half the city already below sea level (Lin and Hidayat 2018). One major cause is excessive groundwater use: as noted above, inadequate supply of piped water means that many households draw their water from wells, with significant inequality of clean water access (Kooy 2014). But Jakarta is not alone. For example, Semarang, the capital of Central Java, is sinking at a rate of 10–12 centimetres annually (Aditiya and Ito 2023). The government plans a massive, and controversial, sea wall in Jakarta to prevent inundation, and similar plans are either being prepared or implemented for other vulnerable cities, including Semarang (see, for example, Mufti 2019). Seawater encroachment, meanwhile, is one of the reasons President Widodo and other government leaders cite for moving the Indonesian capital city to an inland site in Kalimantan.

In addition to dealing with these problems regarding the urban environment, leaders of city governments have to deal with all the normal challenges that local governments throughout Indonesia face: delivering high-quality services to citizens in fields like education and health as Indonesia tries to make the transition to a knowledge-based economy and ensure that government bureaucracies work well and deliver effectively for residents.

Urban Indonesians thus experience problems of daily life—traffic jams, pollution and all the rest of it—that would be familiar to urbanites in other parts of the world, especially in the Global South. Many of these problems have accumulated over a long period during which Indonesia's urban population growth outstripped the capacity of city governments to provide the physical and governmental infrastructure to service the swelling urban population. For decades, especially during the New Order years, rapid urbanisation was largely driven by rural-urban migration, as poor Indonesians moved away from the countryside to find work in the cities, either in the informal sector or, especially during the New Order's final decade, in the industrial and service sectors that were rapidly expanding in and around them.

In this period, cities thus expanded largely as a result of informal, organic and unplanned processes of growth, with newly arrived migrants moving into the crowded self-built settlements known as *kampung* that

housed most urban dwellers (see Abidin Kusno's chapter in this volume for a review of the historical development of these *kampung*). Depictions of life in these *kampung* in Jakarta and other major cities during the New Order years (e.g. Guinness 2009; Jellinek 1991; Murray 1991) not only portray the remarkable resilience and ingenuity of *kampung* dwellers, they also paint a picture of the very poor living conditions typically experienced in them, conditions not dissimilar to those found in the slums or shanty towns that swelled around many cities in the Global South (Davis 2005) (even if scholars of urban life in Indonesia have generally been reluctant to use these pejorative terms).

Decades of efforts by *kampung* dwellers to improve their homes and living environments (Reerink and van Gelder 2010), as well as government efforts through measures such as the famous Kampung Improvement Program (e.g. Silas 1992), have transformed most of these urban *kampung*, replacing flimsy shacks with solid brick or cement homes, covering open drains and transforming muddy paths into neatly cemented alleyways (for a recent account of the centrality of *kampung* to Indonesian urbanism, see Kusno 2019). Thus, according to UN-Habitat data, the proportion of Indonesia's urban residents living in dwellings classified as slums dropped from 35 per cent in 2000 to 19 per cent in 2020.[2] Even so, while many *kampung* dwellers have tried to formalise their possession of land (e.g. Lund 2020: 126–50), the unplanned nature of these settlements and the fact that *kampung* residents still lack formal legal title continues to contribute to governance problems and social conflicts. These can arise when governments carry out urban improvement programs (e.g. clearing riverbanks in order to alleviate flooding, or opening up green spaces) by forcibly clearing *kampung* without providing adequate compensation, or by moving residents to social housing in ways that destroy their livelihoods and sense of community (as detailed in Clara Siagian's chapter in this volume).

More recently, however, as demographers Meirina Ayumi Malamassam and Luh Kitty Katherina observe in their chapter in this volume, the pattern of urbanisation has changed. Their wide-ranging overview of urbanisation trends shows that migration is no longer the main driver of urban growth. That is now a seemingly technical process of reclassification of rural areas as urban, something that occurs as population density increases in areas formerly considered rural and as these regions build more modern amenities and infrastructure. Many of Indonesia's *kabupaten*, officially considered to be rural districts, thus now have fully

2 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.SLUM.UR.ZS?locations=ID, viewed 12 April 2024.

urban characteristics (see chapter by Erman Rahman, Ihsan Haerudin and Ronaldo Octaviano, this volume). These *kabupaten* are often 'ill-prepared to manage urban development processes' (Mardiansjah et al. 2021: 24). This shift is thus associated with a pattern of urban growth that includes greatly expanding urban sprawl around major centres, expansion in the number of small and medium-sized towns, and urbanisation of many formerly rural regions. These processes are visible throughout Indonesia but especially so in Java, which is well on the way to becoming an 'island of mega-urban regions' (Firman 2017).

The result is that new sorts of problems of urban growth have been added to the old ones, such as how to build transport infrastructure to connect massively sprawling urban agglomerations, including those that cross municipal, district and even provincial boundaries, and how to restrict building in areas ringing cities in order to preserve water supplies and prevent flooding. The scale of such problems can be daunting. The province of Jakarta, for instance, was estimated to have a night-time population of 11 million in 2019, with that number climbing to 14.2 million people during the day as commuters stream into the city from surrounding districts (Martinez and Masron 2020: 6). Similarly, Medan, the largest city in Sumatra, has a population of 5 million during the day but only 2.7 million at night (Syahputra 2023).

The political sources of Indonesia's urban governance challenges

Why do Indonesian governments, national and local, struggle to deal with the problems of urban living, amenities and environment summarised above?

One explanation is obvious: governments are simply overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the challenge. Problems such as traffic congestion and flooding have accumulated over many years and require massive investment in physical infrastructure and new governmental systems to address them. Muhammad Halley Yudhistira and Andhika Putra Pratama, in their chapter on traffic congestion in Greater Jakarta, show that one of the major impediments to development of the capital's railway systems has simply been the massive investment required (though they also point to the need for more integrated planning and management across the Greater Jakarta metropolitan area). Likewise, Nur Azizah explains in her chapter that Surabaya's relatively successful management of solid waste in recent years has been built in part on large-scale investment, including the construction of a waste-to-energy plant that would be beyond the capacity of most Indonesian urban areas. At the same time, as the chapter by Erman Rahman, Ihsan Haerudin and Ronaldo Octaviano makes clear, despite

Indonesia's decentralised system of government, the local governments in charge of Indonesia's urban areas have limited fiscal resources; indeed, their chapter shows that per capita government revenues are generally lower in urban districts than in rural districts, despite urban areas having greater ability to raise their own revenues.

The financial burden of fixing the problems that afflict Indonesia's towns and cities is undeniably important, but it is a core contention of this volume that the chief barriers to resolving Indonesia's urban problems are fundamentally political. Understanding the political sources of Indonesia's urban challenges is thus a second major theme of this volume.

Indonesia's urban problems are fundamentally political problems because resolving them requires city governments to develop the independence, and to muster the political will, to challenge the powerful vested interests that undermine urban planning and effective implementation of regulations designed to enhance city life. Governments are often unable to do so. Studies of Indonesian political economy and of local politics in the post-Suharto period (e.g. Aspinall and van Klinken 2010; Hadiz 2010) provide us with guidance for why this is so: such studies point to the close informal relations that link powerful business and political actors at all levels of Indonesian government. Sometimes, these ties take the form of longstanding clientelist relationships between politicians and businesspeople, but they also manifest in the form of payments of kickbacks, bribes and informal fees of various kinds. Indonesia's high-cost elections, in which political candidates regularly have to reach out to business backers in order to fund their clientelist election campaigns, help drive these dynamics (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). However, it is not only civilian politicians who participate in these exchanges: so too do bureaucrats, as well as security and law enforcement officials, such as police, military and prosecutors (see the chapters by Yogi Setya Permana and Bima Arya Sugiarto in this volume for examples).

Such patterns of connections between business and politics regularly give rise to lax enforcement of planning and other regulations, as well as to policy capture, which occurs when business actors are able to influence the design of policies in ways that favour them. When people discuss these phenomena in Indonesia they regularly use terms such as 'corruption', 'collusion' and 'money politics' to describe the dynamics at play. While these terms are not inaccurate, they should not lead us to think of these problems as being aberrations within Indonesia's system of government. Rather, informal ties between business and political actors and the undermining or manipulation of regulations are so widespread that they constitute structural features of Indonesian politics in the post-Suharto period (despite all the efforts at reform).

How is all this relevant to urban governance? Yogi Setya Permana's chapter on urban flooding provides an excellent primer. He shows that the flooding that regularly afflicts Indonesian towns and cities is not merely a symptom of environmental mismanagement resulting from factors such as poor training, knowledge or capacity among relevant government officials, and it is not even primarily caused by inadequate or poorly designed investment in flood protection infrastructure. Instead, he argues, flooding is, at root, a political problem. Specifically, he argues, flooding arises as a result of 'collusion between state and business actors'. Business actors regularly violate flood prevention and other environmental regulations. For example, property developers build on watershed areas or fail to provide proper drainage facilities in their housing estates, and polluting factory owners dump waste into rivers. They can do such things because they pay informal fees to, or otherwise maintain informal connections with, local government officials in the relevant planning or environmental agencies, local politicians, or other state actors (collusion between factory and military officers is a particular problem in one of Permana's case study sites). In short, problems such as urban flooding are intimately connected to the nature of the local political economy, especially to the webs of informal ties and resource flows that connect political and economic actors.

Such problems involve high-level corruption in which well-resourced property developers, for example, use their economic power and political influence to secure spatial plans that advantage them, while lower down in the system, officials in charge of enforcing municipal ordinances (such as to move informal vendors off pavements, or to ensure that private waste disposal companies dispose of their waste hygienically) might themselves be taking informal fees in exchange for turning a blind eye to violations. It is also important to note that such patterns are deeply entrenched historically. As Abidin Kusno's historical overview chapter in this volume makes clear, urbanisation during the Suharto years, while building on colonial legacies, was driven by a 'growth coalition' that linked the president and his political allies to property developers and other business actors who had little interest in paying attention to the needs of ordinary urban residents, especially the urban poor.

The final chapter in our volume involves a significant change in perspective, but one that also draws attention to the political sources of Indonesia's urban governance challenges. It is authored by one of the more prominent of the recent generation of city leaders: the former mayor of Bogor, Bima Arya Sugiarto. As well as serving as mayor of Bogor from 2014 to 2024, Sugiarto has also held the position of chairperson of Apeksi (Asosiasi Pemerintah Kota Seluruh Indonesia, Association of Indonesian

Municipal Governments), and is thus well placed to understand the challenges that Indonesia's city leaders experience both from a personal perspective and through intensive interactions with his counterparts from across the country. Importantly, his chapter, which draws primarily on his own experiences as mayor, reinforces the political nature of many of the challenges facing city governments in Indonesia, including the tendency towards corruption exerted by Indonesia's high-cost election campaigns and the difficulty of accommodating the wide range of actors interested in attaining contracts, projects and other rewards from the city budget.

Understanding this context helps us understand why dealing with the problems of Indonesian cities requires not only better quality urban planning and massive investment, but also significant political and governance reform. This topic is a third major theme of our volume, which we turn to now.

Urban governance and political reform

Given this rather gloomy background, it is striking that many Indonesian cities have in fact shown themselves as being capable of reform over recent decades. In fact, some cities have become virtual laboratories of political change for the country as a whole, pioneering new methods of delivering services to residents, improving amenities, tackling longstanding urban problems, and, in at least some cases, taking action to reduce entrenched corruption and increase citizen participation.

To a large extent, in the public imagination, this wave of urban political change has been associated with the emergence of prominent individual urban politicians, especially mayors. President Widodo is the best-known example, but he is only one of a new type of city leader who has risen to national prominence in the post-Suharto period, especially during the past decade or so. While the first generation included Jokowi and his contemporaries, a second generation includes figures such as Tri Rismaharini, popularly known as Bu Risma (mayor of Surabaya, 2010–2020, and later Jokowi's Minister of Social Affairs) and Ridwan Kamil (mayor of Bandung, 2013–2018, later governor of West Java), as well as Jokowi's deputy and successor as governor of Jakarta (2014–2017), Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok).

These individuals have achieved national fame from their efforts to make their cities more livable for residents, more efficient at delivering services and more attractive to visitors. They have produced what we can think of as a 'standard model' of urban political reform that has involved paying attention to basic infrastructure, such as road paving and city parks, increasing the efficiency of the city bureaucracy and services, making

them more responsive to citizens, and opening up feedback and complaint mechanisms by which citizens can notify the government of problems that need fixing. City leaders have also tended to be at the forefront of broader public welfare reform. For example, when Joko Widodo was still mayor of Solo, he was one of the first local leaders to introduce a free healthcare program, a policy that was later rolled out nationally.

Some cities have become especially well known for being at the forefront of reform. Perhaps the best-known example is Surabaya, the capital of East Java province, which is something of a star exhibit in this volume. Surabaya occupies a central position in Mochamad Mustafa's analysis of urban reform and is held up as an exemplar of successful flood management in the chapter by Yogi Setya Permana and as a leader in solid waste management in the chapter by Nur Azizah. This city, with a population of around 3 million (10 million if we include the surrounding urban sprawl) was once a byword for urban grime. Over the past 25 years, a series of reforming mayors—most famously Risma, at the time of writing the Minister of Social Affairs—has rebranded the city as 'clean and green', and residents and visitors alike praise the city's new sense of cleanliness, and its parks and open spaces. As Nur Azizah explains in her chapter, the city has built a massive waste-to-energy incinerator, developed a system of neighbourhood-level waste banks and introduced environmental 'cadres'. Crucially, the Surabaya model also involved governance reform, including new online reporting and complaints systems for citizens, and the introduction of e-budgeting and e-procurement systems that have since been used as models around the country.

Generally speaking, the new generation of reforming leaders such as Risma and Jokowi must be viewed as a product of the post-Suharto democratisation. In pursuing policies of local governance reform and striving to deliver better services to citizens, they have largely been motivated by the desire to respond to voter aspirations and thus secure victories in competitive electoral contests (Aspinall 2014).

However, it should be stressed that democratisation has not had this effect everywhere. Not every city or town in Indonesia has become a model of governance reform. In many Indonesian urban centres, old patterns of patronage politics and corruption continue to stand in the way of urban reform, with political elites and their business backers dining out on infrastructure, reclamation and similar projects, but doing little to improve the lives of ordinary residents. Many of the most clientelist local governments found in Indonesia are in relatively small towns in less-developed regions, especially provincial capitals and other towns that are highly dependent on the government bureaucracy or extractive industry for their economic life (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019: 240, 245).

Some much more populous and developed urban centres are also sites of predatory elite capture. Mochamad Mustafa shows in his chapter that the city of South Tangerang, one of the country's wealthiest urban districts, located on the periphery of Jakarta, has long been ruled by members of one of Indonesia's most notorious political dynasties, and has experienced major corruption scandals, with the city's leaders effectively combining predatory behaviour with improved delivery of health care, education and other services.

How do we explain this variation? In the existing literature, and much popular discourse, a favoured explanation is that individual leadership is key to governance reform at the local level in Indonesia (see especially von Luebke 2009). Prominent mayors, such as Jokowi, Risma and Ridwan Kamil have garnered significant attention for the role they have played in pursuing processes of urban reform. There is no denying that such individuals have played an important part in changing city government. They have done so in part by modelling new patterns of behaviour (such as Jokowi's famous spot inspections of government offices to ensure bureaucrats were at their posts and working hard, or Risma's well-publicised participation in public street sweeping and other clean-up events), and in part by developing new methods to monitor budgets and bureaucrats in ways that allow them to detect abuses and thus produce more efficient and effective government. (See, for example, Governor Ahok's use of a new e-budgeting mechanism to expose collusion between local politicians, bureaucrats and contractors in public procurement in Jakarta: Aspinall and Berenschot 2019: 172–73.) In this light, it is possible to see the processes of urban reform that these leaders have pioneered as being primarily technocratic and top-down; in her chapter on public space in cities, Rita Padawangi accordingly refers to such leaders as practising a form of 'managerial leadership'.

The chapter by Mochamad Mustafa makes an important intervention into this debate. He argues that, beyond the influence of individual leadership and technocratic reform, a key factor determining how effectively city governments deliver services to their citizens is the nature of the political coalitions that underpin them. In urban centres with an active and diverse civil society able to put pressure on city governments to deliver, and to support reforming leaders when they confront entrenched vested interests, it is easier for mayors to initiate reform. He illustrates this argument by way of an analysis of the recent history of Surabaya, which, as already noted, is lauded in several chapters in this volume as a good governance standout. Mustafa ascribes Surabaya's success to the relatively active and varied character of civil society in that city which, he suggests, has provided a 'conducive environment' for urban reform.

In his account, relatively early in the post-Suharto *reformasi* period, civil society protest led to the removal of one mayor who was seen as unable to improve the city, and his replacement by a reformer, Bambang DH (Risma's predecessor), who, with civil society support, faced down corrupt elements in the bureaucracy and local parliament. Yogi Setya Permana's and Nur Azizah's analyses of, respectively, flood management and solid waste disposal largely confirm this analysis. Mustafa contrasts the Surabaya story with that of the city of Bogor, where a reform-oriented leader, Bima Arya Sugiarto (who contributes a chapter to this volume), had to operate in a much less rich and diverse civil society context, and thus, lacking allies for his reform efforts, ended up making more compromises over his good governance agenda.

This emphasis on the role of civil society accords with our own observations, and helps to explain why cities have been at the forefront of governance reform in post-Suharto Indonesia. Generally speaking, civil society activity is more buoyant in cities than in rural areas, due to the relative prosperity and more diverse nature of urban economies and, hence, societies (which also helps explain why cities with economies built around bureaucratic employment and government expenditure are relatively rarely sites of reform; such places tend to have much less space for expression of diverse social and political interests: Aspinall and Berenschot 2019: 245). Certainly, many initiatives to improve city life have begun with civil society groups. For example, recent moves to introduce bicycle lanes in cities started when community members, organised in 'Bike to Work' (BtW) groups, lobbied local governments to provide such lanes. BtW now has chapters in many cities in Indonesia and, at the time of writing, more than 114,000 followers on Instagram. In other cases, civil society organisations have pushed city governments on issues such as decent housing rights for the poor, introducing air quality measurements and taking circular economy initiatives to promote garbage recycling. And it is not only middle-class city residents who have taken such initiatives; members of the urban poor have done so as well. For example, in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, various urban poor communities, organised with the help of a group known as the Urban Poor Consortium, made political deals with governor candidate Anies Baswedan, convincing him to sign 'political contracts', in which he promised not to evict them from their homes in exchange for their votes (Savirani and Aspinall 2017; Savirani and Guntoro 2020).

In some ways, of course, we should not be surprised that Indonesia's cities have been at the forefront of post-Suharto political and governance reform. The word 'city' itself derives from the Latin *civitas*, referring to the citizenry, and urban scholars sometimes suggest that cities have

historically been closely linked to the concept of democracy, as well as being places where novel methods of claim-making and organising politics have been forged (e.g. Barnett 2014; Isin 2002). Comparative scholars have long posited various explanations for why urbanisation and democratisation might be linked, including that the relative density of urban life facilitates collective political action and enhances 'civic capital' of the population (Glaeser and Steinberg 2016).

Of course, recent processes of democratic decline in Indonesia should make us hesitate to adopt an overly optimistic analysis of the democratic potential of the processes of urban reform discussed above—not least given that this decline was overseen by President Widodo (Power 2018), who was so lauded previously as being one of Indonesia's leading 'progressive' mayors. While members of the new generation of urban reformers have undoubtably been motivated by open electoral competition, delivering improved services and amenities in order to win votes, there is considerable variation in the way they mix technocratic reform (including new techniques for top-down monitoring and control by the mayor) with measures to increase popular participation and input (for example, many cities have been pioneering various apps and online measures by which citizens can convey complaints and report problems to the government). As already noted, while some mayors have been backed by active civil society, others have found ways to combine improved service delivery with continued pursuit of clientelist strategies. More broadly still, there are also questions about *which* urban residents get to participate in and guide these new political experiments, and who gets to benefit from them. This is because, as well as being locations of political experimentation, Indonesia's urban areas are also sites of major social inequality.

Urban governance and social inequality

Urban inequality is a fourth major theme that threads its way through most of the chapters in this volume. Various reports have shown that inequality has increased sharply in the post-Suharto period (Gibson 2017; World Bank 2016). According to the World Bank (2016: 2) most of the benefits of economic growth during this period benefited about 20 per cent of the population, creating a considerably larger middle class, but leaving much of the population behind. To be sure, generally speaking, residents of urban areas are more prosperous than their rural counterparts. Of the top twenty districts with the highest human development index scores in 2023, for example, eighteen were cities and the other two were highly urbanised *kabupaten* (BPS 2023). Yet while Indonesia's urban areas house most of the country's middle class, and almost all of its wealthiest citizens,

they also retain large numbers of poor people: in 2019 it was estimated that nearly 7 per cent of the urban population lived below the poverty line, with a similar proportion classified as 'near poor' (ADB 2022: 3). As a result, while inequality has increased everywhere, it is highest in 'the most prosperous areas—that is, in multidistrict metro cores and their urban peripheries' (Roberts et al. 2019: 7).

In this regard, Indonesia fits the global norm whereby 'larger and more prosperous cities tend to be more unequal than smaller, less prosperous, cities' (Roberts et al. 2019: 8). High levels of social inequality are also, as Sonia Roitman emphasises in her chapter in this volume, a characteristic of the urban social landscape that Indonesia shares with many countries in the Global South. And, just like in many global cities, urban inequality manifests itself visibly in Indonesia: in the most expensive areas of Jakarta, for instance, one can easily pay for a meal costing the Jakarta monthly minimum wage in a fancy restaurant and find, just across the street, a family living under a bridge and struggling to survive.

But inequality also produces social segregation into separate urban spaces. Space is not only in short supply in urban areas, it is typically deeply contested. Across Indonesia's urban areas, as already alluded to, private developers—some of whom are among the very wealthiest Indonesians—have played a dominant role in steering, even capturing, urban planning and land use policy since the New Order period. As part of what Abidin Kusno calls the New Order regime's urban 'growth coalition', major developers such as Ciputra built gated communities and new towns for wealthy and middle-class residents around the outskirts of Jakarta, benefiting from their close links with the Suharto government (see also Firman 2019; Arai 2001; Winarso and Firman 2002). Consistent with the pattern described above, this expansion of privatised residential space was accompanied by widespread violations of city planning documents, or their amendment to suit developers, in a context in which 'developers … often bribed the authorities and the local governments' (Rukmana 2015: 358). Indeed, in such locations land acquisition often takes place via a 'land mafia' (Bachriadi and Aspinall 2023) involving developers, public officials and politicians. Such relationships continue to the present day (Savirani 2017), as the expansion of private housing estates for middle-class consumers continues apace. In the meantime, the housing backlog for the poor reached 12.7 million in 2023 (Simanungkalit 2023).

In her chapter in this volume, Corry Elyda provides a telling discussion of the resulting housing inequality. She focuses not on the story of collusion between wealthy developers and local governments, but on the social and political consequences of gated communities. She describes life in such communities of South Tangerang, where many

wealthy urbanites live, commuting to Jakarta every work day. In doing so she identifies a pattern of extreme and growing social segregation, with the middle class and wealthy residents of these communities having few interactions with the poor residents who live in the *kampung* that surround their gated communities, and largely relying on private provision of basic infrastructure and amenities. In analysing this situation, she identifies another obstacle to political reform in urban Indonesia: because many of the wealthiest urban residents are protected from the hard scrabble that plays out beyond the walls of their communities, they have little incentive to care about public facilities or support politicians who provide them. As one resident of a gated community told Elyda: 'I am not a citizen. I am a consumer'. As a result, there is a kind of withdrawal from city politics by middle-class residents—many of them, who might otherwise be expected to demand better services and performance from politicians at election times (rather than being satisfied with the gifts of money or other forms of patronage provided to poorer voters), do not bother to vote. This dynamic helps explain why South Tangerang municipality, despite being one of the wealthiest districts of Indonesia, has continued to be dominated by a notorious political dynasty.

Of course, this pattern of social segregation and exclusion does not arise naturally: it is produced, and policed. Ian Wilson explores how this happens in his chapter on the changing nature of security provision in Jakarta, where he traces the rise of new professionally run private security companies, challenging and partly displacing older forms of security provided by so-called 'social organisations' in Jakarta's *kampung*. In a context in which, he says, wealthy Jakartans increasingly demand 'physical and moral security and detachment/autonomy from the city's infrastructural and social woes', it is the growing private security industry that acts as gatekeeper in both business and residential spaces 'via screening, monitoring and regulation of entitlement of entry into private spaces'.

If social inequality shapes the nature of both political participation and segregation in urban Indonesia, it also affects the political transformations currently underway in the country's cities and towns. We have already noted that, historically and to the present day, most of the poor and near-poor live in informal *kampung*. While informality—another defining feature of urban Indonesia that, as stressed in Sonia Roitman's chapter, is shared with other Global South cities—can manifest in terms of various forms of self-help and self-management that help the urban poor to survive (Suhartini and Jones 2023), it also makes *kampung* dwellers vulnerable, insofar as they lack formal legal title to their residences and often also lack official permission for their petty trade or other livelihood activities.

Accordingly, forced relocations (*penggusuran*) of *kampung* dwellers to make way for private developments and public infrastructure projects have long been a part of the urban development story in Indonesia, as have periodic clean-ups of informal traders of various kinds. Critically, such actions have not disappeared along with the rise of the new model of urban political reform discussed above; on the contrary they have often been a feature of it. Members of the urban poor frequently pay the price for the city infrastructure and beautification projects by which the new generation of reforming city mayors and other leaders burnish their political reputations. Their visions of neat, clean and physically attractive 'global cities' are fundamentally middle-class visions.

Two chapters in this volume zero in on this issue. In her discussion of the management of public space in urban Indonesia, Rita Padawangi highlights that many of the new green spaces that have come to symbolise urban renewal in cities such as Bandung and Jakarta have been created through processes of forced relocation. Among other examples, she discusses the case of Teras Cikapundung, an aesthetically pleasing riverbank park in Bandung that Ridwan Kamil presented as one of his signature achievements, which was built on the site of a *kampung* whose residents were forced to move aside. In pointing to the community-led management of public space that often occurs at the *kampung* level, she sees signs of a more hopeful model of inclusive management of public space—but one that may be difficult to apply at scale.

Clara Siagian focuses on the aftermath of evictions in Jakarta, this time caused by various infrastructure projects, primarily for flood prevention. She identifies one area where the new city politics differs from that of the past: in the New Order period, victims of *penggusuran* were often left to fend for themselves, or even expelled from the city; in the post-Suharto period city leaders such as Jokowi and Ahok have at least expressed concern about the fate of evictees, and often used dialogue in order to persuade them to be willing to move (certainly, this was characteristic of Jokowi's approach in Solo, though less so in Jakarta). While this new more conciliatory approach often does not work out in practice (in the case of Jakarta, the tenure of Ahok as governor was characterised by a large number of forced evictions), those pushed aside are now often provided alternative housing in the form of apartments in social housing complexes. As Siagian shows, however, the social consequences can still be devastating, as poor residents are ripped away from the *kampung* environments that provided them with social support and livelihoods, resulting in feelings of social isolation and alienation.

Conclusion

Indonesia confronts many challenges as it becomes increasingly urbanised: challenges of flooding, waste management, traffic congestion and more. This volume does not provide a single, uniform perspective on the nature of those challenges, nor on what can be done about them. Instead, the chapter authors draw on different disciplinary perspectives to examine urban governance from a variety of angles. What sets this volume apart from others that have tackled the challenges of Indonesia's urbanisation in recent times (e.g. Roitman and Rukmana 2023) is the overarching political framework it adopts. Taken together, the volume shows how Indonesia's urbanisation is transforming the nature of politics and governance in Indonesia. It also shows that the successes or failures of governments at various levels as they respond to the growing challenges of urban governance are shaped, to a large degree, by underlying political (and political economy) dynamics. To understand how Indonesia is going about managing its urban transition, we need, in other words, to understand city politics: that field which 'defines and regulates how the city should be organised, how it should allocate its resources and how—and by whom—it should be governed' (Pierre 2011: 1).

As readers will discover, adopting this perspective does not hold out the prospect of easy solutions to Indonesia's urban problems. It is not simply that the magnitude of the problems is so daunting. More fundamentally, resolving them requires doing more than finding the right policy prescriptions and technical solutions. Because the problems are so embedded in political processes and practices that have deep historical roots and are part of the basic structure—especially the informal structure—of Indonesia's political life, fixing them also requires broader processes of political change and reform.

Even so, it is hoped that readers will not find this to be a pessimistic volume—at least not unrelentingly so. The story of post-Suharto democratisation has produced numerous positive as well as negative results. In recent times, the story at the national level has been generally gloomy, as a slow but seemingly inexorable slide in the quality of Indonesia's democracy has occurred. But this volume shows that, when we look at the city level, there are many stories of success and positive change, including examples of city governments taking seriously the challenges of structural reform, marshalling their resources to tackle the various environmental, infrastructure and service challenges they face, and engaging in novel partnerships and coalitions when doing so. Together, they indicate that there are positive models of reform and considerable capacity within Indonesia's varied urban communities to produce better urban governance and more livable Indonesian cities into the future.

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