

# PERSPECTIVE

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## **Persistent Patronage: Explaining the Popularity of Former Corruption Convicts as Candidates in Indonesia’s Regional Elections**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 263 regions across the Indonesian archipelago will conduct simultaneous direct-elections for regional elections (*Pilkada*) on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015. Part of the larger decentralization programme, direct-elections for regional leaders have been conducted since 2005.
- Corruption in the form of money politics has prevailed in past elections. Such practices are deep-rooted in the patron-client tradition prominent in Indonesia’s (local) politics.
- Preparations for the upcoming *Pilkada* have already shown similar traits: many of this year’s *Pilkada* applicants for candidacy had previously served as regional leaders and had been convicted for corruption during their terms. Despite their past graft cases, however, surveys show that these former convicts remain popular in their respective constituencies. Such high “electability” among these individuals have encouraged political parties to endorse their candidacy.

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- To explain the persistent popularity of these individuals, it is important to analyse the meaning of “corruption” in the eyes of voters, who would not have escaped witnessing the dissonance between the rhetoric of “good governance” during the election campaign and the corrupt practices of their leaders. Acceptance of this inconsistency between the rhetoric and the practice of these leaders shapes the voters’ understanding of “corruption” and perpetuates patronage democracy in local politics in Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

In commencing the much anticipated simultaneous direct elections for regional leaders in Indonesia (*Pilkada*), the General Election Commission (KPU) announced the candidacy of 784 pairs of aspiring regional chiefs. These candidates are either endorsed by political parties, coalition of political parties, or they are running as independent contestants. From 269 regions scheduled for the elections across Indonesia, 263 are eligible to hold the *Pilkada* in December 2015, while the remaining have had to postpone theirs until 2017 since they have so far only one pair of registered applicants.<sup>1</sup>

While *Pilkada* is generally considered one of the major achievements of decentralization and democratization in post-Soeharto Indonesia, practices such as money politics and vote-buying are still rampant. This is due to both the internally “centralized” and “opaque” process of applicant endorsement in political parties, as well as the deeply rooted patronage system both among members of the elite and in the relations between the elite and voters.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Indonesia’s district elections so far have illustrated the dissonance between the positive image of electoral democracy and the reality of money politics during elections.<sup>3</sup>

Recent reports have supported this argument: many of this year’s *Pilkada* applicants had previously served as leaders in their respective regions and had interestingly been convicted of corruption during their terms. This year, six former corruption convicts are running in the elections in Semarang (Central Java), Sidoarjo (East Java), Manado (North Sulawesi), North Minahasa (North Sulawesi), Dompu (West Nusa Tenggara) and Buru (Maluku). While some observers lament this fact,<sup>4</sup> political parties endorsing these former graft convicts defend their decision with the argument that these individuals still have “high electability” based on recent surveys done on the preference of voters in their respective regions.<sup>5</sup> Their high popularity is also not a new phenomenon. Candidates who were suspects in various graft cases managed to win the 2010 *Pilkada* in ten regions in Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua.

While vote-buying may generally boost the popularity of wealthy candidates during campaigns and open-rallies (where banknotes are usually distributed rather openly among followers),<sup>6</sup> mere financial profit is insufficient to explain the persistent popularity of those who *have*

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<sup>1</sup> “KPU pastikan pilkada di empat daerah ditunda sampai 2017”

[http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita\\_indonesia/2015/08/150812\\_indonesia\\_kpu\\_tunda](http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2015/08/150812_indonesia_kpu_tunda) (accessed 2/9/2015).

<sup>2</sup> Deasy Simandjuntak, “Gifts and promises: Patronage democracy in a decentralised Indonesia.” *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11 (2012): 99-126.

<sup>3</sup> Deasy Simandjuntak, “Milk Coffee at 10 AM: Encountering the State Through Pilkada in North Sumatra” in Gerry van Klinken and Joshua Barker, eds., *State of Authority—The State in Society in Indonesia* (Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2009): 73-94.

<sup>4</sup> “Banyak koruptor calon di pilkada, begini komentar mahfud md”

<http://fajar.co.id/headline/2015/07/30/banyak-mantan-koruptor-calon-di-pilkada-begini-komentar-mahfud-md.html> (accessed 20/8/2015).

<sup>5</sup> “Ketika popularitas menjadi pertimbangan utama”

<http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/08/01/16591491/Ketika.Popularitas.Menjadi.Pertimbangan.Utama?page=all> (accessed 31/8/2015).

<sup>6</sup> Edward Aspinall, “Money Politics” *Inside Indonesia* 116: April-June 2014

<http://www.insideindonesia.org/money-politics> (accessed 2/9/2015); Ulla Fionna, “Vote-buying in Indonesia’s 2014 Elections: The Other Side of the Coin” *ISEAS Perspective* 4 June 2014; Andrew Walker “Vote-buying, commodity or gift?” *New Mandala* 13 April 2014, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/04/13/vote-buying-commodity-or-gift/> (accessed 2/9/2015)

*actually been convicted* for corruption. After all, Indonesian voters are familiar with, and support, good governance rhetoric frequently echoed during campaigns, such as the eradication of corruption, clean government and the prioritising of the needs of the people. How do we then explain the popularity of former graft convicts in *Pilkada*?

This article argues that society's deep-rooted patronage system has influenced the meaning of money-politics in *Pilkada*, beyond mere financial profit. Due to the patronage system, the interaction between candidates and voters mirrors that of patrons and clients, thus creating between them clientelistic expectations and obligations which beset voters' ideals of "good" leaders. By examining these dimensions, the article seeks to explain the persistent popularity of corruption offenders.

### **PILKADA 2015: FORMER CORRUPTION CONVICTS AS ASPIRING REGIONAL CHIEFS**

One former corruption convict running in this year's *Pilkada* is the former mayor of Semarang (capital city of Central Java), Soemarmo Hadi Saputro, whose candidacy is endorsed by two major Islamic parties, Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and National Awakening Party (PKB). According to a recent survey, Soemarmo's popularity reached as high as 93.58%, while his strongest rival could only get 5.29%.<sup>7</sup> With such popularity, many parties had been eager to endorse his candidacy, including the Golkar Party (the ruling party during the Soeharto era) and the Democratic Party – *Partai Demokrat* (the ruling party during the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono era), which together with PKS had established a coalition in Semarang. As it turned out, the coalition collapsed, and Golkar and *Partai Demokrat* decided to endorse other candidates instead.

Soemarmo was serving his term as elected mayor of Semarang for the 2010-2015 period when he was convicted of corruption in 2012. Indonesia's Anti-Corruption Court (Tipikor) found him guilty of bribing local parliament members (MPs) in the drafting of the city's regional budget (RAPBD). After he was dismissed from the mayorship, the Supreme Court sentenced him to three years in prison (later reduced to 2.5 years). He was released in September last year.<sup>8</sup> When recently asked to reflect upon his corruption case in 2012, Soemarmo, who refused to be called a "corruptor" and preferred the term "witness" instead, confidently maintained that his past bribing of local MPs was part of his "struggle for the benefit of the people of Semarang" and that the reason for his running in this year's election was to "fulfil many of my past [government] programmes" which have been abandoned while he served time in prison.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, his vice-mayor-to-be, Zuber Safawi, who is a former national MP from PKS, consider Soemarmo as "having goodwill".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Survei popularitas, Soemarmo menang telak atas Sigit Ibnugroho" <http://metrosemarang.com/survei-popularitas-soemarmo-menang-telak-atas-sigit-ibnugroho> (accessed 19/8/2015).

<sup>8</sup> "MA perberat vonis walikota Semarang" <http://www.hukumonline.com/berita/baca/lt5130a028dc6ce/ma-perberat-vonis-wali-kota-semarang> (accessed 24/8/2015); "Soemarmo HS bebas" <http://berita.suaramerdeka.com/soemarmo-hs-bebas/> (accessed 24/8/2015).

<sup>9</sup> "Calon walikota Semarang: jadi nabi korupsi demi rakyat" <http://news.liputan6.com/read/2279890/calon-walikota-semarang-jadi-nabi-korupsi-karena-demi-rakyat> (accessed 24/8/2015).

<sup>10</sup> "PKB-PKS usung mantan nabi koruptor jadi calon walikota" <http://m.news.viva.co.id/news/read/653446-pkb-pks-usung-mantan-nabi-koruptor-jadi-calon-wali-kota> (accessed 2/9/2015).

In the municipality of Manado, the capital city of North Sulawesi province, candidates for this year's mayoral *Pilkada* include Jimmy Rimba Rogi, a former elected Manado mayor who was convicted for embezzlement of the municipality's budget (APBD) in 2009. Having served five years in prison and having paid a fine of IDR 64.137 billion (USD 6.4 million), Jimmy Rogi was released in July 2014. Despite protests by Indonesian corruption watchdogs on the legality of his candidacy, he is endorsed by the Golkar Party and the National Mandate Party (PAN), a major nationalist Muslim party whose branch leader maintains that Jimmy Rogi has "repented and promised not to repeat the corruption".<sup>11</sup> Golkar mentions that according to the party's survey, Jimmy Rogi has significantly high "electability."<sup>12</sup> Rogi – whom his supporters call by his nickname "The Commander" – remains very popular in Manado, and observers consider him one of the strongest candidates in the election.<sup>13</sup>

Similar phenomena can also be observed in small towns. A strong candidate in this year's *Pilkada* in the district of Sidoarjo, East Java province, is the former chief of the town's local parliament (DPRD), Ustman Ikhsan, who was convicted for the embezzlement of the human resource development fund in the municipality budget (ABPD) in 2003 up to a tune of around IDR 21 billion (USD 2.1 million).<sup>14</sup> He was sentenced to a six-year prison term, but was released earlier for good conduct. In this year's *Pilkada*, he is paired with Tan Mei Hwa, a Chinese female Muslim preacher. Their candidacy is endorsed by the Great Indonesia Movement (Gerindra) party, and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). In a TV interview, Ikhsan admitted that he has given substantial "financial contribution" (*mahar*) to the said parties in order to secure their endorsement.<sup>15</sup> This statement was immediately dismissed by Gerindra and PKS.

Another interesting case is the candidacy of family members of former leaders who have been convicted with corruption. A significant example is the family of former governor of Banten province, Ratu Atut Chosiyah. She had been convicted for bribing former Constitutional Court chief Akil Mochtar and for other major corruption offenses involving several of her family members who held important leadership positions such as being mayors and district heads, in Banten province.<sup>16</sup> The fact that members of this family are leaders in many districts/municipalities in the province has led the public to call it a "political dynasty". Since these corruption cases are well known among the people in Banten, this year's *Pilkada* will therefore be a test case for the persistent popularity of this family, as three of Ratu Atut's family

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<sup>11</sup> "PAN dukung Jimmy Rimba karena tak akan ulangi korupsi" <http://www.pikiran-rakyat.com/politik/2015/07/28/336180/pan-dukung-jimmy-rimba-karena-tak-akan-ulangi-korupsi> (accessed 18/8/2015).

<sup>12</sup> "Survei Jimmy jadi alasan Golkar mengusungnya di Pilkada 2015" <http://beritabuana.co/view/kanal/?open=1&alias=nasional&id=9890> (accessed 31/8/2015).

<sup>13</sup> "Panglima Imba maju Pilwako Manado" <http://manadopostonline.com/read/2015/07/11/Panglima-Imba-Maju-Pilwako-Manado/10073> (accessed 2/9/2015).

<sup>14</sup> "Pilkada Sidoarjo 2015: Mantan Napi Ini Percaya Diri Maju Calon Bupati" <http://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20150728/78/456860/pilkada-sidoarjo-2015-mantan-napi-ini-percaya-diri-maju-calon-bupati> (accessed 28/8/2015).

<sup>15</sup> "Calon bupati akui ada mahar, ini jawaban Gerindra Sidoarjo" <http://nasional.tempo.co/read/news/2015/08/04/078688908/calon-bupati-akui-ada-mahar-ini-jawaban-gerindra-sidoarjo> (accessed 31/8/2015).

<sup>16</sup> "Dinasti politik Ratu Atut setelah delapan tahun berkuasa" <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2013/12/18/0729208/Dinasti.Politik.Ratu.Atut.Setelah.Delapan.Tahun.Berkuasa> (accessed 1/9/2015).

members are strong candidates in their respective constituencies: first, her sister, Ratu Tatu Chasanah is running for district head in Serang endorsed by no less than eight major parties—Golkar, PDIP, PKS, PAN, PKB, Democratic Party, National Democratic Party (NasDem) and United Development Party (PPP); second, her sister-in-law, Airin Rachmidiany, is running for mayor of Southern Tangerang endorsed by six parties—Golkar, PKS, PKB, PAN, NasDem and PPP; third, her son-in-law, Tanto Arban, is running for vice district head of Pandeglang endorsed by eight parties—Golkar, PKB, Nasdem, PKS, PBB, PAN, People’s Conscience Party (Hanura) and Gerindra.<sup>17</sup> Though not proven to be involved in corruption, these candidates have been officially questioned as witnesses in Ratu Atut’s cases. The decision of the parties to endorse members of this family despite the fact that the province’s budget was swindled to enrich its leaders, while Banten remains one of the least developed regions in Indonesia,<sup>18</sup> indicates that the notorious corruption cases, interestingly, have not significantly reduced the popularity of the family.

All the individuals mentioned above managed to be persistently popular despite being involved in corruption cases that, in the case of former mayors and district heads, had resulted in their dismissal and in prison sentences. Ironically, during their past campaigns, like other regional head candidates in Indonesia, these individuals had promised to eradicate corruption and to guarantee a clean, accountable, government. In view of their failure in fulfilling their promise of clean government, the persistence of their popularity may be better explained through an analysis of the meaning of “corruption” and the meaning of money for potential voters during elections.

## **CORRUPTION AND THE MEANING OF MONEY DURING ELECTIONS**

Former graft convicts have been legally allowed to run for regional head positions after the Constitutional Court annulled Article 7, point (g) of the *Pilkada* Law which had earlier forbidden former corruption convicts from running for public office for five years after their release.<sup>19</sup> The Court had argued that the Article breached citizens’ political right as protected by the Constitution. The Court’s only requirement now is that these individuals publicly announce their criminal history before campaigning.

In terms of money politics, there are at least two areas in which money is important during elections: firstly, to cajole or remunerate party endorsement and secondly, to entice potential voters during the campaign. Based on past *Pilkadas*, parties may oblige aspiring candidates who seek their endorsement to pay an “administration fee” or *mahar* whose amount, in many cases, is substantially large.<sup>20</sup> The congruence of ideals between the aspiring candidate and the

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<sup>17</sup> “Tiga Keluarga Dinasti Atut Ikut Pilkada Serentak” <http://www.galamedianews.com/pilkada/34159/tiga-keluarga-dinasti-atut-ikut-pilkada-serentak-.html> (accessed 1/9/2015).

<sup>18</sup> Banten was the third poorest province in 2013, with a poverty rate of 5.89%, compared to Bangka Belitung province (established at the same time with Banten) whose poverty rate was 5.25%. See “Banten provinsi termiskin di Indonesia” <http://bantenbox.com/berita-1297-banten-provinsi-termiskin-di-indonesia.html> (accessed 8/9/ 2015)

<sup>19</sup> “MK anulir larangan narapidana ikut pilkada” <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/07/10/02000021/MK.Anulir.Larangan.Mantan.Narapidana.Ikut.Pilkada> (accessed 2/9/2015).

<sup>20</sup> In 2013, the Islamic party PKS allegedly demanded a “fee” (*mahar*) of IDR 10 billion (USD 869,000) from a candidate in the gubernatorial election of South Sulawesi. See “Ilham: PKS minta mahar Rp 10m di pilgub

political party has mattered less than the material benefits that the former could provide. This process is centralized and encourages corruption because parties need financing.<sup>21</sup> Although the *Pilkada* law forbids the receiving of *mahar*, media reports indicate that such patronage for cash prevails with almost all parties regardless of ideologies or whether or not they are in power or opposition.<sup>22</sup> An interesting fact about the “application fee” in *Pilkada* is that while the local branch of a political party is the official endorser of a candidate, the central leadership has the authority to approve the said candidate and collect the fee. One district party branch in North Sumatra province has lamented the arrangement: “The central leadership takes the money, we’re just signing formalities here.”<sup>23</sup>

Due to the high cost of campaigning, it is not surprising that the most popular candidates are those who are wealthy and “generous”. Incumbents are especially popular due to their access to state funds. For example, in the 2011 *Pilkada* in Banten, Ratu Atut misused IDR 7.65 billion (USD 532,441) of the regional grant sent from Jakarta in order to finance her own campaign, and she won the election. In order to prevent lavish campaigning in this year’s *Pilkada*, therefore, each local election commission (KPUD), coordinating with candidates, determines the local campaign budget so that every candidate has the same maximum limit of campaign expenditure. For example, it has been decided that the campaign expenditure of a Semarang candidate should not exceed IDR 16 billion (USD 1.16 million). However, one candidate has reported that his preliminary budget has already reached IDR 3.1 billion (USD 215,800) excluding donations that he will get during campaign.<sup>24</sup> In practice, imposing limits will not be simple as the accountability mechanism depends on the candidates’ own report.

In enticing potential voters, the role of money touches the basis of patrimonial politics: gift-giving in exchange for political loyalty. However, as campaign strategy, money is not simply used to “buy” votes, because candidates are aware that they cannot be sure whether the amount distributed would be enough to secure votes. Rather, candidates distribute gifts (or promises) to their potential voters during campaigns in order to develop loyalty. Hence, the function of

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sulse” <http://nasional.news.viva.co.id/news/read/445314ilhampksmintamaharrp10mdipilgubsulse> (accessed 8/9/2015). This year, Gerindra has allegedly received *mahar* of IDR 3 billion (USD 209,000) from candidate Ustman Ikhsan, who is also a former corruption convict. See “Mahar politik calon bupati Sidoarjo dari Gerindra capai Rp 3 miliar” <http://nasional.tempo.co/read/news/2015/08/06/078689576/mahar-politik-calon-bupati-sidoarjo-dari-gerindra-capai-rp-3-miliar> (accessed 8/9/2015).

<sup>21</sup> Parties are ideally financed through membership fees, donations and state subsidies. However, as the number of elections have increased and state subsidies have been reduced, party membership has dwindled, and donations are given directly to politicians and not to the parties. Parties depend for funds on their politicians, and on their offer of nominations for executive and legislative office. See Marcus Mietzner, “Political party financing in Indonesia is a recipe for corruption” *Strategic Review* Oct-Dec 2013, [http://www.sr-indonesia.com/in\\_the\\_journal/view/political-party-financing-in-indonesia-is-a-recipe-for-corruption?pg=all](http://www.sr-indonesia.com/in_the_journal/view/political-party-financing-in-indonesia-is-a-recipe-for-corruption?pg=all) (accessed 8/9/2015)

<sup>22</sup> “PDIP: Sah-sah saja parpol minta mahar dari balonkada” <http://www.harianterbit.com/hanterpolitik/read/2015/08/01/36832/41/41/PDIP-Sah-Sah-Saja-Parpol-Minta-Mahar-dari-Balonkada> (accessed 28/9/2015); “Pasangan ANDI bantah beri mahar politik untuk 3 parpol pendukungnya” <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/pilkada/15/07/30/nsas1c354-pasangan-andi-bantah-beri-mahar-politik-untuk-3-parpol-pendukungnya> (accessed 28/9/2015).

<sup>23</sup> Deasy Simandjuntak (2009), p.89.

<sup>24</sup> “Dana kampanye sibagus paling melimpah” <http://www.hariansemarang.com/2015/08/dana-kampanye-sibagus-paling-melimpah.html> (accessed 8/9/2015). Per regulation, candidates have to submit three reports: pre-campaign preliminary report, the report on donation to be submitted on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015, and lastly the campaign expenditure report on 7-8 December 2015.

money here does not only pertain to its value, but is also considered a symbolic gesture. In patrimonial societies, gift-giving from patron to clients is aimed at assuring the latter that the former will attend to their needs. Thus, aside from procuring votes, money also serves as a power symbol. In these societies, followers tend to prefer powerful leaders who are able to show not only possession of wealth, but also the generosity to “share” this wealth.

Taking an example from Sub-Saharan Africa, “Big Men” accumulate wealth so that they may redistribute it to their followers, because status and loyalties are maintained through the assurance on the principle of elite redistribution of “assistance” to their followers. Such “vertical symbolic redistribution” is essential in maintaining the patron-client relationship.<sup>25</sup> The state is a primary source from which members of the elite extract resources needed to secure clients’ support. Especially during elections, clients reciprocate with political loyalty or votes. In Bolivia, the “time of election” are periods when citizens may demand various gifts from running politicians. Voters assess the suitability of prospective leaders/patrons based on their approachability, sincerity, honesty, generosity and wealth in order to engage them in a reciprocal relationship where they feel obliged to serve the people in return for their electoral support.<sup>26</sup> Such personal exchange of favours and votes between patrons and clients is also used as a political strategy in Brazil.<sup>27</sup>

In Indonesia, past *Pilkadas* have shown similar traits. Distribution of banknotes and gifts at open rallies are meant to secure votes, yet not only by buying the votes, but more significantly as a symbolic gesture of the candidate’s power as potential “patron” for his potential “clients”. Closely related to gift-giving is the function of the campaign team (*tim sukses*), whose aim is to amass votes for the candidate. Members of *tim sukses* are tasked with doling out gifts and banknotes during the campaign period. In 2005, at one district in North Sumatra, in a frequently held *tim sukses* meetings where around 45 people were present, the team leader distributed IDR 300-400 thousand (USD 28-38) worth of banknotes to each member at every meeting to finance their “campaigning activities”.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, rich members of the team, usually businessmen who are financial supporters of the said candidate, are already well-known to the locals for their wealth. Therefore, the proximity of the said candidate (potential patron) to these rich people (sources of wealth) symbolically confirms his power and willingness to “take care” of his followers.

To further explain the popularity of former corruption convict candidates, it is important to understand that Indonesian local politics has been an arena of ambiguities. The first pertains to the contrast between good governance rhetoric used by the candidate to convey his personality and the anticipation of potential voters to get banknotes and gifts. During open rallies of past *Pilkadas*, when asked to list the criteria for a “good leader”, most campaign-goers said “clean, honest person”, indicating their preference for candidates who could portray these traits during

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<sup>25</sup> Jean-Pascal Daloz, “Ostentation in Comparative Perspective: Culture and Elite Legitimation” in Fredrik Engelstad, ed. *Comparative Studies of Culture and Power (Comparative Social Research, Volume 21)* Emerald Group Publishing Limited (2003): 29 – 62, p.48

<sup>26</sup> Sian Lazar, “Personalist Politics, Clientelism and Citizenship: Local Elections in El Alto, Bolivia”, *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 23, 2 (2004): 228-243.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Gay, “Rethinking Clientelism: Demands, Discourses and Practices in Contemporary Brazil”, *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe/European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* (1998): 7-24

<sup>28</sup> Deasy Simandjuntak (2012).

their campaigns. However, the same campaign-goers would line up at a party or *tim sukses* headquarter in the town or village, anticipating to be given “transport allowance”<sup>29</sup> as payment for their attendance in the rally. This reflects the people’s understanding of the campaign as a time when wealthy people come and distribute money and gifts for poorer people.

The second ambiguity pertains to the idealized image of local government and voters’ understanding that the everyday practice of local bureaucrats will never reflect such an image. Voters know that upon seizing power, the new district head will replace some officials with those who are close to him or are members of his *tim sukses*. Voters also know that local development projects will mostly be given to businessmen having close ties with him. Moreover, aspiring to also benefit from access to the leaders, voters will weigh the suitability of leadership of a candidate through a calculation of personal profit: For example, “Can this leader provide me and my family members with jobs?” Following this logic, the kind of patronage usually associated with corruption is thus implicitly understood by citizens and potential voters as the privilege and responsibility of a leadership position, and is thus expected.

“Corruption” is therefore a concept that has to be understood in its cultural context. This is quite obvious in the case of the persistent popularity of former corruption convicts as district head candidates. Most people will condemn corruption” when it involves prominent figures and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), yet the same people still expect to get banknotes and gifts during local election campaigns. In fact, at election time, gift-giving is considered a normal practice and is expected by potential voters. Later, in their everyday dealing with the local administration, the same voters may have to deal with local officials who wish to extract additional fees from them for services that are supposed to be free (or cheaper). The capability to extract fees seems to be treated by some as a privilege for being a local official, and thus “not really” corruption. Moreover, the opportunity to partake in this activity is often the main reason for the common man to aspire to become an official. Therefore, due to his aspiration to benefit from daily rent-seeking practices, these are seldom categorized as corruption. Corruption, hence, seems to be considered as something that only takes place in big cities, involving “larger” sums of money, and the KPK.

In short, corruption involves practices that the common man cannot imagine himself being involved in or benefitting from.

### **PILKADA: TRANSFORMING CLIENTS TO CITIZENS?**

Although patronage, which is based on personal exchange, and modern democracy, which is based on fair election and accountability, may seem incompatible, patronage practices still exist in representative democracies.<sup>30</sup> This is due to the prioritization of the “act of voting” which is seen as the essence of democracy, rather than the result of the election itself or the quality of the (local) government resulting from such election. The need to entice individual voters, therefore, partly explains the function of lavish campaigning, which in turn explains the necessity of having wealthy candidates.

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<sup>29</sup> This is a misnomer, since the amount of money distributed is more than mere transport fee remuneration.

<sup>30</sup> Luis Roniger and Ayşe Güneş-Ayata. *Democracy, clientelism, and civil society*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994.

Nevertheless, *Pilkada* has brought positive changes to the traditional patron-client relations. James Scott's observation of the connection of electoral politics and patron-client relations revealed that elections improved the clients' bargaining position by adding to their resources.<sup>31</sup> This observation is relevant to the regional elections in Indonesia, in which the clients became 'empowered' by being able to vote for patrons, as the national parties established and strengthened networks at the local level, and competition among patrons intensified. By participating in direct local election, "clients" may be transformed into "citizens" who understand their political rights and have the power to choose their leader.

However, the persistent popularity of former corruption convicts as candidates also show that voters might still behave like clients by retaining a preference that reflect a patron-client relations. Clients prefer rich patrons, and seem to "tolerate" corrupt practices or see these as a privilege of leadership. Such preference unsurprisingly stimulates political parties to endorse these former corruption convicts. Ten years since its initiation in 2005, *Pilkada* may still be experiencing the persistence of the deep-seated patronage mentality that was rampant during the authoritarian New Order era.

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<sup>31</sup> James C. Scott, "Patron-client politics and political change in Southeast Asia." *American Political Science Review* 66, 01 (1972): 91-113, p.109.