THE POLITICS OF
NGOs IN INDONESIA

Developing democracy and managing a movement

Bob S. Hadiwinata

The Politics of NGOs in Indonesia

Non-governmental organisations have proved crucial to political and social development in developing countries, and perhaps none more so than Indonesia, Southeast Asia's biggest country.

This book deals with two major issues: how Indonesian NGOs survived under Suharto's authoritarian rule; and how NGOs contributed to the promotion of democracy in the post-Suharto era. NGOs are often perceived as the cornerstones of a vibrant civil society, providing voices for the disenfranchised and creating centres of influence outside the state. Yet through an analysis of primary material, Bob S. Hadiwinata's fascinating study argues that NGOs must adjust their activities in accordance with local social and political conditions, and that NGOs are sometimes at odds with the local communities they purport to represent. If NGOs are to change from 'development' to 'movement' in democratic post-Suharto Indonesia they must adjust not only their management and working style, but also their very ideology.

This comprehensive study will be an important book for scholars interested in Asian studies, Indonesian politics and development studies.

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Edited by Duncan McCargo
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The Politics of NGOs in Indonesia

Developing democracy and managing a movement

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Preface

This book argues that a complete understanding of NGO operations as the 'third sector' organisations can be achieved if we perceive NGOs as both 'institutions' (since they have permanent office, organisational structure, leadership, management, staff members, statute and the like) and 'movements' (with commitment to political transformation, revolutionary change, informality, flexibility, spontaneity and so forth). It is this dual identity that makes an NGO an interesting agency.

Although the NGO movement is not a new phenomenon for Indonesia, an enlightened version of them thrived from the late 1960s and early 1970s when students and intellectuals formed organisations which were dedicated to community development activities. In the 1970s, amid the realisation that the government was unable to reach the poorest, NGOs received full support from the New Order government as they were expected to help the government in providing low cost health care, small credits and training on micro-enterprises.

From the mid-1980s, however, Indonesian NGOs entered a new era when the New Order government sought to co-opt or in some ways neutralise their activities as a manifestation of President Suharto's 'de-ideologisation' and 'de-politicisation' strategies. In this situation, no organisations – including NGOs – were allowed to pursue any ideology other than *Pancasila* (the five moral principles); and they were not allowed to carry out any activities without the government's consent. As a result, there was no room for Indonesian NGOs to nurture a strong ideological basis which would have been crucial in guiding their attempt to generate a movement. They were also compelled to adjust to the political situation by adopting a low-profile approach in which political controversies and strong words that may arouse suspicion were avoided.

The research for this book was carried out in the last years of the New Order government and again in the years following the fall of Suharto. During my first field research (October 1996–September 1997), I was able to record NGOs' attempt to help the underprivileged in the area of community development, grass-roots empowerment, and democratic education amid the government's constant attempt to control their activities. My second research in May–August 2001 had allowed me to learn about new hopes as well as challenges faced by Indonesian NGOs after the fall of Suharto. The post-Suharto government's decision to allow the formation of new political organisations and the removal of all regulations

controlling organisational activities in 1998 seemed to have provided ample opportunity for society to become involved in political activities. The impact of this new development on NGOs' activities was obvious. If during the New Order government NGOs had to compromise their radical ideologies to avoid a possible ban or dissolution, in the post-Suharto era they can openly disclose their radical identity without the risk of being repressed.

In the post-Suharto era, the role of NGOs in both community development and empowerment becomes more crucial for at least two reasons. First, the economic disruption and widespread impoverishment after the collapse of the Indonesian currency, the *rupiah*, in 1997 and the political persecutions and civil disturbances in 1998 brought new demands from society to which NGOs cannot turn a blind eye. NGOs committed to both 'development' and 'human rights' would seem to play a greater role in mitigating the impact of the economic downturn. Poverty has opened up new opportunities for development NGOs to expand their charity, self-help and micro-enterprise activities to help the underprivileged. One major concern in the post-Suharto era is the decline of living standards in both urban and rural areas as a consequence of the implementation of the structural adjust-ment policies, which generates unemployment, the removal of government subsi-dies on basic items and the collapse of the social security system. Some new NGOs are formed to distribute loans and grants from various international devel-opment agencies – the World Bank, IMF, USAID, UNDP, and so on – to the urban and rural poor, especially those who are badly affected by the financial crisis (urban workers, farmers and the like). During 1998–2000, thousands of NGOs were involved in the disbursement of the government-sponsored *Jaringan Pengaman Sosial* (social safety-nets) programme. Moreover, the lessening of the military's political control of societal activities has increased NGOs' acceptabil-ity among the rural poor. Beneficiaries are no longer demanding approval from the local authorities prior to NGOs' operation in their neighbourhood.

Second, in a situation where the opportunity to engage in political activities arises, those NGOs committed to 'democratisation' have much to do to create a condition that will allow the democratisation to proceed. As a result, facilitating the transition to democracy becomes an agenda for Indonesian NGOs, including those which are previously considered to be conservative. Indonesian NGOs had undoubtedly contributed to the fall of the New Order government. Their endless pro-democracy campaigns and political education programmes since the early 1990s had generated a feeling of being oppressed among the people, especially those in the marginalised spectrum both in urban and rural areas. More impor-tantly, notwithstanding the New Order government's systematic attempt to control all types of organisation in society (students, workers, peasants, professionals, women and so on), Indonesian NGOs were able to preserve the idea of people's sovereignty (*kedaulatan rakyat*) and conveyed it to the grassroots population. Thus, when the transition to a more democratic political system was initiated in 1998, it did not take much time to encourage grassroots population to support the *gerakan reformasi* (reform movement) since they were already familiarised with the idea of people's sovereignty and were prepared to defend it at all costs.

Although NGOs' ability to facilitate the transition to democracy is debatable, their access to grassroots organisations and their commitment to empower the marginalised groups have generated optimism that NGOs will contribute to the strengthening of Indonesian civil society much needed to generate demand for a more accountable, clean and transparent government. Some politically oriented NGOs have attempted to boost the democratisation by focusing on three crucial activities. First, an attempt to draw political and ideological boundaries within the existing groups in society. Second, an effort to develop a common political platform that should lead to the formation of a collective action involving different social and political groups. Third, a more serious attempt to form grassroots networks and coalitions in order to build a strong civil society.

These activities are crucial in Indonesian context, given that the democratisation is seriously challenged by the feeling of frustration towards the volatility of the political transition. Frustrated with ongoing conflicts and public disorder during the transition to democracy, some conservative elements of the society express their demand for a possible return of a Suharto-like authoritarian government. Having enjoyed a relatively stable political situation during Suharto's authoritarian rule, the conservatives are convinced that limitation on political activities of society will guarantee order and stability. This new development has alarmed NGO activists of a possible disruption to the democratisation which evolved from 1998. In order to prevent this conservatism from spreading across the country, NGO community feels it necessary to strengthen their attempt to establish networks and to replicate their workshop, training and campaign activities. This is exactly what has been done by many NGOs in the post-Suharto era.

Despite their success in making grassroots people determine their own development and in facilitating the transition to democracy, Indonesian NGOs remain unclear about their management system. Although they develop a more or less sustainable organisational structures, they remain ambiguous about the issues of career progression, staff development, leadership, managerial authority and accountability, financial management and other essential components of a modern management. Our cases seem to indicate that small NGOs tend to face less pressure of professionalisation, which affect their seriousness in developing the technical and managerial skills of their employees and in adopting an effective leadership. Meanwhile, large NGOs have more serious concern on staff development, career progression and leadership due to their awareness to act as a professional organisation. As a result, the activities of small NGOs often depend on the presence of a strong leader, while large NGOs depend on the rules and procedures, which guarantee more stability and sustainability. In terms of financial management, those NGOs capable of running commercial programmes tend to be more financially self-sufficient, which ensures stability and independence. Meanwhile, those NGOs focusing on mobilisation and empowerment activities are dependent on foreign donors. In judging NGOs' accountability, one should consider both external and internal dynamics of NGO operation. Our cases suggest that factors such as NGOs' status of being *yayasan* (which implies a non-democratic character), their role as 'virtual representatives' of the people whom

they represent and the low level of demand for accountability both from target groups and public in general appear to have prevented Indonesian NGOs from developing an effective accountability system.

In this study, although a great deal information is drawn from participatory observation and in-depth interviews, it is not a pure ethnography. My analysis is also based on what other authors or scholars think, write or say about Indonesian NGOs in general as well as those NGOs used in the case studies. Since Indonesian NGOs rarely write about themselves, except what they write in their reports, the only information I can find from 'insiders' is through NGO activists whom I interviewed, their reports, bulletins, leaflets and meeting minutes made by NGO staff members. Data from state agencies and other external sources are also used insofar as they support the arguments developed throughout this study. In selecting NGOs in a place where organisations have been and continue to be numerous, varied and active, and often act in concert with each other, I hope to indicate the range of issues that arise in assessing NGOs in Indonesia or Yogyakarta (Java) in particular.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ABRI	*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* or Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia
ADB	the Asian Development Bank
ANGOC	the Asian Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition
APBD	*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah* or Regional Development Budget
Apsari	*Akseptor Keluarga Berencana Lestari* or Family Planning Group
BAKIN	*Badan Koordinasi Intelejen Negara* or State Intelligence Co-ordinating Board
Bandes	*Bantuan Pedesaan* or village development assistance
Bappeda	*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah* or the Regional Development Planning Board
Bappenas	*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional* or the National Development Planning Board
Bimas	*Bimbingan Masyarakat* or Agricultural Mass Guidance
BIPIK	*Bimbingan dan Pengembangan Industri Kecil* or Guidance and Development of Small Industries
BPD	*Badan Perwakilan Desa* or Village Representative Body
BPS	*Badan Pusat Statistik* or Centre of the Statistical Bureau
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BRI Unit Desa	the village units of the Indonesian People's Bank
BSY	*Bina Swadaya* Yogyakarta
Bulog	*Badan Urusan Logistik* or the Food Logistics Agency
BUUD	*Badan Usaha Unit Desa* or Village Unit Enterprises
BTI	*Barisan Tani Indonesia* or Indonesian Peasants' Front
Camat	sub-district head
CD-Bethesda	Community Development Unit of the Bethesda Hospital
CGI	Consultative Group for Indonesia (replaced IGGI in 1992)
CODE-NGO	Caucus of Development Non-governmental Organisations Networks
COME'NGOs	Come-and-go NGOs (fly-by-night NGO entrepreneurs)
CPSM	Centre for Participatory Social Management
Danramil	*Komandan Koramil* or the Sub-district Military Commander
DIY	*Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* or Yogyakarta Special Province
DPR	*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* or People's Representative Body
DPRD	*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* or Local People's Representative Body
FKMY	*Forum Komunikasi Mahasiwa Yogyakarta* or Yogyakarta Student Communication Forum
FPIS	*Front Pembela Islam Surakarta* or the Islamic Defense Front of Surakarta
GAD	Gender and Development

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Gerwani	*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* or Indonesian Women's Movement (operating under PKI's influence)
Golkar	*Golongan Karya* or Working Groups (the ruling party in the New Order)
Golput	*Golongan Putih* (white groups) or the non-voters
GRINGOs	Government-run, -inspired or -initiated NGOs
GSOs	Grassroots Support Organisations
GTZ	*German Technische Suzammen Arbeit* or German Technical Cooperation Agency
HBK	*Hubungan Bank dengan Kelompok* or Groups and Banks Relationship Programme
HIP	*Hubungan Industrial Pancasila* or *Pancasila* Industrial Relations
HKTI	*Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia* or Indonesian Farmers' Association
HNSI	*Himpunan Nelayan Seluruh Indonesia* or Indonesian Fishermen's Association
HYVs	High Yielding Varieties
ICF	Indonesia-Canada Foundation
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICMI	*Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim Indonesia* or Indonesian association of Muslim intellectuals
IDT	*Instruksi Presiden untuk Desa Tertinggal* or the presidential instruction of the less-developed village assistance
IGGI	Inter-Governmental Group for Indonesia (reformed as CGI in 1992)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INFID	International NGO Forum for Indonesian Development
INGI	International NGO Forum on Indonesia
Inmas	*Intensifikasi massa* or mass intensification agricultural programme
INPI-Pact	Indonesian NGOs Partnership Initiatives
Inpres	*Instruksi Presiden* or Presidential Instruction
Insus	*Intensifikasi Khusus* or Special Intensification Programme
ISJ	*Institut Sosial Jakarta* or Jakarta Social Institute
ITP	*Ikatan Tani Pancasila* or Pancasila Farmers' Association
JBIC	the Japan Bank for International Corporation
KADIN	*Kamar Dagang dan Industri* or Indonesian Chamber of Commerce
Kapolda	*Kepala Kepolisian Daerah* or the Provincial Chief Police
Kapolsek	*Kepala Kepolisian Sektor* or the Sub-district Chief Police
Kecamatan	sub-district administration
Kelompencapir	*Kelompok Pendengar Pembaca dan Pirsawan* or Radio listeners and Newspaper Readers' Group
Keppres	*Keputusan Presiden* or Presidential Decree
KIK	*Koperasi Industri Kecil* or Small Industry Co-operatives
KIK/KMKP	*Kredit Investasi Kecil* or Small Investment Lending Scheme
KKD	*Kader Kesehatan Desa* or Village Health Cadres
KKN	*Korupsi, Kolusi dan Nepotisme* or Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism
KMKP	*Kredit Modal Kerja Permanen* or Permanent Working Capital
KNPI	*Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia* or the National Committee of Indonesian Youth
Kodim	*Komando Distrik Militer* or District Military Command
Komnas-HAM	*Komisi Nasional Hak Azasi Manusia* or the National Commission for Human Rights

Kopinkra	*Koperasi Industri Kerajinan Rakyat* or People's Handicrafts Co-operatives
Koramil	*Komando Rayon Militer* or Sub-district Military Command
Kowani	*Konggres Wanita Indonesia* or Indonesian women's congress
KSK	*Kas Solidaritas Kelompok* or central solidarity fund in *Bina Swadaya*'s joint effort groups
KSKPKO	*Kelompok Solidaritas Korban Pembangunan Kedung Ombo* or Solidarity Group for the Victims of Kedung Ombo Construction Project
KSM	*Kelompok Swadaya Mandiri* or People's Self-reliant Group
KUB	*Kelompok Usaha Bersama* or Joint Effort Group
KUD	*Koperasi Unit Desa* or Village Unit Co-operatives
KUK	*Kredit Usaha Kecil* or Small-enterprise Credit Scheme
Kupedes	*Kredit Usaha Pedesaan* or Village General Lending Programme
KUT	*Kredit Usaha Tani* or Farmers' Enterprise Credit
LKMD	*Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa* or Village people's Defense Council
LMD	*Lembaga Musyawarah Desa* or Village People's Consultative Assembly
LP3ES	*Lembaga Pengembangan, Penelitian, dan Pendidikan Ekonomi-Sosial* or Institute for Social-economic Research, Education and Development
LPSM	*Lembaga Pengembang Swadaya Masyarakat* or Self-reliant Community Support Institutions
LSM	*Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat* or Self-reliant Community Institutions
MPR	*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* or People's Consultative Assembly
MSOs	Membership Support Organisations
NKK/BKK	*Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus/Badan Koordinasi Kampus* or the Normalisation of Campus Life/the Campus Co-ordinating Body
NOVIB	the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Co-operation
ORA	*Organisasi Rakyat* or People's Organisation
Ormas	*Organisasi Massa* or mass organisations
ORNOP	*Organisasi non-pemerintah* or Non-governmental Organisations
OTB	*Organisasti Tanpa Bentuk* or formless organisation
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (an international NGO based in the United Kingdom)
PAD	*Pendapatan Asli Daerah* or original regional income
PAN	*Partai Amanah Nasional* or National Mandate Party
Pansus	special inquiry committee in the people's representative body (DPR)
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PBB	*Partai Bulan Bintang* or Star and Moon Party
PDI	*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* or Indonesian Democratic Party
PDIP	*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* or Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle
Pemda	*Pemerintah Daerah* or local administration
Perda	*Peraturan Daerah* or local government regulation
Pertamina	*Perusahaan Tambang Milik Negara* or the state oil corporation
PIR	*Perkebunan Inti Rakyat* or Nucleus Estate Small-holders
PGOs	Primary Grassroots Groups
PKB	*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* or National Awakening Party
PKI	*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or Indonesian Communist Party
PKK	*Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* or Family Welfare Guidance
P3M	*Perhimpunan Pesantren dan Pengembangan Masyarakat* or Association for *Pesantren* and Community Development
Polsek	*Kepolisian Sektor* or sub-district police office
PPL	*Petugas Penyuluh Lapangan* or Field Extension Workers
PPP	*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* or United Development Party

PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal (a method of assessment of rural development problems)
PRD	*Partai Rakyat Demokrasi* or People's Democratic Party
Prokesa	*Promotor Kesehatan Desa* or the state-formed village health cadre
Puskesmas	*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat* or the government-run health centre
P2W-KSS	*Peningkatan Peran Wanita menuju Keluarga Sehat Sejahtera* or Programme for the Improvement of Women's Role and the Family Welfare
Repelita	*Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun* or Five-year Development Plan
Rp	*Rupiah* (the Indonesian currency)
SBPY	*Sekretariat Bersama Perempuan Yogyakarta* or Yogyakarta Women Joint Secretariat
SBSI	*Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia* or Indonesian Union of Prosperous Workers
SIP	*Suara Ibu Peduli* or Voice of Concerned Mothers
SMID	*Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi* or Indonesian Student Solidarity for Democracy
SPSI	*Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia* or the All-Indonesia Workers' Union
SSCI	Small-scale and Cottage Industries
Susenas	*Survey Sosial-ekonomi Nasional* or the National Social-economic Survey
TNI	*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* or the Indonesian National Armed Forces is the term used by the military circle in the post-Suharto era as a substitute for ABRI
UMR	*Upah Minimum Regional* or Regional Minimum Wages
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USC	Unity Service Cooperation Foundation (an international NGO based in Canada)
UU Ormas	the law on mass organisations (No. 8/1985)
WALHI	*Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia* or Indonesian environment network
WID	Women in Development
YAKKUM	*Yayasan Kristen untuk Kesehatan Umum* or The Christian Foundation for Public Health
YAPPIKA	*Yayasan Penguatan Partisipasi, Inisiatif dan Kemitraan Indonesia* or the Foundation for Indonesian People's Participation, Initiative and Partnership
Yasanti	*Yayasan Annisa Swasti* or *Annisa Swasti* foundation
YLBHI	*Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia* or Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation
YSTM	*Yayasan Sosial Tani Membangun* or Farmers' Social Development Foundation

1 Introduction
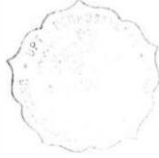
Background

The past two decades have seen a substantial increase in the number, size and scope of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These organisations have established themselves in pivotal positions in the social, economic and political landscapes across the globe. In Southeast Asia, as in much of the rest of the developing world, NGOs have proliferated since the early 1980s. In Thailand, in the early 1990s it was estimated that there were 10,000 NGOs, indicating a 250 per cent increase from around 4,000 in the early 1980s (Farrington *et al.* 1993b: 277). In Malaysia, 14,000 similar organisations were registered under the 1966 Societies Act in the early 1990s (Clarke 1998: 26). In Singapore, the number of registered charities and social organisations grew from 656 in 1988 to 4,562 in 1994 (Clarke 1998: 26). In the Philippines, between 1985 and 1995, the number of NGOs increased by 260 per cent from an estimated 27,100 to 70,200 (Clarke 1998: 93). In Indonesia, while there is no accurate data on the exact number of NGOs, it is believed that the number of NGOs has grown significantly from 10,000 in 1996 to around 70,000 in 2000 (BPS 2000: 34).

Commentators argue that the rise of NGOs is an indication of a substantial break from the conventional wisdom that social development is primarily the responsibility of the state and the market (Clark 1991: 43–5; Hulme 1994: 253; De Janvry *et al.* 1995: 4; Edwards and Hulme 1997: 3–5). Falling living standards in many parts of the developing world have raised attention on immediate survival and on the alternative possibilities which NGOs can offer when the state and the market are no longer able to deliver services efficiently (de Janvry *et al.* 1995: 1). Many NGOs are formed as a manifestation of people's dissatisfaction with the failure of both the state and the market to deliver welfare, public goods and jobs. Disenchanted with the state's limited capacity to provide public services, people begin to turn their attention to agencies outside the state which are expected to provide substitutes for the state's welfare programmes, to help the poor overcome the strains of daily economic activities, and to help them generate self-help initiatives (Hudson 1995: 292; Salamon and Anheier 1996: 2). NGOs also grow as a result of what Hansmann (1994: 21) termed a 'market failure', a situation in which consumers are in a poor position to judge the goods and services they are

receiving. NGOs, in this context, are formed to ensure confidence that goods and services are supplied and distributed efficiently and have a high quality.

When one talks about the growing significance of NGOs, one should be able to locate where exactly NGOs settle themselves in the general context of social organisations. In modern societies, there are three clusters of organisations that carry distinct purposes. The first cluster belongs to the so-called 'first sector' whose purpose is to protect, secure and regulate the lives and activities of citizens. The state agencies whose main duties are, among others, to ensure citizens exercise their rights and obligations, to provide services to the people and to supply basic social securities, and these are some of the examples of this sector (Fowler 1997: 21; Turner and Hulme 1997: 52–3). The 'second sector' consists of the private realm whose major purpose is to make a livelihood, create and accumulate wealth. This sector includes private market-oriented agencies, namely, the business and industrial establishments (De Janvry *et al.* 1995: 8–9; Hudson 1995: 34; Fowler 1997: 22). The 'third sector' refers to the private realm whose main purpose is to pursue individual interests or tackle personal or social concerns collectively such as spiritual, social, recreational, and cultural issues (Billis 1993: 158–9; Hudson 1995: 33–4; Fowler 1997: 22). NGOs belong to this sector. As 'third sector' organisations, NGOs are not subject to direct political control from the political elite and are not meant to distribute profits to those who run them (Hudson 1995: 27–9). Operating outside both the state and the market, NGOs are supposed to have a certain degree of independence to determine their own policies and strategies.[1]

The argument

Current studies on NGOs have been infused with either optimism or pessimism with regard to NGOs' ability to encourage grassroots initiatives, to carry the 'voices of the voiceless', and to induce social and political transformations. The optimist school of thought suggests that NGOs have demonstrated the capacity to design and implement development programmes, using innovative approaches and by-passing long bureaucratic procedures, enabling them to reach the poorest members of society (Aubrey 1997: 25). Some have argued that NGOs are sources of diversity and innovation because they contribute to pluralism by creating centres of influence outside the state and by providing the means through which disenfranchised groups can organise themselves (Clark 1991: 19; Di Maggio and Anheier 1994: 179; Hulme 1994: 261). Others have noted that NGOs have the capacity to make governments more responsive, to get new issues on the public agenda, to provide low-cost services, to raise people's awareness of their social milieu, to focus on humanitarian issues and even (in extreme cases) to overturn governments (Hodgkinson and Sumariwalla 1992: 490–1; Jorgensen 1996: 39; Trivedy and Acharya 1996: 59; Blair 1997: 29). Fowler (1997) identified four factors that have determined the strength and effectiveness of NGOs: (1) their ability to design an agenda linking vision to action; (2) their ability to achieve goals because of the commitment and determination of their staff members and leaders; (3) their capacity to mobilise necessary

resources due to the presence of competent and disciplined cadres; and (4) their flexibility in maintaining relations with governments, donors and target groups.

The pessimist school of thought, on the other hand, comes out of a belief that NGOs are 'oversold' since their presumed strength and effectiveness may not materialise in practice (Clark 1991: 63; Aubrey 1997: 26). In the words of Annis (1987), an analyst of NGO performance: '... in the face of pervasive poverty, "small scale" can merely mean "insignificant", "politically independent" can mean "powerless" or "disconnected", "low cost" can mean "under-financed" or "poor quality", and "innovative" can mean simply "temporary" or "unsustainable"...'. Streeten (1997: 196) argued that NGOs may describe in their statute the goal of helping the poorest, but in practice they rarely reach this group because they tend to reinforce the rule of the elite circles and put too little effort in ascertaining whether the beneficiaries are really the poorest. A study by Farrington *et al.* (1993a: 91–100) suggested that the participatory and empowerment rhetoric of NGOs is vulnerable, especially since most NGOs are accountable to donors, not to the beneficiaries of their work. Veltmeyer *et al.* (1997: 85–6), perhaps the most extreme authors of the pessimist school, argued that NGOs have a negative impact on grassroots initiatives because they tend to fragment the social constituency of popular movements and create a new strata of dependent administrators based on exogenous resources who are in direct competition with the activities of the poor.

These two schools of thought represent the current competing development paradigms with regard to the interpretations of the role of agencies in facilitating grassroots initiatives. Although there is a danger of overstating NGOs' successes or failures in each of the schools of thought, I believe the two perspectives contain some elements of truth about NGOs' strengths and weaknesses. The fact that NGOs are formed by concerned individuals, staffed with low-paid but committed individuals, organised on the basis of flexibility, and guided by humanitarian values (justice, equality, democracy, and so on) raises the hope that they must make a difference to the community whom they serve (Hulme 1994: 264). But, it is also important to note that NGOs may face some problems as a result of their limited resources, restricted political space, dilemmas in management, pressures from the political environment, and so on.

This study attempts to examine the 'politics' of NGOs in Indonesia. Although politics has been associated with the study of government and public affairs, nowadays it has come to be understood in a much broader context to include other areas of social life such as gender, race and class (Gamble 1990: 412). Politics can therefore be understood as the exercise of power and authority to influence others that occurs throughout society: from family groups and the voluntary association (clubs, professional associations, social organisations, NGOs, and so forth) to the state (Stoker 1995: 5). In this broader sense, politics, according to Leftwich (1984: 83–4), comprises all the activities of co-operation and conflict, within and between societies, whereby the human species goes about organising the use, production and distribution of human, natural and other resources in the course of the production and reproduction of its social life.

This book is concerned with the question of how NGOs survived under different social and political contexts. During Suharto's government, when the society suffered from serious political constraints and the powerless were too afraid to challenge the powerful, NGOs were forced to adopt strategies and approaches that conform to the political conditions set out by the state. However, since the mid-1990s, when Suharto's political legitimacy was beginning to wane, some NGOs attempted to facilitate grassroots resistance by conducting the pro-democracy campaigns. In the post-Suharto era, the role of NGOs in facilitating the political transition to democracy becomes more significant. Many NGOs conducted activities to facilitate the formation of a strong civil society. This book covers mainly the period between 1990 and 2001 when Indonesian NGOs began to exert influence on the process of grassroots empowerment[2] and the strengthening of civil society.[3] Its main purpose is to examine how complex sets of relationships among various kinds of associations, the state agencies, communities and individuals have had an impact on a specific area at a specific time and how NGOs respond to particular social and political contexts in order to ensure their survival. This raises the following questions: How do NGOs adjust to specific circumstances? How do NGOs contribute to the promotion of democracy? How do NGOs sustain their operation in different political situations? And what is the impact of particular social and political contexts on NGO activities?

Defining NGOs

Many have attempted to classify and define non-governmental organisations, though to nobody's great satisfaction. Some observers loosely group NGOs under an assortment of headings such as 'voluntary organisations', 'non-profit organisations', or 'intermediary organisations' carrying out various social activities. But this grouping seems to cover too much. It can include hundreds of types of organisations within the society ranging from political action committees to sports clubs. Applying these terms as a general nomenclature for NGOs will force someone to put an international charity organisation such as Oxfam and an exclusive sports club into a single category, since both of them are created voluntarily, carry out non-profit social activities and sometimes play intermediary roles. Such umbrella terms also fail to make a substantial differentiation between political groups demanding the overturn of authoritarian regimes and local neighbourhood associations providing support for the elderly, women, children and the disabled.

Some other observers try to solve this problem by refining the concept of NGOs through the introduction of various specific terms. Carroll (1992), for example, introduced the term 'grassroots support organisations' (GSOs) – namely a civic developmental entity which provides services and support to local groups of disadvantaged rural, or urban, households and serves as an intermediary institution in establishing links between the local people and governments, donors and international financial institutions – which can be differentiated from 'membership support organisations' (MSOs). While MSOs represent (and are accountable to) their base membership, GSOs have no members (Carroll 1992: 11). Both GSOs and MSOs, according to Carroll, can be distinguished from 'primary grassroots

organisations' (PGOs) by scope, level of complexity and function. A PGO, he argued, is the smallest aggregation of individuals or households that are regularly involved in joint development activities, while GSOs and MSOs tend to serve, represent and co-operate with one or more PGOs in various development activities (Carroll 1992: 11).

Carroll's attempt to diversify NGOs into several groups does not seem to reduce the complicated nature of NGOs. While one can accept the differentiation between GSOs/MSOs and PGOs, many would equate GSOs with MSOs without further explanation because the two organisations often operate under the same philosophy of self-help and the same organisational framework. The differences between these two types of organisations are in fact subject to local variations. In some societies, especially in Latin America and the Philippines, one can see a clear distinction between GSOs and MSOs; but in other parts of the world, people tend to see them as overlapping organisations working under the same principle of self-management (Farrington *et al.* 1993b; Fisher 1994).

Although definitions may not necessarily reduce complications surrounding the concept of non-governmental organisations, they may help us to determine what type of organisation is included and excluded in this study. The NGOs in this study can be defined as follows:

1 Organisations which serve as advocates of the poor, the neglected and the disenfranchised. They are also advocates for social change. They provide social services, particularly to underserved groups, and in some nations serve as the major vehicle for the provision of social welfare. They provide innovation, are flexible, and can deliver more personalised services to specific groups or in local situations. With their value orientation, they serve in many nations as moral associations. In societies with authoritarian governments, they help to create institutions where citizens can learn to work, play and worship together and where they can they try to become part of a strong civil society (Hodgkinson and Sumariwalla 1992: 486).

2 Organisations sharing the following characteristics: (1) *formal*, in terms of having regular meetings, offices, a set of rules or procedures and some degree of organisational permanence; (2) *private*, i.e. institutionally separate from the government; (3) *non-profit-distributing*, i.e. not returning profits generated to their owners, directors or the governing boards; (4) *self-governing*, in terms of having their own internal procedures for governance and not being controlled by outside entities; (5) *voluntary*, i.e. involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation either in the actual conduct of activities or in the management of their own affairs; (6) *non-religious*, i.e. not primarily involved in the promotion of religious worship or religious education; and (7) *non-political*, i.e. not primarily involved in promoting candidates for elected office (Salamon and Anheier 1996: 14–15).

These definitions refer to organisations with rules, structures and procedures which perform intermediary roles to achieve at least two common goals: to help the poor to develop self-help management to solve their problems; and to