Digital Deliberative Democracy in Indonesia: An Analysis from System Theory Perspective

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Abstract
This article aims to analyze the practice/quality of deliberative democracy in Indonesia regarding the use of digital technology. The implementation of digital government or e-government at the central and regional levels is one element to assess the extent to which the quality of democracy and policymaking takes place by optimally utilizing digital technology and involving the wider public. The System Theory perspective is the primary analytical tool for obtaining general and detailed explanations of the complexities of digital government and deliberative problems in Indonesia. Data were obtained through individual and group interviews with various sources in the central government and several regions (cities) such as Surabaya, Makassar, Surakarta, and Jembrana. The results show that the quality of deliberative democracy in Indonesia, which is facilitated by digital technology, has not run optimally. One of the issues that stands out is that system integration is not running well because of high differentiation and large gaps between the central and regional governments or between one region to another.

Keywords: Deliberative, Democracy, Digital, System, Indonesia

Introduction

The digital government in Indonesia, so far, has been implemented within the e-government framework, which began in 2003. This is marked by Presidential Instruction (INPRES) No. 3 of 2003 concerning national policies and strategies for e-government development. Furthermore, e-government is one of the five priority sectors in the 2014-2019 Indonesia Broadband Plan. In 2018, the President issued Presidential Regulation No. 95 concerning Electronic-Based Government Systems, which became the legal umbrella for implementing e-government in Indonesia. But, during almost two decades of its implementation, the digital government in Indonesia has not been running optimally due to several issues related to various factors, such as technical, geographical, regulatory, leadership, to financial factors (Rose, 2004; Rahardjo, Mirchandani, & Joshi, 2007; Hermana, et al., 2012; Prahono & Elidjen, 2015; Choi, et al., 2016; Aritonang, 2017). Indonesia conducts an internal evaluation of the implementation of e-government through the Indonesian e-Government Rating (PeGI) by the Ministry of Communications and Informatics (MCI) and the Electronic-Based Government System Index (SPBE) by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PAN-RB).

From the central to regional levels, the government in Indonesia has been aggressively using digital technology and creating various platforms for government and public service needs in the last decade at least. The number of local governments (Provinces and Districts / Cities) is currently 548, and each local government usually has dozens of applications or platforms. So it can be said that there are thousands of platforms being developed for the needs of today's digital government in Indonesia. This number does not include platforms developed by other ministries and state institutions. The increasing number of internet users and smartphone users are two of the factors driving this. The number of internet users in Indonesia in 2020 reaches 175 million users and 338 million mobile phone connections (We Are Social, 2020). However, this gigantic quantity of platforms is not matched by these platforms' technical and substantive quality, as seen in the annual reports of PeGI and SPBE. The visible trend is that government institutions at various levels are competing to create platforms. This was then followed by the classic bureaucratic problem in Indonesia, namely the sectoral ego. Each institution has its own platform and its own database that is not synergistic and integrated.

Meanwhile, one of the important aspects of digital governance and become a serious problem in Indonesia is participation, more precisely public participation. In the e-government framework, this aspect is known as the concept of e-participation. United Nations (2014) explains that electronic participation is "the process of engaging citizens through ICTs in policy, decision making, and service design and delivery to make them participatory, inclusive, and deliberative." Indonesia's achievements in this aspect are less than encouraging. Based on the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) released by the United Nations in 2018, Indonesia's electronic participation index has increased from the previous year but is still in position 107. This shows that there are still fundamental public involvement problems in Indonesia's government process and policymaking, especially through digital technology facilitation.

The issue of public participation in the policy-making process itself can be further drawn or linked to the concept of deliberative democracy, which can be understood in

normative and empirical contexts (Steiner, 2012). In this research, deliberative democracy is interpreted as an ideal condition in policymaking by involving the public or society on a wide scale and through procedures based on optimal rationality, openness, and inclusiveness. Deliberative democracy is also interpreted from the system perspective, which means that the ideal conditions above have boundaries that are identical to the boundaries of democracy. In the Indonesian context itself, the concept of deliberation, which comes from the Latin phrase deliberatio, literally means 'consultation,' has the equivalent of 'musyawarah'. Thus, practically/empirically, this concept is not an unfamiliar thing in Indonesia.

The ideal deliberative democracy can run with several principles or functions, namely epistemic, ethical, and democratic (Mansbridge, et al., 2012). Epistemic is related to preferences, opinions, and decisions based on facts and logic, ethical with the principles of mutual respect, and democratic with the principles of plurality, equality, and inclusiveness. According to Jürg Steiner (2012), "there is an agreement in the normative literature that mutual respect in the sense of reciprocity is a key element of good deliberation." The successful realization of these three functions will guarantee the legitimacy of policies and ultimately lead to the ideal conditions of deliberative democracy (Mansbridge, et al., 2012).

The presence of digital technology impacts deliberative democracy, both in its theoretical and empirical settings. Similar to the context of technology in other socio-political dimensions, in deliberative democracy, technology comes with two contrasting consequences, positive and negative. On the one hand, technology promises a bright future of deliberative democracy because of the technical advantages it brings, enabling a high number of participants. On the other hand, digital technology is considered to have the potential to create polarization, leading to weak policy legitimacy. These are only a small part of the debate on the role of digital technology in the context of deliberative democracy. Several scholars have researched deliberative democracy and its relation to the presence and use of digital technology itself in different contexts and perspective (See Jaeger, 2005; Zhang, et al., 2013; You, et.al., 2015; Davidson & Elstub, 2014). What distinguishes this research from others is the case selected, the study's focus, and the main analytical tool used namely the System Theory perspective.

The System Theory perspective is the primary analytical tool for obtaining general and detailed explanations of the complexities of digital government and Indonesia's deliberative problems. The system perspective has several advantages in understanding deliberative democracy (Mansbridge, et al., 2012). The system perspective allows us to think about deliberative democracy in large-scale societal terms, to analyze the division of labor among parts of a system, and to introduce into the analysis large contextual issues and broad systemic inadequacies (Mansbridge, et al., 2012). In this study, System Theory itself specifically refers to Niklas Luhmann's ideas (1984; 1997a; 1997b) regarding modern society, especially regarding the complexity of social systems due to changes in the system's environment. Luhmann's way of looking at the existing systems and how these systems operate is used to understand the empirical facts of the ongoing digital government implementation and deliberative democracy. The system, according to Luhmann, works in an autopoietic way which is characterized by the ability of the system to create its basic elements, determine its own boundaries and structures, refer to itself (self-referential), and are

closed although still concerning the external environment (Luhmann, 1984; 1997a; 1997b). Using the system perspective for analysis, Indonesia's digital government model will automatically be seen as a large system consisting of several sub-systems, working with special codes and dealing with complex environmental conditions.

Method

Amidst the euphoria of digital technology implementation in Indonesia, as briefly explained in the beginning, this research aims to analyze the quality of deliberative democracy in Indonesia regarding digital technology use. The implementation of digital government at the central and regional levels is one element to assess how the quality of democracy and policymaking occurs by optimally utilizing digital technology and involving the wider public. This research looks at and finds out to what extent digital governance implementation in Indonesia (national and regional) can enable the realization of the ideal deliberative democracy as envisioned. Some of the questions to be answered in this research include: (1) Has the digital government system running so far been formulated and worked with the main principles of deliberation? (2) Have the platforms developed enabled broad public participation in policymaking and encouraged the public to participate rationally? (3) Are existing digital platforms able to encourage the presence of a broad discourse on various public issues without technical and substantive limitations?

This research utilized a qualitative approach to obtain data, arrange findings, and analyze the results. Data were obtained through individual and focus group discussions with various sources in the central government (Ministry of Communications and Informatics (KOMINFO) & Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (MENPAN-RB)) and several regional governments (cities) such as Surabaya (East Java), Makassar (South Sulawesi), Surakarta (Central Java) and Jembrana (Bali). These four regions can provide various portraits of digital government implementation and its relation to involving citizens in it because of the character of the regions and their respective backgrounds. Data were also obtained through direct observation of several digital government platforms developed in these four research regions.

The digital government's portrait and public participation dynamics in the four research areas are definitely insufficient to describe the quality of deliberative democracy running in Indonesia comprehensively. This research looks more at existing practices or those carried out from the government's side. Further research will need data that can provide perspectives from the public or other relevant parties regarding the implementation of digital government itself and the deliberation process that may run in it. However, the results shown in these four areas are sufficient to provide an entry point for understanding the deliberation process taking place in Indonesia, especially in the context of today's complex digital society.

The following sections describe some general and specific findings based on data obtained from the study area. A brief analysis will be presented with the System Theory perspective, which is the main analysis tool chosen.

Results

The digital government system running in Indonesia in the last two decades has been driven by the rapid development of technology and the need for better public services. Along the way, the government at the central and local levels has developed various technologies and platforms that are used for this purpose. Implementation issues that arise later are related to technical aspects and related to aspects of motivation, skills, and the underlying values and principles. The issues faced, for example, limited access to computers and internet networks, the inability to use various available platforms, to the users that are not following their intended use. The scope of issues that arise is also related to the drafted regulations, including the authority and institutional structures established to implement this digital government.

Regarding deliberation issues, the central and regional governments also seek to realize public participation in government activities and policymaking by digital technology. However, community involvement is limited to a one-way model that takes the form of complaints. For example, the central government has developed a platform called LAPOR!, which is actually intended as a medium for public participation. REPORT! Stands for People's Online Complaints and Aspirations Service. In its implementation, the problems faced by this platform also concern structural issues. This platform was initially run by the Executive Office of the President (KSP) and later transferred to Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform.

Besides, LAPOR! has been a complaints platform, tended to be 'one way,' and arguably less dialogic. This platform does not confront the public and the government in need of dialogue to formulate policies. The contributing factors can be traced from the technology side, the level of understanding of the users and the developer/manager, and the policies formulated to operate it. This, of course, requires further and more detailed research. However, apart from the existing weaknesses or shortcomings so far, this platform is actually quite potential to become a deliberation platform because it is widely known by the public and sufficient to integrate government units at various levels from central to regional. However, to make this happen, conditions that must be met in advance are needed, ranging from individual, organizational to systemic dimensions.

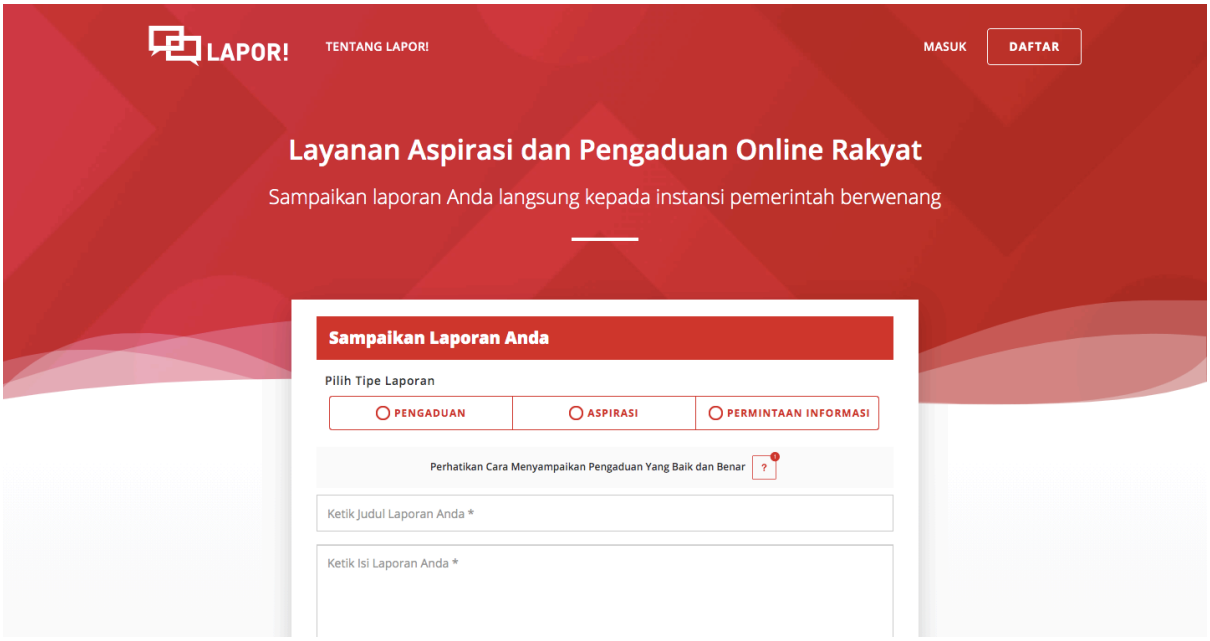

Figure 1: The interface of LAPOR! (https://www.lapor.go.id/)

The following sections provide a brief overview of the four research areas, namely Surabaya, Surakarta, Makassar, and Jembrana. In Surabaya, digital governance is one of the success stories and has become a reference for other regions and even the central government. The Surabaya City Government has made digital technology the backbone of government administration and public services. This city portrait shows one of the important dimensions underlined in realizing the work of digital government, namely strong leadership. What is also evident from the development of digital governance in Surabaya is close collaboration with universities. The main platforms used by the Surabaya City Government for community participation are the 112 command center services and the e-musrenbang platform (development and planning forums). However, from the deliberation side, the platforms developed in Surabaya have not yet been optimal in providing a broad space for involvement and dialogue for the public in the policy-making process in various dimensions.

In the Surakarta case, the city government has developed several digital government platforms focused on public service activities. Two institutions that become the main actors are the Communication and Information Office and the Population and Civil Registry Office. Efforts to involve the community in the policymaking process are prioritized offline by conducting face to face meeting. The mayor meets directly with the community through a routine program called Sonjo Wargo, held in each sub-district. In this program, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have a direct dialogue with citizens to hear aspirations. This is done because not all Surakarta citizens have access to or can use the city government's digital platform.

The Makassar City Government runs a digital government like many other regions by developing various website-based platforms and mobile applications. The Smart RT / RW platform is a mobile application developed by the Makassar City Government to involve citizens in the policymaking process. However, this application's role has not been maximized due to technical constraints and limited knowledge of citizens regarding its function. Apart from that, the City Government is also working with the

Provincial Government of South Sulawesi in developing the Baruga platform, which is more of a complaint platform like LAPOR !. Deliberations facilitated by digital technology in Makassar have not run optimally due to factors that are also identical to what happened in the two previous cities.

In the 2007-2013 period, Jembrana Regency became a pilot for implementing e-government in Indonesia. In that period, Jembrana Regency became the destination of comparative studies of several local governments, the central government, and many international agencies interested in implementing e-government. The Jembrana Regency Government has developed the Jimbarwana Network (Jimnet), an e-government network infrastructure and public services. In fact, Jembrana has shown a positive portrait through the e-voting system developed for the Village Head election process. However, this good practice did not continue due to several problems, ranging from budget, human resources, leadership, and policies

Analysis & Conclusions

In general, the results show that the quality of deliberative democracy in Indonesia, which is facilitated by digital technology, has not run optimally. This occurs for several reasons that are both technological and substantial. The issue of gaps in access and ownership of the equipment to participate is a fundamental problem. The platform's availability by the central and local governments is not followed by most of the community's ability in material and skill aspects. Not all people have the tools to access the platform, and the network infrastructure is not evenly available even in urban areas. Digital government platforms are also developed with a government perspective without sufficient public involvement in the design to evaluation process for the development of their features.

Previously, it was imagined that digital technology could solve one of the deliberation problems in the offline context, namely the limited number of individuals involved. The internet is believed to allow everyone to be involved without the limitations of time and space. In fact, the issue of access to technology, as mentioned above, is a hindering problem. This can be solved by providing a network infrastructure that evenly reaches each area. Also, users' skill problems need to be solved with various strategies, from socialization to inclusive digital literacy programs.

One of the issues that stand out is that system integration is not running well because of high differentiation and large gaps between the central and regional governments or between one region to another. The lack of synergy between the central and local governments from the system perspective means different 'operating codes.' The central government sets policies that are difficult for local governments to follow. One of the reasons is that policies in one ministry are not in line with other ministries' policies. At the central government level, there is no synergy in the design and implementation of digital government. Local governments are confused about implementing various policies, and in fact, not all of those policies are relevant to each region's needs and conditions. Some local governments are even more progressive and innovative in developing digital technology for public services than the central government. This became a problem because the central government then attempted to carry out standardization for data integration purposes. Several regions

were then forced to adjust to the central government's demands even though they eventually had to return to 'old' technology.

Also, the government seems to lack of understanding of ideal deliberative principles and procedures, which should provide ample opportunities for the citizens to be involved in the policy-making process, in this case, facilitated by technology. Both at the national level and in the four regions that became the research areas, the ongoing deliberations' quality does not show the ideal portrait expected. Existing platforms are unable to fulfill epistemic, ethical, and democratic functions. The community is not given sufficient space for rational and argumentative dialogue with the government. The government is still trapped in the logic of 'one-way' communication. What is needed in the context of the current information society is an interactive two-way communication model and provides an opportunity for the parties involved to build common meaning. According to Mendonça, et al., (2020) "deliberative democracy needs to go beyond verbal forms of communication and acknowledges the crucial role of non-verbal communication in expressing and exchanging arguments".

From a system perspective, what is happening in Indonesia today shows that Indonesia's digital government system is unable to reduce the complexity of its environment. These complexities include the rapid development of technology, the growing popularity of social media as the main communication and information channels, decentralization and the increasingly important role of regions, and the emergence of a new generation and digital culture. This complexity is ideally responded through the system's internal mechanisms such as differentiation (segmentation, stratification, and functionality). In fact, system differentiation is not going well. Several regions that have to return to 'old' technology due to the central government's policy demands are one of the indications. Also, the inability of this system does not necessarily mean that the system has failed. It is more appropriate to read this as a process of evolution of Indonesia's digital government system in the increasing complexity of its environment. The success then will be largely determined by the system's ability to respond to problems that exist in the external and irritate other social systems to move. In the end, the quality of digital deliberative democracy in Indonesia today is still far from the ideal expectations imagined.

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