

RELOCALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT: THE POST-SOEHARTO INDONESIAN EXPERIENCE

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In 1998, Indonesia entered a new era of democracy with the end of 32 years of an authoritarian Soeharto regime. With the advent of democratization Indonesia has changed drastically in almost every aspect of social and political life. One of the most important institutional changes has been the introduction of decentralization. In particular, law number 22/1999 has given a radically wide range of powers to local government. Since decentralization, the central government and some scholars have become critical of decentralization, as it has caused so many administrative and political problems, including corruption, at the local level. This has prompted the central government to attempt to re-centralize.

However, this one-sided, negative evaluation of decentralization is unwarranted. This becomes clear when the implementation of autonomy at the village level is examined. This paper shows several successful cases of village autonomy, including the implementation of a democratic decision-making process and mutual help for development activities, in Maluku province and other provinces; it also offers a critical examination of the movement toward recentralization. Finally, the paper emphasizes the need to relocalize democracy and development.

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