

Civic_Spaces@Demopolis.Id

Merlyna Lim, University of Twente, Enschede - The Netherlands

Focusing on civic spaces in Indonesia this paper attempts to provide detailed instances of the ways in which space and place have been bound up with the formation of identities in the history of conflicts and struggles over political power. By specifically locating the spaces of Jakarta city in the chronology of Indonesian politics, this paper uses space as a lens through which to analyze identity politics of Indonesian regimes in time as well as politics to spatialize history. By tracing the emergence of physical and cyber civic spaces during and after political reform, this paper argues that cyberspace and physical space have become interdependent dimensions of democratization processes. In the case of the 1998 popular uprising against the state, this paper also shows that in the specific context of Indonesia, civil society entering the public realm was fostered from cyberspace - through its ability to avoid state censorship - which, in turn, generated real (physical) insurgent civic space. By examining the existence and roles of both cyber and physical cyber civic space in routine city life of Jakarta after May 1998, this paper further argues that the future continuity of these civic spaces in everyday life very much depends on the roles of the state, corporate economy actors and civil society in governing the provision of and access to them. Processes to transform overtly contested, often violent yet ephemeral sites of political action into routinely accessible spaces for tolerance and peaceful civil society is a central issue in on-going political reform in Indonesia.