# Democracy in Public Policy
## *Case Study About the Role of Public Opinions on a Policy*

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Abstract: Democracy is as a realization of public sovereignty. Public space becomes a media to establish interactive communication between the public and the state which is usually called as public participation or public opinion. Democracy is not only related to politic (e.g. parliament decision), but it is also related to public policy. The process of public policy has been developing. Previously, public policy is a struggle result of idea, interest, and ideology of public representation to elite group in government institution. It influences public opinion in making policies. This paper used the method of literary study by describing scientific, intensive, and detail phenomenon about program, event, and activities on the level of personal, group, institution or organization to obtain deeper knowledge about the phenomenon. The result of the research shows that democracy in public policy is relevant to be applied in Indonesia because of the communal society. The influence of the role of public opinion on a policy has not been found. However, there are several factors that influence public opinion on politic stability: 1) Media, 2) Group of interest, 3) Public officials, 4) Environment factors.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The government has a legitimation to make public policy to utilize various state resources for social welfare. The existence of the policy is remarked with the agreement of the relation of legislative and executive. The agreement of both houses is the result of the discussion. It means that the formulation of the policy is conducted with several stakeholders related to the policy itself.

The government system of Indonesia is democracy. The dominance is from the society and aimed to create prosperous society. Society is the largest and most complex media of democracy experiment in heterogeneous state, Indonesia. The society is demanded to control the government system to actively participate and control the policy. Based on the report of the council of human right of united nation in 2016, the value of democracy index in Indonesia is on the highest level in ASEAN (Kurmala, 2017).

Below is the democracy index of ASEAN:

Table 1: Index of democracy

| No | State | Percentage |
|----|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Indonesia | 6.97% |
| 2 | Philippine | 6.94% |
| 3 | Malaysia | 6.54% |
| 4 | Singapore | 6.38% |
| 5 | Thailand | 4.97% |

Source: Kurmala, 2017

However, based on the data of central bureau of statistics from 2009-2016, index of foreign democracy has decreased. Below is the table of democracy index in Indonesia based on three indicators:

Table 2: Index of democracy in Indonesia, 2014-2016

| Indicators of Indonesian democracy index | Indicators of Indonesian democracy index | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Threat/violence by the government officials that obstructs the freedom of getting assembled and united | 80.00 | 86.76 | 82.35 |
| Threat/violence by the society that obstructs the freedom of getting assembled and united | 95.00 | 85.85 | 85.85 |
| Threat/violence by the government officials that obstructs the freedom of giving opinion | 68.89 | 65.32 | 76.47 |

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017

Process of public policy has been developing. Previously, public policy is a struggle result of idea, interest and ideology of public representation to elite group in government institution. It influences public opinion in making policies. Public policy is an output and core of public administration (Denhardt, 1995). Public officials as the actors in making the policy must be able to accommodate the public's will. Nowadays, the development of theory in public policy enables the non-state actors to involve in the process of making the public policy. It is aimed to create an interaction from several factors that have interests and strategies in the process of policy (Klijin, 2000).

If the state is not the only agency that are planning and implementing a policy, the function of steering toward the relation among the complex actors in formulating, taking decision and implementing public policy becomes very essential (Spiel, 2018). The term of governance without government might be the metaphor to describe the large dominance and limited role and capacity of government model in the recent time (Rhodes, 1996). Therefore, the role of public opinion on a policy is required.

Public opinion determines the quality of democracy in a governance. Public opinion is a balance of politic information and politic science. The balance of information can be obtained because of democracy. Moreover, public opinion is a personal representation in democratic life. In a democratic government, the protection of right is very essential in government's responsibility. The reflection of government is the creation of policy. Dissatisfaction of policy made by the government will affect the public behaviour and becomes a problem. One of the causes is the loss of policy impact or the feeling that the rights have not been filled in the policy. Therefore, this paper will discuss democracy in public policy: How is the role of public opinion on a policy?

## 2. METHODS

This paper used the method of literary study by describing scientific, intensive, and detail phenomenon about program, event, and activities on the level of personal, group, institution or organization to obtain deeper knowledge about the phenomenon (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1994; Strauss, 1990). This paper focused on the certain object as the case to be studied to solve the reality behind the phenomenon. It was started through the study on several literatures that can support the analysis approach such as; public policy, democracy, deliberative policy, statistics study about democracy, public opinion and etc. The sources of study are from reference books, journals, related regulation, and other references. In collecting reading material, the writer considers two aspects; the relevance of reading material and discussion topic. The conclusion of analysis result of literary source is described based on the case study.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1. Democracy in public policy

Along the time, democracy is defined as an elite mechanism to manage the public. According to Huntingtington (1993), democracy is an institution management to make a political decision to obtain the votes from the public through competitive effort. It can be concluded that democracy is a method of institution which measures to know that democratic process is "how to get voted". It means that democracy is a process to get public legitimation.

Democracy is as a realization of public sovereignty. Public space becomes a media to establish interactive communication between the public and the state which is usually called as public participation or public opinion. Democracy is not only related to politic (e.g. parliament decision), but it is also related to public policy. It is started from the process of planning policy to the evaluation of public policy. The involvement of society in the step of public policy (support and critics) becomes the important factors in the interaction quality between the state and its citizens, and accountability of democracy in making policy.

Concept of democracy in public policy is on the deliberative approach (Rayner, 2003; Gerber, 2005; Chambers, 2003). Concept of deliberative public policy is appropriate with the conflict condition. In public administration science, the concept of deliberative public policy is not separated from orientation movement of government into governance.

Deliberative policy is a derivation model of deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy is derived from the conception of public space (Habernas, 1998). Deliberative democracy uses the way of taking decision through conference. Moreover, it uses dialog and sharing experience between the sides and the society to move the issue. The purpose of conference or meeting is to achieve the agreement by considering several criterias. The involvement of society is the core of deliberative democracy. It is different with the term of representative democracy which recognizes the term of minority and majority. Deliberative democracy emphasizes the participation and direct involvement of the society. In a conflict that involves the marginal society on an empowerment, deliberative conflict will emerge as a group which expresses argument upon the injustice. Based on the case study, public opinions are mostly ignored.

The raising conflict can be stated as a description that a policy or decision which involves the society does not truly happen as always. Theoretically, deciding a policy does not belong to political aspect. According to common society, politic will remain with several questions, such as; which choices will be taken, which choices will be reduced or taken, why the choices are taken and others are not, why one problem becomes a serious matter and others are ignored.

Process of public policy which started from policy formulation or agenda setting becomes a complicated process, emerges conflict for policy maker, and brings impacts to the future after being implemented. In the process of taking policy, there are three popular theories (Schlager, 1996). The theories are Sabatier's advocacy coalitions framework (ACF), institutional rational choice (IRC), and Moe's political theory of bureaucracy which is often called structural choice (SC). The theories take political aspect into the process of public policy. It shows that public policy is arranged without ignoring the existence of its political actors. The actors have a task to solve social problem. They can also bring their interest in this role. This interest becomes a problem because politic is not separated from power or authority. It has been known that authority can be a source of conflict.

In public policy, power becomes a thing that determines the relation and access between policy maker and the problems. The problem is represented by the objects of policy. It can be group or individual. According to Kingdon, the process of pra policy is called as agenda because the planning of policy is being made and the process of agenda selection will be implemented (Gül, 2006-2009). Power in this agenda has two tendencies whether the policy is made based on the elite or plural power. Elite power is focused on a group of people and plural power is broader which spread to public (Bachrach, 1962). The pluralists state that authorization relates to certain issue and can be unclear or persistent to the societies' interest such as momentum and semi-permanent issue. The pluralists oppose the elite dominance which states that authorization can be obtained from the previous resources. Meanwhile, actual issue can be moved by the society to obtain the authorization that can change a policy or decision.

Based on the perspective of deliberative democracy, theory of policy selection must involve plural authorization because it is defined as a participation in decision selection. However, elite dominance does not ignore its relations with decision selection. Both approaches can create conflict if the objects are on the side of "do not want to do what the officials want". There are three authorization dimensions in taking the decision using plural approach namely first face of power, in which A

uses its dominance to B and makes B do something even B does not want to do it. This authorization dimension has direct characteristic (Bachrach, 1962; Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 1980). According to Dahl (1961) and Polsby (1980), this dimension is an open system which allows every person to freely state their ideas and participation. Meanwhile, non-participant and non-issue do not consider as a problem. This dimension blames the participants who express their right as a victim. Dimension of second face of power is almost the same as the first dimension. However, A uses non-direct authorization. In this theory, a person who designs "game", he can determine who will play. Non-participant and non-issue are supposed to be a part of political problem. This dimension is more elite because the users tend to have resource in which other people must obey it (Schattschneider, 1975).

According to Bachrach (1962), elite and plural dominance are not complete in defining second face of power because both issues are same and important in defining the authorization as an actual media in the process of policy selection as a result of the policy selection itself. Third face of power has a perspective that A does not only use its authorization to B to not conduct the decision, but it also determines and creates B as they expect. It is the best way to handle the conflict. The invisible dimension can be seen from the process of socialization, culture in school, media, religion and others. All of them can create a person and their interaction to the environment (Gaventa 1980).

In another side, deliberative democracy is also related to empowerment. Empowerment is as a process to increase self capacity of individual or group of people in selecting a decision to be actualized into an action. Action in empowerment might emerge in which the individual or group has a resource limitation to influence the decision selection. Empowerment is usually in local level such as village or area group which expects a better living (Gibson, 2008). The group representative can express their choice in deliberative democracy and when it is implemented. Social conflict can happen in the implementation of deliberative democracy if it is only implemented as a symbol which decreases the vote of participants or societies. Deliberative democracy tends to be a propaganda of top-down policy (He, 2014)

The social conflicts tend to direct to the marginal community upon the political decision. Besides that, another problem which emerges conflict is trust. Trust in taking public policy plays important role in order that the policy maker can obtain authorization to conduct the policy. Trust becomes the critical point of connector between the government and society to achieve consensus; whether the policy can be conducted or not. This trust becomes a collaborative symbol between the government and society if it relates to the context of sound governance.

According to OECD (2005,b), trust is an important factor in democracy element. Trust is a democracy contract that will determine the direction on how the societies see the government. Trust is individual or society perception towards the action of government (Kikuchi, 2007). The decrease of trust also emerges conflict resource between society and government. It can be concluded that deliberative democracy will truly direct the public policy effectively if the dominant domain can be conducted effectively. Public policy becomes a conflict resource if the implementation is only a symbol of elite propaganda or dominance media which emphasizes individual or public choice to get a better living.

## 3.2. The role of public opinions

Public space is a requirement that must be possesed and developed in a democratic state. It is aimed to achieve the purposes of the democratic state. Public space gives the role of expression related to the public. Public space can influence the government's policy. According to Hennesy (1970), public space is a complexity of perspectives, group, and individual that is usually called as public opinion. The opinion used to make decision in the form of direction and combination of several voices to influence the policy. The policy is an equilibrium in a group struggle in certain time.

Although public opinion becomes the requirement in democracy, public opinion is basically irrational, emotional, prejudice, stereotype and etc (Macdoullal, 1952). If the journey of public opinion aspiration should be delivered to the central of decision maker, potentials of public space must be mobilized. Public space must be able to demonstrate

"capacity to feel, interprete, and bring the problems in society by using attractive and innovative way" (Habernas, 1996). Capability must be used well by giving a role to public space in political life. Besides that, public space is also expected as a sounding board of problem. It means that public space has a task to feel, interprete and remark the problems in society. Public opinion must not be naive, illegal and vulgar if it wants to be accepted in formal politic. Public opinion must be completed with solutions. It must also be made as if the public space has been managed and defined by parliamentary complex. The decision makers (legislator and executive) have a flexible size because countervailing power can be applied each other (Badiou, 2008). In the same time, all citizens who belong to stressing group can utilize rivalry among the competitive group.

The relation between public opinion and public policy is the core of normative democratic theory. Responsive government on mass willingness is the most democratic basic conception (Lijphart, 1984). Each empirical investigation of policy response is complicated fact. The role of mass public policy of vis-à-vis is a complex problem. First, it can not be easily accepted because the congruence between public opinion and public policy is same as the response of government. The ideology of "fake consensus" states that mass of public opinion is non-autonomous in the nature because it might be created by the elite group. As a result, consensus between opinion and fake policy is not from the independent mass opinion, but it is the result of manipulative process (Dahl, 1967)

The dilemma of policy context which usually emerges public critic is the rise of fuel price. Each regime of Indonesian government must adapt the fuel price with world oil price. Logically, the policy of the rise of fuel price is needed to conduct by the government. The developing and big opinion might influence politic stability. For example, in the era of Megawati. The public opinion was very big. Therefore, the policy of rising the fuel price was revised. In the era of Abdurrahman Wahid, he left his position. Recently, public opinion is difficult to differentiate. The question is whether the opinions happen based on the discussion result or there are several sides who emerge the public opinion. Below is the table of fuel price rise in the period of government regime:

Table 3: The rise of fuel price

| No | Regime | Government's response | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Suharto | The policy remained continuous | The fuel price was risen from 25 to 71 %. As a result, Suharto left his position. |
| 2 | Abdurahman Wahid | The policy remained continuous | House of representative which supported: *national awakening party* (PKB). Refused: *the Indonesian democratic party of struggle* (PDIP), *united development party* (PPP), *and functional group party* (GOLKAR) |
| 3 | Megawati Soekarno Putri | Revision | House of representative which supported: *the Indonesian democratic party of struggle* (PDIP), *united development party* (PPP). Refused: *functional group party* (GOLKAR) *and national awakening party* (PKB). |
| 4 | Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono | The policy remained continuous | The house of representative threated to hold pleanary session. |
| 5 | Joko Widodo | The policy remained continuous | There was public opinion but there was no big mass action. |

Source: processing data, 2018

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The emergence of democratic concept in public policy is not separated from the movement of public administration science from government to governance. Concept of democracy in public policy is relevant to be applied in Indonesia because the society is communal. However, the implementation is difficult because there are many perspectives and opinions. Will the process of policy making, run effectively? It is difficult to

know whether the public opinion can influence the policy. There are several factors that influence public opinion, such as:

4.1. Media (TV, radio, newspaper, and social media). It has significant influence to grow the opinion.

4.2. Group of interest (political party, non-governmental institution, religion group, etc). It processes the information data and spreads public opinion which relates to its constitutions.

4.3. Public officials. It has big role to play sensitive issue in influencing public opinion.

4.4. Environment factor. It has important role in developing public opinion because somebody might be influenced and adapts the group in their environment.

The massive public opinion will influence political stability and the government must solve it.

There are still many weaknesses in this paper, the researcher expects that there will be further research to develop democratic space in public policy which is not only seen through the role of public opinion, but will use the mix methods in order that the result can be measured completely and valid.

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