

Political Dynamics in Pematang Siantar and Humbang Humbang: A Candidate Couple Against The Empty Box

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Abstract

The implementation of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) was held with many polemics. In addition to being an election that takes place in the midst of a pandemic, the 2020 Pilkada also marks a series of regional elections with the number of candidate pairs vs. most empty boxes. This research is how people respond to choices with schemes like this. Using behavioral analysis, this research seeks to capture political dynamics based on facts collected in the field. The research area is in the Humbang Hasundutan and Pematang Siantar areas. The regional election in advance was taken because it represents two different political dynamics: While the political situation in Pematang Siantar is more passive, Humbang Hasundutan's political situation is pro-active and dynamic. It is precisely in these two conditions that this research was carried out. The findings of this study show that even though both are in the situation of choosing the empty box or candidate pairs, the dynamics of the community that take place have significant differences.

Keywords: empty box, pilkada.

1. Introduction

The implementation of the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) which has been held by 270 regions, with details of 9 provinces, 224 regencies and 37 cities full of polemics, can finally be completed. This Pilkada is the fourth batch of Simultaneous Pilkada conducted for regional heads as a result of the December 2015 election. Noted as the first Pilkada after the determination of the 2019 Presidential election victory, which means that it is still shrouded in an atmosphere of pre and post-election, the simultaneous Pilkada this time was also highlighted by several things.

First, this simultaneous regional election is the first electoral political agenda to be held during the Covid-19 pandemic (KPU, PKPU No. 6 tahun 2020). Through PKPU No. 6 of 2020, in the midst of pressure to postpone the election, the KPU remains in its stance to carry out the 2020 simultaneous elections with a health protocol. Second, which will be the focus of this research, the Simultaneous Pilkada

in 2020 is an electoral political agenda inhabited by a single contestant without the most rivals since the simultaneous Pilkada was enacted (<https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/>). It was recorded that 25 elections held in 2020 held regional head candidates against empty boxes (<https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/>).

To get into the political process in the regions, there is a series of strenuous political work, which is done by many people and takes time and energy. If we talk about the initial process of democratization at the regional level, especially the stage of the transition from the New Order regime to the reform regime, then we will understand the function of electoral politics at the regional level.

Assuming that each region has its own characteristics that still need to be explored, the implementation of regional elections is considered a means of formulating ideas and ideas that are more participatory and reduce dependence on the central government. With the Pilkada, the community will be served and involved, become both objects and subjects in a competition of ideas and will be spoiled by the development discourse—which will be evaluated independently by the community. Furthermore, the quality of democracy will be determined by the discourse on what happens in a series of regional elections.

From the phenomenon of the 2020 pilkada with a single candidate against an empty box, such a dialectic is not possible. Ideas and ideas run monologues, there is no competition for ideas that can be laughed at to the public. This loss of privilege should be the focus of attention for political science scholars by examining the factors that condition this phenomenon. With this research, it is hoped that we will find objective and holistic answers regarding the empty box regional elections that will be held in North Sumatra.

Through VOA, Political Science scientist Burhanudin Muhtadi 4 assessed that the increase in the number of empty boxes in the 2020 simultaneous elections was a sign of the declining spirit of democracy. The phenomenon of the number of empty boxes in the implementation of the Pilkada is a political reality that must be seriously highlighted. This is because democracy, as a governance system or medium which is organized to carry out circulation and regeneration of politics and government, requires “political competition” as its basis. Without this form of competition between political forces, what is known as electoral democracy must be questioned.

But is the Empty Box always a manifestation of the declining spirit of democracy? If democracy is only interpreted to be limited to elite circles, then the emergence of many pairs of candidates in the regional elections may justify the proposition. However, if the definition of democracy is extended to the level of community participation, what the authors find in the field research shows something different.

The number of public participation in the pilkada with empty boxes turned out to be successful in increasing the number of voters in the two areas where this

research was carried out. In Pematang Siantar, the number of participants, which reached 63%, was higher than the number of participants during the 2015 Pilkada which only reached 61% (KPU, PKPU No. 6 tahun 2020).

The increase in community participation also occurred with the Pilkada in Humbang Hasundutan in 2020 which had a participation rate of 78%, a slight increase from the number of participants in the 2015 elections which reached 75% (Soetarto&Serikat Luaha, 2019).

With the increase in the number of participants in the two regions that have already held the empty box pilkada, the proposition that states "there is a decline in democracy" can be refuted by the data in advance.

For this reason, it is important to read and analyze the situation in regions that hold Pilkada with empty boxes, especially to know the behavior of political participation in regions where elections are held in empty boxes.

2. Theoretical framework

Several academics have put forward explanations about political participation. On this occasion, the author uses the notion of participation described by Ramlan Surbakti (2010) as the activities of the citizens of the state in influencing the process of making and implementing public policies and in determining government leaders. One of these activities is choosing people's representatives in general elections.

Pilkada, through the same reference, is a political process that expects citizen participation (Surbakti, 2010). The election of regional heads that functions as a mechanism for elite turnover at the regional level requires community involvement as the final stage at the end of the process. Theoretically, the relationship between elections and circulation can be explained by looking at the mobility of the elite and non-elite in the arena of political institutions.

With the opening of the 'faucet' of direct democracy to the people, the people have the flexibility to replace, or influence their dominant circulation of leaders. This function focuses on anticipating that the circulation of leadership is no longer determined by a handful of elites, but the active intervention movement of the community who determines their own leaders.

In Indonesia, Pilkada can be approached from various approaches (Stoker, 2008): First, Normative, which reviews Pilkada as a means to respect public aspirations in the electoral realm; second, Institutional (Marsh & Stoker, 2002), which approaches the Pilkada via political rules, procedures and infrastructure; third, Behavior (Marsh & Stoker, 2002), which reads Pilkada as a tool to measure the tendencies of actors and individuals involved in the electoral/pilkada area.

To assist the analysis, this research will approach the Pilkada Humbang Hasundutan and Pematang Siantar by reading Behavior; who will see Pilkada performance through the behavior of citizens when participating in direct political mechanisms to find/replace public leaders at the provincial and district/city levels.

The implementation of the Pilkada itself refers to Law no. 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government and Law no. 22 of 2007 concerning the implementation of general elections, which have been part of Indonesia's current decentralization since 1998 (Koirudin, 2005).

The study of the analysis of the quality of democracy on the empty box phenomenon in the Pilkada in the study of Political Science has not been done much. If anything, the study of this issue is still in the form of fragmented studies and focuses on percentages and is not an evaluation of the principle of democracy: public participation.

Another research with identical discussion about the empty box phenomenon is the research conducted by Indra Syahrial and Dadan Herdiana, with the title of the Single Candidate and the victory of the Empty Box as a Reality of Democracy at the Local Level.

This study discusses the early emergence of the empty box phenomenon in a regional election.

The research then moves on to examine the regulations that allow empty-box competition to emerge as a single contender. Instead of probing the empty box as a symptom of a decrease or increase in the quality of democracy, this research discusses/reflects a lot on regulations that allow a single candidate to appear in the arena of political contestation at the regional level. This research (Indra, 2019) for example offers a thesis that the regulation of the threshold in regional head elections is the main cause of the emergence of empty boxes as challengers for regional head candidates.

3. Method

The Study on Analysis of Democracy in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Elections Case Study: The Empty Box Phenomenon in the Humbang Hasundutan and Pematang Siantar Pilkada, researchers used qualitative research methods. This study uses data collection techniques in the form of literature study, in-depth interviews, participatory observation and limited group discussions (FGD). This FGD aims to validate data from the results of in-depth interviews and participatory observations. Thus, this research is expected to find accurate data results. (see Koentjaraningrat, 1990). In formulating the problem of Political Dynamics in Pematang Siantar and Humbang Hasundutan: Candidate Pairs Against Empty Boxes, the researcher will use the PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) method by collecting data, information and views of the government, political figures, and other figures involved in the process. Pilkada events in the two regions.

1. In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain as much information as possible in the form of data on how the process from the beginning to the end of the regional elections in Humbang Hasundutan and Pematang Siantar was conducted. In-depth

interviews involve several people who will become research informants, such as community and traditional leaders in the Samosir community.

- a. A key informant is someone who understands the political process of Humbang Hasundutan and Pematang Siantar in the simultaneous regional elections, such as youth leaders who support candidate pairs, groups claiming to be in the name of empty boxes, organizers such as KPU and Bawaslu.
- b. Informants are usually people or related parties who support this research data: in this study, we interviewed a number of students who were in the area to help the research get a more objective picture.

2. Limited Group Discussion (FGD)

In addition to interviews, data collection was carried out through limited group discussion techniques. Several people were gathered to discuss the issues raised, such as Political Dynamics in Pematang Siantar and Humbang Hasundutan: Candidate Pairs Against Empty Boxes. Limited group discussions were held at least once in the research area. This group discussion focused more on Organizing Institutions such as KPU and Bawaslu, as well as supporters of empty boxes in the Humbang Hasundutan area. In connection with this, an analysis that has actually been carried out since the start of this research was carried out. The analysis in this study (qualitative) consists of 3 flow of activities that are presented simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification (Milies & Hubermaen, 1992: 16).

Data reduction includes activities to make summaries, explore themes, create ideas, create partitions, create memos. This data reduction/transformation process continues after the field research, until a complete final report is prepared. Drawing conclusions/verification is actually done by the researcher while in the field, and the conclusion is tentative, temporary, and is treated with skepticism because it will continue to be tested in the field. Final conclusions may not emerge until the end of data collection because they are constantly being verified, including when they are discussed among peers to be developed.

4. Result and Discussion

Even though it received a lot of criticism and negative comments, with the addition of certain requirements, the rules regarding the Empty Box Pilkada were finally accommodated by the KPU as the organizer in the General Election Commission Regulation (PKPU). This provision can be read in PKPU Number 13 of 2018 (PKPU No. 13 of 2018/kpu.go.id) amendments to PKPU Number 14 of 2015 concerning the election of Governor and Deputy Governor, Regent and Deputy Regent, Mayor and Deputy Mayor with one candidate pair. This PKPU allows the KPU and election participants to hold elections with only one pair of candidates and against empty boxes.

Although the implementation of this kind of political process will invalidate one of the habits of electoral politics: namely political competition, where electoral politics in Indonesia is not only inspired by the spirit to prevent absolute power at

the regional level, but also held to enrich ideas in regional development projects, however, to avoid problems with terms of office and commitment to holding simultaneous regional elections, the empty box regional elections are still enforced within the framework of the 2020 electoral political agenda.

There are many things that must be ignored first if the election is accommodated by the KPU, for example, this election will eliminate the habit of electoral politics as a competition of ideas and ideas - which is also an opportunity for civil society to participate in thinking about relevant development programs and ideas for the next 5 years (Hambali & Alfred, 2014) and as an internal means of democracy that accommodates all the ideas, ideas and programs of the candidates—which are then elected by the people at the polls.

If an electoral election with a single candidate pair against an empty box is held, the public will not see the aforementioned parade of ideas. People living in areas holding elections with a single candidate against an empty box, will not get the luxury of the features that democracy provides.

That is why, some parties regret and consider the empty box election as a sign of the decline in the spirit of democracy. At first glance, the view can be validated when the KPU does not validate the empty boxes as participants and leaves the candidate pairs as the only participants who are free to disseminate ideas. At this elite and legal/formal level, the “spirit” of democracy is not identified—until we examine the substance of the political process: public participation.

The empty box phenomenon in the electoral political process should not be read solely in the legal/formal process. In investigating participation, this research will be able to better capture the political dynamics that occur in the areas where the empty box elections are implemented in this case: Humbang Hasundutan and Pematang Siantar. The purpose of this research is to capture the dynamics that occur in the constituencies of Pematang Siantar and Humbang Hasundutan: what factors are empty boxes and how the people of Pematang Siantar and Humbahas respond to this.

The pairs of candidates involved in the Pematang Siantar and Humbang Hasundutan elections are the pairs of candidates who have the support of the majority of the parties in the DPRD, and both won the contestation. However, both victories they have different percentage distances.

In Humbahas, the Dosmar Banjarnahor-P Nababan pair won 52.5% versus 47.5% empty boxes, while in Pematang Siantar, Asner Silalahi and Susanti Dewayani scored 77.4% and empty boxes 22%. This phenomenon is interesting, Apart from being both supported by the majority party, these 2 single candidate pairs have significant percentage differences. In addition, what we pay attention to is that the empty box has a voter and even in Humbang Hasunduta, the empty box voter even hits 47%.

4.1. Empty Box Support Group Appears

The enthusiasm to participate in democracy does not only apply to supporters of candidate pairs. In these two regions, the empty box also has participants who come to the polling station to vote for the empty box.

In Humbang Hasundutan, the name of this group is Forum Peduli Democracy which is educated and led by several activists and academics who are dissatisfied with the performance of the incumbent Dosmar Banjarnaho and P Nababan candidates. In

Pematang Siantar, although no group presents itself as explicitly as Forum Peduli Democracy, and does not have a specific name, has sufficient political awareness to voice its dissatisfaction by choosing the empty box.

From the interviews we conducted with Bawaslu and KPU Humbang Hasundutan and KPU and Bawaslu Pematang Siantar, groups that support the empty box are acknowledged to exist outside of legal/formal terms, but exist as political expressions in these two areas.

In contrast to the Pematang Siantar empty box support group, Humbang Hasundutan's empty box support group who goes on behalf of himself Forum Peduli Democracy appears very, very active in persuading the public to vote for the box blank.

From an interview conducted with one of the founders of the Forum Peduli Democracy, Maruli Simanjuntak, we can even see how this group organized campaigns to people's homes and mobilized people to vote for empty boxes to the polling stations. day and night, there is no time to explain, explain what an empty box is”.

This group was originally present as a form of protest against the elite political process. According to them, the Pilkada Humbahas was sabotaged by money and big concessions at the central elite level which resulted in bringing in all political parties to nominate certain pairs of candidates. Exactly because of this awareness, some people, former activists, legal practitioners and students have initiated a forum to express their political aspirations. "So this is moving on its own, only we are asked to be the chairman. (This group consists of various elements.) There is a forum for district care, democracy, Humbang Hasundutan. There are Formades, there are many elements”

Even though it failed to win the empty box aspirations, for Bawaslu, the involvement of organizations with claims to support the empty boxes indirectly contributed to an increase in the level of community participation. Similar to what happened in Pematang Siantar, the polarization between the pairs of candidates and the empty boxes made the political atmosphere heat up and pushed each supporter to vote for his choice.

After being investigated, Bawaslu's allegations in advance were not a figment, before campaigning for the empty box, the Forum Peduli Democracy first educates the public about the empty box that has received a black campaign by the opponent. Its politics, which incidentally straightens out the meaning of the empty box, is the

job of the KPU and Bawaslu: “(some people) say that the empty box is the ghost's room. Well that's right. So people (feel) why choose the empty one, there is something that contains it. The community is 70 percent still low political knowledge.

The initiative to move for them is a means to get involved in the political process—it's just that, due to the limited regulations of the Election Law and the KPU, they don't have a place to analyze their aspirations through formal legal channels and end up as a momentary political movement. Even so, we can see that the enthusiasm to be involved in this kind of electoral political arena proves that the claim of an empty box is a sign that the spirit of democracy is declining has a counterfactual.

What happened to Pematang Siantar, despite earning less numbers and appearing implicit, was also part of the enlivening electoral politics of the region. We conducted interviews with leaders and members of the Pematang Siantar Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), Timbul Marganda Lingga (Chairman) and Astronout Nainggolan (AN). For them, the empty box voter is a form of public sensitivity to politics, and this is a positive sign for political education in Pematang Siantar. “In Siantar, voter participation, the phenomenon, interest in the regional election is high, he still wants him to go to the polling station and choose an empty box, right? It means that he has been educated politically, he participated in the election, rather than abstaining. Abstain, not going anywhere is good.”

According to the political reading in Humbang Hasundutan, the empty box voter in Pematang Siantar is a form of political participation or concern that is not accommodated by the Law and PKPU.

5. Conclusion

The dynamics of society in the election of course cannot be captured if the research on it is still at the elite level. The claim that there is a decline in the spirit of democracy in the electoral political process with empty boxes can only be seen from the factors at the very end of the process: Society; and not from formal readings and elite political processes alone. This study proves that the electro-political process at the regional level (Pilkada) with an empty box received an "enthusiastic" response from the community. The initiatives that claim to be supporters of the empty city, and the turnout that runs into the tens of thousands reflect that spirit, a the initiative to express politics outside the formal laws that have been determined by the KPU.

The inability of the KPU and the regulators to capture the "pulse" of this community has made us and other related parties evaluate the entire series of political processes: instrumentally and behaviorally so that in the next general elections we are able to accommodate the widest possible community.

In order to improve the quality of implementation, the research that we are doing wants to play a role in opening up a problem that has so far received little attention on how to expand the reach of voters that has been scattered and neglected.

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