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NGOs in Java Acrobats between Political Restrictions and Cultural Contradictions

Kristina Großmann



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**Dedicated to
the members of LESSAN**

I would like to say special thanks to the members of LESSAN, for their invitation, support and patience.

My special gratitude goes to my friends, who helped with valuable suggestions, support and patience.

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Foreword

When I visited Java in 1999 I was surprised, how the atmosphere has changed, in contrast to my earlier visits, when the authoritarian system of Suharto had been still in power. There was excitement in the air, a long lasting burden had been lifted. It was suddenly possible for me to debate the political situation of the country with the people in the street. During the time of Suharto's regime, political questions had been answered mostly by a shy grin only, for fear of disadvantages and suppression.

Due to the background of my studies: the sciences of social work, I am very interested in the activities and objectives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Indonesia and their role in the present situation of the country.

In 2001 I got in contact with the NGO LESSAN and met their members for the first time. I joined a training about health issues which has been organised by the NGO. All of a sudden I was thrown into the lively and open atmosphere which immediately arises when a group of Indonesians join together. My basic knowledge of the local language: *Bahasa Indonesia* was greeted enthusiastically, but in the end, hands and feet had to do a lot of the work. I was astonished, how different the background of the participants was. For some of them it was the first training at all and sometimes even the farthest journey they'd ever made.

I liked the way how sensitive the members of LESSAN dealt with the participants and implemented their ideas of the training. The NGO tried to meet the people there where they stand, with their point of view, their knowledge and their social background. From this meeting onwards I had regular contact to LESSAN.

To explore the scope of NGO work in Java deeper was the motivation for me to visit LESSAN for three months in form of an internship.

As the fields of activities of LESSAN has many parallels to fields of social work in Germany, like community development, work with so called marginalised people and activities in the public and educational sector, it was very interesting for me, to get an insight in the way of working, the challenges and the problems of a NGO in Java.

1. Introduction

Java is on the southern fringe of the Indonesian Archipelago. 120 Million people live on this island, which make approximately 50 per cent of the inhabitants of Indonesia. The

density of population in Java is one of the highest in the world.¹ Since the nineteenth century Javanese migrate voluntarily or forced to other islands of Indonesia.

The vast majority of the Javanese are Muslim. There are also small numbers of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Animists. In everyday life the principles of Islam play a minor role. That does not mean that the religion itself is not taken serious, but many other religious concepts are imbeded, like animist supernatural beings and powers. A lot of religious ceremonies are performed which have little connection with the official doctrines of Islam.

During Dutch colonisation, towards the end of the 19th century a national ideology was built in Indonesia. The first political organisations emerged.² At the beginning of the 20th century, Indonesian intellectuals who were educated within the colonial system of education established a movement towards the development of national consciousness, the *Taman Siswa*. In the same time trade organisations, political parties and other organisations were built.³ These developments build the basis for the formation of today's NGOs in Indonesia. The foundation background of the former organisations and today's NGOs show similarities.⁴ One main parallel is the aim to build a counterpart to suppressive state structures.

To deal with the political structures, is one of the main challenges for Javanese NGOs. The relation between the government and NGOs is ambivalent and scopes between tolerance, cooption and suppression. Therefore, one focus of my thesis is the political condition which determines the work of Javanese NGOs.

Another aspect which has huge influence on the work of NGOs in Java is the cultural frame, which is the second focus of my thesis. Objectives and strategies of development work⁵ come from Western⁶ countries. NGOs and self-help organisations are part of the concepts of development policy, so Western values and aims are transferred to Javanese culture. Conflicts arise, as the Javanese culture has a strong ideology and strict codes of behaviour which stand in some points contradictory to the Western culture. An

¹ Auswaertiges Amt 2006

² Frings 1991: 40

³ Dahm 1974:108ff

⁴ Frings 1991: 25

⁵ Development work will be used in this paper to denote the one-sided transfer of ideological, financial and material so called help of so called first world countries to so called third world countries. Cooperative development work denotes the try of a more equal and sustainable work.

⁶ Western will be used in this paper to denote advanced capitalist countries, including Japan. Other loosely equivalent terms are rich, developed or industrial countries.

important aspect in my examinations is to regard culture not as an unflexible determining structure. I will elaborate on questions like: Which scope do Javanese have within their cultural frame? Where is the culture really determining and which other aspects restrain people in their freedom of activity?

The objective of my thesis is to examine, exemplary on three case studies, the political and cultural conditions which determines the work of the NGOs. In a further step I elaborate the scope, the fields of activity and the role of the examined NGOs and extend the focus on Indonesian NGOs in general.

In my opinion, NGOs should represent the interests of their members or their so called target group. To consider and take a very close look to the individuum, which should be represented, which should be targeted, whose situation should be improved is very important when it comes to discussions about development policy. It is too simple to consider NGO work one sided or in unsuitable stereotypes, as e. g. the honorable donours and the poor uneducated target group. I think it is very important to recognise that development policy and their implementation must be considered on several levels, on the political, the cultural and the social. The impact on the individuum should always stand in the middle of the examination.

In my thesis I try to consider several dimensions of NGO work in Java with focus on the individuum. This leads me to a critical examination of the political situation in Java and of the development policy implemented from the West. The elaboration of the objectives and activities of NGOs are led by the questions: Which changes bring NGO work? Is it positive or negative?

As I wrote this paper on an american keyboard, the german *Umlaute* are replaced by ae, oe, ue. The german *scharfes S* is replaced by ss.

The paper is based primarily on secondary sources, the elaborations about *Bina Swadaya/Usaha Bersama* Groups are primarily based on the examinations from H. Bongartz, 1989. No up to date information in this scope was available.

The paper is organised as follows:

Chapter one introduces the general thoughts of my paper.

Chapter two presents the cultural arena. A short insight in rural Java is given. Afterwards, the Javanese culture, with its cosmology, the features *rukun* and *hormat* and the concept of power is described.

Chapter three examines the political arena. Relevant political features of the Suharto era and the Sukarno era are given. The development policy under the New Order is described and a brief summary of Indonesia's current challenges follows.

Chapter four examines the phenomenon NGO. A model which shapes the relation between Indonesian NGOs and the government is presented, contradictions between Western and Indonesian Definitions referring to development policy are briefly discussed on two examples.

Chapter five describes three case studies: *Bina Swadaya/Usaha Bersama* groups, WALHI and LESSAN.

Chapter six examines the case-study NGOs referring to the traditional elements of leadership, distribution of power and *rukun*.

Chapter seven elaborates the cultural contradictions between Western values which are transported in the NGO work and the Javanese culture. The question of a possible cultural determination is discussed.

Chapter eight deals with the restrictive policy of the Indonesian government. The ORMAS law and formal/informal contacts to officials are discussed.

Chapter nine examines, according to the model presented in chapter four, the relation between the case study NGOs and the Government.

Chapter ten describes the acrobatic act of NGOs. The impact and the effectiveness of the examined NGOs, according to their special cultural and political frame is elaborated. Measurements of effectiveness are the fulfilment of the proclaimed NGO targets and the changes through their impact in the social, economic, political and cultural field. Further the frame is extended to Indonesian NGOs in general. The role of NGOs in macropolitical processes, the enhancement of democracy and the poverty alleviation is discussed.

Chapter eleven finally presents conclusions and recommendations.

2. Cultural Arena

About 2000 BC the first people from the South-East Asian mainland came through the Malay Peninsular and occupied most of the western Indonesian islands. During the first centuries AD vendors from India brought the Hinduism and the Buddhism to Java. In the 13th century Muslim merchants from Gujarat, South India, and Persia brought the Islamic religion to North Sumatra, from there it spread to Java. Due to the strong mystical orientation of the Islam it could be easily adapted into the cultural, social, and political system in Java, the Javanese *santri*-culture was build.

2.1. Javanese Villages

The majority of the Javanese live as peasants in village communities, so agrarian matters and subsistence agriculture is a major element in Javanese culture. The people in the village are called *wong tjilik* (little people) in contrast to the *prijaji*, the members of the administrative bureaucracy. The village is the first level of formally organised community beyond neighbourhood and the village bond is very strong. Though there are not so many corporate activities in the daily life of the villagers the social relations are very tight. There are many formal obligations which should maintain the good relations between neighbours and the households. For example, to bring small presents (*oleh-oleh*) for the neighbours, when returning from a journey or the *slametan*, which is a socio-religious meal.

The render of assistance in case of sickness, accidents or death may not be refused and is strongly expected in the close neighbourhood and in the own family up to the third degree of collaterality.⁷ There are different kinds of strongly defined mutual help in the field of agriculture, housebuilding or celebrating ritual feasts, for example *gotong rojong*⁸. According to the age and the social relations the aid is reciprocal or extended freely.

More important than the cooperation within the same hamlet is the cooperation with the other peasants who work in the same locality. During harvesting, hoeing or planting the peasants initiate dyadic actions where the help is voluntary. Irrigation e. g. is officially

⁷ Koentjaraningrat 1967:263

⁸ see Chapter 2.2. for more informations

handled corporately by the village community but due to their ineffective organisation, the farmers handle it mostly individual according to their own interest.⁹

The smallest unit in the regional administration is the *dukuhan*, which contains several villages. The next level is the *desa* (village complex), the headman is called *lurah*. He is the main link between the residents of the village and the higher administration. The *lurah* has no innovative power or responsibilities, resistance contra official regulations is only possible in a very modified and passive way.¹⁰

2.2. Traditional Forms of Cooperation

There are numerous forms of cooperation at village or group level. These rural institutions of cooperative action is known as mutual aid or *gotong royong*. The mutual aid is based on a system of reciprocity, as I described in the former chapter. "In village community life in Java *gotong royong* constitutes a system of mobilizing additional manpower from outside the family circle, in order to provide extra labour at busy periods in the cycle of production activity in cultivating wet rice fields."¹¹

Arisan is another form of mutual help in form of a voluntary credit association.¹² The group meets at regular intervals and each member contributes a fixed and equal sum of money. The sum is normally very small so even fairly poor families can join the group. According to a fixed order of rotation the total money which is paid in at each meeting is paid out immediately to one of the group. This member does not contribute money at this time and is the host of the meeting. Every member receives over time the same amount of money. The meetings are held regularly until all members in turn have received the collected money. When the round is finished, the group is disbanded. New groups are mostly initiated by women who have a certain skill for money affairs and handling cash. The concept of an *arisan* is that of a mutual aid society and it gives its members the possibility to do small investments or pay expenses without being dependent on a private moneylender who have high rates of interest.

Besides this traditional form of cooperation, there is a large number of groups and organisations in Javanese villages. These groups are active in the fields of agriculture, education, health, sports, culture and religion. The extend of participation in such

⁹ Jay 1969:337

¹⁰ Jay 1969:407

¹¹ Koentjaraningrat 1961:21

¹² Jay 1969:416ff

groups is proportional to the social status of the person. “The leader of all these groups were recruited from a relatively small village elite, and membership seems to widely exclude the so-called ‘poorest of the poor’. Multiple leadership and membership commonly involve direct correlation between the higher status of the person and the number of groups he leads or is a member of.”¹³

According to H. Bongartz, the *gotong royong* activities are decreasing. “This is mainly due to two reasons: the first is that the man:land ratio is declining and that, therefore, particularly the poor, who have to invest more time in order to ensure their subsistence, are not able to participate in *gotong royong* activities. The second reason for the deterioration of *gotong royong* is caused by the government village-development funds, which make it unnecessary for the villagers to organize any work under the system of *gotong royong*.”¹⁴

These examinations support the opinion, that traditional cooperatives and groups are not an effective tool in improving the situation of the poor.

2.3. Situation of Rural People in Java

The economic crisis 1997 hit the farmers hard, the prices of basic commodities and of all imported agricultural inputs went drastically up.¹⁵ Java and Bali were the most affected regions by the crisis.¹⁶ Consequently the food security in many Javanese villages has been weakened. In mid July 1998, another food crisis emerged. The price for rice increased dramatically that the poor had to change their diet from rice to other cheaper foods with lower nutritional quality, such as cassava.¹⁷

The impact of the *reformasi*, which raised during and after the fall of Suharto, came late into rural areas. Activists of the rural reform movement targeted village heads and other officials and forced them to resign. The political and economic crisis led to frustration and anger, which broke out in plundering and illegally occupation of private land. “One interesting aspect of these actions is, that villagers do not seem to be afraid any longer of the police or soldiers. In East Java, villagers illegally harvesting cocoa from a

¹³ Bongartz 1989:43

¹⁴ Bongartz 1989:43

¹⁵ During the period of February 1996 and December 1998 the inflation rate for food commodities reached around 149% (Said 2000:11)

¹⁶ Said 2000:38

¹⁷ Soetrisno 1999:167

plantation in Malang owned by a government plantation company, even dared to attack a police special brigade and wounded eight policemen.”¹⁸

2.4. Javanese Culture

Kejawen or *kejawaan* describes all elements of the Javanese culture. It is a “System von Vorstellungen ueber das Wesen von Mensch und Gesellschaft, das die Seele der javanischen Ethik und Tradition und des javanischen Stils ausmacht. Der Javanismus liefert also eine allgemeine Sinn- und Erkenntniswelt, die als eine zusammenhaengende Wissensstruktur der Interpretation des Lebens, wie es ist und zu sein scheint, dient.”¹⁹

F. Magnis-Suseno describes the Javanese ethic with two principles, which determines the behaviour of the Javanese people: The principle of harmony, *rukun*, and the principle of hierarchical relations, *hormat*. These two principles are integrated in the Javanese cosmology.

2.4.1. Javanese Cosmology

According to the Javanese cosmology, the human existence is part of a metaphysical divine energy. This energy is an immanent power which protects the cosmical order and prevents catastrophies, wars and bad harvests. The absolute aim is therefore the maintainance of the social and cosmic order. For that reason, a human being has to be at his or her special place which is provided within the system. According to this perception the Javanese have a strong believe in fate, *taktir*, which must be accepted. The acceptance of one’s fate is called *nrimo*. It is not per se a fatalistic conviction, because the active shaping of the own fate is also part of the Javanese life. But within the tight cultural and political conditions it is, especially for rural people, almost impossible to change the social status and subsequently the living conditions, so *nrimo* takes more fatalistic features. But it is important to stress that the Javanese cosmology is a dynamic one, and the social status is not as fixed as e.g. in the Indian cast system. I will examine in chapter seven, which role *nrimo* plays in the emancipation of the Javanese rural people.

¹⁸ Java Pos, 25 August 1998:7

¹⁹ Mulder 1990:19

2.4.2. Principle of Harmony: *Rukun*

The aim of the principle of harmony is to avoid any open conflict. Every Indonesian wants to achieve this ideal in all relationships, in the family, in the neighbourhood, in the village and in every group. *Rukun* is as well a way of acting and is based on the continuous effort of all individuals to interact peacefully with each other and to remove potentially unharmonic and dissonant elements. To act in the way of *rukun* means to repress all signs of personal tensions and to preserve the impression of a harmonised social relationship.²⁰ *Rukun* doesn't refer to the inner conviction or the personal feelings. The important thing is the visible surface of social relationships. The ability to repress the inner negative feelings and tensions are an advantage in acting according to the *rukun* concept, but it is not obligatory.

In practice, *rukun* means the neglect of personal interests and the renouncement due to the harmonic agreement. It is an offence to put weight on the own advantage, to act individually and to be initiative. The individual should always act together with the group and nonconform positions, even when they could help the group, are not appropriate.²¹

The Javanese learn the ethics of *rukun* from childhood on and the disziplination is based on a mild and continous reminding. Nonobedience is not punished with repulsion within the family but with threat from outside, so the family is the warm and cosy source of security.

The effort of *rukun* is the basis for *musyawarah*, a joint deliberation with mutual consultation. Ideally *musyawarah* is a procedure in which all voices and opinions are heard. They are all considered to be true and theoretically they all contribute to the solution. This joint deliberation is in the Indonesian belief a guarantee for the right decision-making. It reflects the totality of the participants and powerful parts do not take advantages. *Musyawarah* should always end in *mufakat*, an consensus, where everybody is prepared to give a little. For that, it is necessary for all parties to relinquish

²⁰ Magnis-Suseno 1981:38

²¹ A highly respected virtue is the ability to express something negative in an indirect way. So it happens very often that the conversation seems to deal with superficial themes but in fact the members are preparing themselves to the essential point. Another technique to avoid dissatisfaction is *etok-etok*, to do as if. This is a very high virtue and it says not to show any true feelings besides within the family. The effect of concealing all real feelings is to keep a steady level of very mild and positive affect in interpersonal relations.

the personal desires which might cause social disturbance.²² This procedure is considered to be a specific way of Indonesian democracy, as I will examine later.

2.4.3. Principle of Hierarchy: *Hormat*

The Javanese sense of hierarchy, *hormat*, requires everyone, in speech and behaviour, to show adequate respect to whom one comes in social contact. This principles of respect are based on the attitude that all relationships in society are organised in a hierarchical manner, which as well secures the order in the society. Everybody has its special place and duty in the society and contributes to a harmonic whole. People in higher positions should be respected and never interrupted or, even less, contradicted. Those in lower positions should be treated with benevolence and a sense of responsibility for their welfare. Ideally, a leader is responsible for the safety, prosperity and dignity of his or her followers. In the Javanese conception, it will always be the best, to act in accordance to *rukun* and *hormat*, because the community will live in peace and harmony, and individuals are protected by their community and their leaders.

2.4.4. Javanese Concept of Power

In the Javanese tradition, power is perceived as an expression of the pool of cosmic, metaphysical energy which is behind the visible world, subsequently, power is not a social and interactive phenomena.

A powerful ruler is able to concentrate a big amount of cosmic energy which is the source of the fertility of the soil and the prosperity of the people. The prove that the powerful person has still the effective monopoly of the flow of energy shows in the absence of social disturbances and natural calamities. If unrest, dissatisfaction, criticism, natural catastrophes or revolts breaks out, it is a sign that the ruler is not able to maintain his monopoly of power. According to the Javanese cosmology, the greatest danger to the power of a ruler does not come from outside, but from *pamrih*, his own inner weakness. He concentrates on the outer world and is driven by narrow egoistical interest.²³ If there are opponents, there are two possible ways of dealing with it. If the rival is weak, the ruler can just ignore him, if the opponent is strong , the ruler can try to

²² Magnis-Suseno 1981:47

²³ Magnis-Suseno 1981:91

co-opt him and thereby make his power subservient to his own power. If this is not possible, the ruler must liquidate the challenger.

2.5. Impact of Modernity in Java

As the impact of modernity in Java is a huge and multilevel phenomenon, my descriptions show only some aspects, which have similarities to the examinations of F. Magnis-Suseno.

Main features of modernity²⁴ are the commercialization, the liberalisation and the individualism.²⁵ Modernity has its origin in Western countries. The philosophy and the value systems of modernity are today the base of Western societies.

The commercialization of more and more private sectors has a high impact on the value system of many Indonesian people. To the former basic needs of life, comes the need to consume. The increase of consume in the field of commodities, telecommunication and other symbols of wealth, change the attitude and the economic structure of individuals and families. As a lot of Indonesian families live mostly in subsistence, the additional money has to be earned by labour in urban areas.

Through the liberalisation in the economic field, the peasants are increasingly dependent on factors outside their own environment. A major step in this direction was the so called Green Revolution which lead to an enormous dependence on external resources. Another impact of modernity is the globalisation of the local economies. The liberalisation makes it hard for peasants to secure their daily basic needs. As prices become more volatile, security of peasant families regresses.

The individualism stands in contrast to the traditional *gotong royong* society in Java. The families are more and more responsible for their own economic and spiritual welfare. The traditional rituals don't have the former collective bond any more. Individual interests and personal success contradict the principles of *rukun*, *hormat* and *musyawarah*. Mostly it is a conflict between generations and occurs in the urban higher class of society. Whereas in the villages the traditional bonds are still strong and especially the release from hierarchical structures is not visible, as I will describe in chapter seven.

²⁴ Modernity is a dynamic transnational process. The modernity is based on the industrial revolution and describes an enormous change in the economic, social, political and cultural conditions.

²⁵ Magnis-Suseno 1989:19

The reaction of the Javanese people to the change in the social, economic and political sphere has a wide range. The general possibility to cope with change is the method of cooption. Alien elements are integrated into the own cultural and social background and therefore are made subservient to own interests. The Javanese culture has proved the ability of co-option with the Hinduism, the Buddhism and the Islam. In addition to the co-option of new influences, the Javanese are quite practical and stoical in daily live and have learned, sometimes with a high price, to accept what is coming from above or outside.

3. Political Arena

The political history of the modern Indonesia is parted into three periods. Sukarno's leadership from 1945 to 1966, the following *orde baru* (New Order) under Suharto from 1966 to 1998 and the time after Suharto's resignation.

3.1. Sukarno Era: Independent Indonesia

During the Second World War the Japanese forces occupied Indonesia for three years. Mohammed Hatta and Sukarno, who were both imprisoned during the Dutch colonial government because they founded political parties, were appointed by the Japanese occupation army to direct the Indonesian people in the war against the Allied forces. After Japan's surrender, Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed the independence of Indonesia on the 17 August 1945.

Until 1949 the struggle for independence commenced and Sukarno tried to balance the socio-political and religious forces. Reformist Muslims were not satisfied with the secular character of the new constitution. In 1955 the first general elections were conducted. From the 40 parties which constituted the parliament, four parties held 80 per cent of the votes. *Masyumi*, a reform Islamic party, *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU) the orthodox Islamic party, *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (PNI) the Indonesian Nationalist Party with Sukarno as leader and the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI) the Communist Party. The Islamic parties together gained only 44 per cent of the votes, which meant a solid majority to a secular state.²⁶ The next ten years were characterized by political and

²⁶ Magnis-Suseno 1989:42

economic turbulence. The effort of Sukarno to maintain the integrity of Indonesia against the interests of the military, the Islamic parties, the Communists and the Nationalists failed, and he dissolved the Parliament in 1957. In 1959 he announced the Guided Democracy which was plagued by inflation, military interventions and famines. The tensions between the military forces, the Muslim, the Christian and the Communist party rose, subsequently Sukarno tried with the *NASAKOM* ideology to unite the three major forces of the country: The Nationalism (*NAS*) the religion (*Agama*) and the Communism (*KOM*). On 1. October 1965 a handful of left-wing army officers made a coup, six of the highest generals of the army were assassinated. The Communist Party was blamed for having planned the initial coup and in many parts of Indonesia its cadres were captured and killed by the army and by Muslim and Catholic youth organisations. Hundreds of thousands were killed, more than one million were captured.²⁷ The army found a solid excuse to seize power. Sukarno handed power to General Suharto, who had countered the coup in Jakarta.

3.2.1. Suharto Era: The New Order

After Suharto's seizure of power the political structures in Indonesia changed totally. The Communists, under Sukarno still the strongest civil power group, were devastated. The Nationalists lost much of their power. Subsequently the army was the new ruler of the New Order, though most rulers were not new at all, they had been members of the Old Order.

One key feature of the New Order is the presence of *Tentara Nasional Indonesia-TNI* (armed forces) in civil society. The *operasi karya* (civil mission) doctrine provides the military with *dwi fungsi* (dual functions): *Dwi fungsi* is the institutionalization of the military intervention in civil society.²⁸

Suharto's main political doctrine was *stabilitas politik* (political stability) and *pembangunan* (economic development). The New Order government achieved an unchallenged control and power to regulate the activities of institutions and individuals. The ideological foundation for this suppression was the doctrine of the *massa lepas* (floating mass), this semi-official principle should conduct all the energy of the people,

²⁷ Magnis-Suseno 1989:45

²⁸ Schreiner 2003:6

mostly rural people, to the support of the economic development. Heavy restrictions were imposed on political activities in the countryside.

Indonesia's official ideology is *pancasilas*²⁹. It was formulated by Sukarno in the 1940s and is said to be a common inheritance from the past and an integral part of the traditional society.

To fill the political vacuum and to prevent that other political power groups gain support in the population, *Golkar* was build up. *Golkar* is an acronym for *Golongan Karya* (functional groups). It is controlled by the government and the armed forces and was the main vehicle of the New Order to mobilise popular support. In the elections 1971, *Golkar* gained 60 per cent of the votes. One year later Suharto forced the political parties to unite. Only *Golkar* and two other parties should remain: the PPP a coalition of the four Islamic parties and the PDI a union of the five other parties. Indonesian civil servants and other official representatives have to be members of the *Golkar* and its Civil Servants Corps (*Korpri*). Subsequently the political sector was and still is strongly intertwined with the private sector, what makes people more controllable. The civil area and the political area are less separated that in Western countries.

3.2.2. Economic Development Policy under the New Order

Sukarno left behind a desolate economic situation with an immense rate of inflation, high foreign debts and a general decrease of production and export.³⁰ At the beginning of the 1970s the government under Suharto made strong efforts to restore the stability of the economy. With the help of Western economists and Indonesian technocrats, who were educated and trained abroad, the visible success of the government contributed to a stability of the New Order. The liberalisation of the economy made Indonesia a focus of international economic activities and foreign companies got lured with concessions, lucrative investments and the facilitation of export- and import conditions.³¹ The success of the 1970s is partly based on the immense income of oil exports, so the decrease of the oil price in the 1980 stopped the enthusiasm and showed a first weakness of the unsustainable economic growth of the 1970s. Due to the support of mammoth projects mostly in the basic production field, the building up of infrastructure was mostly limited

²⁹ *Pancasila* is built on five pillars: Belief in the one Supreme God; A just and civilised humanity; The unity of Indonesia; Democracy led by the wisdom of deliberation among representatives; Social justice for all the people of Indonesia

³⁰ Soetrino 2000: 163

³¹ Frings 1999:73

on power plants, harbours and telecommunication. Rural development was neglected and the poverty of the mass was not significantly reduced. The one sided economic development concept of the New Order government lead to an increase of social disparities between the high industrialised sector and a more traditional sector.

Indonesian economic policy follows a so-called: Tripartite ideology, which means a balance between state, private and corporate sector. Each sector has its own rights and responsibilities and the central government supervises and coordinates them. The *Repelita* (Five Year Development Plans) contains the concepts, strategies and implementations of the economic policy. In the first (1969-1974) and the second *Repelita* (1974-1979), "...priority was given to national stability, economic growth and equitable distribution. An annual growth rate of over 7 per cent was achieved. In 1979, with the start of the Third Five Year Plan (*Repelita* III), the Government began to give equity higher priority."³² Thus, the output of the New Order economic policy is quite different from the objectives.

The national development concept of the New Order government implied, next to the liberation of the economic sector, a number of programmes to increase the productivity in the agricultural sector. "Through these programmes the 'Green Revolution' strategy was adopted to realize the targets of increased productivity in the agricultural sector and, in particular, self-sufficiency in rice production."³³ In 1965 the first programme was started, known as *Bimbingan Masal*: BIMAS (massive guidance). "With the improvement of irrigation facilities, the BIMAS programme was expanded and institutionalized by a 'presidential decision' in 1969. The BIMAS programme included the provision of high-yield rice varieties (HYV), credit, fertilizers and insecticides, and also guidance by the agricultural extension service."³⁴ In 1973 *Intensifikasi Masal*: INMAS (massive intensification) was introduced. The main focus was the provision of HYV and agricultural extension. In 1975 the government established *Koperasi Unit Desa*: KUDs (Village unit cooperatives) which acted as rice purchasers on behalf of the government and later started to distribute basic commodities. In 1970 *Instruksi Presiden*: INPRES (presidential instruction programme) was started, which focused the construction of schools, markets and health centres (*Puskesmas*).

The central government financed this programme and the implementation was through the district-level administration. The programmes for rural development which were

³² Bongartz 1989:33

³³ Bongartz 1989:34

³⁴ Bongartz 1989:34

started from the government were top-down concepts, which had little scope for generation and incorporating participation from the recipients. The programmes did not respond to borrower-needs and inflexible bureaucracy made them ineffective. Although the stipulations for credits were quite moderate, they still excluded the poorer section of the rural communities whereas the better-off benefited.³⁵

3.3.1 Indonesia in Transition

The New Order government ruled Indonesia for more than 30 years unchallenged. Its downfall revealed that, in the end, Suharto's power was not very strong any more. The New Order established, with the base of the military and *Golkar*, a centralised, authoritarian, paternalistic and ideological united system, which has eliminated all criticism and external control. People in opponent structures suffered extreme brutality and violence from the military. Towards the end of the New Order the top down approach in all sectors, the corruption, the big conglomerates in the economic sector and the nepotism made the political and economic situation unbearable for most Indonesians.

Economic crisis³⁶, political upheavals³⁷ and tensions between the armed forces and Suharto drew his era 1998 to a close. The resignation of Suharto on 21.May 1998 lead to a process of political change (*reformasi*), where hopes of democracy, peace and justice emerged after a long period of violence and state suppression. Vice-president J. Habibie was automatically installed as the third President of Indonesia. The general elections in 1999 produced Indonesia's first democratic Parliament under the Constitution of 1945. The new President was the moderate Islamist Wahid, whose cabinet was a conservative coalition of military, technocratic elements and political party leaders. Only two years later, in 2001 new elections were held, and Megawati Sukarnoputri was elected as President. All of them had the big challenge to deal with the pressure of the military, the maintenance of the integrity of Indonesia, the economic instability and the demand of political and social change according to *reformasi*. Megawati's politics stagnated in the last period of her duty, so the people were quite frustrated when the next general elections were held in 2004. Susilo Bambang

³⁵ Bongartz 1998:34

³⁶ The Asian crisis 1997 hit Indonesia very hard.

³⁷ The end of Suharto's era was framed by the *gerakan reformasi* (reform movement), which started among the urban student circles and came slowly to rural areas. Big demonstrations and outbursts of violence against the Chinese minority, which embodies the capital of Indonesia showed the anger of the long suppressed Indonesian people. Even in rural areas, the peasants rose against officials and the police.

Yudhoyono (SBY) is now President of Indonesia. His past in the military is reason for critical voices, who fear that the recent movements towards more transparency and control of the authoritarian political system, dissolve completely. In the first year of duty, SBY set accents in the foreign politics and made moves towards a release in the conflict areas of Timur and Aceh.³⁸ SBY's main targets are the decrease of the dominant role of the military and the fight against corruption.³⁹ The opinions about SBY's actions contra bribes are divided. One opinion is, that the cases brought to court are only the very top and that they don't even touch the roots of the complex system of corruption in Indonesia.

3.3.2. Indonesia's Main Political Focus Today

Korupsi, Kolusi and Nepotism: KKN (corruption, collusion and nepotism) are a big problem in Indonesia's political and social structure. SBY has promoted in his election campaign the fight against corruption as one of his main targets, but a lot of work has to be done, before one could say, that corruption is really on the decrease.

The military⁴⁰ is one of the main forces in Indonesia and has therefore an immense influence in the political and economic sector. The military is responsible for massacres and Human Rights abuse in Indonesia, as the murder of the Human Rights lawyer Munir shows.⁴¹ Under Suharto, the high generals of the armed forces have established a semi-official economic area with own companies, reaping huge profits from illegal business, e.g. logging and drug trafficking. It is a big task for Indonesia, to decrease the influence of the military.⁴²

Indonesia suffers from big inner state tensions. When the independent Indonesia was formed, certain parts of the former colonial country were forced to join the state. The idea of a united Indonesia is the basis of big tensions between the dominant island of

³⁸ Berger 2005

³⁹ The promise of fighting corruption was one of the main targets in SBY electoral campaign. Some cases of corruption were already brought to the court. E.g. were four members of the commission of election judged to jail because they were involved in an illegal deal with an insurance company during the Presidential election in 2004. The state lost more than 1 Million Euro. (dpa, Frankfurter Rundschau 2005)

⁴⁰ „Fuer Militärausgaben waren im indonesischen Haushalt fuer das Jahr 2002 etwa 1,5 Mrd. US \$ eingestellt, was einem Anteil von etwa 4% am Gesamthaushalt entspricht. Dieser Regelhaushalt entspricht nur etwa 25-30% den Ausgaben des Militäers, der Rest, bis zu 70% wird aus nichtbudgetären Mitteln gedeckt.“ (Schreiner 2003:5)

⁴¹ In September 2004, the Human Rights lawyer Munir was poisoned during a flight to Amsterdam. The responsible are not brought to jail yet. Munir was in the commission for investigation about Human Rights abuse in Easttimor, where six high Generals are accused. (Reinert 2006)

⁴² Schreiner 2003:5

Java and other parts of Indonesia, e.g. Aceh or Irian Jaja, who want to gain independence or at least a more autonomous status. East Timor gained independence in 1999 at a high price. A lot of people died and die in the massacres of the military and the responsible generals are not brought to court. Aceh gained, as a result of the negotiations between the government and the independent fighters GAM, a higher status of autonomy. This is a positive step towards a more diplomatic handling the conflict.

Another big problem is the influence of the Islam. Though Indonesia is a secular state, the Islamic parts in the parliament influence the politics of the country immensely. In Aceh e. g. the Islamic conservatives are setting restrictive limitations in all areas.⁴³ Within the discussion of the Western countries how to deal with their fear of terrorism, Indonesia moves in the focus of Western observation.

The Tsunami hit mostly Aceh, villages and infrastructure need to be rebuild. Foreign countries donated money, commodities and know-how, what makes Indonesia dependent on the wishes and requirements of the donors. The Indonesian government has to make compromises between the needs of the concerned people in the Tsunami hit regions and the infiltration of Western countries through help programmes.

4. NGOs

The concepts of development policy ranges from the idea of the so called trickle-down effect to the community development approach and the concept of cooperative development work. NGOs are seen as one tool in the implementation of the concepts of development policy.

4.1. Concepts of Development Policy

Modernity and modernization, as mentioned above, has a big impact on the economic, political and socio-cultural structure of a country. Since the 1950th, modernization and development have been regarded as identical and the theories of modernization have largely influenced development theories.⁴⁴ In those theories the state has the main responsibility to plan development and implement projects. "...modernization strategists

⁴³Aguswandi 2006

⁴⁴Bongartz 1989:5

concentrated on industrialisation in urban centres, on building centralized institutions which were subsequently to facilitate structural changes for the modernization of society, and also on increasing productivity in the agricultural sector by means of transferring high technology and ‘modern’ know-how and skills to so-called progressive farmers.”⁴⁵ The benefits of the efforts towards development should trickle down to these who haven’t got any direct profit from the development projects. The development potential of the rural areas and the role of the poor population in the national development were wildly neglected. The success of these development strategies was little due to “inappropriate technology and unfavourable social and political conditions”⁴⁶

In the 1970s a new idea of development work came up. The community development approach and the community participation approach stressed the importance of the participation of local target groups in the process of rural development. Another development strategy was the basic needs concept.⁴⁷ Key issues of all those concepts were next to the call for popular participation, the decentralization of planning and administration, and self-reliance at the local level. Non-governmental development organisations (NGOs) and self-help organisations manifest the process in the concept of development work.⁴⁸

The development strategies of the 1980s brought little change, new strategies pointed to the question how to reach and strengthen the position of the rural poor.

In all development strategies, the rural population is seen as a resource which has not yet been sufficiently exploited in order to strengthen national development. Evers⁴⁹ had called attention to the use of the word mobilisation, a term which was borrowed from the military. Instead of mobilization Evers suggests to use the term emancipation, this enables the population to free itself from coercion and dependency. These concepts of emancipation did not get much response from the professional development theorists and practitioners. The focus of development work shifted only slowly toward the rural poor and the improvement of their situation.

4.2. NGO: Definition, Objectives and Fields of Activity

⁴⁵Bongartz 1989:7

⁴⁶Bongartz 1989:7

⁴⁷Bongartz 1989:13

⁴⁸Frings 1991:14

⁴⁹Evers 1975

The term NGO is potentially open-ended and determines only what a NGO is not. To clarify the range of organisations which could be called non-governmental, the following definition determines the term NGO as used in this paper: "...organisations and groups whose activities are directed towards improving, and in a more radical sense changing the social and material conditions of economically and socially disadvantaged. Activities of a purely charitable, religious or humanitarian nature are consequently excluded as are party or quasi-party organisations. However, public interest groups in such fields as environment, human rights and consumers awareness, particularly insofar as they impact on the poor majority, form a central focus of discussion."⁵⁰

The phenomenon NGO must be seen in accordance to the historical, socio-cultural and political circumstances of the certain country. Interpretations of conceptional frames, objectives and values differ a lot. Almost all development concepts are founded in Western countries. Subsequently these concepts base on Western values of equality and social justice and don't refer to the special situation of the eventually country in question.

According to the historical and cultural background, and to the relation to the government, NGOs have different objectives and fields of activity. One conceptional distinction can be drawn between NGOs with focus on conventional programmes of community development and those who concentrate on education and emancipation of disadvantaged people.

According to U. Frings⁵¹, NGOs are characterised by the following objectives of development politics:

- Participation⁵²
- Self-reliance
- Consciousness-raising

⁵⁰Eldridge 1989:3

⁵¹Frings 1991:15

⁵² Participation is very unsharpened defined and implies a big range. E. g. the passive presents in a group, the active participatory planning within an organisation and the popular participation, i.e. taking influence in high level decisions.

There can be distinguished between two levels of participation, which are reciprocal. The first level is the intern structure of a NGO, do the members of the project have the power to manage and control or are the formal structures hierarchic and undemocratic. The second level is the participation in a wider sense, that means taking influence on political decisions and enhance democratic structures.

In the current discussion about goals in the NGO work, two main targets are predominant: The enhancement of democratic⁵³ structures and the reduction of poverty.⁵⁴ Subsequently, these two points are the main fields of activity of NGOs.

The hope, that NGOs will play a major role in the enhancement of democratic structures in Indonesia, are based on the development concepts of NGOs, as I described in the former chapter, and their role in the political and educational sector.⁵⁵ Beginning in the late 1980s and increasingly since the *reformasi* movement after the fall of Suharto, the demands for democratic changes in Indonesia have a more broadly based support. Intellectuals, who still form the core of the movement, and people from rural areas build more and more a unit in the demand for more democratisation of the legal and institutional structures and for more openness.⁵⁶

The international situation fosters a democratic development of Indonesia. Decentralisation and deregulation are aims, which are supported by Western governments and the World Bank. A bigger extent of community participation in official development programmes and the manifestation of democratic structures are official preconditions of foreign aid.⁵⁷

NGOs and self-help organisations, with stress on participation and self-reliance are seen from many development specialists as suitable to reduce poverty.⁵⁸ Through emergency help, small-scale credits and other financial support in the economic field, the poverty should be reduced and subsequently the living conditions improved.

The Indonesian government signed in September 2000 the UN Millennium Declaration. This includes the commitment to reduce poverty, to improve the situation of health care and education and to enhance peace, human rights and the environmental situation. As a part of the Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals refer to the aims which should be reached until 2015.⁵⁹ These goals had a positive impact on the work of NGOs, as they could develop objectives and activities according to the statements of the UNDP.

⁵³ Democracy is a term which is not clear defined. R. Tetzlaff suggests three minimum conditions for the existence of a Western-style democratic system. Human rights as an essential part of the constitution, the control of political power through regular, secret, general and free elections, the tie of the policy to laws and the separation of powers. (Tetzlaff 1998: 11ff)

⁵⁴ Forrester (1999), Manning (2000), Diermen van (2000), Eldridge (1997).

⁵⁵ Jorgensen 1996: 38ff

⁵⁶ Soetrisno 2000:167

⁵⁷ Eldridge 1997:200

⁵⁸ Bongartz 1998:17

⁵⁹ UNDP 2004

4.3. Funding Sources

The quality of NGOs programmes is highly dependent on the funding sources they have. The successful search for funding needs organisational energy, structures of accountability within the NGO and operating procedures to suit the requirements of funding agencies. Many NGOs in Indonesia get aid from foreign countries, most of the larger NGOs depend on foreign sources. The main donors are USAID, (USA), OXFAM (U.K.), CIDA (Canada), the Ford-Asia Foundation, CEBEMO (Netherlands) and the GTZ (Germany).⁶⁰

Organisational autonomy can be protected to some extent by funding through different sources. In the present situation of Indonesia, access to foreign funding increases the NGO's freedom of action and the bargaining power contra the government.

The position of the government towards foreign funding agencies is ambivalent. On the one side, the officials perceive the agencies to influence the climate of the public opinion,⁶¹ but on the other side, they have a desire for foreign investments in Indonesia. In the 1980th, several countries, notably Holland and Germany have built co-financing arrangements into their aid delivery processes, so the external funding is negotiated as a package.⁶² This increases the pressure of the Indonesian government to coopt larger NGOs into corporate state structures, in alliance with agencies of international capital such as the World Bank.

The policy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is absolutely neo-liberal, has a huge negative impact on the living conditions of the Indonesian people. The IMF aid in 1998 involved a pledge of more than \$ 40 billion⁶³ in emergency loans to serve as guarantees for international imports and exports. In practice the country could not use most of the money because it was merely deposited at the bank of Indonesia to serve as a guarantee. But these loans still provide the IMF with effective control over economic policy. Indonesia was required to implement dozens of new policies on inflation and interest rates, banking reform and privatisation, and the removal of tariffs on imports. Social subsidies for farmers and the poor, such as those on gasoline, were reduced or abandoned. By 2002, the Indonesian government was forced to terminate its IMF-

⁶⁰Eldridge 1989:9

⁶¹Eldridge 1989:9

⁶²„Official guidelines now applied by Western donor government and the World Bank increasingly insist on partnership arrangements with Indonesian voluntary organisations.“ (Eldridge 1989:9) So it has been argued that NGOs are being used to penetrate capitalist structures into Third World Countries.

⁶³Bahagijo 2005: 6

inspired economic austerity program. Opposition from both legislators and the public regarding the impact of the IMF economic measures proved too much. But nothing changed. The IMF ideology still held sway among economic policy makers.⁶⁴ At the beginning of 2006, the petrol prices rose 120 %, due to a cut of subsidies.

4.4. NGOs between Autonomy and Cooption: A Model

The term NGO associates an independence from governmental structures. This is nearly impossible in the case of Indonesia, how this paper will show in chapter eight. So the 'non-governmental' refers to a certain oppositional conviction towards the government and excludes definitely party and quasi-party organisations. It is not possible to make a clear distinction in governmental and non-governmental organisations in Indonesia. In reality there are transitions, relations and integrated forms between governmental, semi-governmental and non-governmental organisations according to their history of foundation and discontinuity of governmental influence.⁶⁵

Larger NGOs in Indonesia decided in 1983 to drop the term non-government organisation for fear that it could be interpreted as anti-governmental. The indigenous term of *Lembaga Pengembangan Swadaya Masyarakat*: LPSM (Self-Reliant Community Development Organisations) was chosen.

Philip Eldridge designed a model⁶⁶ in which he shapes the relation between Indonesian NGOs and the government. There are three broad kinds of NGO models which are characterized by a different orientation towards the government. The three models should be seen as ideal types, most NGOs display mixed characteristics and tend to evolve through various stages.

Philip Eldridge calls the first approach: High-Level Partnership: Grass roots development. It means to participate in official development programmes while the NGOs seek to influence their design and to implement more participatory aspects. Though the good contacts with relevant officials and agencies, these NGOs show no interest in changing the political process as such. This manner is the most effective means of preserving their own autonomy and that of local groups with whom they work.

⁶⁴Bahagijo 2005:6

⁶⁵Eldridge 1989: 8

⁶⁶Eldridge 1989:11ff

NGOs according to this model originated as small, locally-oriented groups, who have been pitchforked into large-scale programmes.

The second approach is described by Philip Eldridge as: High-Level Politics: Grass roots Mobilisation. The NGOs have a framework of radical social theory, linked to a broader critiques of the government. These NGOs promote building up consciousness and capacity for self-management among specific target groups. Further they seek legal status and protection against lower level officials, and they themselves have contacts at higher levels of government. NGOs in this category have contacts if not influence with military and bureaucratic networks and monitor political development. The various small groups which they sponsor can be seen as providing an informal base for political oriented activity at higher levels.

The third group's focus is at the local level. It can be called: Empowerment at the grass roots. The concept of mobilisation promotes raising consciousness and awareness of rights rather than campaigns to change policy. While seeking legal and bureaucratic niches within which to operate, only minimum contact is sought with the government agencies. Social and political change is seen possible on self-reliant group formation.

P. Eldridge summons that despite very substantial differences in outlook and strategy, the three categories share several broad characteristics in common:

- “1. an orientation towards strengthening community groups as the basis for a healthy society and as a counterweight to government power;
2. a creative search for new strategies to confront changing social needs and emerging structures of disadvantage and powerlessness;
3. a strong commitment to ideals of popular participation in defining and implementing programs.”⁶⁷

4.5. Contradictions Between Western and Indonesian Definitions - Two Examples

4.5.1. Self-reliance

⁶⁷ Eldridge 1997:217ff

Self-reliance means, in a Western notion, “that those people most immediately concerned should determine their own organizational forms, decision making processes, priorities for action, and means for achieving them.”⁶⁸ Natural, material and financial resources should be identified and used. The role of the NGO is pooling together these resources and provide additional resources. Most of the NGOs understand their work as a middleman between the poorest part of the population and the government. According to the Self-help concept, the work of the NGO should support the collective self-reliance of small unites to improve the situation of disadvantaged and poor people.

In the Indonesian context, notions of self-reliance (*swadaya*) were historically perceived in the context of the national struggle for independence.⁶⁹ “Ideas of self-reliance and popular sovereignty (*kedaulatan rakyat*) at that time found expression both independent from and even in conflict with Indonesian state structures.”⁷⁰ “Since that time, a more quasi-Gandhian understanding of *swadaya* has emerged, emphasising service to the community, encouragement of local initiative linked to an ethic of cooperation, and moderate lifestyles, with social action focusing on basic needs.”⁷¹ From the government’s standpoint, *swadaya* implies an emphasis on the sovereignty and national resilience of the Indonesian state. The government is keen for villages to mobilize their own resources but maintains strong political and financial control.⁷²

4.5.2. Democratisation

The political situation in Indonesia is repressive and monolithic. The conditions for the existence of a Western-style democracy are at no point realised in Indonesia. It is clear that political reform conducted through legal processes will not be sufficient to provide a strong basis for civil society.⁷³ This makes it very hard for NGOs to work in this field.

⁶⁸ Eldridge 1997:208

⁶⁹ Local patterns of guerilla and territorial warfare came into conflict with the Indonesian state and especially with the armed forces. (Eldridge 1997:209)

⁷⁰ Eldridge 1997:209

⁷¹ Eldridge 1997:209

⁷² „Thus BANGDES, the rural development arm of the Departement of Home Affairs (Dalam Negeri) classifies *swadaya* as the highest of three stages of village development-the others being *swasembada* (self-sufficiency) and *swakarya* (self-development). As defined by BANGDES, *swadaya* seems to consist of having a long list of facilities in place, with little obvious regard of quality.“ (Eldridge 1997:214)

⁷³ „The legal reform conducted so far (for example, the Election Act, the Political Party Act and the Act on the Structure of the DPR and MPR) has focused on procedural and institutional problems and has not been directed at more substantial change towards democratisation and the empowerment of civil society.“ (Katyasingkana 2000:261)

Political and social democracy is a concept which is developed and, at least theoretically, implemented in Western systems. The democratic idea is based on equity and participation, the deregulation of the economic field and the liberalisation of the socio-political area. Democracy has in different countries different features, according to the historical and cultural background. In which way the theoretical ideas of democracy are realised in the concrete political structures of certain countries, and according to this, what is the practice of democracy is another question and I do not have the space to explain this here.

The definition of democracy in the Indonesian context embraces several levels. According to Philip Eldridge it is possible to distinguish three broad understandings.⁷⁴ The first type is the Western style, so called representative or constitutional democracy. The enhancement of liberal-democratic structures has growing appeal in the middle class. Intellectuals and businessmen search for more freedom in the choice of political representation and in the field of free speech and association. They favour the process to more competition and openness, very much in contrast to the mass of workers and peasants who are more concerned about economic security. As NGOs should represent the needs of disadvantaged and poor people, they have some problems with supporting the western-style liberal democracy.

The second Indonesian understanding of democracy is following the ideology of *pancasila*. Core values of *pancasila* under a historical sight are deliberation, consensus and voluntarism modes of community cooperation. “Equally, freedom of expression can be accommodated by *pancasila* to the extend that the ultimate goal is to achieve solutions for the whole group rather than a few individuals”⁷⁵. The emphasis on group- and community-based decision making and activities which pursue a common purpose, have a big cultural and political resonance and stands in contrast to the individualistic character of the Western understanding of democracy. The *pancasila* understanding of democracy fits more to the core values and practice of Indonesian NGOs. Present and former governments abuse the ideals of *pancasila* for their purpose and NGOs together with other opponent activists, criticise the monopolization and centralisation of power by the government. “For the most part, however, rather than take up demands for sweeping structural change, they have concentrated their energies on working for more

⁷⁴ Eldridge 1997:204ff

⁷⁵ Eldridge 1997:205

“open” and “participatory” interpretations of *pancasila* within their own sphere of operation.”⁷⁶

The third tradition of democracy focuses the people’s sovereignty. It comes historically from the political left spectrum and the interpretations go from ‘popular sovereignty’ in terms of government accountability through elected legislatures to direct mass action. “Values emphasising mass action for social justice and an ethos of face-to-face decision making have obvious appeal in many local struggle contexts. They are also reflected in traditions of voluntary action which see diffusion of decision making beyond the formal processes of politics and administration as essential to any effective development of popular participation.”⁷⁷

Indonesian NGOs appear more comfortable and familiar with the second and the third interpretation of democracy. Whereas most NGOs don’t follow one straight line, but use different aspects of democratic ideals in discussions and statements against the dominant state structures.

The emphasise of NGOs on popular participation, self-reliance, bottom-up and decentralised styles of development seems to make them a suitable tool in enhancing more democratic structures in Indonesia. I will discuss later, to which extent Indonesian NGOs can contribute to this process.

These two examples show contradictions between the Western and the Indonesian understanding of NGO principles. The Western definition is based on the idea of equality, social justice and the principles of a liberal democracy, whereas the Indonesian definition stresses the importance of a dominant Indonesian state and the principles of *musyawarah* and *gotong royong*. It is very important to take these contradictions into account when it comes to the implementation of development concepts in Indonesia. In the following chapter, I will elaborate more exactly on the cultural contradictions in the NGO work.

5. Profiles of Three NGOs in Java

⁷⁶ Eldridge 1997:206

⁷⁷ Eldridge 1997:206

In the next chapter I examine, after a brief introduction into the formation of today's NGOs, the foundation, the objectives and the organisational structures of the NGOs *Usaha Bersama* Groups/*Bina Swadaya*, WALHI and LESSAN.

5.1. Historical background of NGOs in Java and the Formation of Today's NGOs.

Indonesian NGOs today show similarities to the foundation of social movements during the colonial time at the beginning of the last century. In that time, a lot of free organisations and groups had been built, which, according to socio-cultural conditions, had a lot of parallels in the foundation process, objectives and organisational structures to today's NGOs.⁷⁸ The conditions for the formation of non governmental organisations in the first three decades of the last century can be summarized as the increasing pressure from the colonial system to the people, social-cultural changes in traditional structures, the dissolve of the patron-client relation and the rise of a *prijaji* elite.⁷⁹ The objectives of the former NGOs were, according to the historical background, ideologically oriented, with their main focus on the national independence, integrity and identity. Today's NGOs put their weight on the national development. The NGOs during the colonial period have nevertheless prepared the way to a national identity and made the first step towards the development of a social and political movement in opposition to governmental structures.

The background of the foundation of NGOs during the Suharto era can be seen on several levels. One level is the offensive development policy of Western countries in the 1970th and their so called bottom-up approach, as it is elaborated in chapter four. Another level is the political dimension. It seems, that during the New Order, the colonial history has been repeated. During the whole time of the national building, free organisations and self-help organisations have played an important role in areas, which have been neglected by the government. The expansive economic policy, the political demobilisation and the implementation of politics through a bureaucratic state showed similarities to the colonial structure before independence.⁸⁰ The repressive policy of the New Order government and the dismissal of all political parties in 1967 had as consequence, that there was no legal channel for developing social politics. So activists searched for other legal organisations to work on political themes. NGOs could

⁷⁸ Frings 1991:25

⁷⁹ Frings 1991:32

⁸⁰ Frings 1991:83

therefore substitute political equipartition and political vocabulary had to be transmitted in development politics vocabulary.⁸¹

5.2.1. *Usaha bersama* Groups and *Bina Swadaya*: Foundation and Status

*Bina Swadaya*⁸² is the institution which forms, promotes and supports self-help groups, *Usaha bersama* (UB). The background of *Bina Swadaya*'s foundation is the disbandment of independent farmers' organisations during the New Order. 1985 *Bina Swadaya* became the status of a legal body as *yayasan* (Foundation). IPP already promoted a number of UB groups, mainly in Central Java. "Usaha Bersama' groups are informal village-level groups with a general orientation towards improving the living condition of their members, including economic, social and cultural aspects of life; they are voluntary groups with open membership. They try to achieve their aims through the participation of all members in all the activities carried out, including the planning, implementation and evaluation of these activities."⁸³ All UB groups undertake savings and loan activities. The origins of the UB groups differ widely, the basic characteristics which they have in common are: "saving and credit activities are carried out regularly; principles and objectives are identical or similar; all groups are supported by the Self-Help Promotion Organisation *Bina Swadaya*."⁸⁴

There are many local self-help groups in Indonesia, which could be instrumentalised for different development approaches. It is important to differentiate between indigenous groups, e. g. *arisans*, and those which were initiated recently by external organisations, although that is not always easy. H. Bongartz has classified UB groups in his analysis as follows:⁸⁵ Religious groups, (indigenous) neighbourhood groups, government initiated groups, 'working-place' groups.

Most of the groups were founded by local, formal and informal leaders, e.g. Catholic priests or teachers. The government-initiated groups were founded by the village head

⁸¹ Frings 1991:84

⁸² *Bina Swadaya* has its origin in the Roman-Catholic farmers association *Ikatan Petani Pancasila*: IPP, formed in 1958 to assist the poor farmers with agricultural training and legal aid and was active in the BIMAS movement. In 1967 the IPP was disbanded from the government and the *Yayasan Sosial Tani Membangun*: YSTM (Farmers Socio-Economic Development Foundation) was established, of which *Bina Swadaya* became the operational arm. IPP was merged with *Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia*: HKTI (All Indonesian Farmers Association), and dissolved as an autonomous organisation.

⁸³ Bongartz 1989:49

⁸⁴ Bongartz 1989:49

⁸⁵ Bongartz 1989:57

together with the extension officer. The UB groups do not have a formal status, “a loophole in the law allows small cooperatives to describe themselves ‘pre-cooperatives’, as yet unready for registration. Many local authorities seem willing to accept and even encourage ad hoc arrangements of this kind.”⁸⁶. The government insists usually on formal registration of cooperatives and gives a monopoly to the KUDs (Village Unit Cooperatives) referring the marketing of agricultural products and the supply of inputs. The government institutions are often shells, mismanaged and very ineffective in their work.⁸⁷ So additionally to the KUDs, a lot of UB groups operate throughout Indonesia, to form a counterpart to the government offices and supply the people with basic needs.

5.2.2. Objectives

“*Bina Swadaya*’s development approach is based on the assumption that the majority of people (especially in rural areas) are living under conditions which might be characterized by such terms as backwardness, poverty, and a lack of (human and natural) resources. Since official government development programmes are usually concentrated and oriented towards macro-level projects, the aspect of human resources development often remains neglected. Hence there is a significant need for the development and promotion of self-help organizations set up by the people themselves, based on their ‘felt needs and participation’.”⁸⁸ Since unofficial cooperatives must generate their own savings, because they have no access to credits at good conditions, one of the main tasks of *Bina Swadaya* is to revolve loan capital to the UB groups as seed credit. In the 1980s, *Bina Swadaya* has shifted its focus to more cooperation with government programmes and the Indonesian Bank Rakyat Indonesia, “on means to extend loan facilities to very small cultivators and other self-employed individuals or groups. West German aid authorities and some West German banks⁸⁹ are reported to be keen on this approach.”⁹⁰

The formal objectives of the UB groups are usually derived from the *Bina Swadaya*’s concept of self-help groups. The UB groups have to accept these principles in order to get support. Main goal is to uplift the economic situation of their members through

⁸⁶ Eldridge 1989:14

⁸⁷ own sources

⁸⁸ Bongartz 1989:53

⁸⁹ „In a broader context, the West German government is financing a major study with *Bank Indonesia* covering 45 sub-districts (*kecamatan*) ...with a view to channelling greater financial assistance to small self-help groups. LPSMs such as *Bina Swadaya* would obviously play a key intermediary role in implementing any such schemes, probably acting as guarators in many instances.“ (Eldridge 1989:16)

⁹⁰ Eldridge 1989:15

compulsory savings and loan activities.⁹¹ Apart from these objectives, groups have informal rules which are sometimes contrary to the formal ones. The major focus of the UB groups varies from economic activities to social interactions, according to their background.

The savings and loan activities of the UB groups enable the members to save on a regular basis and to get a loan from the group's capital when they are in need of it. This capital formation within the groups (*simpan pinjam*) makes the members independent from private moneylenders and banks. Poor people have to lend money from local money lenders, who have high rates of interest, because banks will not give them credit.

5.2.3. Organisational and Internal Structures

Bina Swadaya established centres with specific tasks and activities. According to H. Bongartz, the Centre for Pre-cooperative Development works with a staff of six at the headquarters and with 18 fieldworkers. They train, support and assist the UB groups, organize national annual meetings and monitor and evaluate the programmes. The Centre for Solidarity Capital Formation operates the credit scheme through which the guided UB groups can apply for credits. The credit programme started in 1976 and in 1985 credits were disbursed to 58 groups, the rate of repayment was 98 per cent.⁹² "Until 1982 both the number of groups supported and the amount of credits increased continuously. Then however, the number of groups decreased sharply from 690 to 438 whereas the disbursed credits reached a peak in 1984 with Rp. 111,450,000 (US \$ 99,155). It seems that this development signals a change in *Bina Swadaya's* policy, from a quantitatively oriented self-help promotion system to a more qualitatively oriented one."⁹³ In 1996, the total budget of *Bina Swadaya* is US \$ 20 million.⁹⁴

The official internal structures of the UB groups are similar to the Verein in Germany. "Each group has an executive board (*pengurus*) consisting of a chairman or chairwoman (*ketua*) who holds the overall responsibility for all activities carried out by the group, a secretary (*sekretaris*) who is responsible for administration, and a treasurer (*bendahara*) whose field of responsibility is finances. In the course of the development of the group, i.e. adding new members or new tasks, the *pengurus* should be assisted by a vice-chairman, vice-secretary and vice-treasurer. ...Above all, more developed groups should

⁹¹ Bongartz 1989:59

⁹² Bongartz 1989:53

⁹³ Bongartz 1989:54

⁹⁴ *Bina Swadaya*, 1996

have a supervisory board (*badan pemeriksa*), which is meant to evaluate and rate all activities carried out by the leaders. Both the members of the executive board and those of the different sections or committees and the supervisory board are to be elected by the members' assembly."⁹⁵

In the following the membership of UB groups will be assessed more exactly, referring to the analysis of H. Bongartz.⁹⁶ The majority of the groups involve between 20 and 29 people, whereof 75 % are men. Regarding the educational background of the UB members, not even 20 % are from the illiterate category, whereas 70 % of the total Indonesian population fit in this educational level. Nearly half of the UB members have completed primary school (SD). One third of the members are occupied in the agricultural sector. Government civil service employees and teachers build the second frequent category.

For the saving activities of the UB groups examined by H. Bongartz, each member has to contribute an opening or initial deposit, which range from US \$ 6.2 to US \$ 1840.⁹⁷ A commonly agreed amount, varying from group to group has to be saved regularly, which range from US \$ 14.2 to US \$ 2964.⁹⁸ In addition to these two compulsory savings, the members might also save on a voluntary basis. Most of the groups have also deposits in a bank account, which is usually utilized as collateral for a credit.

5.3.1. WALHI: Foundation and status

Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia: WALHI (Indonesian Environmental Forum) "is a network of individuals and organisations concerned in one way or another with threats to the balance of Indonesia's ecology."⁹⁹ In the 1970s ecological awareness grew, on the one side because more and more specific problems raised from logging, mining and transmigration in Eastern Indonesia and on the other side due to the pollution caused by urbanisation and industrialisation. At the same time the dissatisfaction with the governmental strategies of the economic development grew and mostly students and people with theoretical and practical knowledge of environmental problems forced engagement in this field. In 1980, WALHI was founded as a communication forum as a

⁹⁵ Bongartz 1989:70

⁹⁶ Bongartz 1989:60ff

⁹⁷ Bongartz 1989:93

⁹⁸ Bongartz 1989:93

⁹⁹ Eldridge 1989:38

result of the first national meeting of Indonesian environmental groups. The members of this forum were quite heterogeneous, three main strings were represented: “‘Naturliebhaber’ (meist von der Universitaet), professionelle Organisationen wie z.B. ‘Landscape Architects’ und Selbsthilfegruppen bzw. NGOs.”¹⁰⁰

5.3.2. Objectives

“WALHI’s functions basically cover training, research, general education and communication. To this end it arranges forums and dialogue between community organisations, government and other interested groups, participation in and sometimes coordinating technical and other working groups in preparing environmental impact statements.”¹⁰¹ The main goals are the encouragement of local groups to become involved in their own action research, and make similar advocacy and communication work as WALHI. For that reason the contact with other NGOs, especially at the grass root level is very fundamental for the work of WALHI. The big resonance in the press proves WALHI’s activities on the regional and national level. The NGO was involved in the drafting of the Environmental Law 1982, which includes next to general environmental lines, the right of NGOs to participate in implementing environmental policy.

WALHI's development of its contents and focus of work can be structured in four stages:

“Aktivitaeten im technisch-wissenschaftlichen Bereich bzw. Konzentration auf Spezies; Informationsbeschaffung zur Rolle von Oekosystemen und zu regionalen Problemen; Umweltproblematik und ihr Bezug zur sozialen Dimension; Umweltproblematik und ihre rechtliche Dimension (“Umweltgesetze”).”¹⁰² Additionally WALHI built up connections to environmental groups on the local, regional and national level.

The four stages in which the focus of WALHI has developed, can be recognised in the national meetings: The first meeting of the foundation 1980 reflected the main concerns of the members. The second meeting 1983 was the national representation of Java and the other islands. In the third meeting 1986 more regional involvement and participation was desired, the members of the Presidium now represent their special region, and have to be confirmed from the basis NGOs.¹⁰³ On the regional level, there exists as well a

¹⁰⁰ Frings 1991:103

¹⁰¹ Eldridge 1989:38

¹⁰² Frings 1991:104

¹⁰³ Frings 1991: 118

presiding board, which is according to the motivation of the local groups more active or passive.¹⁰⁴

The high presence in the public media through press conferences, articles and discussion forums as well as personal contacts made it possible to form a number of new networks which belong to WALHI. These networks focus on pesticide alleviation, logging and environmental pollution.¹⁰⁵

5.3.3. Organisational and Internal Structures

The forum WALHI is represented through the presiding board of 18 members.

“WALHI has no formal membership but claims to correspond with around 400 organisations of which 120 are considered to be active. Active groups are invited to a general meeting every three years to elect a Presidium and appoint a Director. Efforts are made to achieve socio-cultural and regional balance in selecting members of the Presidium.”¹⁰⁶

The bureau of WALHI was situated until 1982 in the same building as the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, so the NGO could strengthen its contacts to the government. This protection from above and mainly the influence of Prof. Emil Salim, the former Minister of Population and Environment, makes the work of WALHI so effective and sustainable. They could support the basis organisations and their interests with official rear cover. This status of WALHI causes conflicts between the NGO and the government, as I will discuss in chapter six.

WALHI gets external funding from USAID, Asia Foundation, CIDA and smaller NGOs¹⁰⁷, most of the funds have a specific purpose and go directly to individual groups. Some routine costs are provided by the Indonesian Wildlife Fund. Through the establishment of *Dana Mitra Lingkungan*¹⁰⁸, a non-profit organisation, WALHI gains funding and general support from individuals and corporations.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ In 2005, the regional representation of WALHI in Yogyakarta has 24 cooperating NGOs (WALHI info, 28/06/05)

¹⁰⁵ Frings 1991:104

¹⁰⁶ Eldridge 1989:38

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Rettet den Regenwald e.V. supports the recreation program of WALHI in Aceh after the tsunami

¹⁰⁸ DML has its own organisational structure, with banking and business figure on its board and with direct lines of communication to the Office of the Minister for Population and Environment. (Eldridge 1989:40)

¹⁰⁹ WALHI gets significant business support through regular subscriptions. A supporting statement which endorses the importance of NGO work in the environmental field in terms of *pancasila* was signed on 27/10/1983 by a list of notable persons. (Eldridge 1989:40)

5.4.1. LESSAN: Foundation and Status

Lembaga Studi Kesehatan: LESSAN (Institute for Alternative Health Studies) was founded in 1989 by five engaged members of the Cultural Development Foundation. They dealt with cultural issues and were concerned about the health conditions in the community, particularly the disintegration of the traditional Javanese system of health treatment: *Jamu*. LESSAN has now the status of a *yayasan*.

The local knowledge about the *Jamu* system is slowly pushed into backwardness. Since the lobby of the pharmaceutical industry has grown immensely, and the promotion of Western medicine makes it modern and apparently more effective, many Indonesians follow a conventional medical treatment in the case of sickness. Moreover, people often buy chemical drugs sold openly in shops without any doctor's consultation, because this would be too expensive.

5.4.2. Objectives

The aims of LESSAN are: "To give back peoples belief in traditional medicine system. To develop a system of alternative medicine which is cheap, safe and effective. To develop social consciousness on health issues."¹¹⁰

The main activities of LESSAN are: The conservation, distribution and use of *Jamu*. Community work in means of improving the welfare situation of marginalised people through the amend of the health situation, the establishment of CU (Credit Union), and emergency help. Another field of action is the coordination and advocacy of local resistance against neglect and exploitation.¹¹¹ One important focus in the work of LESSAN is the support of emancipated and participatory manner of marginalised people. Traditional medicine is one instrument to make these manners conceivable. Main field of action is the Merapi region¹¹² and the *gunung kidul*¹¹³ area.

¹¹⁰ According to the brochure of LESSAN

¹¹¹ e.g. in the Merapi region, where LESSAN networks with other NGOs, e.g. WALHI.

¹¹² The Merapi erupted in 1994, so LESSAN provided emergency help. The former government took the chance, to resettle the locals, what was successfully hampered through LESSAN and other NGOs. Since 2001 the government has plans to build a National Park in the Merapi region, without involving the local interests. LESSAN is involved in forming the resistance against the plan. LESSAN provides as well emergency help after the latest eruption of the Merapi in June 2006.

¹¹³ The *gunung kidul* area is one of the poorest regions in Java. The soil is unfertile and there is lack of water. The crises 1997 hit this area very hard.

During the year 1990-1991, the members of LESSAN began to make a inventory of herbal plants which are used as *Jamu*.¹¹⁴ They collected data by talking with elders and *Jamu* vendors to gain broad information about the traditional knowledge. Together with farmers, LESSAN started to open *Jamu* posts, which are small kiosks where good quality *Jamu* is sold cheaply.¹¹⁵ The assistants in the shops are knowledgeable about illnesses and *Jamu* medicine and provide free consultations. This *Jamu* posts collect data about frequently occurring diseases and discuss prevention methods with the farmers. Additionally, LESSAN provides lectures, discussion groups and alternative education to marginalised people in order to built up a critical perception about disadvantageous conditions.

In 1992, LESSAN published a book which provides information on common diseases and *Jamu* recipes to cure them. With this book, the knowledge of the traditional medicine is restored.

In 2002 peasants founded, together with LESSAN, at the basis of numerous seminars about alternative agricultural methods, the network *Serikat Petani Jamu: SEPEJAM*¹¹⁶.

5.4.3. Organisational and Internal Structures

At present, LESSAN has seven full-time staff members in the office in Gentan, near Jogjakarta, three men and four women. Three of them were involved in the founding process of LESSAN and make up, in a way, the core of the NGO. The members work quite autonomous, always one or two persons are responsible for the projects in one certain region. Nevertheless there is a tight cooperation between the colleagues. The formal structures are very loose, there is no hierarchy and the atmosphere is very comfortable and familiar.¹¹⁷

Almost all members have a rural background and similar qualifications in the field of social science. This prevents hierarchical structures. Planning and decisions are made together on the base of discussions within the group.

LESSAN gains funding from Terre des Hommes, Germany and some private subscriptions.¹¹⁸

In the following table I present a summary of the profiles of the examined NGOs.

¹¹⁴ Own source

¹¹⁵ Own source

¹¹⁶ For more Information, see chapter 6.2.3.

¹¹⁷ Own source

¹¹⁸ Own source

	UB Groups/<i>Bina Swadaya</i>	WALHI	LESSAN
Foundation	Traditional Background	Intellectual Background	Rural Background
Official Status	Informal Groups/ <i>Yayasan</i>	Network	<i>Yayasan</i>
Objectives	<u>Economical Objectives:</u> Uplift the Economic Situation Enhance Participation.	<u>Environmental Objectives:</u> Dialogue between Regional and National Level Encouragement of Local Groups	<u>Welfare and Educational Objectives:</u> Enhance the System of Local Medicine Enhance Emancipation and Participation
Orientation towards Extern Structures	Intertwined with Official Structures	Good Contacts to the Government	Work in Niches
Internal Structures	Hierarchical	Democratical	Equal
Activities	Saving and Loan Activities	Networking Advocacy Research Training Education	Community Work Advocacy Research Training

Own summary

6. Traditional Elements and Values of the Examined NGOs

In the next chapter I discuss the traditional elements of leadership, distribution of power and the principle of harmony: *rukun* within the three examined NGOs.

6.1. Leadership and Distribution of Power

One important feature of the Javanese culture is the sense of hierarchy and respect, *hormat*, as I described in chapter two. The social net is based on mutual obligations and verbal expressions of respect. Rational and objective behaviour is inappropriate in meetings. Social relations refer to family structures, even in modern groups and organisations. The official address of leaders is *bapak* (Father) and *ibu* (Mother). This reciprocal relation should harmonise heterogeneous groups and lines the members in a vertical chain. The address *ibu* and *bapak* implies mutual obligations and creates a clear hierarchy of leader and followers. The leader is responsible for his family and makes all important decisions. The followers pay respect and submission to their leader and accept his or her power. In the next chapter I will elaborate on the leadership and the distribution of power within the three NGOs. I will concentrate on the internal structures of the NGOs.

6.1.1. *Usaha Bersama*

My elaboration about leadership and distribution of power in this chapter concentrates on the *Usaha Bersama* groups, because the cultural contradictions are most obvious in the rural surrounding.

The importance of capable and honest leadership for self-help groups is often stressed in development theories.¹¹⁹ As many development approaches see the local cadres as a main target group for their programmes, the village elite is focused on to function as multiplier and is involved in training courses. Contradictions can emerge easily in this concept, because the leaders could use the organisation and its resources for personal benefit.¹²⁰

According to the examinations of H. Bongartz, UB groups which are successful have usually dominant leaders, who are the motor of the group.¹²¹ Subsequently the leaders come from higher socio-economic status, have a very good educational background and work in the official sector.¹²² Farmers are underrepresented in the groups' board. „For teachers, government officials and other leaders with a high social status, the fact that they were elected into leadership position was just normal ..., whereas for leaders coming from lower socio-economic strata the position of a board member, especially

¹¹⁹ Bongartz 1989:69

¹²⁰ Bongartz 1989:70

¹²¹ The leader could be in the position of the chairperson, the secretary, the treasurer or another member of the board. (Bongartz 1989:75)

¹²² Bongartz 1989:76ff

that of a secretary or treasurer, implied a change in their status.¹²³ That shows the perception of leadership in the Javanese context, which I described in chapter two.

As mentioned above, the foundation of UB groups refers often to a charismatic person and subsequently, founding members have a high representation within the leadership. Although most groups formally have a rotating principle among all members, “the only rotation which happens in practice is that among leaders, e.g. the secretary became treasurer who, in turn, was elected into the credit committee from which the new secretary consequently emerged.”¹²⁴ As the village elite is not the target group of the self-help approach, but has the important positions within the UB groups, there is no adequate representation of the farmers’ interests.

6.1.2. WALHI

Mrs. Erna Witular was the first Director of WALHI. “Apart from her own personal dynamism, the generally favourable response from the Indonesian government to WALHI was no doubt assisted by her husband’s membership of the DPR¹²⁵. At the same time, an enormous boost has been given to WALHI’s work by the strong support given to the role of community organisations by the Minister of Population and Environment, Prof. Emil Salim. The importance of Prof. Salim’s ‘conversion’ to the environmental cause lies in the high esteem in which he is held in economic and planning circles and his consequent capacity to bridge numerous cultural, disciplinary, ideological gaps between environmentalists and ‘technocrats’.”¹²⁶ The good contacts to people with influence at the government level is one of the reasons, why WALHI’s work is quite effective on the national level.

Erna Witular describes her role “als Motivatorin, wobei sie versucht haette, den demokratischen Prozess, der ihrer Meinung nach in NGOs am besten praktizierbar ist, in Gang zu halten. Die Mitarbeiter einer NGO haetten das Recht, ihre Meinung zu aeußern, da sie sich aufgrund der geringen finanziellen Entschaeudigung eher als freiwillige Mitarbeiter fuehlten. Fuer die meisten Mitarbeiter waere diese Arbeit keine Lebensstellung, sondern ein vorruebergender Arbeitsplatz, durch den man wichtige Erfahrungen sammeln kann. Es waere wichtig, die Meinung der Mitarbeiter zu hoeren und zu beruecksichtigen, da sie ‘Teilhaber’ der NGO sind bzw. Ihre Zeit fuer deren

¹²³ Bongartz 1989:77

¹²⁴ Bongartz 1989:75

¹²⁵ Indonesia’s Parliament

¹²⁶ Eldridge 1989:38ff

Entwicklung investiert haben. Der ‘leader’ haette die Aufgabe, die Mitarbeiter durch Kommunikation untereinander als auch zu sich selbst in Gang zu halten, wobei dies umso schwieriger werde, je mehr NGOs sich zu kleinen Buerokratien entwickeln. ... Man sollte davon ausgehen, dass der ‘leader’ aufgrund seiner Erfahrung gewaehlt worden ist. Sollte sich jedoch waehrend des ‘decision making process’ andere Aussagen als besser herausstellen, so hat auch der ‘leader’ das zu akzeptieren.”¹²⁷ The statement of Erna Witalar makes clear, that the director of WALHI as the leader of the organisation has no authoritarian position, but has accountability to the representation of the members and their interests.

6.1.3. LESSAN

The foundation process of LESSAN was based on a group of people who know each other on a more or less private base and who joint together in their engagement against neglection and exploitation and their fight for more justice and a better situation for marginalised people. So the foundation of LESSAN took place in a equal and not hierarchical atmosphere. The members of LESSAN work, as mentioned above, quite autonomous and self-accountable on projects, nevertheless do they discuss and plan bigger actions together. The formal frame of LESSAN as a *yayasan* does not produce a hierarchical atmosphere, because all decisions and planning are made in the members meeting where every person can freely contribute his or her opinion. The formal positions as chairman or treasurer are not fixed on one person, but change in an alternating order.¹²⁸ According to my impression, the working atmosphere is comfortable and equal and there is no accumulation of power to one person or a cadre. The members of LESSAN have a rural background with similar qualification, so no leadership according to higher education is predominant. One of the members of LESSAN has visited Europe and the NGO attains foreign visits from friends, journalists and students who make an internship at LESSAN. So there is an exchange of Indonesian and European values between the members of the project and the visitors, which affects both sides.

In the following table I present a summary of the examined NGO’s leadership and the distribution of power.

¹²⁷ Frings 1991:120ff

¹²⁸ Own source

	UB Groups	WALHI	LESSAN
Leadership	<u>Dominant Leader</u> with High Socio-Economic Status	<u>Accountable Leader</u> with Influence to the Government	<u>Alternating Leadership</u> between Members
Distribution of Power	<u>Initiative Comes from Leader</u> <u>Little Representation of the Members</u>	<u>Initiative comes from Represented Members</u> <u>Decision-Making: Mixture between Consensus and Democratic Principle</u>	<u>Initiative Comes from all Members</u> <u>Decision-Making: Discussion and Consensus</u>

Own summary

6.2. *Rukun*: Participation Versus the Principle of Harmony?

Another main feature of Javanese culture is *rukun*, the principle of harmony and conflict avoidance. As I described in chapter two, it is very important for Javanese to maintain harmony, so all individuals should act peacefully to remove unharmonic elements. Exponent positions and initiative character show an offence to social balance and are inappropriate, even when they could improve the situation of the people. This ethic was misused by ex-dictator Suharto to secure his position. His policy of the floating mass and the restraint of criticism was as well based on the principles of *rukun*. The strong military and the police was of course more effective to enforce Suhartos dictatory politics than the stress on traditional Javanese ethic. But nevertheless is the forced adaption of the Indonesian people to Suhartos repression very deep rooted. Resistance and contradiction and even criticism to authorities and leaders is unmoral and very seldom.

In chapter four, I described some aspects of the Western meaning of participation. The common understanding of participation in the West refers mostly to an active process, in which own interest are presented and should be taken into account. This is not according to the principles of *rukun*.

In the following chapter, I will examine more exactly where the tensions between *rukun* and the Western understanding of participation can be found.

There are two levels of participation. One level refers to the internal structure of the NGO and the other level refers to the activities of the NGO. If the internal structure of the NGO is participatory, the activities are also in a participatory manner.

In the following examinations I put the focus not so much on the very inner circle of the NGOs, as the degree of the participation of NGO members is correlated with the distribution of power, which I examined in the former chapter. I take a closer look at the activities of the NGOs, e. g. the planning of certain actions, the meetings with represented people and the cooperation with other projects.

6.2.1. *Usaha Bersama*

Within the UB groups, the members' meeting (*rapat anggota*) should be the highest decision-making authority, where the members can take influence on decisions and planning affairs. „Ideally, according to the rules and regulations developed by *Bina Swadaya*, a *rapat anggota* would be a monthly evaluation and planning session where the activities of the group should be reflected. Decisions to be made at the *rapat anggota* concern predominantly financial matters such as the disbursement of new loans, the application and utilisation of external credits, etc. But the admission of new members and the election of leaders should also be carried out during the members' meeting. Apart from this, the members store their regular savings and repay their credits during the meetings. It is stated within the statutes of the groups that the meeting are not to be utilized for discussion politics and religion.“¹²⁹ The experiences which H. Bongartz made during his attendance of *rapat anggotas* was, that „the most important subject to deal with during the regular meetings was handling the groups' saving and loan activities. In many cases no other activities were carried out during the meetings, except watching TV collectively. Quite a number of groups with a religious background, usually Catholic groups ..., utilize the regular meetings for praying.“¹³⁰ Decisions and planning are meant to be made through *musyawarah* and *mufakat*. „In practice this often means that the chairman ask the members to agree with his decisions and they automatically answer „*setuju!*“ („we agree“). If somebody does not join the chorus he might be regarded as too stupid (*bodoh*) to understand the leaders' suggestion.“¹³¹ The Javanese conflict-avoiding procedures are, according to this statements, predominant within the UB groups. The members' meeting is in reality not the highest authority in the groups' decision-making process, but a „ceremony to reconfirm the leaders sole authority.“¹³²

¹²⁹ Bongartz 1989:80

¹³⁰ Bongartz 1989:81

¹³¹ Bongartz 1989:81

¹³² Bongartz 1989:82

Participatory planning is in the conceptual framework of the self-help approach, as I described in chapter four, one method to improve the economic situation of the disadvantaged people, by their active participation in the planning of income-generating activities. According to the data of H. Bongartz, the two main constraints which hindered the functioning of a participatory-planning instrument was „the relatively low qualification of both the fieldworkers and the groups‘ leaders and members in the field of research and systematic planning, which resulted in a lack of self-confidence and passivity. The second constraint –maybe the more relevant one- was the heterogeneous (particular in the section: occupation and source of income) membership composition of the group investigated which hindered the establishment and development of collective economic activities...“¹³³ H. Bongartz describes that successful participatory planning „has to be based on a concrete idea for establishing a small-scale business, and has to be combined with training and educational aspects. The smaller the planned enterprise is and the faster it can be realized, the greater is the possibility that the people involved will participate in other (future) planning activities.“¹³⁴

Over all, it seems that in the Javanese philosophy of harmony, where everyone has his own certain place in the world which is determined by the cosmic order, planning in the means of influencing in an innovative manner, is inappropriate and will be sanctioned. In summary, the participatory aspect is not very strong in the UB groups. Traditional values and manners dominate the structure and the work of the groups. The leaders who concentrate the main power on themselves don‘t make any effort to enhance participation among their followers.

6.2.2. WALHI

The network WALHI gave account to the growing demand of the regional groups towards more participation. The elected members of the presidium represent their special region. After the election as members of the presidium on the national level, they have to be reconfirmed from the NGOs in their region. On the regional level, there is as well a presidium which is, according to the activities of the local groups, more active or more passive. Through this regulation the base should be strengthened and the participation to national decision-making processes should be enhanced. Every three years there is a national meeting in which the regional presidiums can contribute to the

¹³³ Bongartz 1989:85

¹³⁴ Bongartz 1989:85

general lines of WALHI's work. At regional meetings, the decisions from the national meeting are implemented.

Referring to the experience of Ulrike E. Frings, the meetings of the presidium are according to democratic structures. Discussions and listenings of the personal contributions are the main elements of WALHI. The decision-making process has Western and traditional aspects and WALHI tries to combine Western forms of democracy, without hurting the traditional *mufakat* and *musyawarah*. According to the statements of members of WALHI¹³⁵, the Indonesian way of long discussions and searching for a compromise by the leader is preferred. The method of consensus guarantees that good opinions are not overvoted, what is especially important for the representation of the smaller islands, because they are in the minority. On the other side, endless discussions can be very ineffective and irrational. One director of WALHI mentioned that voting in general is very difficult for 'us' Indonesians, because then we must decide definitely.¹³⁶ The way of WALHI to combine Western and traditional concepts and values are as well caused by visits abroad and experiences in the cooperation with international NGOs.

6.2.3. LESSAN

One main aspect of LESSAN's work is to enhance the emancipation and the participation of marginalised people. LESSAN informs and educates through meetings, leaflets and seminars and is a platform on which resistance against suppression and exploitation can be formed.

One main focus of LESSAN is the Merapi¹³⁷ region. Since 2001 there are plans of the government to design a Merapi mountain and Merbabu mountain national park area. The government hasn't consulted with the communities living in this area and has shown no transparency about the plans. The official side has done no steps, to integrate the needs and rights of the people who live in this area for generations and know exactly

¹³⁵ Own source

¹³⁶ Frings 1991:118ff

¹³⁷ The Merapi volcano is situated in the north of Jogjakarta. The peasants who live in this region can take advantage of the big and fertile agrarian fields. It is one of the scarce regions where it is possible to have dairy cattle. The peasants collect the food for the cows at the slope of the volcano. In addition to this, the peasants collect firewood and medical herbs in the forest around the mountain.

how to maintain the natural environment. According to reports¹³⁸, the implementation of the national park includes the building of touristical infrastructure. The cultivation of land will be prohibited and their inhabitants have to fear resettlements. LESSAN formed a platform for the resistance against the government plans, collected data, built networks with other NGOs and functioned as ‚missing link‘ between the single settlements at the Merapi region. LESSAN helped the inhabitants to organise the resistance. The NGO gave the peasants a camera, to document their livelihood, their use and their protection of the region. LESSAN organised transports to the regional meetings and to the demonstrations and helped in forming contacts to local politicians and the media.

LESSAN and other NGOs worked together with WALHI, which as well supports the resistance against the national park. A peoples‘ meeting produced a statement and an open letter to the former President Megawati. WALHI who gave advocacy to the oppositional coalition, brought the Decree on trial at the State Administration Court.¹³⁹ During a visit of President Megawati Sukarnoputri, the peasants demonstrated, though they have been put under enomous pressure from the government.¹⁴⁰ The resistance was sucessful, Megawati didn‘t announce the national park.

Another example of the participatory work of LESSAN is the net SEPEJAM. The peasants of this project plant traditional herbs, manufact Jamu, the traditional medicine and sell it in small stalls in the villages. Expanding aims are the exchange of knowledge, the distribution and the save of seeds, the introduction of securities for the members and taking influence in local politics. The net has 300 to 400 members and was founded at an empowerment seminar of LESSAN.

According to my experiences, LESSAN put very much weight to values like participation, emancipation and equality. The members explained to me that these values are very important but that it is very hard to implement them in the daily work with the peasants and the officials. Popular participation, in the means of taking political influence, has to be very circumvent, as the danger of getting in the shooting line of governmental repression is very high. Participation is very contradictionary in the work with the basis. On the one hand, the people have the desire to participate in decisions and take influence in planning, on the other hand the implementation of this desire is quite low. It takes a long time and a certain familiar atmosphere to get to know, what

¹³⁸ Own sources

¹³⁹ WALHI 2005

¹⁴⁰ Own sources

people think and need. As the situation gets more official, the acting is more restricted according to traditional sociocultural values.

In the following table I present a summary of the examined NGO's conflict avoiding strategies, participatory manner and traditional values.

	UB Groups	WALHI	LESSAN
Conflict Avoiding Strategies, <i>rukun</i>	High	Medium	Little
Participation of the NGO Members (inner circle)	No Participation of Members	Participation of Members	High Participation of Members
Participatory Manner of Activities	Very Little Participatory Activities	Encouragement of and Cooperation with Local Groups	Activities are Based on the Participation of the Local People
Traditional Values	Strongly Established	Mixture between Traditional Values and Western Influences	Strong Approach to Western Values

Own source

7. Cultural Contradictions - Western Values Versus Javanese Values

Participation, emancipation, empowerment and self-reliance are core values of NGOs, which are linked to the Western idea of social justice and equity. Rarely the discussion comes to the fact, that concepts and values in the development work must be seen within the background of the culture and the context in which it is implemented.¹⁴¹

My examples of different, sometimes contradictory definitions of values in the Javanese and in the Western culture, e. g. the different understanding of power, the contents of the term democracy or the meaning of participation, show, that the gap between the interpretation of terms is wide. The case studies show, how distinct the implementation

¹⁴¹ Zimmermann, Rappaport 1988

of certain core values are. Therefore I think, it is very important to take a closer look to the Javanese background and context in which Western values shall be implemented, and where exactly the contradictions can be found. The often summoned Javanese cultural determination refers to Geertz¹⁴² and other authors, who describe the Javanese culture as a strong determining frame, in which the Javanese people act. *Rukun* and *hormat* are in this theory main aspects in restraining the Javanese to free themselves from the cultural boundaries. I want to examine more exactly, which aspects of the Javanese culture are under which conditions determining which Javanese. Where are the main contradictions to Western values. Which scope have Javanese people within their cultural frame, at which situation is the culture really determining and which other aspects restrain people in their freedom of activity?

7.1. Concept of Power, Bapaktism

As I mentioned in chapter two, the concept of power in Indonesia has a strong metaphysical aspect and denies the moral or ethic controll. This is contradictory to the Western understanding of power. The understanding of power in Indonesia has many facets, mostly dependent of the socio and economic background of the people. According to the traditional concept of power, the power itself comes from a metaphysical, cosmic level. The humans who receive the power must be in inner balance in the means of controlling egoistic desires. The misuse of power on behalf of egocentric reasons shows an inner weakness of the leader and must lead to a withdraw from his position. So the power is not completely unquestionable. Power relates to harmony, and harmony relates to contentness. If the people are not content and wealthy, the ruler has to step back. The people don't have to be loyal any more and can support resistance against the ruler. So theoretically there is a moral control in the practice of power.

Today, power has mostly a materialistic base, subsequently the traditional concept of power lacks its base and is demystified. Nevertheless, a lot of Javanese support the idea of a strong and dominant leader. The conviction, that Indonesia needs a powerful leader with a hard political line is wide spread, and comes close to a mystifying picture.

As shown above, the Javanese concept of power includes the idea of participation and resistance.¹⁴³ In the today's praxis, it is very hard to realise this intervention, because the

¹⁴² Geertz 1961, 1987

¹⁴³ Uhle 2004:71

Indonesian political system lacks of legal structures to control power. According to my experiences, which are similar to these of C. Uhle, the today's concept of power is a mixture between on the one side, the traditional mystic perception of leadership, where metaphysical signs still play a role and on the other side, the knowledge that power has a materialistic foundation and that therefore the intention of a political leader is not the wealth of the population. Above this knowledge lies still the deep rooted ethic of *hormat* and *rukun*. This ethic gives, next to the fear of political repression, one condition in which the Javanese people act (not think) and which determine their behaviour. Criticism of the government, especially in rural areas, is made very seldom and hidden.

7.2. *Taktir* and *Roda Hidup*

Taktir, the personal fate and *roda hidup*, the wheel of life, are main aspects of the Javanese culture. How oppositional are these beliefs to Western values?

The personal fate has a big religious aspect. A common parable is that the humans are puppets in a marionette play and there is one who moves the strings. The puppets can't talk and move alone and don't know what will happen tomorrow. The only possibility to change the fate within this concept is to pray to God.

Another aspect of the belief in fate is the cultural and traditional one. The statement that it was always like that and the people must adapt to the tradition, makes the culture to a tool of the fate. In this case it is changeable and contestable.

Tightly connected with *taktir* is *roda hidup*. The image says, that the life turns as a wheel, once you are up and once you are down. You have to accept the situation in which you are, no matter in which position of the wheel you are. This picture is a quite dynamic one and makes the people not fatalistic or exasperated. There is always the possibility that the wheel will turn, and the situation will change.

The different interpretations of *taktir* depend mostly on the cultural and educational background. Rural people have a more religious sight and devote themselves to their fate. People who live in urban areas and for example the members of LESSAN have a more secular sight.¹⁴⁴

According to these statements, *taktir* and *roda hidup* have not to be a constraint to participation and emancipation. More and more people withdraw their devotion to

¹⁴⁴ own sources

obligatory living conditions and shift to a more materialistic and realistic sight. The aspect, that the personal position in life is not obligatory fixed makes the system dynamic and gives place and chances for change.

7.3. *Hormat, Rukun and Nrimo*

Hormat, the principle of respect and *rukun*, the principle of harmony are, according to Geertz¹⁴⁵, the main determining factors of the Javanese culture.

Hormat and *rukun* have been misused by Suharto to legitimise and control his dictatory regime. So the respect which should be given to people within the hierarchical system was diminished to a circle of suppression and fear. The responsibility and the loyalty was dissolved and was substituted by materialistic advantages and tactic acting.

Obedience is not obligatory in the system of respect and harmony, especially if the harmony is disturbed.¹⁴⁶ *Rukun* and *hormat* gives the place for pluralism and constructive argumentation, but was misused and newly determined by Suharto and enforced by the military.

Nevertheless is, according to my experiences, the right and the demand for resistance mostly theoretical. Christoph Uhle mentions that in the life of the peasants there is hardly any open criticism and resistance at official level.¹⁴⁷ He explains this phenomenon next to other factors, with *nrimo*. This means to accept ones fate and situation, to be modest and passive.¹⁴⁸ Modesty, to be relent and a high acceptance of the given situation decline the feeling of injustice and exploitation. Important to say is, that *nrimo* is not only the fulfilling of cultural categories, but is an expression of the lack of possibilities to change the structural conditions. So *nrimo* can as well be seen as a functional behaviour to abide by the actually unacceptational situation.

Rukun and *hormat* don't support a climate in which participation and emancipation is part of daily life, but these cultural values on the other side don't prohibit contradictions in interests and discussions, as *mufakat* and *musyawarah* shows. But the misuse of Suharto, the actual repressive political conditions together with the cultural aspect of *nrimo* make it very hard for Indonesian people to participate in political matters.

¹⁴⁵ Geertz 1960

¹⁴⁶ Uhle 2004:80

¹⁴⁷ Uhle 2004:81

¹⁴⁸ Christoph Uhle describes an example, where in an argumentation about some plans of the government, the minor group agrees to an unacceptational compromise because they don't have the position to fight for their affairs. *Nrimo* and *rukun* plays a major role in this acting. (Uhle 2004:83)

My elaborations on traditional elements and values in the Javanese NGO work and possible tensions between them and Western values show, that there are contradictions which nevertheless can be overcome. It is a matter of the social position and a matter of the availability of information, education and knowledge, if people are able to question their circumstances and can get active to improve their living condition. First of all, the lack of material resources, like school education, the lack of knowledge of political, economic and social relations and the lack of time, energy and money are factors which make it hard for people to debate their situation. Secondly, aspects of the Javanese culture and mainly their interpretation through the dictatorial regime of Suharto are contradictory to the Western understanding of participation, emancipation and equality. Some elements in the Javanese culture, make it hard for the people to resist injustice, but basically there is no cultural determination to stand repression and exploitation. A long history of colonialism and authoritarian political regimes makes it hard to develop structures of resistance. Fear of suppression and punishment make a lot of people indifferent and modesty about their situation.¹⁴⁹ The Javanese culture is based on hierarchical sight where there are obligations and commitments from both sides. This structure penetrates the daily life of every Javanese. The strong social hierarchy stands in contradiction to the Western idea of equality. But if the system of obligations and commitments is disturbed, which is the case in today's political system, there is the legitimation of resistance.

8. The Restrictive Policy of the Indonesian Government

To understand the relation between Javanese NGOs and the Indonesian government it is important to take a closer look to the political and social conditions in which NGOs have been formed and work. The New Order period in Indonesia was characterised by heavy centralisation of power, by coopt or neutralise dissident opinion and non-official activities of any kind. The relation between Javanese NGOs and the Indonesian government is therefore a mixture between cooperation and cooption. In addition to the repressive political climate, the cultural condition of *rukun* and *hormat* is also permeating the NGO sector. „The long history of state domination and centralized

¹⁴⁹ C. Uhle gives in his ‚Antiempowermentzirkel‘ a good summary about the cultural, historical, political and materialistic factors which hinders the implementation of empowerment. (Uhle 2004:95)

government has developed excellent skills and strategies on part of non-governmental institutions and groups to evade direct government control and create space for activities. On the other side, there is to some extent and at least outwardly, always an impression of harmonious cooperation between both parties. This has certainly its roots in the background of the dominant Javanese culture, in which conflicts are perceived of as disturbing social harmony and should therefore not be exposed.¹⁵⁰ The formation and the work of NGOs in Indonesia is a search for niches and appropriate tactics to restrain political restrictions. The net of formal and especially informal relations is sometimes not easy to reveal and therefore it is difficult to assess the work and tactic systematically.

There is no general and united line of the government regarding NGOs. Within the complex bureaucracy there are many supporters and opponents of NGOs, there is no united lobby within political parties, so there is much weight on informal structures, which play anyhow a very important role in the Indonesian culture.¹⁵¹

8.1. The Government as *Bapak*

To characterize the relation between the government and NGOs the word *bapak* is suitable. The leader, the hierarchical, bureaucratic apparatus has the unquestionable power of decision making and the follower has the role of obedience. The government see NGOs as a tool to implement their development programs. NGOs have the technical know-how and the contact to the basis, so the government seeks to coopt their services to increase popular support for their programs. „For their part, governments are attracted by the prospect that NGOs can assist them in achieving national development goals by mobilizing human resources and offering lower cost alternatives.“¹⁵² The government’s idea of NGO work is unpolitical and according to the state philosophy *pancasila*. Community help, environmental and economic problems should be handled unpolitically, whereas expertise and publications should be provided. This means that

¹⁵⁰ Utrecht 1986:204

¹⁵¹ Frings 1991:122

¹⁵² Eldridge 1988:3

the cooperation between the government and the NGOs works as long fine, as the NGO obeys the official authority and support their political line.

Another official role of NGOs is the connecting link between the top and the bottom.

„Denn soziologisch gesehen stehen die Gruendungsvaeter der NGOs als staedtische Intellektuelle and als logisches Ergebnis der frueheren Koalition zwischen Militaer und ‚Mittelklasse‘ der nationalen Elite in der Regierung nahe. Dieselbe ‚Mittelklasse‘ repraesentiert aber auch die (laendliche) Mehrheit der Bevoelkerung, da eine offizielle (mittlere und untere, z.B. parteipolitische) Ebene zwischen Regierung und Basis fehlt. Da sich die Regierung der Stellung der NGOs bewusst ist, schwankt ihre Haltung von der Aufforderung zur Teilhabe (wie z.B. im Umweltgesetz von 1982 verankert) bis zur weitgehenden Kontrolle (ORMAS-Gesetz).“¹⁵³

The intervention of the state and its measures to improve the situation of marginalised people is often counterproductive and leads to a devolution of resources and decision making structures of communities.¹⁵⁴ The government health care centres (*Puskesmas*) provide health education and services at village level, but the work is often ineffective, unprofessional and is based on Western medicine which is expensive and implies a lot of side effects. Therefore, NGOs try to built up parallel structures to the official ones to guarantee the availability of basic needs.¹⁵⁵

The situation of NGOs in Indonesia is ambivalent. On the one side, the NGO must play the passive and devotive role towards the government and on the other side, the NGO mustn't forget to represent the affairs of the represented people. Larger NGOs “also hope to influence the mainstream formulation and implementation of official development programs, while seeking access to funds and other benefits. On the other hand, they fear loss of identity and grassroots links.”¹⁵⁶ Through the assistance and the cooperation with official programmes, the NGOs gain more competence and therefore more participation in political affairs. Nevertheless, the NGOs always move on the narrow path of cooperation and criticism and they try to find niches to work independently from official restrictions. The reports of the NGOs must for this reason be according to the official line and the successful fulfilment of implementation are sometimes very artificial.¹⁵⁷ Sometimes it is not obvious to NGOs where they collide with the official line, because this is very unframed and dependent to the certain

¹⁵³ Frings 1991:124

¹⁵⁴ Eldridge 1997:201

¹⁵⁵ own source

¹⁵⁶ Eldridge 1989:5

¹⁵⁷ Eldridge 1989:5

situation of the conflict and dependent to the mood of the officials. Political faults of NGOs can be tidened up, through good personal contacts to personalities with influence in the government.

The government seeks to coopt NGOs and to neutralise their targets like participation through establishing parallel structures. Official organisations which should concentrate and mobilise certain target groups such as woman, youth and farmers, are institutions for political control but without any popular support, innovative character or influence. „Though important as vehicle for political control, excessive reliance on ‚functional groups‘ and GONGOs¹⁵⁸ is counter-productive to the solution of pressing social, economic and environmental problems of growing concern to an increasingly broad spectrum of decision-makers. This contradiction is central to understand the confused semi-public debate about ‚participation‘, political ‚openness‘ and so forth currently being conducted in Indonesia.“¹⁵⁹ This quotation shows very clear the tactique of the government to deal with discussions about people’s affairs. The officials do not repress them at all, but interpretate values and needs of people according to their philosophy. NGOs, especially bigger NGOs which work on higher official levels, are squeezed in the contradiction to take part in the harmonic official shine discussions with the authorities and not to loose their identity in representing people’s needs and to push forward a deeper discussion about participation and democratisation.

As NGOs have not a secure and definitely legal status in Indonesia, some problems occur as well in the institutional sector. The elected representatives gain their support mostly through the formation of interest groups. The prefix non- in non governmental excludes the NGOs from the competitive electoral politics. As it is uncommon in Indonesia, that some kind of organisation is not related to politics, the politicians see the NGOs as rivals, because they do not join the game of trading votes for services. So another problem of NGOs is the dependence of patronage and protection from politicians. The expectations of reciprocal support comes in conflict with the concepts of the NGOs.

8.2. Legal Status of NGOs - The Restrictive ORMAS Law

¹⁵⁸ Acronym for ‚Government Organised Non-Government Organisation‘, for example the Indonesian Labour Foundation and several GOLKAR-front organisations.

¹⁵⁹ Eldridge 1989:5

The 1973 Regulation Governing Overseas Technical Cooperation and Assistance, requires foreign NGOs to sign agreements with the Indonesian government, when they intend to cooperate with Indonesian NGOs. These papers cover general objectives and operational methods with the relevant government departments. „These regulations were widely recognised as unworkable and were partly a by-product of conflict between intelligence agencies and between the Departements of Home Affairs (*Dalam Negeri*) and Social Affairs (*Depsos*). In practice, overseas NGOs, dealing through their Indonesian counterparts at local level sought approval from and periodically reported in general terms to the District Head (*Bupati*). Who in turn gained clearance from and furnished necessary reports to higher authority“¹⁶⁰

In 1985 the Indonesian Parliament passed the law on Social Organisations: ORMAS (*Undang Undang Organisasi Kemasyarakatan*). A strong perception has been generated inside and outside Indonesia that this law will undermine the autonomy of NGOs. Whereas P. Eldridge mentions, that it doesn't seem that the situation for foreign funding agencies has much changed.¹⁶¹ However the Indonesian organisations themselves, especially those who deal with sensitive themes as Human Rights, advocacy or Community Development and education, did have much critics on the law.

Bevor the law was launched, it was very easy to become a legal body in Indonesia. All what the organisation had to do was to register with a notary as a foundation (*yayasan*)¹⁶². It is now unclear, which organisations are affected by the ORMAS law, because the acronym refers to organisations with a huge number of members (*organisasi massa*) such as trade unions, student youth organisations or political parties. The term actually used in the Law is: Social Organisations (*organisasi kemasyarakatan*) which covers a far broader community context and refers to „Organisationen, ..., die von Buergern aufgrund von gleicher Aktivitaeten, Berufe, Funktionen und Religion gegruendet worden sind.“¹⁶³ This does not fit to the model of NGOs, which are no unified organisations. Even in government circles there was confusion and the former

¹⁶⁰ Eldridge 1989:6 ff

¹⁶¹ Eldridge 1989:7

¹⁶² *Yayasans* requires only a very general statement of objectives. The organisation do not need any formal membership base and can be set up in the name of trustees. *Yayasans* can establish institutions (*lembaga*) or executive bodies (*badan*) which can operate flexibly. Such organizational forms have generally proved successful in evading potential takeover or cooption by the government and associated front agencies.(own source)

¹⁶³ Frings 1991:125

Home Affairs Minister interpreted the ORMAS law in this way, that the „notary’s certificate continues to provide the necessary legal basis for NGOs’ existence.“¹⁶⁴

Another point of discussion about the ORMAS law is the requirement that the five guiding principles (*pancasila*) of national ideology should be written into every organisation’s statement of objectives. A critical discussion about the *pancasila* structure of the state and the society is not possible any more. Especially the Muslim organisations feel threatened by the ORMAS law.

Another point of criticism is that the law forces guidance of the social organisations by the government. „...‘technical guidance‘ by the appropriate departments and ‚general guidance‘ through the *Dalam Negeri* structure. However the precise responsibility is left vague and in practice leaves organisations with a good deal of discretion in selecting sympathisers and protectors from within the bureaucracy.“¹⁶⁵

Another concern is, that the government will seek to coop larger NGOs under their own umbrella organisations. The ORMAS law officially suggests that organisations which are similar in activities and function should join together. There is the danger, that the organisations loose their autonomy as it happened in the past under the functional groups of GOLKAR.¹⁶⁶ NGOs have tried to counter this endeavour of the government by establishing their own networks and forums. These are occasionally so strong, that they can hinder the cooption through the government. „This is providing to be a complex task, requiring skill and flexibility in order both to hold the government at arm’s length while maintaining unity in the face of conflicting interests and approaches among their members. Smaller locally-based organisations also resent what they see as a growing concentration of power and resources in the hand of the larger LPSMs and are inclined to resist coordinating structures promoted by them.“¹⁶⁷

This shows the different positions and objectives of NGOs. The larger NGOs have to resist cooption by the government and the smaller NGOs have to resist being patronised from the larger NGOs. The question of regulation, control and guidance is an immanent aspect of Indonesian NGOs and requires much flexibility and diplomatic skill.

Though the implementation of the ORMAS law seems fairly difficult, it nevertheless shows that the official side pushes forward a higher regulation and surveillance of political organisations. According to P. Eldridge and U. Frings, the law is not effectively operational and the NGOs have still a broad spectrum of ways to steer

¹⁶⁴ Eldridge 1989:8

¹⁶⁵ Eldridge 1989:8

¹⁶⁶ Frings 1991:126

¹⁶⁷ Eldridge 1989 :8

around regulations and surveillance. Formal and mostly informal contacts render the thorns of the ORMAS law less harmful.

8.3. Formal and Informal Contacts to the Government

Indonesian NGOs know, that an oppositional attitude contra the government causes a decrease of their position and their radius of action, therefore they try to influence the progressive members of the government and search patronage from officials. Because of the unclear and unstable politics of the government and the hardly understandable administrative ways, the work of the NGOs is characterised by a day-by-day decision-making. The technique of contacting informally the responsible government office through friends, relatives or colleges, takes a lot of time, but is very effective. „Vor der Beantragung eines Projekts sind bereits im Vorfeld informelle Gespräche mit Regierungsbeamten zu führen, d. h. der Rat des ‚Zuständigen‘ ist gehört worden. Der Gang des offiziellen Weges wurde als schwierig dargestellt, zumal die entsprechende Regierungsstelle ebenso ihren Entwicklungsplan erfüllen will, der mit den Interessen der NGOs kollidieren kann.“¹⁶⁸ Formal, institutionalised meetings between the government and the NGOs are not existing. In the case of a long term project, there can be regular meetings with the responsible ministry. If the referring person in the ministry changes to another ministry, it is possible, that this ministry is further on responsible.¹⁶⁹

There is no institutionalised communication between the government and the NGOs, the most important relations are the informal contacts. The importance of them is raising because the government doesn't acknowledge the NGOs as similar partners. Moreover, the NGOs are not united and they lack of bargaining power. What exist, are more or less tight groups, networks and coalitions.

The network INGI (International NGO Group on Indonesia) was founded in 1984 and is a network of Indonesian and international NGOs. INGI forms a platform on which national and international cooperation is possible. The network deals with themes like: Human Rights, Transmigration and Exploitation. The role of Indonesian NGOs is strengthened through the international dialogue und support.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Frings 1991:128

¹⁶⁹ Frings 1991:129

¹⁷⁰ own source

9. Autonomy versus Cooption-The Relation between the Government and the Examined NGOs

In the next chapter I will examine the relation between the three case-studie NGOs and the government according to autonomy and cooption through the state. I follow the model¹⁷¹ by P. Eldridge:

	High-Level Partnership: Grassroots Development	High-Level Politics: Grassroots Mobilisation	Empowerment at the Grassroots
	UB Groups/<i>Bina Swadaya</i>	WALHI	LESSAN
Cooperate with Official Programmes	Yes	Limited	No
Development or Emancipation	Development	Emancipation	Emancipation
Penetration of State Structures	Medium	High	Low
Relations between Small Groups and NGO Sponsors	Semidependent	Mutually Supportive	Autonomous
Orientation vis a State Structures	Accomodate	Change	Circumvent

In: Eldridge 1998:11

9.1. *Bina Swadaya* and *Usaha Bersama* groups

In the following examinations, I will concentrate on *Bina Swadaya*, because the NGO deals, as a representative of the UB groups, with the government.

Bina Swadaya and the small-scale cooperatives UB belong to the first category: High-Level Partnership: Grassroots Development. *Bina Swadaya* participate in official

¹⁷¹ Eldridge 1989:11

development programmes and seeks to influence and modify them into a more participatory direction. The UB groups link mostly to existing community organisations and the main direction is development. *Bina Swadaya* seeks no effort in changing or intervening in the political process as such and cultivates cooperative relations with the relevant officials. This is seen as the most effective means of preserving the autonomy of the NGO and the small local groups with which they work.

As described above, *Bina Swadaya* has shifted its emphasis towards cooperation in government programmes. In the sector loan-facilities there are engagements with the Bank Rakyat Indonesia, government offices, the military and foreign donors, notable from Germany.¹⁷² The target of *Bina Swadaya's* cooperation is nevertheless to strengthen the collective bargaining power of the smallholders. As government-owned companies who hold funds for small-credit schemes are commonly mismanaged and give support on an individual base, the scheme falls into decline and gives the smallholders no power.¹⁷³ *Bina Swadaya* form smallholders collectives and take the role of a diplomat between the government and the smallholders, for example in the sensitive issue of land certificates, prices of seeds and the delivery of inputs and services. Additionally, *Bina Swadaya* negotiate with banks about loan facilities and repayment rates, and acts as a guarantor on many instances.¹⁷⁴ *Bina Swadaya's* work in the small-scale schemes is much more effective, reliable and participatory towards the holders than the government schemes, so the provincial authorities and foreign donors support the NGO. Through the tight engagements with officials, *Bina Swadaya* sought to influence the direction of government organisations by interventions at various levels. The NGO has enabled the establishment of additional groups and organisations which do the necessary support on village level, where the government organisations have failed. *Bina Swadaya* also support the local organisations to get independent of KUDs, which work highly uneffectiv and constrains participation. As *Bina Swadaya* cooperates with government programmes on a higher administrative level, where national banks and foreign donors

¹⁷² „Bina Swadaya's involvement in the Nuclear Smallholders' Scheme (NSS) at Ophir in West Pasaman district, West Sumatra entails a complex five-sided relationship between Bina Swadaya, the Departement of Agriculture, the Provincial government, the West German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and an association of smallholders groups called Badan Kerjasama Antara Kelompok (BKAK). The Ophir scheme also formes part of a more general Area Development Programme assisted by GTZ over 10-15 years. It is also one project within the national NSS scheme being developed in most transmigration areas, though the Ophir programme entails rehabilitation of a run down estate owned by ABRI. Most of the farmers are former labourers on the estate or military veterans.“ (Eldridge 1989:15)

¹⁷³ Eldridge 1989:15

¹⁷⁴ The BKAK has raised its position according to effective work and with the cooperation of *Bina Swadaya*, the bank has developed sufficient confidene in BKAKs capability not to demand land certificates as collateral. (Eldridge 1989:16)

are involved, it is obvious, that the affairs of the concerned people do not have the first priority. There are many interests of many sides, which makes it obligatory to find compromises. „The significant question is whether the experience of selfmanagement by different types of groups across the country plus a measure of economic success will over time alter the quality of relations between them and the various government agencies. On the positive side, *Bina Swadaya*'s formular of informal group formation within a framework of official protection does not appear to have changed essentially when cooperating in official programmes compared with their traditional approach.“¹⁷⁵

9.2. WALHI

WALHI is settled in the second approach of the model by P.Eldridge, which he describes as: High-Level Politics: Grassroots Mobilisation. WALHI takes a more critique position to the government, and doesn't cooperate with official development programmes, besides some research on behalf of the government. WALHI's objectives are consciousness-raising, advocacy, mobilisation and the promotion of participation of smaller groups in regional and national politics. The NGO seeks legal status and protection for them against higher level officials. WALHI monitors political developments in Jakarta and arranges forums of discussion and politically oriented activities at higher levels.

As described above, WALHI has a good response from the Indonesian government, due to the support of important officials, for example Prof. Emil Salim. An important breakthrough of WALHI was the official recognition of the participation of community groups in the implementation of environmental policy in the draft of the 1982 Environmental Law. Despite WALHI enjoys protection and support from government sources, the NGO is not lacking autonomous strength. „In the first place, its structure has been designed to protect the organisation from takeover, as every associated group is legally autonomous. In any case, most activities depend on voluntary cooperation at regional or local level.“¹⁷⁶ WALHI itself can be quite critical of government policy in relation to matters as transmigration policy and procedures for Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA). WALHI has due to its official protection and international support, a high amount of bargaining power. The NGO started a correspondance between twelve Indonesian NGO representatives and the former President of the World Bank which was

¹⁷⁵ Eldridge 1989:17

¹⁷⁶ Eldridge 1989:40

published in WALHI's newsletter *Environesia*. The message was, that the Bank should stop their funding until the Indonesian government made sure, that large scale resettlement is ecologically sustainable and that indigenous communities are involved in the planning.¹⁷⁷ In 1987 substantial extensions of EIA procedures were laid down. They enhance the transparency of official planning and gives the NGOs a certain amount of participation. „EIA may be seen as providing a potential entry point for raising awareness of environmental issues both in government circles and in the general community. But it could equally be used as a vehicle for gaining NGO acquiescence or at least watering down of opposition to already pre-determined schemes in the absence of well informed and active local groups.“¹⁷⁸

9.3. LESSAN

LESSAN can be filed in the third category of P. Eldridg's model. He labels it as: Empowerment at the Grassroots. LESSAN's focus of action is at the local level. The objectives with the basis of emancipation, put weight on consciousness-raising and participation. LESSAN supports the formation of self-reliant groups at the base, and enhance therefore an informally structured popular movement. LESSAN seeks legal and bureaucratic niches within which to operate, contacts to government agencies are driven to a minimum. The most contact with the government raise from advocacy work and the support of groups on their way to autonomy. LESSAN minimises its involvement in large-scale networking arrangements and emphasises face-to-face dealings rather than formal organisation.

The conflict about the Merapi national park is one example for the fact, that the NGO stands in contradiction to government planning and concepts. LESSAN's way of working is to form, organise and support the resistance of the directly concerned people. Due to the informal level on which this happens, LESSAN works very autonomous from official side. To gain more support and to influence political decisions on regional level, it is obviously necessary to raise the issues on higher levels. Subsequently, LESSAN supports the groups in getting in contact to the media and the higher official levels. If it is desired, LESSAN represent the local groups and formulate their affairs.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Eldridge 1989:40

¹⁷⁸ Eldridge 1989:41ff

¹⁷⁹ In the Merapi conflict, LESSAN and other NGOs start, with the background of the parliamentary election, the contact to members of the provincial Parliament in Jogjakarta. It occurs, that several oppositional parties joint the resistance against the National Park contra the interest of the local people. Additionally to this, the press gets more and more interested in the conflict. Soon later, there was a hearing in the Parliament in Jogjakarta.

The NGO networks together with other local, regional and national NGOs, to strengthen the bargaining power. This leads often to a conflict of interests, because on this level, many parties and many interests are involved in the affair. E. g. networks LESSAN together with WALHI in the Merapi conflict, where differences in the main target can occur. LESSAN's goal is to represent the concerned farmers and their interests, WALHI has the background of a highly reputed NGO with contacts to higher official levels, where sometimes compromises must be made. On the one side it is very useful, to have supporters on influential national levels, on the other side there must be made cuts to the original target. In the work with the locals, LESSAN has much autonomy from governmental side, but when issues are raised on a higher level, the conflicts with the officials decrease the autonomy. Nevertheless it would go too far to say, that the government wants to coopt LESSAN in a broader way, and use them for implementation of their affairs. The NGO seeks for niches to built up parallel structures to the official ones and therefore avoids fundings and support from the government side, in the consciousness that this would influence and restrict their work.

10. The Acrobatic Act of NGOs

NGOs in Java are like acrobats, who must perform incredible and apparently impossible bendings and dislocations to master their role.

10.1. Impact and Effectiveness of the Examined NGOs

It takes some effort, to assess the effectiveness of NGO activities. It is hard to find a method to measure the impact on the concerned people and their surrounding. The activities of NGOs reach people on different levels and it takes intensive and sensitive studies to draw a realistic picture.

To proceed from, is the objective of the NGO: Which target group shall be reached and which needs shall be changed. Are the aims reached and if not, why. The impact of a NGO always implies changes and refers to several levels. The activities change the social, economic, political and cultural living conditions of the people. The question is: Is the change positive or negative? This questions implies a lot of aspects, because the answer is mostly not a clear yes or no. I try to summarise the impact of the examined

LESSAN organises the transport of the peasants in the city, to joint a demonstration in front of the Parliament.
(Own sources)

NGOs according to the changes in the economic, social, political and cultural field with the background question: Has the situation of the people improved? Further I try to imply the external factors, which makes some changes impossible.

10.1.1. *Usaha Bersama* Groups

In the following, I will concentrate on the *Usaha Bersama* groups, because the direct impact on the farmers comes through them.

The impact of UB groups in the economic field should be the outrages one, as the most important and sometimes only activity operated in a collective way in all groups was the saving and loans activity. A continuous increase in the amount of members' savings and in the amount of the annual surplus was noticeable.¹⁸⁰ „But the development of the annual surplus depended largely on the amount of loans disbursed, and this amount of loans depended largely on the amount of credit received from outside the group (e. g. the *Kredit Setia Kawan* from *Bina Swadaya*).“¹⁸¹ The most positive impact of the saving and loan activities of UB groups is the freedom from the professional money lenders. „Those member households which had no access to cheap bank credit were freed from their previous dependency on moneylenders, who charged interest of up to 45% per month. Now these families could get a loan from the UB group for 3% to 5% interest per month. They were not forced to sell any assets in case they needed money, so their socio-economic life became more projectable and more secure.“¹⁸² The loans are often utilized for educational purpose, health care or ceremonial costs, so the households achieve a higher standard of living. Other collective economic activities were usually initiated by the leader and were not effective.¹⁸³ „Most of the economic activities so far undertaken by the different groups ended in smaller or bigger failures. The impact of these incidences was that the members became even more afraid of trying to set up any group business again...“¹⁸⁴

Which changes in the social dimension do UB groups bring for their members? In Indonesian villages, a lot of socio-economic groups exist. The establishment of an UB group means to give an already existing group a new, additional framework. The UB groups did not introduce new forms of collective activities, but utilized long-existing

¹⁸⁰ Bongartz 1989:129

¹⁸¹ Bongartz 1989:130

¹⁸² Bongartz 1989:130

¹⁸³ Van Tuijt, Witjes 1993: 205

¹⁸⁴ Bongartz 1989:131

socio-cultural phenomena for their program. The traditional groups are mostly under government control and top-down initiated, so the socio-cultural structure of the UB groups are similar. The heterogeneity of the membership leads to a positive impact for the member households in the social field. „All group members interviewed stated that their status in the village increase due to their membership in the UB group. At least in groups with relatively open communication and information mechanism, low-income and/or low status households benefited from the high status members; information and knowledge could be transferred. It was particularly where poorer members were presented in the groups' boards that we could find a significant positive impact for the specific households.“¹⁸⁵ Due to the increase of the standard of living through loans, the social position and the status in the village increase too. The majority of the UB group members stress the social component of the meetings. „The majority of the members regarded UB groups as places to discussing general problems relating to their living conditions and environment. Most of them said that the groups were social institutions rather than economic ones.“¹⁸⁶ As the members of the UB groups are as well members of other socio-economic groups or organisations, sometimes with the same membership composition, the specific impact of UB groups in the social field is not clear defined. UB groups do not have much impact on the cultural system of the village or the family. As mentioned in former chapters, the internal structures of UB groups are in accordance with the traditional cultural structures of hierarchy and paternalism. „Actually, it was the leader who made any decisions in all the groups investigated, with some minor distinctions between the different groups. Members preferred to be guided, rather than take on responsibility themselves. It seems that the majority of the members preferred to imitate successful undertakings instead of acting in an innovative manner. Due to the cultural, historical and political environment, this predominance of the leadership did not lead to conflicts or chaos; on the contrary: it was accepted and even welcomed by most of the members. However, it also did not lead to high participation on the part of the rural poor in self-help activities!“¹⁸⁷

The traditional Indonesian way of solving conflicts is to avoid them. Some UB group members however make critical statements. „It was predominantly the better educated group of members who encouraged themselves to make critical statements...(this) could be noticed in one of the UB groups investigated in particular.“¹⁸⁸ According to the

¹⁸⁵ Bongartz 1989:132

¹⁸⁶ Bongartz 1989:133

¹⁸⁷ Bongartz 1989:134

¹⁸⁸ Bongartz 1989:135

examination of H. Bongartz, the UB groups have little impact on cultural and political structures and do not enhance participation and self-reliance.

10.1.2. WALHI

WALHI's main objectives are the environmental preservation and the support and advocacy of people who are concerned of ecological problems. The newsletter *Environesia* states critical voices against government policy in relation to fundamental matters as transmigration policy, logging and pollution. It increases the ecological awareness and gives background information which improves the critical discurs. WALHI plays an important role in consciousness raising about ecological contexts in its socio-economic, juristical and political dimension. The NGO has therefore a big socio-political impact, as the drafting of the 1982 Environmental Law shows. Because of facts, which are founded on proper research, and a big and well working network of cooperating projects and NGOs, WALHI's work is very effective.

The specific strength of WALHI is to bring its work in a broader socio-political context. Through their engagement, they offer other groups in the society possibilities of identification which are not given by the government.

WALHI tries to find out the problems of the grassroots and articulates them on the national level. The extension of the EIA procedures, is one example. Another example is the activity referring the planned Merapi mountain national park. With the financial and ideological support of WALHI, a peoples' meeting was held on June 2004. The communities living in the four regencies around the Merapi mountain area, activists, students environment groups, and academics from the Gaja Mada University, Yogyakarta were brought together. The meeting produced a statement from the participants that reaffirmed their opposition to the national park status and formulated an open letter to President Megawati.¹⁸⁹ Through the support of WALHI, the problems of the local people have been risen to a national level, which improves the chances for success. Financial, material and ideological support is important to form the opposition and increases the bargaining power.

WALHI has an intellectual background and analyses from this point of view the social and environmental situation.¹⁹⁰ The NGO stands between the basis and official institutions. The good contacts to members of the government and the buisness fundings

¹⁸⁹ WALHI 2005

¹⁹⁰ Frings 1991: 136

let arise the question of a conflict of interests. The concern of the local people could be softened through the political self-interests and tactics of the NGO.¹⁹¹ WALHI tries to include the concern and aspirations of the people into governmental programs, but the option of a complete refusal of official plans is often not given. This would be in some cases the only way to really preserve environment and sustain the situation of the local people. The NGO tries to articulate the problems of local people by finding supporters in the national government. On the one side, WALHI therefore has to make compromises between the government plans and people's concern and on the other side, without WALHI's influence, the local interests would not be supported at all.

WALHI's intention to represent the local people at the national level includes the cooperation on the communal level. The NGO is dependent on the goodwill of the local authorities.¹⁹² If they insist on directly controlling the affairs or if they refuse the building of informal groups to bundle the resistance against governmental programmes, the success is unsure.

The problem of creating environmental awareness is mostly marginally, as most people understand the practical importance of maintaining a stable environment in order to sustain basic sources of life. Support on higher levels depends rather on finding alternative means of livelihood. To find sustainable solutions, WALHI has to examine the situation of the local people very carefully, the local authorities has to be cooperative and the NGO has to lobby governmental sources. WALHI works on several levels and has to consider many dimensions.

10.1.3. LESSAN

LESSAN's main focus is the mobilisation of the basis, subsequently most of the work is directly with farmers, *Jamu* sellers and families in remote areas. LESSAN implements its objectives and aims very sensitive and consequent. The community work is based on three equal steps:

Investigation and Observation, Integration and Action.¹⁹³

In the first step, the NGO collects data about the village and crosschecks it with the community. In order to be accepted within the community, the NGO settles in the

¹⁹¹ Frings 1991: 137

¹⁹² Eldridge 1989: 43

¹⁹³ Raetzler 2003: 13 and own sources

second step with the local people, without feeling more superior to them. The third step is making a scale of priority concerning solutions to problems occurred.

This process of entering the village is in tight cooperation with the local people, what makes the work of LESSAN so effective. The concepts of the NGO are very close to the needs and possibilities of the people with a special focus on sustainability.

The enhancement of *Jamu* is a very good example. The alternative medicine is cheap, most people can afford it, it has no side effects and it is effective, because of constitutional treatment. The local people can grow the herbs themselves and increase their income by being suppliers of raw products. Through the use and the grow of *Jamu*, the standard of living is improved and traditional knowledge is preserved. Besides this, the independence from chemical drugs enhances the self-confidence and makes empowerment conceivable.

Another part of LESSAN's community work is establishing CU (Credit Unions), small industries and the financial support to improve the infrastructure in the village. Therefore, the work of LESSAN has an impact on the economic, social and cultural situation of the local people.

The NGO conducts trainings for farmers in effort to increase their knowledge about traditional and ecological agriculture and to enhance awareness and political understanding. The trainings reach farmers who are not part of the village elite, subsequently it is possible for them to quit the traditional structures.¹⁹⁴

The network SEPEJAM is another step, to improve the communication between villagers and farmers. The exchange of knowledge, experience and agricultural resources is encouraged and the bargaining power is increased.

The political impact of LESSAN's work is shown in the support of the opposition in the Merapi Mountain region. Due to the resistance of the community, the national park was not announced. It is hard to say, which factors finally gave the impulse to stop the project of the government. But the resistance was definitely not contraproductive and for sure it gives the people self-confidence to affect the political decisions.

The strength of LESSAN is found in the very good contacts to the basis. Through the intensive cooperation with the local people, the actions contribute to an improvement of the peoples welfare on the economic, social, cultural and political level.

As the aims of LESSAN and its sponsors have little divergences, the NGO doesn't have to make big compromises. As the NGO works in a niche, the conflicts with the official

¹⁹⁴ Own Sources

level are not overweight. Subsequently the activities of LESSAN do reach the basis of the society, but has little influence at higher socio-economic or political level. The strategy and hope of LESSAN is to emancipate the basis as a beginning for a bigger change.

The question, if a certain impact or change is positive or negative, depends on the judge's ideological and cultural background. Low participation, e. g. could be seen ,according to Javanese values, as positive, because the harmony in the group is not disturbed. According to Western values, it could be seen as a negative aspect, because the poorer members are suppressed by the members with higher status.

The individual economic success, which is the effect of most CU, is another point with two sides. On the one side, the individuum gains e. g. economic success due to financial support of NGOs, which is an enhancement for his or her personal situation. On the other side, she or he could swop into a dominant position in the trade sector and expelles other traders and members of the CU group from the market. Individual success stands contra solidarity with the group.

	UB Groups	WALHI	LESSAN
Target Group	Farmers	Local People Other NGOs, Projects	Local People
Needs	Improvement of Economic and Political Situation	Emergency Help Financial, Material, Know- How Help Representation and Advocacy	Improvement of Economic, Political and Social Situation
Objectives of NGO	Uplift Economic Situation Enhance Participation	Environmental Preservation, Articulation and Advocacy Research	Enhance Welfare Enhance <i>Jamu</i> Research
Impact: Social, Economic, Political, Cultural	<u>Economic Impact:</u> Improve Financial Situation of Farmers	<u>Socio-Political Impact:</u> Consciousness Raising, Research, Identity Building, Affect Political	<u>Economic Impact:</u> Improve Financial Situation of Local People

	<u>Socio-Cultural Impact</u> Improve Social Status of Members Consolidate Traditional Systems	Decision-Making Process <u>Socio-Cultural Impact:</u> Support of Interests at Local Level and other Projects/NGOs <u>Economic Impact:</u> Preservation and Improvement of Living Conditions	<u>Social-Cultural Impact:</u> Consciousness Raising, Questioning Cultural Structures <u>Political Impact:</u> Affect Political Decision-Making Process
Objectives Reached	Very Particular	Yes	Yes
Positive Impact	Increase of Economic and Social Status	Preserve and Improve Living Conditions Increase Bargaining Power of Local People	Improve Welfare Emancipation Increase Bargaining Power of Local People
Negative Impact	Consolidate Non-Participatory Manner	Not Absolutely Loyal to Target Group	Little Change of Political Conditions
Obstacles for Success	Conservatism	Realpolitical Compromises	Operating Mostly on Village Level

10.2. The Role of Indonesian NGOs in Macropolitical Processes is Limited

In Indonesia, there is no clear distinction between state and civil society. According to the historical and cultural background, it is difficult to draw sharp lines between the government and the civil sector. Especially at village level, the government and the family structures are close intertwined. The distinction between governmental and nongovernmental spheres have less significance than in Western societies.

Subsequently, it is not realistic, that Indonesian NGOs build a counterpart to the monolithic institutional structures.

Social activists in the West and in Indonesia formulate hopes, that NGOs can effectively influence macropolitical and governmental structures. The idea, that NGOs fill the gap left by political parties is wrong. The main focus of political parties is to capture and hold power, for which purpose they need to combine and aggregate interest groups across the social and political spectrum. Indonesian NGOs prefer to work directly at the basis and try to keep the government and parties as far away as possible. NGOs function as a catalysator and middleman between official and nonofficial structures and lay the basis for a more open political system in Indonesia. The responsibility for forming independent political parties will have to be taken up by others.

10.3. Indonesian NGOs Contribute Indirect to the Enhancement of Democratic Structures

The NGOs in Indonesia are very heterogeneous and have different understandings of the meaning of democratisation, as I described in chapter four. It can't therefore be assumed that demands for democratisation necessarily are translated into the support for Western-style democracy. According to Philip Eldridge, the NGOs are more comfortable and familiar with a traditional Javanese understanding of democracy, in contrast to a Western definition. In this sense, the terms of participation, self-reliance and people's power are not in the way interpreted, as the demands of a Western-style democracy would do. The Indonesian *gotong royong* society with the basis of *mufakat* and *musyawarah* stands in contrast to the Western ideals of deregulation, liberalisation and individualisation. The extent in which Western values are present in the objectives and aims of Indonesian NGOs varies a lot. UB groups, e. g. are very traditionally orientated, WALHI and LESSAN e. g. try to combine Western values with traditional values. These cultural conditions must be considered when it comes to the question, if NGOs can contribute to enhance democratic structures. If a NGO is traditionally orientated, it does not increase Western-style democratic structures.

The relation between NGOs and the state is ambivalent, as I examined before. On the one side, NGOs consider interventions of the state as counterproductive, on the other side, a lot of NGOs, especially if they operate on a higher political level, get support from official authorities and are dependent of the protection from governmental side.

With this status, and the repressive and monolithic state structures, it is impossible for NGOs, to fundamentally question political affairs. NGOs operate successfully in fields, where there is no big danger for the government. To demand for more Western-style democracy on a higher political level is not a successful task for NGOs in Indonesia.

The aims of NGOs in Indonesia are mostly limited at the microlevel. More abstract values and rights at the macrolevel are hard to demand. Having in mind, that it is hard, to motivate people around priorities they do not have determined for themselves and which do not affect their lives immediately, it is understandable, that the work of some NGOs seems quite unpolitical. Especially among rural people, the understanding of the correlations determining their situation, is a slow process. „Achievement of any overall synthesis between competing understandings of democracy is likely to prove very difficult at both a conceptual and practical level. For example, without denying that ideals of decision making through deliberation (*musyawarah*) and consensus (*mufakat*) can sometimes be realised among small groups in face-to-face contexts, their extension from village and sub-village to regional and national arenas has never been satisfactorily achieved in Indonesia.“¹⁹⁵

NGOs in Indonesia are, according to their political and cultural frame conditions primarily local orientated and relatively passive towards democratic reform in the political sphere. The strength of the NGOs is the variety of indirect support, they can give to the grassroots and groups in the civil society. The central objective of NGOs is the promotion of self-management organisations which are accountable to their members and possess some degree of autonomy from government agencies. Such a contribution supports the establishment of any stable democratic society and policy.

10.4. Reduction of Poverty: NGOs Play a Minor Role

The self-help approach put weight on participation and self-reliance. The NGOs should contribute to the reduction of poverty and should be an instrument to increase the decision-making power of the so called target group.

According to the elaborations of H. Bongartz, it has not yet been possible to put the self-help concept into operation, so that its goals and objectives might be achieved. The UB groups do not reach the poorest part of the population in a large amount. The better-off parts of the rural population are those, who gain the biggest profit from the UB

¹⁹⁵Eldridge 1997:207

activities. This results are similar to those of other authors, e. g. Verhagen, Van Tuijl and Witjes.¹⁹⁶

Participation is not manifested in the UB groups, as I examined in chapter six. So members of the group don't get the support, to commence sustainable projects to improve their situation.¹⁹⁷ This is due to the lack of clear target group policies and insufficient staff capacity of UB group leaders and their referees at *Bina Swadaya*.¹⁹⁸

H. Bongartz summons the failure of the self-help promoting NGOs as following: "... most of the development agencies, governmental as well as non-governmental, concentrate only rhetorically on the rural poor, preparing project proposals and working papers based on the thinking of the poverty-oriented self-help concepts, whereas their activities are mainly determined by modernization concepts. That would imply that there was no role to be played by the poor and deprived, but that the more 'dynamic' strata of society were given the greater attention. They are to be developed into 'modern' entrepreneurs by means of skills, know-how and technology transfer."¹⁹⁹

The concepts of LESSAN are to a greater extent in accordance with the needs and the wishes of the poor. As there is no homogeneous group of the poor, the activities of a NGO must be formed specifically. The sensitive approach to the local people and the cooperation with them brings the projects of LESSAN closer to their needs and wishes. As the members of LESSAN take the socio-cultural backgrounds of the people into account, paternalistic and hierarchical structures can be dissolved. That could lead to a higher representation of the people from lower socio-economic status. LESSAN works, as a small NGO, in niches and is, comparing to UB groups, not so dependent on formal structures. LESSAN works financially on a small scale, so the economic impact of the activities is also on a small scale, but it is according to the needs of the locals.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the fields of development policy, e. g. poverty is a problem with several levels, so the approach to a solution of this problem must be on several levels too. If poverty is reduced to the phenomenon, that poor farmers have too less money, it is too simple. Poverty is a phenomenon which has political, economic and social aspects of several countries. It is a global problem. Subsequently, poverty can't be reduced in a sustainable way by the work of NGOs. They can shortly release some

¹⁹⁶Verhagen 1987:96ff, Van Tuijl and Witjes 1993: 205

¹⁹⁷ Bongartz 1989: 134

¹⁹⁸Van Tuijl, Witjes 1993:206

¹⁹⁹ Bongartz 1989: 24ff

poor people of their burden and can try to give the impulse of what is meant by participation, but the causes of poverty are not decreased.

11. Conclusion

In my paper I examine, exemplary on three NGOs, the cultural and political conditions of Java, which determine the work of the NGOs. I will summarise the main points of my elaborations.

The traditional *Bina Swadaya* and the UB groups offer little participation referring to the internal structures of the NGOs and the macropolitical level. The NGOs cooperate with official programs, which means a big financial frame. The economic situation and the social status of the UB group members is improved, but the UB groups don't reach the poorest part of the population.

WALHI tries to combine Western ideas with Javanese values, subsequently the members and the cooperating NGOs can take influence on the work of WALHI. The NGO takes a middle way between the protection of high level officials and the representation of grassroots interests. WALHI has achieved big steps in implementing environmental preservation and strengthening the bargaining power of local people. As the NGO has to take its dependence to the officials into account, compromises are sometimes not in the interest of the locals.

LESSAN offers their members and the represented people much participation, subsequently the work of the NGO is sustainable. As LESSAN works in niches, the impact is on a small scale.

The influence of the Javanese cultur in NGO work is still strong, but can be overcome. *Rukun*, *hormat* and *nrimo* are determining the internal structure of NGOs and are especially in rural areas a restrain for implementations. Nevertheless, as the example of LESSAN shows, slowly a consciousness of social justice and equality can grow.

Due to the restrictive political conditions of Indonesia, the work of a NGO is most effective when it is independent from state structures. As this is only possible in niches, the impact of NGOs in Indonesia stays on a small scale. The bigger NGOs get, the more do they have to cooperate with the government. Still as WALHI shows, sustainable impact can be reached in small steps.

Other factors, like the lack of education and poverty determine as well the aims and objectives of NGOs and are intertwined in a complex system with the cultural and political conditions of Indonesia.

The role of Javanese NGOs in macropolitical processes is limited. Sustainable solutions of macropolitical problems must be made on the macropolitical level.

According to my point of view, poverty for example, has political, economic, geostrategic and social reasons, which concerns several countries. Poverty is a global problem, and the solution has to be made on the global level. If I consider poverty as the lack of food of several farmers, it is too simple. So the solution of Western development strategies against poverty, to give the poor farmers money for their seeds, is too simple either. The reduction of poverty is a question of sharing power and of economic benefits of the Western countries. As long as the IWF and the Indonesian government make deals, there is no sustainable solution of the problem of poverty.

Macropolitical processes can be speeded up by pressure from the basis. For that reason it is important to strengthen the grassroots. Supporting programs must be designed very specifically on the needs and wishes of the so called target group. Therefore it is important to:

- Assist the grassroots in organising and operating groups, which are owned by themselves.
- Increase awareness, knowledge and skills.
- Assist the grassroots in strengthening their socio-economic position, so that they might be enabled to participate more actively.
- Assist in the field of income-generating activities, which should contribute to higher family incomes.

I believe that coming challenges for NGOs in Java is networking and advocacy.

There must be built a strong network of independent NGOs, to increase the bargaining power contra the state. National and international networks propels matters as exploitation and injustice on the national and international level. The Indonesian crusted political structures only will bend, if enough national and international pressure is made. Advocacy is very important, to strengthen the basis and not to loose contact to it. The recent murder of leading human rights campaigner Munir shows, that the space for

advocacy is still limited. Nevertheless do Indonesian activist develop their vision of changes for the better.

I think advocacy combined with material and ideological help according to the very specific needs of the certain people is the key to emancipation and sustainable help. This work can only be done by experts, and the only experts in Java are Javanese. Subsequently, Western donours should contain themselves to give only sustainable support in the financial field at the base of ideological exchange.

Abbreviations

BANGDES	Institution for rural development of the Dalam Negeri
BIMAS	A large government credit scheme for farm inputs
BKAK	Association of smallholders groups
BKKBN	National Family Planning Coordination Board
BMZ	Ministry for Economic Cooperation of Germany
CEBEMO	Netherland's foreign aid program
CIDA	Canada's foreign aid program
CU	Credit Union
DPR	Indonesia's parliament
EIA	Environmental Impact Analysis
GAM	Aceh independent fighters
GTZ	Germany's foreign aid program
HKTI	All Indonesian Farmers Association
INMAS	Government programme for massive intensification of agricultural production
INPRES	Government program for economic development
IPP	Indonesian farmer organisation
KKN	Corruption, Collusion, Nepotism
KUD	Governmental cooperative on a sub-district level
LESSAN	Institute for Alternative Health Studies
LPSM	Agency for the development of self-help and self-reliance; Indonesian term for NGO
MPR	Indonesia's supreme sovereign body
NASAKOM	Political strategy of Sukarno to unite the nationalism, the religion and the communism
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSS	Nuclear smallholders' scheme
NU	Orthodox Islamic party of Indonesia

ORMAS	Law on social organisations
OXFAM	England's foreign aid program
PKI	Communist Party of Indonesia
PNI	Nationalist Party of Indonesia
PUSKESMAS	Villages health centre
SD	Primary school
SEPEJAM	Network of peasants
SMA	High school
SMP	Lower grade secondary school
TNI	Armed forces
UB	Self-help group
USAID	America's foreign aid program
WALHI	Indonesian Environmental Forum
YSTM	Farmers' socio-economic development organisation

Glossary of Indonesian Terms

Arisan	Traditional saving club
Badan	Executive body
Badan pemeriksa	Supervisory board
Bendahara	Treasurer
Berpartisipasi rakyat	Popular participation
Bapak	Father, fig. patron
Bina Swadaya	NGO which forms, promotes and supports self-help groups
Bodoh	Stupid
Dalam negeri	Departement of Home Affairs
Dana Mitra Lingkungan	Non-profit organisation, which collects funding for WALHI
Desa	Village complex
Depsos	Departement of Social Affairs
Dukuhan	Several villages
Dwi fungsi	Military strategy of interventions in the civil sector
Golkar	Functional groups
Gotong royong	Mutual aid, collective action
Hatta, Mohammed	Proclaimed the Indonesian Independence, Leader of the NU party
Hormat	Principle of hierarchy
Ibu	Mother
Jamu	Traditional Javanese medicine
Kabupaten	Administrative unit: district
Kalurahan	Administrative unit: village cluster
Kecamatan	Administrative unit: sub-district
Kedaulatan rakyat	Popular sovereignty
Kejawen/Kejawaan	Javanese culture
Kepala dukuh	Head of a village
Ketua	Chairmen/chairwoman
Kopri	Civil servants corps
Lembaga	Institution
Lurah	Head of a village cluster
Massa lepas	Ideology of the floating mass
Masyumi	Reformist Islamic party
Mufakat	Consensus
Muhammadiyah	Javanese trade organisation
Musyawahah	Dialogue, joint deliberation with mutual consultation
New Order	Time under Suharto
Nrimo	Acceptance of fate
Oleh-oleh	Presents
Operasi Karya	Military doctrine of civil mission
Organisasi	Social organisations

kemasyarakatan	
Pamrih	Inner weakness
Pancasila	From Sanskrit: 5 Principles; Indonesia's state philosophy consisting of 5 inseparable principles. <i>Pancasila</i> is built on five pillars: Belief in the one Supreme God; A just and civilised humanity; The unity of Indonesia; Democracy led by the wisdom of deliberation among representatives; Social justice for all the people of Indonesia
Pembangunan	Economic development
Pengurus	Executive board
Prijaji	Social class, members of the administration
Rapat anggota	Members' meeting
Reformasi	Process of political change after the fall of Suharto
Repelita	Five year development plan
Roda hidup	Wheel of life
Rukun	Principle of harmony
Santri	Javanese religious social class
Sekretaris	Secretary
Setuju	We agree
Simpan pinjam	Savings and loans activities
Slametan	Socio-religious meal
Soeharto	Dictator who ruled Indonesia from 1965-1998
Stabilitas poltic	Political doctrine of stability
Sukarno	Proclaimed the Independence of Indonesia. Leader of PNI during the Independence of Indonesia
Swadaya	Self-reliance
Swakarya	Self-development
Swasembada	Self-sufficiency
Taktir	Fate
Taman Siswa	National movement in Java
Usaha bersama	Collective action; <i>Bina Swadaja</i> 's terminus for a self-help group
Wayang	Indonesian (puppet) shadow-play
Wong tjilik	Synonym for village people
Yayasan	Foundation; private, non-profit organisation

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