

## The Leadership of Olly Dondokambey and the Diversity Condition of North Sulawesi

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### ABSTRACT

*The clash between religious-based groups, including problems with places of worship and deterrence of national Muslim leaders, has highly escalated in North Sulawesi. This is inversely proportional to the branding of North Sulawesi, especially Manado as a tolerant city. The public spotlight certainly leads to leadership at the regional level. Currently, the provincial government under the leadership of Olly Dondokambey, in terms of policy matters, is not very visible and has not been implemented, taking sides on diversity issues like what President Jokowi poured in Nawacita, which was revealed in many policies. In this article, the author notes that in many instances the government was less involved in the process of resolving clashes between groups. This article is written with a phenomenological approach, reveals cases, and analyzes them. The conclusion in this article is in the form of a recommendation to strengthen the regional vision and mission in favor of the issue of diversity.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The socio-religious condition of North Sulawesi is in a quite worrying phase. This related problem not only hit me but maybe some people of North Sulawesi. This is confirmed by the release of a tolerant city index by the SETARA Institut which places Manado in 4th place in 2019 after 3 years previously being ranked first (Insiyah et al., 2020). This decline in the trend of harmony is caused by various factors and events, for example, the deterrence of PKS politician Fahri Hamzah and controversial preacher Habib Bahar bin Smith, as well as cases relating to the refusal of worship places, not only mosques but also churches.

Currently, the leadership of Olly Dondokambey and Steven Kandouw is entering its final phase in the first period, the progress of infrastructure project with the direction of development towards vital tourism objects is the main focus, of course, the development that is OD-SK's hope must be strengthened with good social security conducive. We all know that the OD-SK leadership coincides with the strengthening of the use of identity politics with instruments of ethnic and religious primordialism. Moreover, shortly, post-conflict local elections will take place in several districts, cities, and provinces.

The vulnerability index for the North Sulawesi election in the release of the Central Election Supervisory Agency (BANWASLU) is also very high, this condition results in the vulnerability of friction between community groups.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This short article is reflective, at least it describes the real facts of the condition of the region which is claimed to be a role model for tolerance in Indonesia, with the theme "Maintaining Harmony-Maintaining Diversity; Critical Thought Contribution for OD-SK Leadership". Hopefully, this article will be useful reading, it will be even more valuable if this article is used as a reference in the framework of future OD-SK government policymaking.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Various Trust Faces; From the Jewish Synagog to the Masade School on the Border

When Kumparan published their coverage of the existence of Judaism in Tondano, many people were surprised and then asked about the facts about the existence of the Jewish community in North Sulawesi. Because in Indonesia there are only 6 official religions that are recognized by the state, even then the big narrative about beliefs is dominated by Islam and Christianity as majority adherents (Kumparan, 2019). The fact is that in North Sulawesi there is a Jewish community, they have even been in open contact with the community for a long time. The *synagog* where their worship is often visited by people from both Muslim and Christian communities. This means that North Sulawesi in the context of diversity is so rich and has a unique plurality compared to other regions.

In addition to the existence of followers of the Jewish religion, there are also religious beliefs, for example, there is the Masade community. It was originally referred to as Old Islam, but because there is pressure from social & Islamic organizations and certain Islamic groups who consider old Islamic religious practices, not from mainstream Islam, so it is forbidden to use the term, Old Islam. Then the belief changed its name to the Masade Community, which refers to the person who first brought the teachings to Sangihe, but this needs to be traced back.

even in the lenganeng village, the Old Islamic community or the Masade community live side by side with mainstream Islam and Protestant Christian groups, and there are even houses of worship there.

The existence of Judaism and the Masade sect has made it even more convincing that the people are open to diversity.

The interaction between citizens of various beliefs and faiths becomes a solid foundation for religious life in a multicultural society. In a sociological context, the interactions built into social capital provide a security guarantee for adherents of other religions or other faiths.

In the past, there were almost no cases of clashes between residents caused by problems of belief. Burning or destroying houses of Ahmadiyah followers, like what happened in other areas, did not happen here. The bloody Shi'ah-Sunni conflict in Sampang Madura did not occur in North Sulawesi. People were free to carry out their worship and rituals.

Even in the context of social life, both Ahmadiyah and Syi'ah groups and other minority groups in the city of Manado are always involved in socio-religious activities together with followers of other religions as equal citizens. However, entering the era of the 90s to the 2000s this condition gradually changed.

### 3.2. Some Facts on the Relationship between the Diversity and Condition of North Sulawesi

North Sulawesi Province was the most affected province when the riots and social conflicts occurred, especially in Ambon, North Maluku, and Poso, both in terms of the impact of displacement and other social impacts. North Sulawesi is in the middle of the conflict areas. However, even though it is in the middle of a conflict area, North Sulawesi does not get involved in social conflicts in some of these conflict areas and is even considered a province that has high immunity in preventing social conflicts with various concepts and practices of harmony. The people of North Sulawesi usually term it with the words "Sulut" which means "*sulit di sulut Karena solid*" or it is difficult in Sulut because it is solid (Yusuf & Hasan, 2020).

In reality, relations between religions in North Sulawesi do not always run smoothly without obstacles. Several "clashes" have also occurred, in mid-2014 there was a case of threats by a resident (a Christian) to a muezzin so as not to call the call to prayer with a loudspeaker in the entire Dendengan area (Interview with Iwan, Pseudonim, February 12, 2021). Still, in the same year, permission to use the public facility by the Manado Muslims abruptly canceled by the city government. Manado Muslims planned to borrow the Sparta Tikala football field to carry out Eid prayers, even though every year the football field was often used by Muslims in the implementation of Eid prayers. This issue was opposed by Muslims throughout North Sulawesi (Interview with Ansor GP Member, March 22, 2021).

Not only these cases but there is also an assumption from the part of the Muslim community, especially a few from the middle and lower government circles that the harmony of religious life which is being actively socialized and built by it as a "hidden Christianization" process, however, this is difficult to prove. The attitude of some Muslims (in fact) can be "interpreted" as an expression of disappointment with the map of politics and governance in the city of Manado, in particular (Hasan et al., 2018).

It is an indisputable fact that during the last few decades Muslims have never occupied the number one position or at least occupy strategic government positions in this area, so it is natural to assume that Muslims are deliberately marginalized in a government-politic context. Also, hiring at government agencies from the Muslim community is very less, so this adds to a sense of disappointment and marginalization from the Muslim community.

The harmony of life for religious people in Manado is very much determined by regional leaders, religious leaders, and community leaders. If one of the groups feels disappointed and moves the mass of his group, then conflict is very easy to occur. We can see cases such as the refusal of Fahri Hamzah, Habib Bahar Bin Smith, as well as Felix Siauw to come to Manado, certain local elites mobilized a group of masses to block them at the airport.

In other cases, for example, regarding the construction of places of worship, the dispute over the construction of the Ash-Syuhada mosque in Bitung and the Al-Khairiyyah mosque in Texas village, religious elites, and mass organization figures were involved in the dispute over the place of worship. The most exciting thing recently happened was the attack on a building that was claimed to be a house of worship (*mushola*) in Agape Housing, Tumuluntung, North Minahasa Regency.

On the other hand, in the span of a long history, Islamic and Christian religious organizations, mainstream Islamic organizations such as NU-Muhammadiyah, and Christian church institutions such as GMIM, have not experienced many intense encounters in the form of collective dialogue. Even if there is dialogue, it is very elitist, usually because of the government's initiation under the coordination of FKUB, in the dialogue the issues brought up tend to be theological and even political, never discussing the agenda or social issues.

Relations between Muslims and Christians in North Sulawesi are very fluctuating, sometimes safe and run very well, but on other occasions there is tension and even leads to actions that exceed boundaries such as violence, incitement between one another.

Although there have been several incidents of clashes between residents, the general condition since the conflict with the nuances of SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and group), plagued Indonesia in the second half of the 1990s to the early 2000s. Manado and North Sulawesi continue to maintain a safe and tolerant image, even though geographically they are flanked by conflict areas. In the south there is the Poso conflict (1999-2000) in Central Sulawesi; east, the conflicts of Maluku (1999-2001) and North Maluku (2000); in the west, there is the Kalimantan conflict in Ketapang (1998) as well as Sambas and Sampit (2000-2001). This image of peace has prompted the arrival of victims from warring areas, especially North Maluku and Maluku, to save themselves in this area (*Consortium for Assistance to Refugees and Displaced in Indonesia*, 2002, pp. 2-3).

Not only that, the image of safe, peaceful, and tolerant religious and ethnic groups in North Sulawesi is strongly attached and is reflected in the song "Torang Samua Basudara" with singer Rama Aiphama. The song, which was released to audiences in 1999, carries the spirit of harmony BoHuSaMi, an acronym formed by the local government based on the names of the local tribes in North Sulawesi, namely: Bolaang-

Mongondow; Hulu (Goro) ntalo; Sangi (he) r; Minahasa. The lyrics and video clips of the song emotionally contain invitations and reminders to live in harmony even though they have different backgrounds.

These sweet stories are directly proportional to the stories of the residents and some people who have stopped by in North Sulawesi. Even though as is generally assumed, the Minahasa people of the North Sulawesi tribe are closely related to Christian identity and Western (an) (Supit, 2005, p. 8) values which are known to be individualistic, but still, people display tolerance in the arena of plurality. For example, at the 2012 Chinese New Year celebration, a religious leader who continues the tradition every year invites all citizens of the city, regardless of any group, to rejoice together at the celebration which is centered at the Ban Hin Kiong Great Temple at noon (Pacific TV, Headline News, January 22, 2012).

Likewise the narrative of a resident of Yogyakarta who had visited Manado and was impressed by his tolerance (Interview with Agus, Pseudonym, January 25, 2019). When he ordered a dish at the "Manado typical" restaurant, at the same time a woman wearing a veil came and respectfully, the waitress said: "I'm sorry mom, we can't serve a menu here for you, maybe you can order a menu at the restaurant next door. provides a national menu ". The mother said: "It's okay, I'm just waiting for my friend here". He has never met this tolerance in his home area.

The religious conflicts experienced by regions are geographically not that far from North Sulawesi. It is considered not to affect the state of relations between religious believers in this area. The harmonization of socio-religious life is well maintained, although many groups have doubts about security stability every time there is an agenda for regional head elections. However, this concern has not been realized, with North Sulawesi in general still showing a sense of security, peace, and harmony. This fact has further increased the confidence of the people of North Sulawesi as a peaceful province, due to the cooperation of the government, apparatus, and the support of the civil society.

Within Islam itself, mass organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Syarikat Islam (SI), Muhammadiyah, Persis, and others are very active in running their organizations. Likewise with extra student organizations such as the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII), the Islamic Student Association (HMI), the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM), plus several youth organizations such as the Muslim Mosque Youth Association (IRM), the Indonesian Mosque Youth Teenager Communication Forum (FKPRMI) ., and the Indonesian Mosque Youth Teenager Coordinating Board (BKPRMI). Even though Muslims are a minority, and there are many mass organizations and youth organizations that certainly have different ideologies, they can work together and can build harmonious relations internally.

Related to religious harmony externally, it can be seen from the pattern of relationships that are built between Muslims and Christians. When Christians in other areas are often disturbed by the implementation of Christmas services, in fact Muslims in the city of Manado together with other religious organizations secure the implementation of the Christmas worship and celebration. Likewise, Christians also always participate in ceremonial Muslim worship activities that involve many people, such as in the celebrations of Eid al-fitr and Eid al-adha.

### **3.3. OD-SK's Leadership "Homework": Commitment and Partition for Diversity**

When starting leadership in North Sulawesi in February 2016, OD-SK by the agenda of its vision and mission was committed to preserving the diversity and richness of regional cultures, even on one occasion Steven Kandouw convinced the public that their leadership used an Inclusiveness approach to face diversity, there was no compartmentalization, not negative thinking, and not suspicious of each other (Sumakul, 2018, 2019). This is proven, when OD-SK led the two-year index of religious life in North Sulawesi which was arguably good, the results of the release of several survey institutions including SETARA Insitut put Manado City in first place in 2016 and 2017, Tomohon City was also in the 10 most tolerant cities in Indonesia. However, after 2018 and 2019, the trend of tolerance decreased, Manado was in 4th place, far below Singkawang.

As we know that the OD-SK pair is promoted by PDI-P, the big election-winning party that carries Pancasila as its ideological basis. Not to mention the nine priority agenda of Jokowi's dream, meaning that the OD-SK pair must be committed to maintaining diversity by the mandate of Pancasila and aspirations in all government agendas. Nawa comes from the Sansekerta word meaning nine, and the cita means goal. The nine priority agendas include protection and security for all citizens, clean governance, system reform, and law enforcement, reinforcing diversity through strengthening diversity and creating spaces for dialogue between citizens. The concept of Nawacita refers to the Trisakti principles initiated by Bung Karno, namely political sovereignty, economic independence, and cultural personality.

The OD-SK pair must be able to understand correctly that North Sulawesi is a laboratory of diversity, with the philosophy "torang semua ciptaan Tuhan" or All of the people are created by God, in its implementation, it is hoped that it can guarantee that every citizen is free to embrace a religion or belief

and express the teachings of his religious belief without any interference, restrictions, prohibitions, discrimination, or criminalization.

There are several problems related to freedom of belief in North Sulawesi, including the issue of permits for places of worship. This requires a strong commitment from the OD-SK pair to be able to resolve without injuring the value of freedom and belief in all citizens according to the mandate of the 1945 Constitution. It is so difficult for local religions to be free to embrace or believe in their beliefs. It needs the "touch of hands" of the OD-SK government through its pro-diversity policies. What the OD-SK pair had to "read" was the level of policy paradigm through the meaning of religion and or belief or faith which was constructed and then inseparable from the tug-of-war of the political power of that era (1950-the 1960s). Post-May 1998, when we should have celebrated an era where the faucet of democracy was opened, apparently it did not bring any changes to the attitude of the state towards minority groups, such as the handling of the Ahmadiyah congregation, the Sampang Syiah group, the HKBP congregation, and the GKI Yasmin. In the future, we hope that this will never happen in North Sulawesi.

The demand for political equality is a gamble on the fate of pluralism in North Sulawesi as a "common house". Nowadays, these political demands are increasingly pressing during the ongoing democratization transition as the population balance between religious communities shows a more balanced trend. Because during the turbulent transition today, just tolerance and dialogue are not sufficient. This democratization transition needs to be understood by the OD-SK leadership because if it only focuses on procedural tinkering, it has the potential to become the tyranny of the majority.

The diversity in North Sulawesi as described at the beginning of this article is already very complex, there is a Jewish community, even Baha'i, and two schools of belief; Masade in Sangihe and Adat Musi in Talaud need extra attention from the OD-SK regional leaders. They have the right to get religious education according to their religion or belief, even explicitly in state legislation that requires this, for example, children from Baha'i, Taoist, Sikh families of various beliefs and others should get the right to religious education according to their religion. Religious institutions, civil society groups, and society at large should also continue to urge the State to guarantee the respect, protection, and fulfillment of religious rights and civil rights of non-official religious groups. To guarantee this freedom, the state's recognition of the belief system held by all citizens needs to be done fairly. In this context, recognition does not have to be based on the number of adherents because each individual's practice of faith is unique.

In the end, once again the OD-SK pair must give equal recognition to all religions, this is aimed at "cleaning" the stigma or negative label associated with them. The form of state facilitation for all religions (world religions, beliefs, and local religions) is to ensure the existence, expression, and development of their religions. The issue of whether each religion should occupy a position at the level of the directorate general is a technical-administrative problem that can be resolved and does not deny the principle, namely the recognition of the equality of all citizens. Full recognition will have implications at least for the obligation to religious education for school children who must consider all religions.

### **3.4. Shadows of Identity Politics in a Democratic Party**

At the national level, if we look at the trend, identity politics is still strong lately, especially in the choice of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The framing of issues uses the diction of Religion, ethnicity, and RAS as a propaganda tool, of course, the goal is to gain electability, this is where the vulnerability I mean if it "smells" people's identities will be very sensitive. Elections that cycle only every five years will ultimately harm all aspects of 'grassroots' people's lives. But in sociological analysis, conflict can be managed. Conflict management will create social stability, and this is good for our democratic life. In this short article, I will have many opinions, referring to observations of how the Manado people managed conflict in the political year. But before getting into the focus of the theme, I will describe where the potential for conflict, especially in this political year, will emerge.

### **3.5. Contestation Shift: From the Virtual World to the Real World**

Today's political contestation arena does not only occur in public spaces but also cyberspace. The openness of information supported by access to digital devices makes every individual free to express their opinion on social media, even though this freedom is ultimately limited by the existence of the Information and Technology Law. Still, the news about HOAX and Hate Speech is hard to contain. Even when social media users activate their timeline, what appears first is fake news.

A research institute Daily Social together with the Jakpat Mobile Survey Platform confirmed to 2032 smartphone users in Indonesia about the distribution of HOAX, they found that most hoax information was on the Facebook platform with a percentage of 82.25%, second place was WhatsApp 56.55%, and Instagram

at 29.48%. Of course, what is the discourse in cyberspace will have a direct effect on social conditions in the real world (Eka, 2018).

As a few examples, in early 2019 the public was shocked by a piece of information circulating on Twitter social media about 7 containers containing ballots that had been punched at the port of Tanjung Priok, North Jakarta, this news went viral and became a debate in the public, then a voice emerged questioning neutrality. KPU as the election organizer. In fact, after tracing the facts on this information were not found, it had already caused riots during the community. This means that political contestation by justifying all means including spreading HOAX, forming opinions in cyberspace without any basis, will trigger clashes between people in the real world.

### **3.6. Divided Society**

Readers may still remember a very moving event, namely the demolition and removal of two graves due to differences in political choices in a remote hamlet in Gorontalo Province. Of course, anyone who has a conscience when he hears of this incident will surely regret and be angry, regardless of his political affiliation, because it touches the deepest side of humanity. Because of political choices, social relations, friendship, brotherhood, and even parent-child relationships are disturbed. In Java, a politician took back his contribution in the form of building materials in a mosque because he could not vote in the mosque environment, this is worsening the behavior of our political life.

Direct elections are the fruit of democracy which guarantees a political process based on freedom. Each individual is guaranteed political rights, each of course has a different view depending on how the assessment of the performance, the partisanship of the chosen party, and the individual as representatives of the people in fighting for the life of the people, especially their constituents. Facts on the ground are not the case, as in several cases that I described in the previous paragraph. What are the consequences? society was divided, clashes occurred, peppered with slander and blasphemy.

Schemes in conflict theory do solve complex problems in divided societies. There will be oppressing, oppressed, coercing, and coerced. Conflict is difficult to avoid, said Ralf Dahendorf, but he then continues to say that it is precisely from the conflict that social change occurs. Creativity and innovation will emerge from the community itself to get out of these conflicts or at least be able to manage the conflict. Every region in Indonesia has different community characteristics because each has its language, culture, and local wisdom, including Manado.

### **3.7. What about Manado**

As far as I observe Manado, its social conduciveness is maintained, but on the other hand, the level of conflict vulnerability is quite high in this political year, meaning that it is not what people out there see. A series of unexpected events took place, for example, the interception of the Deputy Chairperson of the DPR-RI Fahri Hamzah by the Minahasa Adat Alliance then continued actions to reject the presence of Habib Bahar bin Smith, these two events took place amidst the heating up of the national political situation. Fortunately, the authorities and religious leaders were quick to put down the action, not through physical contact.

The government and leaders in Manado actually have experiences related to the success of protecting against security disturbances from outside. If we look geographically this area is flanked by conflict areas, namely Poso and Ambon, as well as the main route for the distribution of weapons between the Philippines and Indonesia. This success is supported by the strength of civil society and the values of local wisdom inherent in the people of Manado. In terms of the Manado multicultural theory, it is a melting pot, a container that accommodates all kinds of identities; including Religion, Tribe, Race. This is a good social asset but also a sign of danger, because the more diverse the identities of a region, the higher the potential for conflict.

In the political realm, conflicts resulting from election disputes rarely occur. At the end of 2015, there were arguments between supporters of the mayor and deputy mayor of Manado, Jimmy Rimba Rogi and Bobby Daud, and the election organizers because the pair was canceled to fight in the post-conflict local election because of Jimmy Rimba Rogi's status, who was convicted on parole. But this problem was quickly resolved. Although there was a large mass movement to take action in front of the KPU Manado.

The issue of religion in the 2015 post-conflict local election is also a topic of discussion. The voice of Islam for Bobby Daud was heard strongly in the community, especially in the Muslim community who supported Bobby Daud as a candidate for vice mayor of Manado. But eventually, it melted away. No matter how fierce the debate, the contestation of supporters between candidates is still the people of Manado bound by a sense of love for their region, the intensity of the encounter minimizes each individual to fight.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the first period, the OD-SK government has also made efforts to commit to preserving diversity. In the future, the vision and mission of maintaining diversity will remain a priority, and it is also pursued through accommodative politics for all beliefs and faith. Government cooperation with religious institutions and mass organizations is needed, all of which have come into contact with socio-religious issues. All of these institutions were important post-reform breakthroughs, but they were not always effective because the recommendations they issued were rarely followed up. The status of these institutions needs to be strengthened to be more effective in assisting the government. Not only these institutions, in the government, in this case, SKPD-SKPD also have an important role related to the issue of diversity management, not all are borne by mass organizations but all related institutions that have direct contact with diversity management.

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