

1a. Title of the research proposal

Costs of Democracy: The Political Economy of Campaign Finance

Costs of Democracy
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Expensive elections campaigns are a threat to democracies around the world, because they generate corruption and political inequality. Yet, due to methodological obstacles and a western bias in the current literature, we do not really know what makes election campaigns expensive. Employing a new methodology, this project studies the campaign expenditures of a thousand politicians from across India and Indonesia to explain why campaign expenditures vary. In doing so, this project aims to help reduce the role of money in elections to healthier levels.

Section B. Scientific proposal

B1. Research idea

a. Research idea

Expensive elections campaigns are a threat to democracies around the world. The large amounts of money that politicians spend on their campaigns generate corruption and exacerbate political inequality because, as scandals regularly testify, business elites can use their campaign donations to politicians to acquire power and privileges. To curtail the damage that expensive election campaigns are doing to the quality of governance and democracy, a growing number of governments is engaging in campaign finance reform (see OECD 2016).

However, the costs of election campaigns vary greatly. Not all election campaigns are equally expensive. Yet, due to methodological obstacles and a western bias in the current literature, we do not really know to what extent and why campaign expenditures vary. In the absence of comparative studies of campaign finance, we lack the knowledge to assess what makes elections expensive and, crucially, what might reduce the role of money in elections. Taking up this pressing challenge, this project engages in a within- and between-country comparative study of campaign expenditures in the global south. Penetrating this secretive yet vital dimension of politics in a manner hitherto impossible, this project aims to identify the conditions that boost the role of money in elections:

Central Question:

What explains variation in election campaign expenditures?

To answer this question, this project adopts a new methodology that combines up-close candidate shadowing with candidate surveys. Two ethnographic studies on election campaigns in India (SP1) and Indonesia (SP2) - two large democracies in the global south representing different electoral systems - will identify drivers of campaign expenditures, while the candidate surveys will serve to engage in quantitative analysis of within-country variation (SP3). By asking candidates about estimates of the campaign funding and spending of *their competitors*, such candidate surveys constitute a major methodological advance compared to the current reliance on self-disclosures. This methodological innovation will enable the study of campaign finance to move out of its largely western confines.

To address a western bias in the current literature, this project will implement a new political economy approach to campaign finance that is more attuned to the impact of informal dimensions of politics - clientelism, rent-seeking and business-politics collusion - on campaign spending. In doing so, this project opens the doors to a previously nearly impenetrable dimension of politics, thereby not only generating hitherto unavailable data and analysis of great scientific and societal value but also informing ongoing efforts of NGOs and governments to reduce the role of money in elections to healthier proportions.

Table 1. Overview of the COSTS project		
	Subprojects 1 and 2: Candidate Shadowing in India (Postdoc 1) and Indonesia (Postdoc 2)	Subproject 3: Candidate Surveys (PI)
Aim:	Qualitative study of campaign funding and spending practices	Quantitative comparative study to explain variation in campaign expenditures
Method:	Postdocs and local research teams will shadow, in total, 24 candidates per country on the campaign trail to document campaign finance practices	Surveys of 1000 candidates for parliamentary elections in 30 (India) and 40 (Indonesia) constituencies

Why this study is urgently needed

The study of campaign finance has a venerable history (e.g. Heidenheimer 1963). Yet, because of methodological and empirical limitations, the current literature offers partial as well rather contradictory explanations for why campaign expenditures vary. For example, in terms of the impact of the *electoral system*, country-studies have argued that the candidate-centred nature of elections under majoritarian electoral systems leads to higher campaign spending (Hutchcroft 2019, Samuels 2001, Cox and Thies 1998) while other studies found that expenditures are actually higher in party-centred proportional representative electoral systems (Nassmacher 2009, see also Yadav 2011). In terms of the impact of *economic conditions* the literature on campaign finance is marked by a very general disagreement about whether campaign costs are higher in economically advanced countries (La Raja 2008: 9) or in developing countries (Nassmacher 2009: 394) with clientelistic political arenas (Pinto-Duschinsky 2002: 83). The study of the political economy of campaign finance has so far mostly looked at the *policy* benefits sought by US campaign donors (e.g., Schnakenberg and Turner 2021, Fowler et al. 2020, McMenamin 2013, Alt and Lassen 2003, Flavin 2015).

Similarly, disagreement and lack of information has hampered the analysis of whether and how *campaign finance regulation* impacts campaign expenditure. There is a large literature on the (causes of) variation of regulatory regimes of different countries (e.g. Van Biezen and Kopecky 2007, Van Biezen 2010, Alexander and Federman 1989, Mendilow and Phélippeau 2018, Ohman 2012). This literature is dominated by single-country studies, which regularly express the expectation that more state funding reduces the role of black money (e.g. Mietzner 2013) and that spending- and contribution- limits would reduce overall campaign costs (Perdomo and Burcher 2017, Hogan 2000, Cagé 2020, Gulzar et al. 2020). Yet the few available evaluative studies (largely focused on the US) find no discernible effects of public funding (Casas-Zamora 2005) or campaign finance reform (see Bowler and Donovan 2013). A lack of reliable information has largely precluded a comparative analysis of whether and how such regulations affect *actual* practices (see Scarrow 2007, Norris and Van Es 2016).

Comparative research on actual practices has relied largely on the financial reports that candidates and parties submit to election commissions (e.g. Bekkouche and Cagé 2018, Cagé 2020, Nassmacher 2009, Johnson 2013, Samuels 2001, Claessens et al. 2008). The major drawback of this method is that in most countries political parties and candidates protect themselves and their donors by obfuscating their campaign spending, making these self-reports very unreliable (see Casas-Zamora and Zovatto 2016, Gingerich 2010). Furthermore, as this self-reporting has been most reliable in western countries, the literature is highly skewed towards the US and Western Europe while “the study of political financing [in the global south] is in its infancy” (Pinto 2002:85, Norris and Van Es 2016: 268, Bryan and Baer 2005). As a result there is “a lack of developed hypotheses” on campaign spending (Scarrow 2007: 205).

Given the importance of the topic, a major research effort is needed to move this unsatisfactory research frontier. The COSTS project goes *beyond the state of the art* in the following ways:

- This study will engage in, to our knowledge, the first-ever *within-country comparative study* of campaign finance in the global south.
- Employing candidate surveys in combination with ethnographic candidate shadowing, the project adopts new methods to assess *actual* campaign expenditures.
- Using this hitherto unavailable data, this project develops and tests a *political economy approach* to campaign finance that is more attuned to the character of politics in the global south.

Analytical Framework

A problematic consequence of this western bias is that the available literature offers little insight into whether and how practices common in the global south – such as clientelism, rent-seeking and business-politics collusion – affect campaign finance practices. Studies on campaign finance have tended to focus particularly on formal campaign finance regulation and expenditures associated with *programmatic* election campaigns, such as (TV) advertisements and social media presence. Yet election campaigns do not only involve proffering *policy programs* to voters, in most countries campaigns also involve *clientelistic* strategies – i.e. the practice of providing voters and campaign donors with personal favours such as money or gifts in exchange for their support (see Kitschelt 2000, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007), which often constitute a major driver of campaign expenditures. Furthermore, as most elections take place in the context of states with limited regulatory capacity and ‘crony capitalist’ economies (Khan 2000, Kang 2002, Hillman 2013, Aligica and Tarko 2014), campaign donations are a common strategy for business actors to obtain privileged access to economic opportunities (see Samuels 2001, Boas et al. 2014, Gulzar et al. 2020). A comparative study of campaign finance needs to assess *when* and *how* these informal dimensions of politics affect campaign expenditure.

To do so this project builds on my earlier work on election campaigns in India and Indonesia (Berenschot 2011, Berenschot 2018, Berenschot and Aspinall 2019, Berenschot and Mulder 2019) to implement and test an analytical framework that could be termed a *political economy approach to campaign finance*. This approach involves integrating the (more common) study of spending incentives facing politicians with the (largely neglected) study of funding incentives facing campaign donors. As campaign expenditure is also a product of the amount of money that politicians can *obtain*, the comparative study of campaign finance needs to pay close attention to the incentives facing campaign donors like businesses and wealthy individuals (the sources of *plutocratic* campaign funding, see Nassmacher

2009). In other words, this project's political economy approach to campaign finance involves paying close attention to the factors shaping the character of politics-business interaction.

This project proposes that the willingness of business actors to contribute to election campaigns is a function of the discretionary power that politicians exert over the allocation of economic rights (see Khan 2000, Kang 2002). The benefits of campaign donations are highest when economic opportunities and profits depend strongly on (circumvention of) state regulation. Examples of such state-dependent, 'rent thick' sectors (Gandhi and Walton 2012, Kar and Sen 2016) are real estate, natural resource extraction, construction, and infrastructure, as well as criminal activities (see Casas-Zamora 2013). Conceptualizing state-dependency in terms of the size of government expenditure (relative to regional GDP) and the relative importance of rent-thick economic sectors, this project will test the hypothesis that *campaign expenditures are higher in regions where local economies are more state dependent* (cf. Berenschot 2018, Berenschot and Mulder 2019, Khan and Jomo 2000). Conversely, this project will explore the hypothesis that *in regions with more diversified economies – i.e. with bigger industry, trade and finance sectors operating outside the direct regulatory control of the state – political actors will be less dependent on plutocratic funding*. In more diversified economies political actors have greater opportunities to find alternative sources of ('grassroot') funding from small individual donors.

This project's ethnographic subprojects will zoom in on factors shaping actual spending and funding decisions of individual politicians. By studying the character of interactions between candidates and business actors, these subprojects will explore the key hypothesis that *the amount of money that candidates spend during elections is shaped by considerations about the amount of money that candidates and their funders expect to make after elections through, particularly, rent-seeking*. In this vein it can be expected, for example, that candidates having close personal connections with entrepreneurs working in 'rent-thick' sectors ('collusive networks', see Reeves-Latour and Morselli 2017) spend more than candidates lacking such connections (cf. Khan 2005). By studying candidates in economically distinct electoral districts, the ethnographic fieldwork will explore in detail whether and how economic conditions shape the intensity and character of collusive exchanges of favours between business actors and politicians, and whether such collusive relationships indeed boost vote buying practices and, hence, campaign expenditures.

This project's comparative design serves to connect this political economy approach to more commonly studied topics such as the impact of electoral systems and campaign regulations on campaign expenditures. The comparison between India and Indonesia serves to sensitize researchers to the impact of differences of electoral systems: India has a majoritarian electoral system and relatively strong political parties, while Indonesia has a fully open-list proportional representative (PR) system with relatively weak political parties. The comparison between India and Indonesia also facilitates an examination of the impact of finance regulation. Recent reforms in India and Indonesia provide this project with a special opportunity to do so. In 2018 these countries have relaxed transparency measures (India) and increased public funding for political parties (Indonesia). In other words, *the between-country comparison will enable this project to study the impact of political economy in relation to other possible drivers of campaign expenditures*.

The key dependent variable of this project – campaign expenditure – is conceptualized in terms of the total amount of money that candidates expend per voter during an election campaign. While incorporating attention for the routine operational expenses, this project focuses narrowly on expenditures that are intended for mobilizing electoral support *for parliamentary elections*. This includes all monetary expenses made for the purpose of cultivating electoral support, involving the following general spending categories: advertisements, campaign rallies/meetings, vote inducements including vote-buying, campaign logistics, campaign staffing, and voting booth management. Attention will also be paid to pre-campaign costs, such as the money that candidates sometimes pay to parties to obtain a party nomination competition (see Hendrawan, Aspinall and Berenschot 2021). While thus focusing on *monetary expenses*, a key interest of this project concerns its relation with the two other main types of campaign resources: *volunteer labour* provided by (party) supporters and the *instrumentalization of state resources* for campaign purposes.

Methodology and project design

The qualitative ethnographic studies of campaign finance practices are integrated with the quantitative component, the candidate surveys. The candidate shadowing of SP1 and 2 will generate hypotheses and insights into the nitty-gritty of campaign finance practices, while the candidate surveys of SP3 will enable this project to test these hypotheses as well as the generalizability of the fieldwork findings.

India and Indonesia are opportune countries for such a study, for five reasons. First, they both have general elections in 2024. Second, while harbouring relatively comparable economies, they have different electoral systems and different campaign finance regulation. Third, the considerable economic heterogeneity within these countries can serve to test the above-mentioned hypotheses concerning regional economic conditions. Fourth, in both countries campaign finance is a hot topic in public debates due to rising concerns about how 'money politics' is leading to 'porous state' (Jaffrelot, Kohli and Murali 2019), an 'oligarchic democracy' (Winters 2011, Sukmajati and Perdana 2018) and a 'billionaire raj' (Crabtree 2018, Kapur and Vaishnav 2018). Fifth, in both countries campaigns are managed and organised by individual candidates rather than parties, thus calling for the proposed candidate-level

analysis.

In *India* campaign finance became a particularly urgent topic due to widely shared perception that campaign costs are rising quickly – from 2 billion USD during 2009's general elections to 7,5 billion USD in 2019 (Shridaran and Vaishnav 2018). These costs fed into tendencies of India's political parties to rely on ('black') money from criminal sources (Bussell 2018) and to select rich candidates who, because of their greater financial resources, are considered to have greater electoral chances (Sircar 2018, Kumar et al. 2020). Claiming to better regulate campaign finance, Modi's government adopted various reform measures in 2018 including a scheme of 'electoral bonds' which, to the dismay of observers (Vaishnav 2019), curtailed transparency by allowing campaign donors to remain anonymous.

In *Indonesia* spiraling campaign costs associated with intensifying vote buying (Muhtadi 2019) have similarly led to concerns about the emergence of a "democracy for sale" (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). The close ties between economic and political elites have led, observers argue, to an 'oligarchy' (Winters 2011, Ford and Pepinsky 2014) fueled by lucrative exchanges of campaign donations for permits for business opportunities such as natural resource extraction (Hadiz 2010, Hidayatullah et al. 2022). In response observers (Mietzner 2013) have called for more public funding for political parties as well as an end to the rather lackadaisical implementation of, on paper, rather strict campaign finance regulation (Mietzner 2015). In short, *these countries not only foster comparative analysis by offering variation on key variables of interest, they also provide rich opportunities to implement this project's emphasis on studying how clientelism and informal business-politics exchanges fuel campaign expenditures.*

Sub-projects 1 and 2: *What factors shape spending and funding decisions of candidates in economically different constituencies? (2 postdocs, with local research teams)*

These projects will engage in ethnographic immersion in election campaigns ('candidate shadowing') in India (SP1) and Indonesia (SP2) during parliamentary elections (April/May 2024 in both countries) to study the actual funding and spending practices of candidates. In addition, in each country eight junior researchers selected by (and trained at) partner institutions will follow candidates on the campaign trail in eight more constituencies during the last two months before the elections. They will be supported by research templates - a form of researcher collaboration I organised before (see Berenschot et al. 2021).

Candidate shadowing is a relatively new fieldwork technique that involves close participant observation during the election campaigns of selected candidates (see Berenschot 2011, Bussell 2020). This can generate material unobtainable through other methods: the fieldwork will serve to grasp the nature of local electioneering, gain in-depth material of campaign finance practices and secretive business-politics exchanges, and acquire insights into the impact of local conditions, campaign finance regulation and the electoral system on these practices. Researchers will follow campaign preparation, document the actual spending of above-mentioned categories during the campaign, trace sources of campaign funding as well as the (gossip about) benefits promised to campaign donors after elections. The researchers will document campaign activities and estimate their costs while also engaging in interviews and informal conversations with candidates, campaign organisers and outside observers about campaign spending, funding and the management of the campaign budget.

Sampling: The two postdocs will each shadow six candidates in two constituencies in each country, while the PI will shadow two candidates in one constituency. The (per country) eight local researchers will each study and produce research reports on two candidates in eight different constituencies involving different political parties. This means that per country in total 24 candidates in 11 different constituencies will be shadowed. The selection of constituencies will involve – following this project's hypotheses – regions with varied economic characteristics and include highly diversified as well as highly state-dependent economies. The selection of the constituencies and candidates will be finalized in the first months of the project as this selection needs to take into account assessments of availability of local researchers and contacts.

Analysis. The analysis of the fieldwork material aims at identifying the key factors shaping funding and spending practices of politicians, with special attention for the impact of economic conditions, collusive networks, campaign finance regulation and the electoral system. The results of the candidate surveys (of SP3) will be used to assess the generalizability of fieldwork findings.

Risks: While candidate shadowing is the only way to obtain close-up observations of campaign finance practices, it does come with challenges. Researchers will need to engage in frank and sensitive conversations about secretive and, possibly, illegal practices which might involve lies and disinformation. The immersive fieldwork will enable the researchers to weed out such disinformation through triangulation. Anticipating the unlikely event that observations of (illegal) campaign practices pose risks to researchers – unlikely because in both countries such practices are generally common knowledge – a protocol for regular contact and continuous risk-assessment (facilitated by partner institutions) will be put in place.

Another challenge is that, as with most ethnographic studies, some selection bias is unavoidable: candidates open to being shadowed are likely to be less shady in terms of their campaign finance practices. The aim of projects SP1 and 2 – identifying drivers of campaign spending - does not require a fully representative selection of candidates. And the above-mentioned teams of local researchers will help alleviate potential bias, as their fieldwork

in other districts will help to increase variation of candidates and contexts. Furthermore, the candidate survey of SP3 provides a special opportunity to assess and address such bias and the generalizability of the findings.

Input: Two postdocs of 1 fte for 18 months, conducting five months of fieldwork. Sixteen junior researchers will do two months of fieldwork during elections.

Outputs: Two articles in peer-reviewed Q1 or Q2 journals about campaign finance practices in India and Indonesia. In addition this project will publish – together with partner institutions and participating researchers – policy reports (and/or an edited volume) on campaign finance in India and Indonesia. To draw public attention to this important topic and to disseminate these findings, public launch events of these policy reports will be organised.

Sub-project 3: *What explains variation in campaign expenditure? (PI)*

Building on the insights gathered by SP1 and SP2, this subproject will study variation of campaign expenditures in India and Indonesia using candidate surveys, executed about four months after the national parliamentary elections in 2024. In both India and Indonesia reputed survey agencies (Morsel and Indikator Politik) will survey a targeted 500 candidates per country - both elected and runner-up candidates for both provincial and national parliaments - about their own as well as *their competitors'* campaign finance practices. Per constituency three to four candidates will be asked about each other's practices, thus generating multiple assessments per candidate.

The advantage of this new method to study campaign finance is that it avoids the above-mentioned pitfall of untruthful self-reports by interviewing political actors about the spending practices of their competitors, thus enabling more candid and truthful responses. The survey instrument includes questions about amounts and character of campaign expenditures of competitors, as well as assessments of sources of campaign funding. For example, we will ask candidates for minimum and maximum estimates of campaign expenditures of competitors, rank the sources of their funding in order of importance, and ask about intensity of clientelistic practices (see Berenschot 2018), character of campaign organisation, contributions from political parties, etc. After extensively testing the survey instrument, these surveys will be executed four months after the 2024 national elections.

Sampling: In each country 30 to 40 (national) parliamentary electoral constituencies will be randomly selected. In the selected constituencies, 30 to 40 winning candidates running for national parliament as well as 80 to 90 candidates for provincial parliaments will be surveyed. In addition, about 360 best-performing losing candidates will be surveyed (three per constituency), thus generating a dataset of, in total, about 500 politicians per country. In Indonesia the random sampling is facilitated by the fact that national and regional parliamentary elections will be held at the same time. In India the random sampling will involve constituencies within the following four states: Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, and Maharashtra. These states will have in 2024 elections for both national and state legislative assemblies, thus allowing for surveying candidates for both parliaments - as in Indonesia.

Analysis: The resulting dataset of campaign finance practices of individual politicians will be used in a multi-level regression analysis to assess to what extent individual variation in terms of a. campaign expenditures and b. dependence on plutocratic funding is influenced by individual characteristics (e.g. the candidate's incumbency, party affiliation, vote-share, professional background and personal wealth (as reported to election commissions)) as well as district characteristics. At the district-level we aim to identify the role of various potentially relevant economic and political characteristics – like average per capita income, the structure of the local economy (including its degree of state dependency and relative size of 'rent-thick' sectors), the urbanization level and the degree of electoral competitiveness. Multi-level (hierarchical) regression analysis techniques allow for separating these multiple sources of variation in the presence of expected dependencies in the data - the relevant explanatory factors may pertain to individual political actors or to the environment (district) in which they act.

The data can subsequently also be used to take up a range of other questions, from the impact of spending on election results to the relationship between campaign finance practices and candidate characteristics. For the above-mentioned policy reports we will compare these spending assessments with the campaign budget reports that candidates have to submit to election commissions in both India and Indonesia – thus providing an empirical evaluation of the (un)reliability of these self-disclosures.

Risks: While candidate surveys are relatively common (e.g. Cross et al. 2020), they have rarely been employed to study campaign finance outside Western Europe (but see Bussell 2018). While the potential gains are thus high – previously unobtainable data and analysis of campaign finance practices of individual politicians – this project will take a number of precautions to ensure the success of this relatively new method. To ensure a good response rate and a reliable implementation, the project will work with reputed survey agencies – Morsel (India) and Indikator Politik (Indonesia) – with extensive survey experience. Their previous involvement in successful surveys of politicians (see Fossati et al. 2020 (Indonesia) and Bussell 2018 (India)) gives confidence that local politicians are quite willing to be surveyed, even on sensitive issues (which my fieldwork experiences corroborate). Second, the survey instrument will be elaborately tested in the first year. Third, the design of the survey – asking multiple politicians within one constituency to assess each other's campaigns – will strengthen the reliability of the results as there will be multiple assessments for each politician. These multiple assessments also ensures that we obtain data on all surveyed politicians even in the case of (some) non-response. The fieldwork of SP1 and SP2 will serve to evaluate the validity of these assessments.

Input for SP1-3: Two candidate surveys, implemented and analyzed by PI (at 0.3 fte for three years)

Output: Two datasets on campaign finance practices of Indian and Indonesian politicians, two peer-reviewed articles in Q1 academic journals on a. the political economy of campaign finance, b. campaign funding; as well as a monograph on the political economy of campaign finance in the global south.

Ethical concerns

If funded, COSTS project will appoint an ethical advisor. This project will seek approval from the ethics advisory board of the PI's employer, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). This proposal together with an annexure covering ethical concerns will be submitted to this ethics advisory board early 2023.

b. Scientific and/or societal impact

Chosen impact focus:

- Scientific impact
- Societal impact
- Both scientific and societal impact

This project can yield considerable *scientific impact*:

- The current lack of reliable data on campaign spending and funding constitutes a considerable barrier for political science research. Not just for understanding campaign finance itself, but also for the many other political phenomena that are impacted by campaign finance practices – from election outcomes and corruption to governance, political equality and (crony) capitalism. By implementing a new method – candidate surveys – to obtain hitherto unavailable assessments of actual campaign spending this project will yield something more than just valuable data and analysis. This project will pioneer a method that could subsequently be replicated in other countries to study the impact of campaign finance practices on a range of associated topics.
- This project will extend the study of campaign finance to the global south. As mentioned, there is a dearth of globally applicable theory and a limited understanding of campaign finance in the global south (e.g. Scarrow 2007, Norris and Van Es 2016). With its methodological and theoretical innovations, this project can overcome the current limitations of a largely western-oriented literature with new data and a theoretical approach that is more attuned to informal dimensions of politics such as clientelism, cronyism and rent-seeking. In doing so this project can boost the study of campaign finance worldwide, at a moment when growing concerns about campaign finance call out for such new knowledge.
- In terms of internationalization, this project involves a collaboration with teams of junior researchers and senior partners in India and Indonesia to boost their publications and capacities to study this important topic.

This project also has the potential to deliver considerable *societal impact*:

Campaign finance is a growing problem for democracies around the world. Particularly in countries with states with limited regulatory capacity (often in the global south), economic elites can use campaign donations to obtain regulatory favours and policy benefits. This widespread practice is weakening governance and democracy. As widespread complaints about 'state capture', 'money politics' and 'oligarchy' illustrate, campaign finance is contributing to a growing disillusionment with democracy (e.g. Wike et al. 2019). Hence it is not an overstatement to say that *the future of democracy depends on finding better ways to regulate and organise campaign finance*. This project contributes to this important challenge in the following ways:

- This project produces data needed to identify the scale and nature of the problem. Given its impact on governance and democracy, we know worryingly little about campaign finance practices. To generate the necessary awareness and political will to better manage campaign finance, our knowledge of campaign finance needs to go beyond the occasional shocking anecdote. This project will do so: this project will provide (for the first time) reliable data about both levels of campaign spending and sources funding in different parts of India and Indonesia. By generating knowledge about the character and scale of the problem, this project aims to convince policymakers, politicians and voters of the need to take action to address the challenges posed by campaign finance.
- The data produced by this project will serve to evaluate (prospects for) regulatory interventions in campaign finance and, hence, systemic change. The policy-relevant knowledge generated by this project includes at least the following four issues: a. the impact of recent reforms of campaign regulation in both India and Indonesia on actual practices; b. the (un) reliability of candidate's campaign finance disclosures to election commission; c. the regularity and ways in which candidates circumvent campaign finance regulation and d. the impact of local economic conditions on the (effectiveness of) campaign finance

regulation. This knowledge will be disseminated through the above-mentioned policy-reports as well as through the seminars with practitioners and policymakers that this project will organize.

- This project collaborates with two important Indian and Indonesian NGO's in this field (Association for Democratic Reform in India and Perludem in Indonesia). With their long-standing experience, network and national stature, these organisations will play an important role in co-producing as well as disseminating the policy reports. Their involvement will help to ensure that the findings of this project will reverberate in public debate and reach policy-makers. In addition this project is in discussion with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to explore ways in which the findings of this project regarding drivers of campaign expenditures could be integrated in policy reforms aiming to reduce campaign expenditures in other countries besides India and Indonesia.

In these three ways this project aims to help identify and implement reforms of electoral systems that could reduce the role of money in elections to healthier levels.

B2. Research team

a. Project team composition

Applicant

Title, initials, surname	Affiliation	Role
Prof. Dr. Ward Berenschot	KITLV Leiden and University of Amsterdam, department of Antropology	Project leader

Other team members

Title, initials, surname	Affiliation	Role
Prof. Dr. Mada Sukmajati	Professor, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta Indonesia (department of political science and government).	Team member subproject Indonesia, leader of research team candidate shadowing
Sarthak Bagchi, MA	Associate Professor, Ahmadabad University, Gujarat, India	Team member subproject Indonesia, leader of research team candidate shadowing
Titi Anggraini	Perludem	Societal partner Indonesia
Jagdeep Chhokar	Alliance for Democratic Reform (ADR)	Societal partner India
Postdoc 1	To be selected	Leader subproject India
Postdoc 2	To be selected	Leader subproject Indonesia

b. Selected output applicant (5)

1. Aspinall, E., & Berenschot, W. (2019). *Democracy for Sale: Elections, Clientelism and the State in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press. Citations: 226.
2. Berenschot, W. (2011). *Riot Politics: Hindu-Muslim violence and the Indian state*. Hurst / Colombia University Press. Citations: 144.
3. Berenschot, W. (2018). "The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy." *Comparative Political Studies* 51, no. 12 (2018): 1563-93. DOI: [10.1177/0010414018758756](https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018758756). Cites: 113. (O)
4. Berenschot, W. & Mulder, P. (2019). "Explaining Regional Variation in Local Governance: Clientelism and State-Dependency in Indonesia." *World Development* 122: 233–44. DOI: [10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.05.021](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.05.021). Cites: 15. (O)
5. Berenschot, W. (2020). Patterned pogroms: Patronage networks as infrastructure for electoral violence in India and Indonesia. *Journal of Peace Research*, 57(1), DOI: [10.1177/0022343319889678](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319889678). Cites: 23. (O)

c. Motivation team suitability

Ward Berenschot is a political anthropologist with extensive experience in conducting the kind of fieldwork – ‘candidate shadowing’ – that this project will engage in, in both India (see Berenschot 2011) and Indonesia (see Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). A common thread of his research is the comparative study of (the impact of) informal dimensions of politics, including politics-business interaction and campaign finance. Methodologically, he has sought to combine extensive ethnographic fieldwork with quantitative methods such as surveys - a combination also proposed for this research project. He outlined this mixed-method approach in above-mentioned well-received article (downloaded 22757 times and cited 113 times since 2018) on clientelism in *Comparative Political Studies*. He has published extensively on both Indian and Indonesian politics, including comparative analysis (e.g. Berenschot 2019, 2020) and publications (such as Berenschot and Mulder 2019) that outline elements of the political economy approach developed in this proposal.

His book *Riot Politics* has been reviewed positively in a range of outlets, with a reviewer in *New Republic* (12-10-2012) arguing that the book “renders signal service to the social science of violence”, with Pankaj Mishra describing it in *The Guardian* (14-3-2012) as an “excellent new book”. His book *Democracy for Sale* is not only regularly cited (226 times since 2019), but also makes regular appearances in Indonesian media in discussion about corruption and money politics. The book has been positively reviewed in, among others, the *New York Review of Books* (March 28, 2019) and *Foreign Affairs* (Jan. 2020). A clip of the talkshow *Mata Najwa* where former minister Emil Salim invoked *Democracy for Sale* to substantiate the need for campaign finance reform (9-10-2019), was shared 1.1 million times on twitter. Berenschot was invited to talk about campaign finance at keynote lectures and staff seminars at several Indonesian

and Indian universities, including a 'parliament lecture' in 2021 at Indonesia's parliament where he discussed campaign finance reform.

During his academic career he has been the principal investigator of several collaborative research efforts, showing his capacity to lead large collaborative research efforts and to obtain research grants. He has been guest editor of two special issues, in *Democratization* and *Journal of Citizenship Studies*. From 2013 to 2018 he coordinated a research program with five PhD's and two postdoctoral researchers on citizenship in Indonesia. For a NWO-VENI research project he trained and coordinated 35 local researchers in an effort to compare the character of election campaigns across Indonesia (see Berenschot 2018). He has previously set up and trained research teams observing election campaigns similar to the teams proposed for SP1 and 2 (see Berenschot et al. 2021). Currently he leads a NWO-funded collaborative research project on the contentious politics surrounding palm oil expansion in Indonesia (2019 – present, involving one postdoc, 11 local researchers and a collaboration with six Indonesian NGO's). This project involved organising policy seminars with politicians and bureaucrats which attracted considerable Indonesian media attention in a manner also envisioned for this project.

Ward Berenschot is employed at both the Anthropology department of the University of Amsterdam and the **Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies** (KITLV) (tenured, full time). These are both research institutions with a strong and long-standing focus on the study of Asia and with good connections to academics and policy makers in India and Indonesia.

Mada Sukmajati is a senior lecturer and political scientist at Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. His research interests include political parties, elections, and parliament. He has written extensively on electoral governance and electoral integrity in Indonesia, such as the book *Pembiayaan Pemilu di Indonesia* ('The costs of elections in Indonesia'). He has done research for both Indonesia's election commission KPU as well as the election supervisory agency Bawaslu. He has been an advisor to both these agencies; his contacts at these agencies will facilitate the dissemination of the findings of this project. He also conducted extensive research on election campaigns in Indonesia. As part of that research he coordinated and edited *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia: Money Politics, Patronage, and Clientelism at the Grassroots* (NUS Press Singapore in 2016, with Edward Aspinall) which addresses many of the topics of this research project. His latest publication is *Education, Conflict Histories and Social Cohesion-Building in Indonesia* in collaboration with Arnim Langer in KU Leuven funded by VLIR-UOS Belgium in 2022. Mada Sukmajati works at the department of politics and government at the **Universitas Gadjah Mada**. KITLV has longstanding ties with this department. The involvement of Universitas Gadjah Mada will not only facilitate the organization of research activities, but will also serve to recruit and train the envisioned team of researchers. As UGM draws the students from all over Indonesia, their involvement guarantees the selection of a high quality research team.

Sarthak Bagchi is an Assistant Professor at the School of Arts and Sciences, Ahmedabad University, India, where he teaching courses on democracy, Indian Politics, populism and ethnographic field research methods. His research is primarily on Informal politics, political mobilization, campaign politics, and clientelistic politics in Indian states. He has done extensive fieldwork in analyzing the state politics of Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat. He has published various articles on political clientelism and election campaigns in India. **Ahmedabad University** is a new independent university offering an open and supportive research environment, as well as a highly diverse student population. The involvement of Ahmedabad University will not only help this project with organization matters but also with selecting and training the local research teams.

Titi Anggraini is the Advisory Board Member and previous director of *the Association for Elections and Democracy or Perkumpulan untuk Pemilu dan Demokrasi* (PERLUDEM, www.perludem.org). Anggraini was a Member of the Indonesia's Elections Supervisory Committee at the central level (Bawaslu). From 2006-2008 Anggraini worked with Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Body for Aceh-Nias, or BRR Aceh-Nias, in managing the legislative strengthening program at the tsunami-affected areas throughout Aceh-Nias. In 2017, Titi was recognized as a Democracy Ambassador by International IDEA for her work in promoting free, fair, and democratic elections. **Perludem** is an important Indonesian NGO engaged in the research and advocacy of elections and democracy in Indonesia. Perludem has played an important role in evaluating and monitoring Indonesia's elections. Its recommendations have contributed to reforms to strengthen the election system. Perludem is also involved in training politicians as well as election officials.

Jagdeep Chhokar is a co-founder and active member of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR, www.adrindia.org). He has been an active and vocal citizen-activist engaged in a range of efforts to improve democracy and governance in India, next to his position as professor of management and organizational behaviour at the Indian Institute of Management. The **Association for Democratic Reforms** is an NGO that has taken an important role in campaigning for electoral reforms in India. It has done so by engaging in public interest litigation but also by providing information about the background and personal wealth of candidates to voters. The data that ADR collects

about the personal wealth of candidates will be employed by this research project. ADR's work in speaking up about the need for electoral reform and financial transparency of election campaigns have earned ADR various rewards, such as as the 'Special Impact Award' by the Times of India in 2013 and the 'Indian of the Year Award for Public Service' by CNN-IBN in 2013.

This research proposal has been prepared collaboratively with these team members during various (online) meetings.

B4. Work plan, planned deliverables and budget.

a. Work plan and deliverables

Table 4. Work Plan												
	2023		2024				2025				2026	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Postdoc 1 (India)	X	Prepare field-work	Training local researchers & fieldwork	Fieldwork on Election campaigns in I and IND (elections in May and June)	Analyze findings and write academic article		Launch policy reports with seminars	X				
Postdoc 2 (Ind.)					Execute candidate surveys in I and Ind							
PI	Kickoff workshop, select constituencies		Testing survey instrument					Write articles, book, publish datasets				

Table 5: Research outcomes				
	Deliverables	Responsible	Dissemination	Planning
	<i>Academic Publications</i>			<i>Submission:</i>
1.	Article on campaign finance practices in India	Postdoc 1 and India partner	Q1 or Q2 academic journal (open access)	Q1 2025
2.	Article on campaign finance practices in Indonesia	Postdoc 2 and Ind. partner	Q1 or Q2 journal (OA)	Q1 2025
3.	Article on the political economy of campaign spending	PI (with postdocs)	Q1 journal (OA)	Q1 2026
4.	Article on campaign funding and business-politics relations in global south	PI (with postdocs)	Q1 journal (OA)	Q2 2026
5.	Monograph on Campaign Finance in the Global South	PI		Q2 2026
	<i>Knowledge Utilization</i>			
6 and 7	Two policy reports or edited volume on campaign finance in India & Indonesia	Postdoc 1 & 2 w. partners & PI	Published via website, disseminated to media with seminars	Q1 2025
7 and 8	Two seminars with policymakers and practitioners on campaign finance in India & Indonesia	Postdoc 1 & 2 w. partners & PI		Q1 2025
	<i>Data</i>			
9 and 10.	Two datasets on campaign expenditures and funding sources of Indian and Indonesians politicians	PI	Published open access in DANS	Q2 2026
	<i>Internationalisation</i>			
11.	Training and co-publication opportunities for 16 junior Indian and Indonesian researchers	Postdoc 1 and 2 (w. PI)	n.a.	2024

B3. Reference list

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