

Digital Activism Resistance Movement in Mining Development Conflict in Wadas Village, Central Java Province

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the form of resistance of the Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement (Gempa Dewa) against the andesite rock mining project for the construction of the Bener Dam in Central Java through digital activism. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies of various key informants, such as representatives of WALHI Yogyakarta, LBH Yogyakarta, GEMPA DEWA, and local government officials. Data analysis was carried out with Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that the resistance of the Wadas people is born from a sense of injustice due to threats to their ecosystem, livelihoods, and cultural identity. Collective identity, solidarity across generations and genders, and adaptation to digital technology are key factors in strengthening this movement. Digital activism through social media such as Instagram and Twitter is effective in building solidarity networks, expanding the reach of campaigns, and countering the dominant narrative of the government. However, this movement also faces significant challenges, such as digital repression, intimidation, social fragmentation, and lack of public participation in decision-making.

Keywords: Construction of the Bener Dam; Social movements; Digital activism.

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INTRODUCTION

Development and public welfare are two closely related concepts, where development is expected to be a means to improve people's living standards. However, in reality, the development agenda often presents two opposite sides (Batubara, 2013; Yudartha & Winaya, 2018). On the one hand, development is predicted as an effort to create economic progress, infrastructure, and social welfare. On the other hand, its presence also raises various challenges, especially related to the negative impact on the environment and directly affected communities (Ramadhan et al., 2024; Sabilillah et al., n.d.). One form of this challenge arises in the form of rejection from people who feel marginalized and not involved in the decision-making process related to strategic development projects (Ismawati et al., 2023; Silalahi et al., 2022).

Conflicts in the development agenda are often triggered by a lack of transparency, lack of public participation, and negative impacts on the environment and social life of communities (Gulo & others, 2020; Tiffani, 2017). Development, which is supposed to be the answer to the needs of the community, actually raises new problems when its implementation does not consider aspects of sustainability and social justice (Hadawiya, 2021; Marpaung, 2017; Traigan et al., 2016). One of the real examples of this problem is the conflict over mining development in Wadas Village, Purworejo Regency, Central Java. The construction agenda of the Bener Dam, which is a National Strategic Project, requires a supply of materials in the form of andesite rocks taken from the Wadas Village area. This triggered rejection from the local community who are members of the Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement (DEWA Earthquake).

The people of Wadas Village have a high dependence on the natural resources in their area, which are not only a source of livelihood but also part of their cultural and social identity. The conversion of land into quarry mining areas is considered a serious threat to environmental sustainability, spring water sources, and the sustainability of the local economy based on agriculture and plantations (FEBRIANTI, n.d.; Mufarrikhah et al., 2024). In addition, the ecological impacts of mining activities, such as deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution, are the main concerns of the community. This condition gives rise to resistance that is not only carried out conventionally through demonstrations and advocacy, but also through digital activism.

Digital activism has become an important tool in contemporary social movements, including in the context of the resistance of the people of Wadas Village. The development of information and communication technology, especially social media, provides a new space for the public to voice their aspirations, build solidarity, and rally public support at large (Anggriawan et al., 2022; Politik et al., 2024). Through platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, the people of Wadas are able to expand the reach of their campaigns, raise environmental issues to the national and even international levels, and pressure the government and stakeholders to be more responsive to their demands (Ramadhan et al., 2024; Sabilillah et al., n.d.). This phenomenon shows how digitalization can change the pattern of community resistance, from the previously local-based to a global movement (Ramadhan et al., 2024; Sabilillah et al., n.d.).

However, behind the great potential offered by digital activism, there are also various challenges that must be faced. One of them is the risk of repressive actions, intimidation, and silencing critical voices, both in physical and digital form (Arianto, 2022; Putri & Pratiwi, 2022). The people of Wadas experience various forms of threats, ranging from physical violence during demonstrations, arrests of activists, to hacking of social media accounts used for resistance campaigns. In addition, efforts to restrict access to information through internet network blackouts in conflict zones show how governments can use control over digital infrastructure as a tool to dampen social movements.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the form of resistance carried out by the Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement through digital activism in facing mining development conflicts in Wadas Village, Central Java. This study also seeks to examine how the resistance movement builds networks with various parties involved in digital activism, including solidarity networks with civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, and environmental activists at the national and international levels. In addition, this study aims to analyze the factors

that affect and hinder the effectiveness of the digital activism movement in the context of resistance to the Bener Dam construction project.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding and analyzing in depth the Digital Activism Resistance Movement in the Mining Development Conflict in Wadas Village, Central Java. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to describe complex social phenomena, especially in the context of social movements and digital activism. Qualitative methods are used to explore and understand meanings that are considered important by individuals or groups related to certain social problems (Creswell, 2016). This type of research is qualitative descriptive which aims to describe in detail how the form of resistance of the people of Wadas Village through digital activism, how they build a network of resistance, and analyze the factors that affect and inhibit the effectiveness of the movement. The design of this study allows researchers to explore social and political dynamics that occur naturally in the field.

This research was conducted in Wadas Village, Purworejo Regency, Central Java, with a focus on community resistance to the andesite rock mining project for the Bener Dam. The informants were selected purposively, including representatives of WALHI Yogyakarta, LBH Yogyakarta, GEMPA DEWA, Purworejo Environmental Agency, Wadas Village Head, Central Java DPRD Members, and the Governor of Central Java. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, while secondary data came from media articles, organizational reports, official documents, books, and academic journals.

Data analysis using an interactive model (Sukandar et al., 2022) includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, and trail audits. This study analyzes the relationship between resistance through digital activism (independent variable), movement effectiveness (dependent variable), and supporting and inhibiting factors (moderator variables) such as social networks, media roles, and repressive actions of the apparatus. The results are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the resistance strategy of the Wadas community in the context of digital activism in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the resistance of the Wadas Nature Care Community Movement to the mining conflict

Development initiated by the Indonesian government is often faced with a dilemma between improving public welfare and negative impacts on affected communities. One clear example of this paradox is the conflict that occurred in Wadas Village, Purworejo Regency, Central Java, due to the Bener Dam construction plan which was included in the National Strategic Project (PSN). Although this project is claimed to aim to improve the welfare of the community through water, energy, and irrigation management, the reality has raised strong resistance from the people of Wadas Village. They consider this project to bring more threats, especially related to natural exploitation that has the potential to damage ecosystems and threaten their livelihoods.

The resistance movement of the Wadas people was not born without reason. The construction of the Bener Dam requires material needs in the form of andesite rocks that will be taken from the Wadas Village area. This exploitation raises concerns about environmental damage that has an impact on the loss of clean water sources, the reduction of productive agricultural land, and the increased risk of natural disasters such as landslides. This rejection is a form of response to government policies that are considered not transparent and lack of socialization to the public. The decision-making process that does not involve comprehensive public participation also reinforces the sense of injustice felt by the community.

In this analysis of resistance, Bert Klandermans' theory of Social Movement became the basis for understanding how the collective action of the Wadas community was formed. Klandermans mentioned that social movements occur because of three main elements: injustice, collective identity, and agency. First, a sense of injustice arises when people feel that their rights are being

deprived without a fair mechanism to voice their aspirations. This happened in Wadas when the government's decision to designate their area as a mining site was taken without adequate consultation. Second, collective identity is formed along with a shared awareness of the threats faced. The Wadas people are united in the spirit of defending their ancestral land as part of their cultural identity and source of life. Third, the agency or capacity to act is seen in various protests, ranging from demonstrations, mujahadah, to campaigns on social media.

The resistance of the Wadas community is also supported by networks with various parties, including environmental organizations such as WALHI, Legal Aid Institutions (LBH), academics, and social activists. These networks not only provide moral support but also strengthen legal advocacy and expand the reach of their campaigns at the national level. Social media has become a strategic tool in mass mobilization and information dissemination, allowing the Wadas issue to gain wider public attention. Accounts such as Wadas Versus on Instagram and Twitter are used to document various forms of resistance, voice unrest, and rally solidarity.

However, this resistance movement is not separated from challenges. The government uses a repressive approach by deploying officials to secure projects, which often leads to intimidation and arrest of activists. In addition, efforts to silence the voice of the public are also carried out through attacks on activists' social media accounts, as well as the disconnection of internet access in conflict areas. This threat has only strengthened the determination of the Wadas people to fight back, showing that their resistance is not just a form of rejection of development projects, but also a struggle to defend their human rights to a healthy environment and a decent life.

Another factor that hinders the effectiveness of this movement is fragmentation at the local level, where there are differences of opinion between groups that support and reject the project. People who are pro-mining see economic opportunities from land compensation and the potential for new jobs. Meanwhile, the group that refused put more emphasis on the long-term impact on the environment and survival. These differences create complex social dynamics, where horizontal conflicts among citizens pose an additional challenge to resistance movements.

Despite facing various obstacles, the Wadas community movement still shows resilience. They organized peaceful protests, filed lawsuits against mining permits, and conducted advocacy campaigns in various public forums. The activity of mujahadah or joint prayer is a symbol of spiritual resistance that strengthens solidarity between them. In addition, they are also actively in dialogue with various parties, including the government, to find fair and sustainable solutions.

In a broader context, the resistance of the Wadas community reflects the challenges in development management in Indonesia that often ignore the principles of public participation and social justice. This case is an important lesson that sustainable development is not only measured by the physical achievement of infrastructure, but also by how the process respects the rights of the community and maintains environmental sustainability. Therefore, it is important for the government to prioritize an inclusive and transparent approach in every development project, so as to minimize potential conflicts and ensure that the benefits of development are felt by all parties fairly.

Resistance of the Wadas Nature Care Community through digital activism to build networks with various parties

The development of digital technology has presented a significant transformation in the pattern of public participation, including in the context of social movements and community resistance to government policies that are considered detrimental. Digital activism is now an effective new weapon in fighting for aspirations, fighting injustice, and building solidarity at large. This phenomenon also occurred in the resistance carried out by the Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement (Gempa Dewa), which faced the threat of natural exploitation due to the andesite rock mining project to support the construction of the Bener Dam in Central Java.

The people of Wadas use digital media, especially social media, as a tool to voice their rejection of mining projects that are considered to threaten the sustainability of the environment and their lives. This digital activism has a dual function: as a medium to disseminate information



about conditions on the ground and as a means of building networks with various parties, ranging from individuals, communities, to national and international organizations. Accounts such as Wadas Versus on Instagram and Twitter have become information distribution centers that display resistance narratives, protest documentation, and invitations to solidarity from the wider community.

According to Klandermans, injustice is the main driving factor in the formation of collective action. In the context of Wadas, the injustice stems from government policies taken without involving the community as a whole, as well as repressive actions against residents who reject the mining project. Digital activism is a forum to fight this injustice. The uploaded content, such as photos, videos, and narratives of resistance, not only aims to inform but also mobilize public emotions to build empathy and support for the struggle of the Wadas community.

The network built through digital activism extends beyond the geographical boundaries of Wadas Village. Solidarity emerged from various groups, ranging from environmental organizations such as WALHI, Legal Aid Institute (LBH), academics, students, to individuals who care about environmental issues and human rights. This support is not only present in the form of statements of attitude on social media, but also through solidarity actions in various regions, online petitions, and legal advocacy to fight for the rights of the Wadas community.

The digital strategy used by Gempa Dewa shows how social media can be a powerful tool in rallying support. The use of hashtags (#) such as #SaveWadas, #WadasMelawan, and #TolakTambang has become a movement identity that is easily recognized and followed by the public. This hashtag serves as a digital consolidation tool, connecting various parties in one voice of rejection. In addition, digital campaigns that are carried out consistently are also able to pressure the government and mainstream media to pay attention to the issues raised.

However, this journey of digital activism is not without its challenges. The people of Wadas face various forms of digital repression, ranging from online intimidation, cyberattacks, to blocking internet access in certain areas. This action is a new form of efforts to silence critical voices in the digital era. However, the repression actually strengthens the spirit of resistance, where the community and their solidarity network are increasingly persistent against all forms of intimidation.

Digital activism also plays an important role in building a counter-narrative against government propaganda or mining project support groups. Through social media, the people of Wadas are able to convey their own perspectives, uncover facts on the ground, and refute biased or misleading information. This creates a more democratic discussion space, where various voices can be heard without being distorted by certain interests.

Apart from being a tool of resistance, digital activism also functions as a political education space for the community. Through social media interactions, the Wadas community and its supporters learned about their rights, advocacy strategies, and the importance of solidarity in the face of injustice. This process not only strengthens individual capacities, but also builds a more critical collective awareness of social, political, and environmental issues.

In a broader context, the resistance of the Wadas community shows that digital activism is not just a temporary phenomenon, but part of the evolution of social movements in the digital era. The ability to adapt technology in resistance strategies demonstrates the flexibility and resilience of civil society in the face of the challenges of the times. Social media, with all its advantages and limitations, has become a new field in the fight against injustice, where every voice has the potential to create change.

In conclusion, the resistance of the Wadas community through digital activism has succeeded in proving that technology can be an effective tool to rally support, build a network of solidarity, and fight injustice. Despite facing various challenges, the collective spirit built through digital media is proof that small voices can resonate widely, inspire, and influence greater social change. The struggle of the Wadas community is a reflection of how courage, creativity, and solidarity can unite in fighting injustice in the digital era.

Success factors and obstacles of the Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement through digital activism

The Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement (Gempa Dewa) shows how a small community can present significant resistance to development projects that threaten the environment and their lives. The success of this movement is inseparable from internal factors that are firmly rooted in their collective identity, solidarity, and adaptability in utilizing digital technology. However, on the other hand, this movement also faces various challenges that are obstacles in its struggle, ranging from digital repression to negative stigma created by the authorities' narrative.

Factors for the Success of the God Earthquake Movement

1. Collective Identity and Commonality of Fate

Collective identity is the main foundation for the success of the Earthquake of Gods. Referring to Klandermans' theory (in Afdhal & Hidayat, 2019), factors of common fate, personal characteristics, and centrality of membership in a group play an important role in the formation of a strong collective identity. For the Wadas people, nature is not only a source of livelihood, but also part of history, identity, and cultural heritage that is inherited from generation to generation. The threat from the mining project triggered a critical awareness that formed a collective resistance. This feeling of solidarity in the face of the environmental crisis fosters a strong solidarity among citizens, which is then translated into real actions both in the real world and the digital world.

Cross-Generational and Gender Solidarity

The uniqueness of this movement lies in its participation across generations and genders. The Earthquake of the Gods not only consisted of men, but also involved a group of women through Wadon Wadas and the youth group You Dewa. The role of women is particularly prominent, where they are not only moral advocates but also the main actors in various protests. Their relationship with nature, such as the tradition of making besek from bamboo and guarding the springs, became a strong symbol of resistance. Symbolic actions such as carrying jugs filled with water from 27 Wadas springs during the protest show how cultural and ecological values are integrated into the narrative of resistance.

2. Adaptation to Digital Activism

The ability of the Earthquake of Gods to adapt to digital activism is one of the factors of their success. Since 2018, they have leveraged platforms such as Instagram and Twitter through the Wadas Versus account to disseminate information, build a network of solidarity, and counter the dominant narrative of the authorities. This digital activism allows them to reach a wider audience, including environmental activists, academics, students, and the international community. The use of hashtags such as #SaveWadas and #WadasTolakTambang is an effective consolidation tool in rallying public support.

3. Support from Civil Society Organizations and Solidarity Networks

The success of the Dewa Earthquake is also supported by the involvement of various civil society organizations, such as the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI), the Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH), as well as student activist groups and academics. These organizations not only provide legal advocacy but also strengthen public campaigns through education, training, and solidarity actions. This support expands the reach of the Wadas movement and increases pressure on the government to respond to their demands.

Consistency in Resistance Narrative and Strategy

The Earthquake of the Gods shows consistency in their narrative and strategy of resistance. They are not trapped in mere rhetoric but continue to take real action, both in the form of direct protests and digital campaigns. This consistency makes the Wadas issue remain relevant in the public sphere and is difficult to ignore by the mainstream media and the government. Symbolic actions, such as the silent act with the mouth taped and money as a symbol that nature cannot be bought, managed to attract the attention of the public and the media.

Factors Hindering the Movement of the Earthquake God

1. Digital Repression and Intimidation

One of the biggest challenges facing the Earthquake of God is digital repression. Activists and supporters of the movement often face intimidation in the form of cyberattacks, hacking of social media accounts, and physical threats. Some residents reportedly received digital terror, such as intimidation messages and threats over the phone. In fact, internet access in Wadas Village was cut off when there was an escalation of the conflict, which hindered communication and mobilization of action. This action is a form of violation of freedom of expression and opinion in the digital era.

2. Stigma and Negative Framing by the Government and Media

The Wadas movement also faces challenges in the form of negative stigmas built by the government and the media that are partisan. They are often labeled as anti-development groups or infiltrated by parties with certain political agendas. This narrative is reinforced by buzzers on social media who try to distort facts by using hashtags such as #StopPolitisasiWadas and #StopFramingWadas. This effort aims to weaken public support for the Wadas movement and create confusion among the wider community.

3. Lack of Participation in the Decision-Making Process

Although the government claims to have conducted socialization and dialogue, the people of Wadas feel that their voices are not really heard in the decision-making process related to the mining project. This procedural injustice is a serious obstacle because it ignores the principle of public participation which should be part of democracy. Instead of engaging citizens substantively, the government uses a top-down approach that leads to resistance.

4. Unequal Access to Technology and Information

Although digital activism is a major strength, not all citizens have equal access to technology and information. Limited digital infrastructure in villages, such as unstable internet connections, is an obstacle in coordinating digital actions. In addition, some older people may not be familiar with the use of social media as a tool of resistance, so the role of young people is very crucial to bridge this gap.

5. Social Pressure and Fragmentation at the Local Level

At the local level, Gempa Dewa faces challenges in the form of social pressure from some communities who support mining projects for economic reasons, such as land compensation and job promises. This fragmentation can weaken internal solidarity and create horizontal conflicts among citizens. The government and companies often use a divide and rule approach to divide community solidarity, so that the resistance movement becomes unsolid.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the resistance of the Wadas Village Nature Care Community Movement (Gempa Dewa), it can be concluded that this resistance was born from a sense of injustice against the andesite rock mining project that threatens the ecosystem and the lives of the local community. Collective identity as a community that depends on nature, awareness of environmental threats, and the spirit of defending ancestral land are the main foundations in building solidarity. Digital activism through social media such as Instagram and Twitter has succeeded in expanding the reach of support, rallying solidarity, and documenting resistance actions that strengthen people's voices at the national level.

The success of this movement lies in its ability to adapt to digital technology, consistency in the narrative of resistance, and support from a network of civil society organizations, academics, and environmental activists. Cross-generational and gender participation, especially the role of women through the Wadon Wadas group, demonstrates the power of inclusive solidarity. Despite facing repression such as digital intimidation, internet access cuts, and negative framing in the media, the resistance of the Wadas community remains resilient because it is built from a strong collective awareness of the importance of preserving nature.

However, the movement also faces significant challenges, such as digital repression, social fragmentation at the local level, and lack of community participation in the decision-making process. The government tends to use repressive approaches and political narratives to weaken resistance. Even so, the courage and perseverance of the Wadas people in fighting injustice is proof

that digital activism and community-based collective action can be an effective tool in fighting for the right to a healthy environment and a decent life in the digital era.

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