

“CORPORATE SECURITY BEGINS IN THE COMMUNITY”: Mining, the Corporate Social Responsibility Industry, and Environmental Advocacy in Indonesia

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In June 2002, around 30 environmental activists from across the Indonesian archipelago convened a Women’s Empowerment Workshop in the village of Tongo, in the southwest corner of the island of Sumbawa. Tongo sits in the shadow of Denver-based Newmont Mining Corporation’s Batu Hijau copper and gold mine, which began operating in late 1999. Workshop participants gathered to discuss the environmental hazards of large mines, their differential impact on men and women, and tactics for transforming village–mine relations. After the activists concluded the workshop, 20 men from nearby villages wielding machetes and other weapons confronted them on the dirt road leading out of Tongo. The men forced the activists out of their vehicles, warning them their cars would be burned if they failed to comply. The men then ripped rolls of film out of the activists’ cameras and robbed them of their personal journals, notebooks, and documents. Although the attackers did not inflict serious physical injuries, they verbally abused the activists for close to an hour before allowing them to continue, paying no heed to one activist’s hysteria or to the presence of several children and an eight-month pregnant woman in the group (MinergyNews 2002b). Another group of men again halted and intimidated the frightened activists farther down the road as they made their way through the village of Sekongkang Bawah. Two policemen watched the second confrontation, but made no move to intervene.

In this essay, I analyze the moral commitments of the Newmont corporate managers and Sumbawan village elites who, respectively, provoked and

carried out the attack. With this study of the agents and defenders of capital, I seek to complement the extensive anthropological literature on transnational advocacy networks supporting indigenous rights and environmental agendas against the forces of capitalism.¹ Understanding the emergence and coherence of the moral commitments of “political Others”² who violently defend capital is critical for anthropological accounts of how, in the face of significant social and environmental challenges, global capitalism is constituted and sustained.

I situate the attack on environmental activists in relation to an evolving corporate security strategy that consciously enlists local elites as the first line of corporate defense. Although not a new strategy, it is one that is now closely tied to the rise in the late 1990s of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) industry. In this essay, I analyze how CSR is evolving alongside environmental advocacy and new forms of corporate security, and how these coevolutions shape social interactions in the vicinity of the Batu Hijau mine.

NEWMONT’S GRASSROOTS DEFENDERS

The activists labeled their attackers *preman*,³ equating them with the mafia-style thugs who have staked out their rural and urban turfs elsewhere in post-Suharto Indonesia. Within Sumbawan villages, residents would have more readily identified the attackers as a mix of local elementary schoolteachers and unemployed youth: notably, the most prominent and marginalized men in the village. Yet villagers were not entirely surprised to see teachers halting their classes to violently evict activists. Alongside other villagers who have higher status by virtue of their aristocratic descent and access to land, teachers have long controlled the local governing apparatus, filling a range of positions from village secretary to representative councilman. Many retain the conservative outlook that characterized civil servants during the Suharto era (1966–98), which began with the 1965–66 anticommunist massacres and purging of teachers with leftist sympathies (Cribb 1990).

After the arrival of Newmont, teachers and other village elites moved beyond steering local government to establish business ventures supplying the mine and its contractors with transportation services, housing, temporary labor crews, construction materials, and agricultural goods. Further, they created new non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that fell somewhere between private profit-seeking and community development institutions. When it became evident that

Newmont managers preferred contracting more metropolitan, established businesses and NGOs, village elites orchestrated demonstrations and roadblocks and incited social conflicts they themselves were strategically placed to resolve (Ryter 2001) as a means of forcing Newmont to extend its affirmative action policies (for local hiring and business contracts) and channel its community development commitments (e.g., providing microcredit, agricultural supplies, and public health, education, irrigation, and transportation infrastructure) through local companies and NGOs. Villagers' tactics had the potential to be very effective; mine managers calculated they could lose at least one million dollars a day if roadblocks halted production.

The actions of Sumbawan village elites could be ascribed to a more general political phenomenon in Indonesia: the making of a "preman state," or the "gangsterization" of local politics as semicriminal gangs, vigilantes, bureaucrats, and business elites incubated under Suharto's rule reconstituted themselves and seized power (Barker 2006; Hadiz 2003; MacDougall 2003; Malley 2003; Santikarma 2004; Schulte Nordholt 2002, 2003, 2004; Sidel 2004).⁴ If Sumbawan elites behaved as "entrepreneurs in violence" (Schulte Nordholt 2002:40), however, they did so with a moral purpose: the pursuit of development. They defined development as tangible material progress and infrastructure, rejecting the more ethereal, neoliberal, self-help discourses so prominent in the rhetoric of the CSR industry (see Text Box 1). For them, Newmont was a vehicle through which to realize the "expectations of modernity" (Ferguson 1999) that the Suharto regime had incessantly promoted as a national goal (Heryanto 1995), even as rural backwaters like southwest Sumbawa were neglected in practice. In effect, village elites forced Newmont to assume the conventional role of the state as provider of patronage goods (Antlöv 1995; Hart 1986, 1989). Village elites' ability to extort development goods from Newmont won them support among ordinary villagers, who nonetheless expressed ambivalence about the uneven ways that elites distributed these gains (Schneider and Schneider 2003). Elites were downwardly dependent on ordinary villagers to participate in the demonstrations they organized, and upwardly dependent on Newmont managers to furnish them with patronage goods. Newmont managers, in turn, nourished local patron-client relations by relying on elites to keep the peace, hiring them and their sons in the mine's Community Development and Community Relations offices, and rewarding them with contracts.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Industry. Although people have debated the nature, rights, and responsibilities of corporations for centuries now, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) only became a significant industry—complete with profit and nonprofit organizations, journals, classes and workshops, guidelines, and prizes—in the last decade and a half. Today, politicians, activists, celebrities, consultants, business school professors, anthropologists, and NGOs are all involved in promoting, measuring, and managing the social responsibilities of corporations. The industry’s rapid consolidation was galvanized in part by transnational social movements that targeted industries and corporations with creative campaigns (e.g., consumer boycotts, shareholder resolutions, and lawsuits see Keck and Sikkink 1998) and called into question undemocratic international institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, that make and enforce the neoliberal conditions under which companies operate (Graeber 2007). Threatened with external interventions, corporate actors turned to CSR as a means, to paraphrase Hewlett Packard’s erstwhile CEO, Carly Fiorina, for seizing control of the movement before it seized control over them.

For the purposes of this article, CSR has three important features. First, CSR proponents largely promote voluntary corporate self-regulation as opposed to mandatory national or transnational forms of regulation (Watts 2005:393–398). The industry has produced a proliferation of corporate and trade association codes of conduct, transnational standards, social auditing bodies and accreditation mechanisms, and socioenvironmental principles for financing,¹ all of which have generated certain improvements to business practices; but critics argue that CSR’s piecemeal approach to companies and industries impedes more sweeping structural change as well as the imposition of external and independent forms of control over corporations (Kimerling 2001; Seidman 2003).² For example, the UN Global Compact, a landmark CSR institution launched in 2000 to promote universal principles of human rights, labor, the environment, and anticorruption for businesses, allows member companies to enhance their reputation despite few mechanisms for accountability. Global Compact signatory companies monitor and report on their own adherence to the principles; there are no significant policing mechanisms or punitive sanctions for violating the principles. In debates over voluntary mechanisms, states are demoted to simply individual players in a multistakeholder process that purports to accord equal footing to governments, corporations, communities, and civil society organizations.

A second important feature of the CSR industry is the centrality of the “business case,” that is, the notion that social and environmental investments will pay economic dividends as more responsible businesses will become the “companies of choice” for consumers, investors, governments, and civil society partners. From this perspective, there is no contradiction between a company’s obligations to stakeholders and shareholders expecting profit maximization. Although the business case has legitimized CSR within companies, it also shapes and constrains the actions of CSR promoters who find themselves justifying their work in terms of potential profit risks and windfalls rather than ethical considerations.

A third crucial feature of CSR is its intimate ties to the development industry. The relation between the corporations and development agencies has multiple dimensions, from

the revolving door between the two spheres to extensive partnerships and a growing belief that corporations alone have the power to catalyze development. The development–CSR relationship is particularly close in mining because companies operating in remote regions often assume a de facto state role, subsidizing public transportation, education, health, utilities, and waste management infrastructure. Ironically, this infrastructure-centered approach—and the norms, technologies, and aesthetics it presupposes—is now frowned on in development circles where self-help and a small-is-beautiful aesthetic is praised in mainstream discourses of people-centered, bottom-up, participatory, empowering, sustainable, and environmental development. These discourses of “genuine” development are typically articulated in explicit opposition to the corruption, environmental degradation, and relations of dependence that are supposedly endemic to “conventional” state-controlled, modernist, infrastructure-centered development. Conflicts often arise between state, mine, and community actors over how development should be defined and who bears responsibility for progress.

NOTES

1. For examples, see ISO 14000, AccountAbility, the Global Reporting Initiative, and the Equator Principles.
2. Institutions representing large U.S. corporations such as the Business Roundtable and the American Chamber of Commerce, for example, promote CSR practices for companies operating in China while simultaneously opposing Chinese government proposals to institute new labor and environmental protections. I view these positions as complementary, not distinct.

On multiple levels, village elites were threatened by the activists and the messages they conveyed: that the mine was an imperialist, exploitative, violent, environment-destroying project that disenfranchised women. They believed the activists constituted a serious threat to the mine’s future, and with it, to their own visions of development and future as political leaders. Mine managers encouraged this perspective.

CSR AND CORPORATE SECURITY

The militarized enclave represents one approach to securing extractive industry operations (see Ferguson 2006). Cleared of local residents and fortified with guns, watchtowers, high walls, razor wire, attack dogs, and armed guards, such enclaves are reachable only by corporate infrastructure. Batu Hijau has elements of this security model in place. The mine’s first community infrastructure project involved constructing a police station; company facilities are fenced in and patrolled by private guards; a color-coded flag system alerts employees to the ambient social threat level; and the mine pays an Indonesian mobile brigade police unit (Brimob)

to remain on site as a backup force. Yet Newmont's approach to security is hybrid, partially militarized but also cognizant of the permeability of the mine terrain, and of threats that cannot be seen or countered through conventional techniques of surveillance and force.

In 2002, Newmont became a signatory to The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights,⁵ a centerpiece of CSR in extractive industry. Drafted in 2000 by an international group of NGOs, Western companies, and government leaders seeking to avoid the kinds of human rights abuses by state and private security forces that have made extractive industry notorious, the principles are intended to "guide companies in balancing the needs for safety while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms."⁶ In keeping with the spirit of the principles, Batu Hijau had long ensured that villagers could make use of certain forests within the mine area, and the company has shrunk the number of Brimob guards over time (down to just 30 in 2004) and largely confined them within mine facilities. What is more, Newmont's private guards bear no firearms, undergo human rights training with their morning drills, and wear laminated cards with the UN Declaration of Human Rights around their necks.

Although downplaying militarized approaches to security, the CSR industry implicitly endorses drawing civilians into the sphere of corporate security through community development. "Corporate security," as an expatriate Batu Hijau manager explained to me, "begins in the community." He drew on his experience as a U.S. army colonel and military attaché, deploying in a corporate context the long-standing U.S. foreign policy logic of using development aid as a means to realize strategic security objectives such as cultivating allies, gaining territorial access, and establishing lines of intelligence communication (see also Atwood 2002:335). The view that community welfare projects are useful for conflict management is echoed in the Voluntary Principles,⁷ and in Newmont Mining Corporation's (2004:11) official line that "the most effective way of maintaining the security of our operations and employees is to have good relationships with local communities and governments." In corporate parlance, a mine is best secured when both company and communities regard it as a "win-win" proposition.

In southwest Sumbawa, village elites have reciprocated Newmont's assistance to local businesses by policing local villages for threats against the mine, sharing intelligence with Newmont on potential foes, and orchestrating public demonstrations of local support and protection. After radical Muslim groups threatened to kidnap Batu Hijau's U.S. expatriates in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, for example, village leaders hung banners over public buildings declaring, for

example, that “The people of Jereweh reject the sweeping of foreigners around the mine,”⁸ and, “Batu Hijau is a Regional Asset. The people of Sekongkang are prepared to secure it.” Thus, Newmont’s CSR strategies have to some extent succeeded in enlisting local actors in defense of the corporation.

Although CSR initiatives such as the Voluntary Principles have partially demilitarized corporate security, I argue that CSR has also produced fresh zones of struggle and new forms of violence. The attack described above was a product of the new corporate social responsibility–security system rather than a deviation from correct CSR practice. This is not to say that CSR officials planned the attack or expressed unmitigated approval of it. Indeed, I will argue that CSR officials might have had difficulty stopping it. Yet it followed logically from the imposition of the new CSR model of security, and from the moral commitments CSR fostered among corporate managers, as I show in the next section.

FROM NEWMONSTER TO GOODMONT: MORAL NARRATIVES AND COUNTERNARRATIVES

In elucidating the cultural logic supporting Newmont managers’ behavior as they provoked villagers to confront activists, I seek to go beyond two standard analytics of corporate behavior. The first, a “bad apples” approach, singularizes deviant individuals. For example, psychologists have claimed that many successful chief executive officers (CEOs) are subcriminal psychopaths who channel their manipulative, narcissistic, and ruthless psychopathic tendencies into corporations rather than becoming serial rapists or murderers (see Steinberger 2004). Singling out CEOs for blame when things go wrong is related to the questionable tendency to lionize celebrity CEOs when share prices are rising (Dudley 1994; Khurana 2002); either way CEOs are treated as all-powerful beings. The second standard analytic involves an institutional approach. Legal scholar Joel Bakan (2004) argues that corporate managers are largely “good moral people” who behave unethically because they are under a legal obligation to maximize shareholder profits. In my story, corporate managers’ provocation of violence instead has cultural roots in shared knowledge practices, rituals, and narratives. Although their actions may have supported profit maximization, they were not determined by or reducible to this imperative.

Corporate managers and CSR experts construct their moral self-narratives in active dialogue with the beliefs and tactics of their most vociferous critics. My starting place, therefore, is an advocacy critique from a comic book story of “Newmonster” produced by Project Underground, a Berkeley-based social and environmental advocacy NGO (n.d.).⁹ Although Project Underground produced

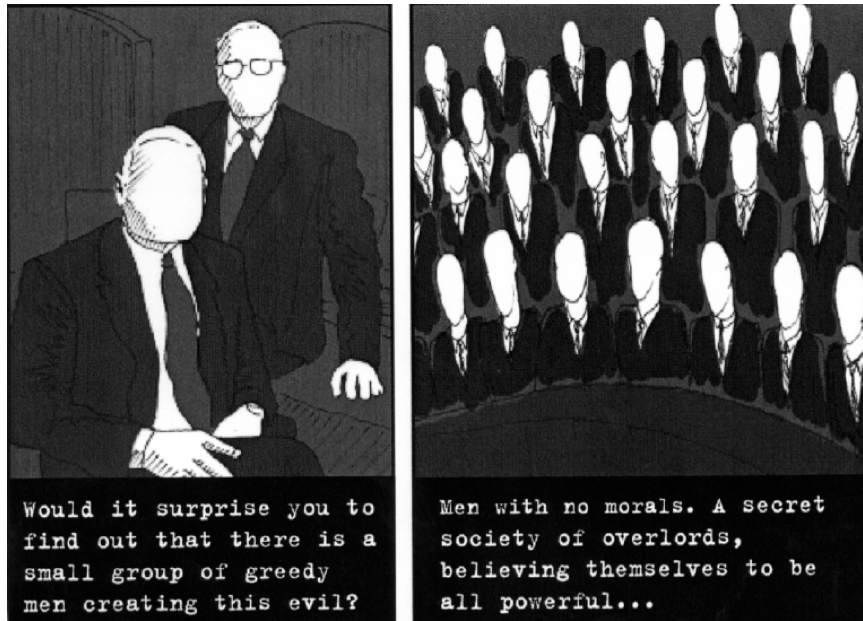


FIGURE 1. Newmonster's Agents. (From Project Underground n.d.)

the comic book for community members affected by Newmont mines (it appears in English, Spanish, and Indonesian), I never saw a copy of it circulating in Sumbawan villages. Rather, I came across it on the Internet and in the Jakarta headquarters of Jatam, an Indonesian network of NGOs opposed to corporate mining.

To summarize, the Newmonster narrative unfolds as follows: (1) large mines destroy the environment, scarring the earth and dumping waste; (2) large mines destroy the health and environment of local communities; (3) this is an ancient imperialist evil; (4) greedy, amoral men are responsible for this evil (see Figure 1); (5) these men are able to carry out this evil because they are backed by police and military violence; (6) communities want to educate themselves to fight mines; (7) the struggle is transnational, and you can be a part of it. My aim here is not to dwell on this narrative's oversimplification of geography, history, community,¹⁰ and corporation. Rather, for my present purposes, the Newmonster narrative usefully distills a set of default leftist assumptions about how U.S. mining corporations operate abroad. Newmont managers and CSR experts engage these assumptions as a template for developing alternative narratives and practices through which they contrast "environmentally friendly" mining corporations with various foils: backward mines, poor Indonesians, and activist NGOs. As I shift between these Others and the practices through which corporate actors construe them, readers

may detect a shift in register from a seemingly healthy sense of competition around which company is at the forefront of mining's "best practices" to a patronizing sense of environmental superiority vis-à-vis poor villagers to, finally, the outright vilification of activist NGOs.

Batu Hijau managers with whom I spoke unanimously compared the mine's social and environmental performance favorably to those of other mines at which they had worked, Indonesian state-owned enterprises, and small-scale mining, which they insistently called "illegal mining." Newmont managers often described Batu Hijau as a "model mine"; from an environmental and social perspective they regarded it as the star performer in Newmont's portfolio, the apex of "best practices." A public relations consultant who had worked for both Newmont and Freeport McMoRan quipped the term "Goodmont," for Newmont, in contrast to "Badport," for Freeport. Freeport is infamous for its corrupt relations with the Suharto regime; large-scale environmental destruction; land expropriation; and complicity in military abuses of human rights (Leith 2002). Freeport is the prototypical socioenvironmental "monster" against which Batu Hijau managers contrast themselves and their work. In contrast to the "ancient evil" of the Newmonster narrative, Batu Hijau officials portray today's "environmentally friendly" mine as a departure from past practices. CSR experts claim that the future belongs to "responsible" mining companies, which will become the "miners of choice" for states, communities, and lending agencies, while setting on the path to extinction "dinosaurs" that pollute and neglect their social responsibilities.

Newmont managers' sense of pride in the mine is particularly apparent in the realm of environmental and social initiatives. One corporate environmental manager from Denver who worked in Batu Hijau during mine construction told me he "loved" the mine and was so certain that it was the best in the world that he might not be objective about it. Several officials tried to impress me with the cost and state-of-the-art design of Newmont's water management system (which they referred to as "the eighth wonder of the world") as evidence of environmental commitment. Other officials point out special features like the softcrete channels that transport surface water runoff from the forest surrounding the mine into the Sejong River that runs through Tongo village. On the community front, Newmont managers expressed pride in the company's local hiring efforts, infrastructure projects, development programs, and NGO collaborations, although many of these initiatives were triggered by external pressures rather than internal commitment.¹¹

Batu Hijau's practice of Submarine Tailings Disposal (STD) is a seemingly significant obstacle to the construction of a positive corporate identity. Batu Hijau

can expel up to 58 million tons of tailings per year into the ocean, or 160,000 tons per day. Although corporate officials often initially find STD an environmentally abhorrent idea (Shearman 2002), many come to regard the practice as minimally disruptive to the environment. The ideological neutralization of STD's impact is enabled in part by technoscience. Newmont documents acknowledge that STD extinguishes the life of every nonmobile bottom-dwelling deep sea creature in the path of the tailings, but dismiss as negligible its impact on biodiversity and biodiversity. Newmont brochures compare tailings toxin levels to those of harmless dirt and sand samples. Under lab conditions, moreover, Newmont's environmental scientists have found benthic organisms can colonize tailings.¹²

Beyond the realm of technoscience, other "enviro-rituals" provide mechanisms for instilling in Newmont officials the conviction that tailings are inert.¹³ Before various audiences of NGO representatives, government officials, journalists, village elites, village schoolchildren, and Indonesian university students, Batu Hijau officials flamboyantly demonstrate the supposedly benign nature of mine tailings by licking, drinking, and covering their hands, faces, and arms with tailings. Metropolitan visitors and village elites see these enviro-rituals during mine tours that are a routine component of the public outreach and stakeholder dialogue efforts through which Newmont managers seek to showcase their CSR initiatives and cultivate new alliances. Mine officials stage a budget version for local villagers and schoolchildren, bringing a roadshow on tailings to village government offices and classrooms (see Figure 2). Enjoined to partake in ingesting and otherwise physically interacting with tailings, audience members typically react with a mixture of awe, horror, curiosity, or skepticism.¹⁴ The Batu Hijau mine has no monopoly on such rituals. At the Ovacik mine in Turkey, senior mine officials donned bathing trunks and frolicked in a tailings dam before media cameras to assure the public that the tailings were harmless. In West Papua, Freeport invests heavily in projects demonstrating that agricultural products can survive on a substrate of mine tailings, and even ships off bubble-wrapped, tailings-raised cantaloupes to government officials in Jakarta. Even if these enviro-rituals are real (many activists express skepticism), they impart no scientific knowledge on the short- or long-term impacts that millions of tons of tailings have on the marine ecosystem and on human health. Yet by enacting such rituals, Newmont officials not only demonstrate but may actually produce their belief in the harmlessness of tailings. By dramatically portraying their faith in the neutrality of the tailings, managers attain faith (Geertz 1973:114; also, Althusser 1971:168–170).



FIGURE 2. A Newmont official showing samples of ore, tailings, and copper concentrate to Sumbawan schoolchildren. Photograph by the author.

In addition to these tailings rituals, Batu Hijau managers also engage in environmental rituals to protect the environment from poor, environmentally destructive Indonesians. Batu Hijau's environment officials stock a small turtle hatchery with eggs collected from local beaches and from a subdistrict to the east (Lunyük). From the perspective of Newmont officials, local villagers, who consider turtle eggs a wonderful delicacy, are a significant threat to these sea turtles. These charismatic, endangered turtles—unlike the scientifically unknown and uncharismatic benthic organisms smothered by the millions beneath Newmont's tailings—elicit among many Westerners and some upper- or middle-class Indonesians a sense of wonder and a desire to nurture and protect.¹⁵ As with the tailings rituals, Batu Hijau is not unique; other corporations embracing CSR construct themselves as heroic saviors of charismatic species that become icons of corporate environmental care (e.g., Macintyre and Foale 2002:3; Rio Tinto 2001:10–11). Batu Hijau holds ceremonies at the beach resort close to its gated Township in which the family members of senior Newmont officials hand release young hatchery-raised turtles. Such interactions, Susan Davis (1997:242) suggests in her *Sea World* study, create a powerful sense of relationship and communion with nature that “feels good, [and] may even feel like social action,” all the while anesthetizing participants to the political and economic dimensions of serious environmental problems.

Other Sumbawan marine foraging practices troubled Newmont managers. Villagers turned out en masse every year to net *nyale*, the colorful marine Polychaete worms that can be caught near the shores at dawn for two days during their annual reproductive cycle.¹⁶ One manager told me villagers must be driving nyale into extinction. Similarly, company officials were convinced that villagers would ruin the reefs with their *remada*, a practice whereby groups of villagers, often dominated by women, combed the reefs at low tide, using knives and crowbars to spear fish and octopus and gather shellfish and seaweed. At low tide, men also fished in the surf with cast and gill nets. From the perspective of Newmont officials, who expressed awe over the marine flora and fauna life they recorded on underwater digital cameras, villagers were consuming the biodiversity and crushing it underfoot. This perspective has roots in conservation ideas and practices, where there is a long history of criminalizing subsistence activities (Jacoby 2001; Peluso 1992; Williams 1973; Walley 2004).

For the most part, managers blamed villagers' "environmental destructiveness" on a combination of poverty and ignorance. In conversations with Newmont executives in Sumbawa, Jakarta, and Denver I grew familiar with the refrain that "the biggest enemy of the environment is poverty."¹⁷ One manager cited an apparent decline in villagers' marine foraging as evidence of increasing village prosperity because of Newmont.¹⁸ Based on my own participation in village activities, however, even the wealthiest villagers enjoy joining groups for seashore foraging and raw seafood meals out on the reefs, suggesting that this is an important social activity, in addition to meeting subsistence needs. Although barter relations and gifting between neighbors went into sharp decline after Newmont's arrival, villagers continued to routinely pass along turtle eggs and seafood to one another, and even distant relatives, as gifts. Nonetheless, Newmont managers see marine foraging as a problem of poverty and ignorance, best remedied by CSR initiatives for economic growth and environmental tutelage.

Newmont's beach cleanups, organized by the mine's environment department every year around Earth Day, represent an occasion for disseminating environmental messages. Newmont officials and surfer tourists alike were revolted by the garbage that had become a constant feature of local beaches since the construction of the mine. Most of this garbage originated in the villages, where residents disposed of trash by burning it, dumping it in shallow depressions, or throwing it into the rivers or on the riverbanks. Rain carried the trash out to sea; wind and tide washed it back up on the beach for years, while Newmont unsuccessfully petitioned the regency government to establish landfill sites and pay for trash

collection.¹⁹ The annual beach cleanup addressed one symptom (dirty beaches) of village waste disposal problems by, once a year, gathering trash to be carted off in Newmont trucks to the company's landfill. In the run-up to this event, Newmont organized environmental appreciation activities for villagers, particularly targeting children in the elementary and middle schools through art and poetry competitions around environmental themes. Newmont's environment officials gave lectures in village schools where they explained how villagers' harvesting of marine resources destroyed marine ecosystems.

Because Newmont managers construct themselves as enlightened, scientific, and responsible environmental custodians in contrast to villagers who abuse the environment, they give little credence to local residents' observations and concerns about the mine's environmental impacts. Newmont managers do not see "environmentally degrading" local practices in isolation. Rather, managers interpret these practices as corroborative evidence that the "ecologically noble savage" myth is the romantic construct of First World activists.²⁰ Thus they connect Sumbawan marine foraging, waste disposal, and swidden cultivation to environmentally damaging practices that are more common elsewhere in Indonesia, including illegal logging, the use of poison or bombs to fish,²¹ and the use of mercury in small-scale mining. These diverse Indonesian practices share several characteristics. First, they are in fact often linked to poverty. Second, they either compete directly with transnational mining interests for resources or constitute a potential threat to insofar as mining companies can be blamed for their detrimental effects (e.g., reef destruction, fish depletion, forest erosion, introduction of toxins).²² Issues like greenhouse gas emissions (closely connected to extractive industry) are conspicuously absent from the list of environmental problems to which corporate managers regularly refer.

Newmont managers further construct a positive corporate identity in contrast to activist NGOs, but here their discourse assumes a much darker tone. Not content to refute Newmonster-style assumptions about mines, managers actually project them back onto activist NGOs, which they accuse of being greedy, corrupt, violent, and insincere. Organizations that wear a mantle of social virtue and environmental consciousness are particularly vulnerable to such allegations. As Kim Fortun (2001:51–52) notes, advocates are widely conceived as embodying modernist ideals. Motivated by unwavering and altruistic purpose, the ideal advocate is never distracted by "personal desires, secondary issues, or simple doubt." A perfect fit always exists between standard and practice, universal and particular, behavior and ideals, world and theory, micro and macro. The ideal advocate "is never seen enmeshed in discrepancies, ambiguities, and paradox. Nor is he seen trying to force

fit the world into available political ideologies” (Fortun 2001:51–52). Advocates, like “ecologically noble savages,” are thus always poised to fall from the moral high ground either claimed by or imputed to them.

Newmont managers used alleged gaps between activist theory and practice to frame established environmental organizations as guilty of hypocrisy and obstructing environmental progress on important issues. In a letter to the editor of the *Jakarta Post* disputing accusations by two Jakarta-based NGOs that Newmont’s Minahasa Raya mine in Sulawesi polluted the environment, one Newmont consultant raised a question that I heard uttered repeatedly by managers: “why have [NGOs] Walhi and Jatam done nothing about illegal mining, which is the real environmental issue in northern Sulawesi? Illegal mining dumps anywhere from 15 to 60 tons of raw mercury into the waterways of northern Sulawesi every year.” The consultant insisted that “Newmont does not use mercury or arsenic to process its ore,”²³ before concluding sanctimoniously that Newmont has “also been working on pragmatic solutions to the problems created by illegal mining (since Walhi and Jatam aren’t)” (Pressman 2001). Newmont managers also seek to raise public concern over “illegal mining” by helping journalists write critical accounts (Schuman 2001).

Besides trying to define the “real” environmental agendas, Newmont managers also attempt to impugn individual activists and NGOs. For example, various officials told me a Walhi representative tried to extort money from Newmont (reversing the activist’s own claim that Newmont had tried to bribe him), acted as a “heavy” trying to provoke violence at a UN conference in Bali, had links to Abu Bakar Ba’asyir (the cleric convicted of conspiring in the 2002 Bali bombing), and supported the presidential campaign of General Wiranto, who is implicated in massive human rights abuses. Newmont managers also closely followed, and encouraged, allegations that Lembaga Olah Hidup (LOH), an NGO based in Sumbawa Besar, had embezzled foreign donor funds. Newmont managers explained to me that environmental activist NGOs in Indonesia focus on Western corporations because this attracts overseas funding organizations, which are far less interested in addressing problems caused by domestic or Asian companies. They also insisted that it is NGOs, rather than corporations, that lack transparency and accountability, asserting that in contrast to NGOs publicly traded corporations have good governance policies in place, produce annual reports, and are accountable to their shareholders.

Newmont officials solidify their dismal views of advocacy NGOs through consultation with public relations firms that, in addition to offering CSR services, market clandestine research on advocacy NGOs and execute strategies for

destroying NGOs (see, e.g., Dezenhall 1999; Nichols 2001). A senior Newmont executive, seeking to illuminate for me the dark underbelly of environmental advocacy networks, furnished me with two documents that were apparently produced by such consultants. He jokingly dodged the question of their origin by saying they “fell off the back of a truck” (see Text Box 2). Fortun (2001:104), describing similar documents in the possession of Union Carbide in the 1980s, remarks on the bizarre contrast between “old-fashioned paranoia about environmentalism” and a “proactive embrace of environmental stewardship,” concluding that “Carbide . . . was caught up in a time warp, exhibiting postures of times past concurrently with postures demanded by the future. The ‘corporation’ was undergoing an identity crisis that brought divergent personas to the surface.” My own take on this concurrence is somewhat different. I see a more stable and mutually compatible set of strategies through which corporate managers seek to actively shape how the genuine environmental problems are defined and who can legitimately claim competence in resolving them. Corporate managers certainly differed among themselves on the strategies they considered appropriate for dealing with NGOs. CSR experts with backgrounds in social science, development, and activism tended to favor letting “extreme” NGOs die out by natural selection. They expressed embarrassment and even disdain for the “cloak and dagger” techniques and “NGO Jihad” impulses of managers with engineering or military backgrounds. Yet the “doves” and “hard-liners” largely shared the same moral framework and narrative when it came to identifying the real environmental issues and actors.

“Fell off the back of truck” A: Indonesian Anti-Development LSMs [NGOs] and Their International Support Network

The national-level and international LSM’s methods of identifying local activists, recruiting, training and deploying them are not unlike those used by intelligence agencies around the world. The LSM recruiters spend time in the local communities and learn about people who may be disgruntled, angry or dispossessed. They then recruit the person, direct their anger towards the investor and provide the recruit with direction and orders to carry out. The local LSMs then carry out the larger program directives of Walhi and Jatam, which are formulated almost exclusively in conjunction with the international anti-development LSMs. This strategy, as implemented through Walhi and Jatam by the international LSMs, allows for the appearance of grassroots resistance to mining, oil and gas investments. In most specific instances, the “local resistance” amounts to nothing more than a handful of vocal, trained cadres of the national level LSMs. But because of the layers of activities by the different LSMs, it appears that many groups are working to “represent a large group of local people.”

In actuality, it is the international LSMs and their national level partners (Walhi and Jatam) who are setting the agendas for the campaigns, not the local people appealing to the

LSMs for help, as the LSMs often profess. The agenda of these LSMs is almost always very different from the desires of the actual communities they claim to represent from around the projects or the sites of potential investment. The communities themselves are often seeking benefits from the projects including jobs, local infrastructure enhancement and other social and economic benefits.

The report goes on to profile Mineral Policy Institute, an Australian environmental advocacy organization, concluding with this statement:

It is important to note . . . that the MPI web sites [sic] makes absolutely no mention of the massive problem with illegal mining in Indonesia. This, combined with the efforts of Walhi and Jatam to attack internationally regulated and financed mining companies belies their true nature. MPI, its international friends, Walhi and Jatam are not environmental LSMs, but anti-development groups seeking to shut down investment in Indonesia while ignoring critical environmental problems such as illegal mining, illegal logging and illegal fishing practices.

The second document attempts to implicate Project Underground, the Berkeley-based NGO that produced the Newmonster comic, in instigating large-scale civil violence that occurred around Freeport's operations in 1996.¹

“Fell off the back of truck” B: White Paper on Project Underground (1998)

Not one dollar of Project Underground, WALHI, or IRN [International Rivers Network] funds has been directly expended on the welfare of local people of Irian Jaya.

Project Underground claims that it seeks to “introduce corporate accountability into [mining, oil and gas] sectors.” Yet, Project Underground is itself a business, not a registered NGO. Questions have been raised about how it handles its own corporate accountability. Project Underground has no membership, no readily identifiable constituency, no legally binding charter nor mission statement, and no corporate officers whom [sic] can be held accountable for the thousands of dollars it spends solicited from legitimate organizations. Questions have also been raised about the group's true agenda? [sic] Project Underground's key leaders have committed their organization to challenge every aspect of support provided to international mining operations. They also plan to conspire to undermine the sellers' markets for products derived from mining operations. . . . Thus, the organization's true agenda becomes apparent—to bring international mining companies to their knees.

NOTES

1. I have not included the relevant excerpts here implicating NGOs in violence (the document is six pages long). Suffice it to note, the argument is reductionist and leaves unexamined the roles of Freeport and the Indonesian military.

A further set of documents produced by a consulting firm, which also “fell off the back of a truck,” illustrates how unfavorable representations of NGOs underpin corporate strategic planning. In 2002, Sumbawa Besar–based NGO LOH demanded a government investigation into allegations that an ocean upwelling had brought up tailings that afflicted crops near Tongo, the village closest to Newmont’s tailings pipeline. Batu Hijau contracted the Jakarta office of an international, award-winning, corporate communications firm to conduct clandestine research and develop strategies for dealing with LOH. The firm’s report, “Project Green Shield,”²⁴ featured a detailed stakeholder map.

Stripped of the typical CSR references to vulnerable, marginalized, or under-represented groups, “stakeholder” refers here in a nakedly instrumental fashion to those who can advance or impede corporate interests (Conley and Williams 2005; Power 2003). The report covered stakeholders at every level from Sumbawan villagers to the international sphere and characterized the positive or negative potential of media outlets (print, television, radio); academics; NGOs; international funding organizations that could be concerned about the credibility of donor recipients; and government officials. The report described stakeholders with adjectives like vocal, emotional, aggressive, passive, proactive, and cooperative but unclear. Besides tracking relations among stakeholders (e.g., kinship, friendship, financial ties), the consultants amassed sordid, potentially useful details about stakeholders’ personal shortcomings, vices (e.g., womanizing, drug habits), and predicaments (e.g., a son accused of embezzlement).

The consultants also formulated a plan of action for Newmont. The report cautioned Newmont against suing LOH for libel, noting that this course of action would only generate a “David and Goliath” impression. Moreover, the consultants noted, it is difficult to look good carrying out litigation in a tainted government system. Instead, the report proposed that Newmont pay the consulting firm close to one million dollars to elevate Newmont’s reputation while tarnishing LOH’s. The consultants offered to educate the “oblivious . . . floating mass”²⁵ about Newmont’s good works by carefully orchestrating Town Hall–style public meetings, providing television media with flattering B-roll footage of Newmont’s operations, and sponsoring trainings for local journalists at a journalism school where they could learn the principles of objective journalism. Indirect sponsorship would ensure “the appearance of independence.” Second, the consultants proposed to lobby through “third parties” for reform of the Indonesian environmental management law (23/1997), which allowed LOH to prompt the government investigation without financial risk to the NGO (hence acting “irresponsibly and without accountability”).

Finally, the consultants suggested destroying LOH's reputation by rendering the NGO "transparent."

The Project Green Shield report recommended turning public opinion against LOH by using Indonesian movements for NGO transparency and an NGO Code of Ethics. Newmont's consultants wrote, "Reputable national and international NGOs will be approached (through third parties) to obtain their support for a move to advocate standards for NGO accountability." The report identified the Indonesian Society for Transparency, Indonesian Corruption Watch, and Civil Society Support and Strengthening Program as potential supporters. They also suggested an influential NGO that had collaborated with various corporations (incl. Newmont) might conduct workshops and seminars, make talkshow appearances, and develop "NGO Watch" lists of "responsible" and "irresponsible" NGOs. "Efforts must be made," the report asserted, "to ensure that LOH is included in a list of irresponsible NGOs." The report proposed "positioning" LOH as a workshop "case study" in NGO irresponsibility, and offered ideas for "placing" op-ed articles on transparency in the media and for prompting the government to "monitor and sanction" NGOs (e.g., with Law 16/2002 that provides for the regulation and potential dissolution of nonprofits). This strategy shows some of the coercive and, ironically, concealed ways in which corporations can use moral discourses of transparency and accountability against activists, joining a groundswell of disappointment and disaffection with NGOs.²⁶

Newmont managers rejected the consultant's proposal, complaining that the firm was too expensive and added little new information to what they had learned from company spies (euphemized as "research assistants") in villages and NGOs such as LOH. Yet Newmont did continue to build on the strategy of making activists transparent, as I show in the next section.

NEWMONSTER IN SUMBAWA

In May 2002, activist NGOs opposed to corporate mining sponsored Bu Halimah, a Sumbawan woman, to attend three interlocking events: the International Mining Workshop, the Indonesia People's Forum (IPF), and the Preparatory Committee for the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Indonesia People's Forum, convened by NGOs to coincide with and critique the UN event, produced several small newsprint bulletins with critical perspectives on globalization and mainstream UN agendas. One article, "Local People Swept Away by the Newmont Dam" (Niluhdian and Wawi 2002, see Figure 3), is devoted to Bu Halimah's criticisms of Newmont and features a photo of Bu Halimah, shoulders

Halimah Hamzah, Benete Village, Sumbawa

Local People Swept Away by the Newmont Dam

The village of Tongo, Sumbawa, used to produce palm sugar. But, not anymore. With the coming of Newmont, the forest where people used to go to make a living has disappeared. The men no longer work on sugar palm. The women no longer make mats from Pandanus leaves. There are no more rattan, betelnut or palm trees, and the fish and eels which used to swim in the river have all disappeared since the building of the dam by Newmont in 1997.

The water was dammed in order to meet Newmont's mining and waste management needs. The fatal thing is that these 'managed' wastes were not totally clean. They were finally dumped into the water to contaminate the sea. Newmont has destroyed the nature of Tongo Village, along with the people's source of livelihood.

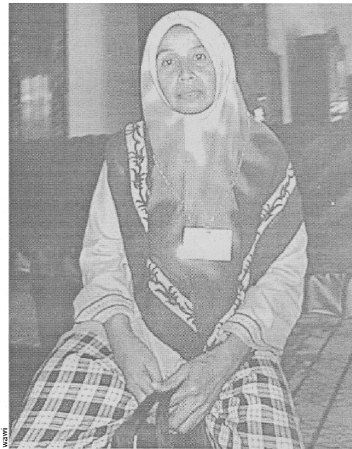
"I don't have any work now," said Halimah Hamzah (47), an inhabitant of Benete Village, Jenere District, Sumbawa Regency. She used to be registered

as a member of the Tongo Village. When Newmont came in, disaster struck. She moved to a neighbouring village with the hope of bettering her economic condition, but it turned out to be the same. Tongo, Benete, and the neighboring villages of Malo, Sekongkang Atas and Sekongkang Bawah, Sejorang, SP1 and SP2 all suffered the same fate.

Only 32 people were accepted to work for the Newmont company. Low levels of education was the company's excuse for not employing more. The rest of the villagers had to make the best of the remaining land not used by the company for growing food. Some left their homes to

gamble their fates in other vicinities. Newmont built a foundation with programs intended for community development. Loans were given to people for cattle raising and farming. Yet, the loans were discriminatory. Those people who persisted in demanding their rights to reclaim their lands were deprived of access to loans. Unfortunately the lands they used to occupy had been passed down from generation to generation without official certification. Their lack of legal tenure allowed Newmont to high-handedly appropriate the land. Almost all the land was taken by Newmont without compensation. The small huts they received as compensation were did not make up for the loss of the land they had used to cultivate for a living.

These are the reasons that motivated



Halimah, as the people's representative of the Sumbawa's Newmont's victims, to come to testify at the IPF meetings. "I want every one to know!" she said.

"I also want to meet with Megawati," continued this mother of four children, her face radiating great disappointment. Megawati promised to help the victims of Newmont to rebuild their lives during her campaign, but the promises founded. "They promised to stop Newmont's operation in Sumbawa," she recalled. "But the promise remained a promise – unfulfilled".

"I want to form my own political party," Halimah said. Dejected and bored with the false promises of the big parties in Indonesia, her tic of anger triggered the obsession to form a new political party.

(niluhdian/wawi)

Foto: Halimah Hamzah (Benete Village, Sumbawa) © Direktorat

FIGURE 3. Article in *Indonesia People's Forum Bulletin* (Niluhdian and Wawi 2002) on the Batu Hijau mine's impacts.

slumped and staring despondently at the camera. The bulletin was freely available to anyone taking part in the IPF, and Jakarta-based NGO Jatam also posted the article on its Web site.

It was an unremarkable advocacy document, the product of a network of alliances between international and Indonesian NGOs, Bu Halimah, a printing press, and the World Wide Web. International activists might read it as the voice of an indigenous Sumbawan woman speaking truth to power and exposing Newmont's

Sumbawan activities to global disapproval. Yet for those more familiar with the mine setting, the article was riddled with inaccuracies. Newmont managers, who were out in force at the UN meeting and maintained a more subdued and even clandestine presence at alternative events, carted a stack of bulletins back from Bali to southwest Sumbawa. They then used Community Relations field officers and village offices—a communicative apparatus that is itself a CSR initiative—to circulate copies of the article among village elites including local government officials, civil servants, contractors, and NGO leaders who benefit from Newmont’s development projects.

Newmont managers strategically circulated the article among village elites because of its inaccuracies, which they saw as tangible evidence that advocacy NGOs use local people like Bu Halimah to tell lies about Newmont to attract foreign donor money. Other explanations could be offered for these inaccuracies—for example, the authors’ haste in producing the article in time for consumption by the IPF participants. The authors produced a satisfactory account of Newmont for an external audience of activists who had already internalized a generic narrative of bad corporate behavior (à la Newmonster) but looked for specificity—a certain place, the particularities of environmental destruction, a photograph of a sad or defiant face, poignant details and personal touches. For Newmont managers and village elites, however, the inaccuracies themselves became the central focus.

The first inaccuracy lies in the dramatic headline, “Local people swept away by Newmont dam.” This is reminiscent of a tragic event that washed a hamlet away, but the 1977 tsunami occurred two decades prior to Batu Hijau’s construction. Although the article describes Bu Halimah leaving Tongo village, which is nearest the mine, to resettle in Benete village after Newmont “disaster” struck, her husband told me they moved to his family’s village of Benete around 1991, when Newmont’s exploration had barely begun. The article suggests Batu Hijau precipitated a population exodus, when in fact the village population has doubled since the mine was built. The article also describes Newmont appropriating land with no compensation, although villagers know some four hundred residents sold land to Newmont. The article claims that all palm sugar production, pandanus mat weaving, and river fishing have disappeared. Villagers, however, continue to engage in these activities, if less than before. The article also states that Newmont only employed 32 locals although, if the ten villages near the mine are considered, the actual figure is around 700.

Although the article correctly pointed out that Newmont’s nominally independent community development foundation, YOP (Yayasan Olat Parigi), is

discriminatory and exclusive in making loans, the claim that YOP withholds from Newmont critics is unfounded. Newmont uses the foundation to dispense gifts—officially loans—to both the company’s supporters and its critics. Indeed, many villagers feel that vocal criticism or threats against Newmont are the only effective mechanisms for accessing Newmont goods. Bu Halimah’s husband served as the Benete village representative for YOP, and Bu Halimah herself had presided over a \$2,500 loan to a women’s group. Newmont’s Community Relations manager used the latter fact to discredit Bu Halimah in front of fellow villagers when she led an activist demonstration in the regency capital (MinergyNews 2002a, 2003). Newmont may not succeed in buying off its critics when it extends to them this sort of assistance, but managers do thereby gain the ability to compromise critics by invoking outstanding debts and complicity with the corporation. Several Newmont managers and Community Development officers told me that Bu Halimah was “not trusted” by villagers and had been beaten on at least one occasion for misusing community funds disbursed by Newmont.

Whatever its shortcomings, the article did deal with a set of environmental and social problems of grave concern to local residents, highlighting issues felt most acutely by villagers marginalized by geography and social position. Bu Halimah focused on the predicaments of people in her natal Tongo because, relative to other local residents, they have suffered the greatest impact on forest, freshwater, and marine resources²⁷ and bear the brunt of environmental risk because of the proximity of Newmont’s infrastructure.²⁸ Further, Tongo’s isolation means villagers have greater difficulty accessing Newmont’s community development programs, a problem compounded by villagers’ lack of formal education and prejudice among Newmont managers and field staff.²⁹ Bu Halimah explained to me that in Bali she deliberately wore some of her shabbier clothes because she went to speak for the poorest and most marginal families, those whose sons—unlike her own—did not get a Newmont job. Bu Halimah sought to underscore environmental problems, poverty, and inequality as salient features of Newmont’s impact on villages. These insights fell outside of the interpretive framework Newmont managers brought to bear on the article.

Newmont managers’ decision to circulate the article among village elites must also be understood in relation to Newmont and villagers’ unequal ability to access and evaluate information. As recent critics of globalization discourse have noted, capital and commodities do not “flow” of their own accord but rather through the actions of various agents, institutions, and technologies that may enable, direct, reverse, constrain, and block movement (Cooper 2001; Ferguson 2006;

Tsing 2004). Information, like capital, is “lumpy” (Cooper 2001), accumulating among certain people in certain places and sparse elsewhere. Within Batu Hijau’s offices, all Newmont-related articles appearing in local, national, and international news are clipped; photocopied; condensed into bilingual summaries; labeled good, neutral, or bad; and chronologically filed. Workers with e-mail accounts, few of whom are local, receive Newmont’s bilingual summaries of media coverage. These daily missives often fuel internal ire over “NGO lies.” In southwest Sumbawan villages, however, few people read or subscribe to newspapers, and only a handful of individuals are in possession of advocacy materials, which usually tend to be worn and dated. Print media trickles fitfully and selectively, rather than flows, into villages, and never circulates in an egalitarian fashion within villages (Tsing 2003). Without Newmont managers’ deliberate and selective intervention then, the bulletin would not have reached village elites.

GOODMONT UNLEASHED

As it turns out, it was Bu Halimah who had convened the ill-fated Women’s Empowerment Workshop in Tongo after the UN meeting and the associated advocacy events in Bali had concluded. One Sumbawan Newmont worker told me he and others had received advance information that the activists’ “demonstration” would take place, and even descriptions of the number, type, and colors of vehicles that the advocacy NGOs would drive. Some had mobilized to defend the company. Yet the NGO group managed to slip in, unnoticed. Once the group had arrived in Tongo, however, a Community Relations officer had become aware of their presence and put his office and Tongo villagers on alert. Newmont workers in Tongo, meanwhile, had taken a day off to monitor, restrict, and intimidate workshop participants. To my knowledge, Newmont did not reprimand any of these workers for their absence, suggesting at least tacit approval. But it was not until the activists were on their way out that they were attacked in the fashion described in the opening paragraph.

It subsequently became apparent that there had been two doctors among the activists, one of whom had announced to the national media that Batu Hijau was poisoning the local environment with arsenic. Dr. Aidarus predicted that a “generation of idiots,” Newmont’s victims, would soon appear (*NTB Post* 2002c). In *Tempo*, a widely read and well-respected Indonesian magazine, Aidarus explained that he had inspected 40 villagers with symptoms of arsenic poisoning, including low blood pressure, itching, a burning sensation in the throat, and foot cramps



FIGURE 4. Implicitly equating activists with terrorists, after the women’s empowerment workshop a local NGO and a youth group hung a banner outside of a resort hotel popular with Newmont’s senior miners declaring, “The Sekongkang community opposes all forms of terrorist action against PT NNT (Newmont Nusa Tenggara).” Photograph by the author.

(Maha Adi and Khafid 2002). When I asked villagers about these reports, only a few with advocacy links had vague knowledge of these serious allegations.

After the attack, teachers and other members of the village apparatus of Sekongkang Atas and Sekongkang Bawah defended their actions in the media and hung banners as reminders to villagers, Newmont, and outsiders that the mine was under local protection (see Figure 4). They claimed that the NGO group had disparaged (*diremekkan*) them because the NGOs had not properly requested permission and reported itself to local officials from the village to the subdistrict level (*Sumbawa Ekspres* 2002).³⁰ They insisted that the community behaved “purely,” “spontaneously,” and out of “concern for the investment world. We must secure regional assets” (*Lombok Post* 2002a; *MinergyNews* 2002d).

In justifying the attack, village elites repeatedly referenced the article on Bu Halimah. One village official and teacher explained that “the anger of the Sekongkang community started because of a paper that was published by an institution which asked that PT NNT be shut down” (*Lombok Post* 2002a; *Bali Post* 2002b). Yani Sagaroa, the head of LOH (the NGO that Newmont had hired clandestine consultants to research in Project Green Shield), who was among the activists, told me some teachers had produced the Bu Halimah article during the second attack and waved it about as evidence of the nefarious motives of NGOs, mistakenly

attributing the article to Yani himself. However uncertain the teachers might have been of the article's content, they were sure that it meant NGOs were bent on shutting down Newmont.

Various groups with formal titles mushroomed to justify the attack and voice their suspicions about Bu Halimah and the NGOs. In a media statement, the head of the Alliance of Near-Mine Communities for Justice (AMLTK)³¹ cited alleged lies in Bu Halimah's testimonial at the UN event and the Indonesia People's Forum (*Sumbawa Ekspres* 2002). He further accused the NGOs of "easily getting projects with the photos that they took" (MinergyNews 2002c). In Indonesia, "projects" (*proyek*) commonly connotes social development programs that powerful people appropriate for private purposes. The term is often associated with the corruption, collusion, and nepotism triad that became a focus of critical public attention in the post-Suharto era. The Forum of Youth Students and Poor Communities of NTB (FPPMM-NTB) also emerged to take credit for the attacks, explaining:

It should be known that the study team took lots of photos of women and children, this was very much manipulated such that they could carefully focus on people who were really in rags, exactly like for a soap opera. Thus, we as the community very appropriately questioned this matter. "What do they want to do with these photos of us." After we discussed this with the community, students and youth, it turned out that the photos were to be sold to donor organizations. . . . So right away we chased down LOH's team which took photos and gave us information that PT NNT didn't pay attention to the community. It should be known that we, the community of Tongo Sejong, Sumbawa, have never felt harmed by PT NNT. [MinergyNews 2002c]

These statements resonate well with the Goodmont narrative: The community was never harmed by Newmont and, in fact, NGOs are the ones trying to manipulate locals to obtain overseas funding. Newmont probably did not have to do much to plant this suspicion among villagers. Every NGO that worked in the region, regardless of mission or funding source, at some point seemed to find itself the object of village suspicions that the organization was really after money and just "businessing" the community (*kami dibsiniskan*), "selling our heads" (*menjual kepala masyarakat*), or "invoking community" for personal ends (*mengatasnamakan masyarakat*). Thus, villagers were predisposed to see NGOs as manipulating them. Advocacy NGOs do little to dispel such assumptions when they show up suddenly, stay for brief periods of time, and shroud their visit in secrecy, even if these

represent precautionary measures ostensibly taken in the interest of protecting Sumbawans.

Two other emergent groups—ominously named the People’s Front for Protecting Investment (Barisan Rakyat Pelindung Investasi, BRPI) and the People’s Front for Protecting the Mine (Barisan Rakyat Pelindung Tambang or Barak Petang, which might be translated as night barracks)—had issued clear warnings in the *Bali Post* prior to the attack that NGOs would not be welcome (2002a). Nasrum, the head of BRPI, warned that the community had agreed to reject the NGOs. If the NGOs came anyway, he said, they would be asking for trouble from the community, which would confront them (*kami akan menghadangnya*). Published before the NGO representatives arrived, this article calls into question the village elites’ claims that community behavior was entirely spontaneous, however much they might wish to view their actions in that way.

CONCLUSION: THE ANATOMY AND MORALITY OF THE ATTACK

If the violent defense of capital is as culturally meaningful, and amenable to thick description, as the work of transnational advocacy networks, then it will not do to attribute the attack to the inexorable, expanding logic of capital. This approach would dismiss the agency and intentions of corporate managers and village elites, as if they were “simply pawns” of capital rather than “social actors and commentators in their own right” (Walley 2004:227) with the capacity “to interpret and morally evaluate their situation and to formulate projects and try to enact them” (Ortner 1995:185).

Rather, we need modes of analysis that carefully show how the moral commitments of capitalism’s defenders emerge and cohere in an era when grassroots approaches to corporate security are nourished by the CSR industry, development projects, and corporate mimicry of environmental values and discourse. The attack in Sumbawa was “indisputably a product and expression of powerful forces, national and global,” but also entailed “a significant local dynamic” (Ferguson 2006:99). We saw that in attacking activists, male village elites organized unemployed male youth to barricade roads, halt vehicles, seize keys, destroy property, and yell threats at terrified people who were only trying to get from point A to point B. This sequence of events was quite familiar to Newmont officials; it was, in fact, identical to the basic plan of attack villagers had repeatedly used on Newmont and the mine’s contractors in the past to secure infrastructure development projects, lucrative construction contracts, and local hiring policies (Community Relations, PT. NNT 2000, 2001).

Yet Newmont managers seemed oblivious to the similarity between the attacks. They described villagers who demonstrated against the mine as “still backwards,” “irrational,” “emotional,” and “spoiled.” Yet, when villagers attacked activists using similar tactics, these same managers lauded themselves on how they had gotten local villagers to see Newmont as such an integral part of “the community” that it had to be defended. From within their moral framework, managers saw villagers’ attacks on activists as justified, whereas similar attacks on the mine were not. From this perspective, one might say that villagers engaged in a form of “alternating politics” when they shifted from attacking to defending the company. From an activist viewpoint too, village elites could be seen as alternating their politics; the moral valence would simply be reversed. That is, villagers would be seen as clear-sighted and progressive when they attack a company and demand public goods, and as reactionary dupes when they defend it.³² Bu Halimah herself, from this stance, was guilty of political vacillation, first engaged in a progressive alliance with environmentalists, and later herself contracting with the mine to supply village labor.

If we take this appearance of “alternating politics,” however, and apply to it the lesson of Boas’s (1889) treatment of “alternating sounds,” the behavior of village elites appears in a different light. As Boas famously showed, what appeared to linguists to be inconsistency in the pronunciation of phonemes among speakers of Native American languages was actually attributable to the bias of the linguists themselves. Similarly, if we take seriously village elites’ own moral commitments, we find that their seeming alternation between political poles of action originates in a corporate or activist perspective rather than inhering in village elites’ own behavior. Within their own moral framework, alternately attacking and defending Newmont was actually part of a consistent strategy. In either case, they constructed themselves as central agents in determining whether the mine would operate, and in creating and maintaining flows of development goods. They certainly had no monopoly over the use of violence, but they sought within the means available to them to use violence to exercise greater control over the destiny of villages and the mine alike. Like rural elites elsewhere in post-Suharto Indonesia, they have had to struggle to assert their continued authority in—and even relevance to—village affairs. Newmont’s responsiveness to their threats has allowed Sumbawan elites to cultivate expanded roles in local business and politics and, in the process, to achieve some success in materializing the vision of development Suharto always promised but never delivered. They have secured a form of development now

deemed “conventional” and “inappropriate” by mainstream discourses of participation, empowerment, and sustainability.

Corporate managers and village elites jointly authored the attack, the former by strategically disseminating information and rewarding its ringleaders, the latter by planning and executing the attack using methods they had perfected against Newmont. Their shared authorship of the attack nonetheless emerged out of divergent moral commitments. Corporate managers saw themselves as pioneers of more socially and environmentally responsible mining, while village elites sought to implement their vision of development and so consolidate their power in the shifting and uncertain political terrain of post-Suharto Indonesia. As anthropologists grapple with the changing nature of global capitalism, these are precisely the types of hybrid moral and political allegiances we will confront.³³ If we hope to understand how capitalism plays out on the ground, we must tease apart these alliances and attend to the different political–moral frameworks that animate various actors—in defense of as well as in opposition to capital.

ABSTRACT

In 2002, male village leaders and youth living near a transnational mining corporation's operation in rural Indonesia attacked a group of visiting environmental activists. I analyze the moral commitments of the corporate managers who provoked the attack and the village elites who organized and executed it, turning to the context of the burgeoning Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) industry to grasp the broader dimensions of the beliefs and practices through which managers and elites legitimized their actions. This essay shows that the CSR industry is coevolving alongside environmental advocacy campaigns and grassroots corporate security models.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, security, environmental advocacy, mining, Indonesia

NOTES

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1. On the intersection of environmental activism and indigenous political claims, anthropologists have explored the political possibilities activist networks hold for historically marginalized people as well as the theoretical, methodological, political, and ethical challenges they pose for the practice of anthropology itself (Brown 1993; Field 1999; Hodgson 2002a; Kirsch 2006, 2007; Ramos 1998; Turner 1991; Wright 1988); shifts from class to identity politics (Alvarez et al. 1998; Warren 1998); the uses and liabilities of “ecologically noble savage” stereotypes (Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995; Nadasdy 2005); the political positioning of indigeneity claims (Li 2000, 2001; Ramos 1998); the putative universals of indigeneity (Bowen 2000; Muehlebach 2001); gains in tangible and intellectual property rights (Brown 1998; Conklin 2002); the “NGOification” and depoliticization of new social movements (Hodgson 2002b; Igoe 2003; Jackson 1995); and the local consequences of indigenous participation in transnational and interethnic settings (Oakdale 2004). On the growth of these movements around mining specifically, see Ballard and Banks (2003), Gedicks (2001), and Gjording (1991).
2. By “political Others” I refer to those whose actions may strike us as “repugnant” or “reactionary” rather than “politically progressive” (Harding 2000; Mahmood 2004; for more on ethnographic treatments of politically unconventional subjects, see McCarthy 2002 and Yanagisako 2002).
3. Preman have a complex genealogy. The word initially derived from *vrijman* (Dutch) or “free man,” then later referred to military or police in civilian clothes (Ryter 2001). Under the New Order, preman increasingly connoted thugs. Preman were renowned beneficiaries of numerous government-initiated construction and demolition projects, and also leased out security services, ran protection rackets, and extorted from businesses (Barker 1999; Ryter 2001). On the political scene, preman gangs zealously supported Suharto and his ruling party, Golkar, staging appearances in progovernment rallies and suppressing opposition by beating activists, shouting down their rallies, and destroying their offices (Ryter 2005). Schulte Nordholt (2002) traces the preman lineage back to youth gangs and *jago*, or semicriminals who acted as intermediaries between villages and the Dutch colonial administration, policing the countryside and creating a climate of fear.
4. Local elites have exercised new power since the 1999 institution of regional autonomy laws devolving fiscal and executive powers from the central government to dispersed regencies.
5. The system has since been assimilated to terrorist warning levels as well, and the mine was on high alert in July 2004 after warnings that Jema’ah Islamiyah intended to launch an attack on Batu Hijau facilities or personnel.
6. See www.voluntaryprinciples.org, accessed January 8, 2007.
7. The fourth principle (<http://www.voluntaryprinciples.org/principles/index.php>) takes note of company impacts on local communities and advises contributing “to the welfare of the local community while mitigating any potential for conflict where possible.”
8. After 9/11, a number of Indonesian groups threatened to forcibly expel or “sweep” foreigners.
9. Project Underground suddenly folded in 2004.
10. As scholars have noted, since the Industrial Revolution, “community” has often been nostalgically articulated as bounded by moral obligations, geography, and kinship, against an atomized, individualized “society” (see, e.g., Calhoun 1980; Tonnies 1955). This “warmly persuasive” word conjures the positive features of a small social group—imagined as cohesive, egalitarian, and democratic—while overlooking the negative potential for hierarchy, dominance, and surveillance (Williams 1976:76; for recent critiques see Agrawal and Gibson 2001; Amit 2002; Creed 2006).
11. Newmont managers often differed on whether improved standards could be attributed to internal commitment or to external pressure. For example, several officials told me that Tom Enos, then PT Newmont Nusa Tenggara’s president, insisted that Newmont spare no expense on water management after seeing one river clouded with waste from construction activity. But a Denver executive told me instead that Newmont originally had comprehensive water management plans, abandoned the plans as too expensive, and then reinstated them after export–import banks threatened to withdraw financing because of Newmont’s failure to meet water standards.

12. For analyses of tailings that dispute corporate technoscience and raise questions of environmental justice, see, for example, Coumans 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Dixon 2002; Moody 2001.
13. For a similar use of the concept of rituals, see Gusterson (1996, esp. ch. 6).
14. One journalist noted that Batu Hijau tries to get each mine visitor to accept a “nontoxic” tailings souvenir gift (*NTB Post* 2002a).
15. Newmont also briefly collaborated with BirdLife International to monitor and protect the nesting habitats of the endangered Yellow-crested Cockatoo and potentially establish a conservation reserve. BirdLife, facing NGO criticism for working with a mining company, withdrew from the project (Robert Humberson, personal communication).
16. For people in Sumba and Lombok, as in Sumbawa, catching and consuming nyale is an important social event (see Ecklund 1977; Hoskins 1993).
17. Similarly, neo-Malthusian fears that overpopulation and poverty would invariably lead to environmental breakdown became dominant at the World Bank during the early 1990s (Peet and Watts 1993:227; also Goldman 2005).
18. If this decline were indeed taking place, it could be attributed not only to villagers’ enlarged economic power (and declining need to engage in subsistence activities), but to the fact that, caught up in the time discipline of wage labor regimes, many are less able to participate in social activities that depend on alternative calendars and tidal fluctuations.
19. In 2004, Newmont gave up hope that the regency government could be cajoled or coerced into paying for local waste disposal. Newmont bought village garbage trucks and offered to partially cover the costs of collection, although with insufficient funds garbage continued to be a source of village dispute.
20. A senior anthropologist in Newmont, Chris Anderson (1989), has published an article debunking the ecologically noble savage myth based on his observations of Australian Aborigines. See also Macintyre and Foale 2002. As Nadasdy (2005) points out, debates over the reality of the ecologically noble savage have overlooked the culturally specific nature of assumptions about what it means to be “environmental.”
21. For nuanced accounts of how socioeconomic marginality and political identity are entangled in the use of bombs and cyanide in fishing, see Lowe (2006, esp. ch. 5) and Walley (2004).
22. In Indonesia, powerful military and also national elites are often involved in the illegal logging and small-scale mining industries. The relationship between large and small-scale mining interests cannot be adequately characterized as one of simple “competition.” Although companies like Newmont publicly treat “illegal mining” as an environmental Other, there are interesting forms of symbiosis, for example, near Newmont’s Sulawesi operation the company allowed “illegal miners” partial use of company infrastructure. Many Newmont workers also invested their salary or severance pay into “illegal mining.” Batu Hijau’s low ore grade precludes small-scale mining.
23. Although the statement that Newmont did not use mercury and arsenic to process its ore at Minahasa Raya may be technically correct, Newmont released at least 33 tons of mercury into the atmosphere and sea around the mine from mercury that occurred naturally in the ore (Perlez 2004). Similarly, mercury that spilled near Newmont’s Minera Yanacocha mine in Peru was a byproduct of the ore mining process and may have been destined for the “illegal” mines that Newmont officials routinely condemn.
24. Project Green Shield refers to the use of an environmental or “green” strategy and appearance to shield Batu Hijau from the company’s detractors.
25. “Floating mass” derives from the Suharto regime’s concept (*massa mengambang*) and 1971 policy for depoliticizing rural Indonesians, who were supposed to avoid political distractions (political parties were banned at the village level) and concern themselves solely with economic development.
26. For other critical treatments of transparency, see Hasty 2005, Marcus and Powell 2003, Morris 2004, and West and Sanders 2003. With the waning of post-Cold War euphoria over NGOs as emblems of “civil society” (Fisher 1997), some critics have argued that NGOs must address their “accountability deficit” by instituting more free market mechanisms and working with corporations (Kovach et al. 2003; SustainAbility 2003). The American Enterprise Institute, a

- conservative Washington think tank, imposes “transparency” on select NGOs with a Web site monitoring their activities and displaying their 990 tax statements and annual revenues (see www.aei.org; www.ngowatch.org; also Stecklow 2006). Conversely, activists and academics have argued that market incentives and corporate intimacy tend to compromise NGOs and precipitate dysfunctions (e.g., Chapin 2004; Cooley and Ron 2002).
27. Newmont disproportionately affects the forest resources of Tongo villagers because of the mine operation’s proximity. Tongo villagers rely on the forests for traditional medicines, subsistence food, building materials, as well as primary commodities like honey, rattan, palm sugar, and the fragrant gaharu wood. They also allow livestock to graze and seek watering holes in the forests. Where the IPF article describes Newmont’s appropriation of land without compensation, I would infer that Bu Halimah was talking about all the *forest* land, not low-lying *agricultural* land. Bu Halimah and several other Newmont critics have petitioned Newmont and the government for formal compensation for palm sugar producers, but their efforts have been thwarted because the government insists that villagers are not really indigenous (*masyarakat adat*) and thus cannot claim special forest privileges (see Li 2001 on the difficulties of gaining *masyarakat adat* recognition in Indonesia).
 28. The tailings pipeline passes close to the village and through village agricultural land, and leaked several times during Batu Hijau’s first year of operation. Tongo villagers also carry out their marine foraging at a closer proximity to the tailings dumping ground than other villagers. Many Tongo villagers also express concern over Newmont’s impact on their fresh water because of three dams located upstream of the village to treat acidic, heavy-metal bearing water from the mine pit. Although an official from Newmont’s environment department assured Tongo villagers that Newmont operates a “closed” water system, during heavy rains Newmont has already carried out several “controlled overflow releases” of dam water into the Sejorong River, which flows through Tongo. Further, villagers and some Newmont officials have expressed concern over the potential impact of Newmont’s drawing heavily of an aquifer near Tongo.
 29. On several occasions I heard Community Relations officers joking over how ignorant or stupid (*bodoh*) Tongo villagers are. The Community Relations manager assured Batu Hijau’s president that Newmont had nothing to fear from the village because of Tongo’s lack of “human resources” (SDM, *sumber daya manusia*), implying that Tongo villagers did not have the education and public relations skills to mount a serious challenge to the company.
 30. Some provincial politicians and local academics also condemned the attack and called upon Newmont to take responsibility (*Lombok Post* 2002b; *NTB Post* 2002b). The provincial governor called for Newmont to take responsibility if the arsenic accusations proved true (*Nusa* 2002), while the Regent in Sumbawa Besar charged that the NGO team was “wild” for not informing his office of the research plans and results (*Lombok Post* 2002c).
 31. Aliansi Masyarakat Lingkar Tambang untuk Keadilan.
 32. This analytic creeps into academic work as well. In a critique of ARCO’s divide and rule strategies in Ecuador, for example, Sawyer (2003:85–86) describes one group of Indians accepting “trinkets” from the company that become “talismans of progress and fetishes of modernity” serving “to pry open and transform local senses of self and property” until the Indians became “docile and compliant.” Sawyer (2003:89) goes on to distinguish “the warped desires of a few small hamlets” from the “larger, more powerful indigenous communities” that had “articulate, savvy spokespersons who denounced the marginalization, inequality, and exploitation that oil operations produced” and demanded from ARCO “alternative forms of development.”
 33. Similar moral–political hybrids are forged between activists and local people against resource extraction, for example, Conklin and Graham 1995.
- Editor’s Note:* *Cultural Anthropology* has published a number of other essays on environmental politics. See, for example, Paul W. Hanson’s “Governmentality, Language Ideology, and the Production of Needs in Malagasy Conservation and Development” (2007); Ananthakrishnan Aiyer’s “The Allure of the Transnational: Notes on Some Aspects of the Political Economy of Water in India” (2007); and David McDermott Hughes’s “Third Nature: Making Space and Time in the Great Limpopo Conservation Area” (2005).

Cultural Anthropology has also published a range of articles that analyze corporations as cultural producers. See, for example, Robert J. Foster's "The Work of the New Economy: Consumers, Brands, and Value Creation" (2007); Martha Kaplan's "Fijian Water in Fiji and New York: Local Politics and a Global Commodity" (2007); and Sarah S. Lochlann Jain's "'Dangerous Instrumentality': The Bystander as Subject in Automobility" (2004).

Cultural Anthropology has also published additional essays on Indonesia. See, for example, Leslie Butt's "'Lipstick Girls' and 'Fallen Women': AIDS and Conspiratorial Thinking in Papua, Indonesia" (2005); Celia Lowe's "Making the Monkey: How the Togeian Macaque Went from 'New Form' to 'Endemic Species' in Indonesians' Conservation Biology" (2004); and Tania Murray Li's "Compromising Power: Development, Culture, and Rule in Indonesia" (1999).

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