

CHAPTER NINE FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will answer the research questions posed in Chapter One, based on comparing the knowledge claims made in the contested media strategies as described in Chapters Four until Seven, with the under reported information about Kedungombo presented in Chapter Eight. I will first present the nature of the language used in the media coverage of Kedungombo. Then I will describe the economic and political interests that were behind, or benefitted from, the drive to depopulate Kedungombo's green belt. After that, I will describe the interests served by the overall coverage of Kedungombo, and finally I will describe the role of the media in educating the public about the various aspects of the Kedungombo controversy.

The nature of the language used in the media coverage of Kedungombo

First and foremost, the authorities had adopted a successful strategy to Javanize the support for the official policy by using Javanese role models and Javanese terms, especially the Javanese slogan that no prosperity would come without a sacrifice (*jer basuki mawa bea*). The major proponents of this media strategy were the Central Java governor, Ismail, and President Soeharto.

The success of this strategy to "Javanize" Kedungombo could be attributed not only to Ismail's ingenuity in continuously creating or utilizing new Javanese terms and phrases, but also to the dialectic between this rhetoric and the marketing strategy of Central Java's largest newspaper group, the *Suara Merdeka* group. The governor and the *Suara Merdeka* 's publisher, Budi Santoso, had one thing in common: they were both very

eager to promote the Javanese culture. During his first term as Central Java governor (1983-1988), Ismail took several steps to promote the Javanese culture in his province. For instance, he criticized the usage of foreign, mostly English, names by Stores, restaurants, and cinemas in his province and encouraged them to change those foreign names into Indonesian names. He also encouraged the youth in his province to learn the Javanese martial art, *pencak silat*, instead of the imported, mostly East Asian martial arts. He ordered that all government buildings in Central Java follow the *joglo*, or Javanese public hall style, and ordered all civil servants in his province to wear clothes on Saturdays made from *lurik*, a traditional Javanese handwoven textile (*Tempo* , 28 May 1988).

Ismail's eagerness to promote the Javanese culture as his province's identity was matched by Santoso's eagerness to capitalize on the Javanese culture in marketing his newspapers. Besides publishing the morning daily newspaper *Suara Merdeka*, Suara Merdeka Press Ltd., the company in which Santoso held the majority shares, also published an afternoon daily, *Wawasan*, a Sunday newspaper, *Cempaka*, and three youth magazines. But it is mainly *Suara Merdeka* that Dhakidae, in his thesis on the decline of political journalism in Indonesia, regarded as "the cultural bastion of Central Java" (Dhakidae, 1991: 336-370). So, the more the governor filled his speeches with Javanese terms, the more likely those words would be reproduced 200,000 times by *Suara Merdeka* 's presses and circulated all over the province and wherever there were subscribers to this daily. And if one missed those words in the morning, one could still read them in the afternoon daily, *Wawasan* .

Second, advocates as well as critics of the dam continuously attempted to "Islamize" their standpoints in defending and opposing the up-

rooting of the local villagers by justifying their positions with Islamic teachings. However, the Islamic opposition did not have much resonance for their criticism, since the largest newspaper group, *Kompas Gramedia*, preferred to publish the criticism of Fr. Mangunwijaya. As discussed at length in Chapter Seven, the Islamic media -- which included many Islamic student media and the *Yogya Post*, a daily newspaper affiliated with a large Islamic mass organization, Muhammadiyah - did publish the criticisms to the government's way of handling the social issues at Kedungombo -- as expressed by an Islamic poet and other Islamic intellectuals, phrased in Islamic principles and Islamic metaphors. However, since their circulation was very low and limited, it was difficult for them to impress a larger public.

Third, the dam advocates kept many mainstream environmentalists from taking sides with the villagers by continuously increasing the amount of the "environmental flavor" in their language in three sequential steps. First, by calling the reservoir rim a "green belt," they evoked the notion of the urban green belt, an urban planning device to curb air pollution and to create a nice-looking environment for urban dwellers.²⁰ Second, by constructing "the myth of the barren valley," they obtained some justification for relocating the displaced villagers to government-sponsored sites far away from the reservoir, which were allegedly more fertile than "the barren valley." Third, by using the terminology of "erosion" and "sedimentation," they convinced some environmentalists to supporting the depopulated green belt policy, either by keeping quiet, or by actively helping the local villagers start a new living far beyond the reservoir's shoreline.²⁰

20) For a history of the urban "green belt" idea and how it was disseminated from London to other cities in Europe and America, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, see Howard 1975 and Hall 1989.

Fourth, the use of the term "green belt" and the agronomical and hydrological arguments to justify the need to depopulate the reservoir's periphery also served to confuse the legal aid and human-rights activists. This new language pushed the activists into a new terrain that was very shaky ground for them but was very solid ground for the engineers and their political supporters. In other words, by emphasizing the "green belt" issue, the authorities were able to transform the more political land appropriation debate into a much less participatory "quasi-scientific" debate.

Fifth, the dam advocates continuously used their "blaming the victim" and "labeling their supporters" strategies to mentally terrorize the rural dissidents and their urban supporters.

Juxtaposing those various media strategies into a historical time frame, a report from the linguistic battlefield may look as follows:

In general, very powerful rhetorical strategies were applied by the dam advocates to their advantage. To address the Islamic sentiments of the villagers and their urban supporters, Islamic rhetoric was used to discredit the critics and to embrace the dam advocates. When the dam critics continued to use strong Islamic metaphors, this Islamic opposition was coopted by incorporating one of their strongest exponents, a young poet, into the newly established Islamic scholars association, ICMI, which instantly put Kedungombo on its agenda. This tactic backfired after the young poet, disillusioned by the slow pace of the bureaucrats within ICMI, withdrew from that government-controlled association.

The young poet's farewell to ICMI was not too much of a loss to the dam advocates, because they could still rely on another rhetorical weapon, namely Javanese terminology, which had already been used in promoting several other dams in Central Java, such as the Sempor and Gajah Mungkur

dams. In the meantime, the dam critics preferred to use legal and human rights appeals.

When the legal debate was moving toward a victory for the critics with Soeharto's promise to review the land compensation regulations, the dam advocates shifted to their ecological arsenal by pushing the "green belt" concept to the center of the debate. Using agronomical and hydrological arguments to back up the standpoint that the reservoir rim should be completely depopulated, two groups of dam critics became alienated from the debate. First was the more mainstream environmentalists, who certainly agreed with the need to prevent erosion and sedimentation into the reservoir. Second was the human-rights and legal aid activists, who had not studied the laws and regulations governing water resources in Indonesia, and who also lacked a minimum hydrological knowledge about dams and reservoirs. After exhausting their legal arsenal, which was mainly limited to the land compensation aspects, they were left out of the debate.

The economic and political interests behind the drive to depopulate Kedungombo's green belt

From the data presented in the previous five chapters, it can be concluded that the Public Works Department and two private corporations were the main motivating powers behind the vigorous attempt to depopulate the reservoir's green belt.

As discussed in Chapter Eight, the Public Works Department was involved in a prolonged conflict with the Forestry Department concerning two aspects related to the impact of building large reservoirs in Central Java. One involved conflicts concerning different reservoir green belt concepts. Public Works stressed the width of green belts, while Forestry stressed the topography of the land around the reservoirs. The other aspect was the compensa-

tion for Forestry land inundated by Public Works' reservoirs. Both conflicts involve budgetary gains and losses. Control over more land around reservoirs would mean larger budgets for the Public Works agencies that operated those reservoirs. The Forestry Department, however, demanded that forestry land appropriated by the Public Works Department should be compensated with other forestry land. But compensating Forestry with new forestry land would require an extra expense to appropriate land, which also would mean extra headaches in facing resistance from land owners.

While Public Works was still fighting its battle with Forestry, Aquafarm Nusantara Ltd. and another private company were already entering the reservoir area to develop their fishery and tourism businesses. They certainly preferred to have the reservoir periphery cleared of most of the population, leaving only a small portion of the villagers to provide the cheap labor needed in those Industries, as well as to serve as a tourist attraction. Both companies had already dominated the fishery and tourist ferrying businesses on Gajah Mungkur, another Central Java reservoir.

While these two companies were making their entries, preparations for a large scale tourist business operation was also taking place. A master plan for that tourist operation had been drawn by architects from the Diponegoro State University in Semarang, the province's Capital. This master plan did not include the village of Wonoharjo, where Aquafarm Nusantara Ltd. had started its floating fish-pen operation, nor the sexually-oriented tourism center on Kemukus island, where the other Gajah Mungkur company had its tourist ferrying monopoly. As discussed in Chapter Five, the Diponegoro University proposal covered the actual Kedungombo dam site and two nearby sites, an unpopulated island and a peninsula. Unfortunately, no information or indication was obtained as to which company would

turn the Diponegoro University proposal into a real investment. These economic and political interests were undoubtedly instrumental, or at least were complicit in the government's attempt to depopulate the reservoir's periphery.

The interests served by
the overall media coverage of Kedungombo

The extensive media coverage of Kedungombo was certainly expected by the dam critics to serve the interests of the displaced villagers. However, after unpacking the major themes that were highly publicized (Chapter Four through Chapter Seven) and comparing those themes with the under-reported Information about Kedungombo (Chapter Eight), one can conclude that the media coverage of the Kedungombo controversy served the following interests.

First, the media coverage of Kedungombo served the interests of the Indonesian dam building industry in general by framing the grass-roots resistance to Kedungombo as an exceptional case, thereby obscuring all other struggles which actually showed that it was quite commonplace.

Second, as the builder of the Kedungombo dam, the Jratunseluna Irrigation Project was also advantaged by the media coverage of Kedungombo. As discussed in Chapter Six, the two most common media strategies were shared by the dam advocates, the critics, as well as the media, — the "Islamization" and the linguistic aggrandizement of Kedungombo —, were beneficial to the Jratunseluna Project. So was the "Javanization" of Kedungombo, in which the Central Java governor was the main actor. With his high media profile, the governor was also a useful front for the Jratunseluna Project in diverting the media's attention from Public Works officials, who actually were primarily responsible for Kedungombo's adverse social effects.

Third, as the parent agency of the Jratunseluna Project, the Public Works Department enjoyed a double benefit from the media coverage of Kedungombo. Due to the critics' framing of Kedungombo mainly as an unfair land-compensation issue, the department's officials were able to capitalize on their superior knowledge of "in-house" laws and regulations on dams and reservoirs by shifting the media's attention to the "green belt" arguments. In addition, the high media profile of Kedungombo diverted the public's attention from alleged corruption of public funds used in constructing the irrigation projects in Bengkulu, where many Kedungombo farmers were resettled.

Fourth, in addition to the Irrigation officials in Central Java and in Bengkulu, another group who benefited from the media coverage of Kedungombo was the local officials and private entrepreneurs involved in transmigrating the displaced farmers. Due to the media's focus on land appropriation problems, transmigration frauds were rarely covered by the media. Only two local newspapers covered a transmigration fraud in which local government officials had faked a couple's wedding certificate and other important documents. Overall, however, the media did not investigate whether the special funds allocated by the president to transmigrate the Kedungombo farmers to Bengkulu really reached their intended beneficiaries.

Fifth, another important special interest group which benefited from the media coverage of Kedungombo was the private entrepreneurs involved in the fishery and tourist business. As discussed in Chapter Five, their main geographical foci were the area around the dam and other places in the district of Sragen, and Wonoharjo, a village in Juwangi subdistrict in the district of Boyolali. The attention of the media and the critics, however, was drawn mainly to a handful of hamlets in the subdistrict of Kemusu,

Boyolali. With all the attention on Kemusu, the tourism planners and the private companies could operate in Sragen, Grobogan, and the remote village of Wonoharjo, practically undisturbed by the media and the dam critics.

Sixth, as the main financier of the dam, the World Bank also benefited from the media coverage of Kedungombo. Except during a very brief period in mid-1989 due to the government's reaction to the letter sent by the International Nongovernmental Organizations' Forum on Indonesia (INGI) to the World Bank, the media never questioned the World Bank's role in Kedungombo. To be more specific, the media never questioned the World Bank's role in promoting transmigration to Air Manjuntö (Mukomuko) as the best solution for the population displaced by Kedungombo, nor questioned whether the bank had met its own guidelines in dealing with the indigenous people in Bengkulu.

Seventh, another major financier of Kedungombo, the Export Import Bank of Japan, also benefited from the press coverage of the dam, since it was completely left out of the picture by the Indonesian media.

Finally, in an indirect way, the media coverage of Kedungombo benefited the State Minister of Population and the Environment, Emil Salim. His role in supervising and approving the environmental impact analysis as well as the environmental mitigation and monitoring plans of Kedungombo was also left out of the picture by the Indonesian media.

The role played by the media in educating the public about
the various aspects of the Kedungombo controversy

In discussing the role of the media in educating the public about Kedungombo, I will first present the overall, or general picture presented by the media about this dam and its social implications. Then I will describe the emerging critical undercurrent of editors and reporters within the main-

stream media who maintained a critical distance from the dominant picture provided before. Next, I will describe the interaction between the non-mainstream media with the mainstream media. Finally, after listing the other factors which influenced the media coverage of Kedungombo, I will describe the superiority of media-generated knowledge about the adverse effects of large dams over similar knowledge provided through the formal educational institutions in Indonesia.

(a). The overall picture provided by the media:

Based on the previous findings, the media obviously played a very limited role in educating the public about the various aspects of the Kedungombo controversy. Apart from exaggerating the dam's physical dimensions, its usefulness, and even the uniqueness of the grass-roots' resistance against it, over the course of three years (1989-1991), the media practically transformed Kedungombo merely as an issue of one hamlet community resisting three overlapping government policies: unfair compensation, forced resettlement, and a prohibition to inhabit and cultivate the reservoir's green belt. In other words, Kedungombo became a modern day "Asterisk and Obelisk"-type story of a proud village community, which was quickly fossilized into a monument of resistance to the new "Roman empire."

In addition to narrowing down the wide range of resistance to a single community, the media coverage of Kedungombo also reduced the wide range of social and environmental impacts of a large irrigation scheme such as the Jratunseluna Irrigation Project into an unfair land compensation issue which mainly involved that one brave hamlet. That image was created by under reporting all the other social effects described in Chapter Eight.

This picture of Kedungombo as an unfair land compensation issue which included other dam construction cases certainly did little to educate

the public about more fundamental issues of large dams such as Kedungombo. For instance, why should Indonesia build such large dams at all, and what alternatives are available? Furthermore, it barely even educated the public about all the loopholes in the existing laws and regulations on land appropriation, which was one of the most immediate targets of the lawyers involved in the unpublicized Kedungombo court case.

In continuously covering Kedungombo from 1989 until 1991, however, the media did send a strong message to the public. The message was that whenever urban intellectuals consistently supported a rural struggle, those struggling peasants had a better chance of continuous media attention, compared to peasants' struggles that did not enjoy such support. Continuous media attention, in turn, guaranteed continuous attention from the government, which guaranteed incremental, not structural changes in the government's policy.

(b). The emerging critical undercurrent within the mainstream media:

Having made this general observation about the media coverage of Kedungombo, one should not overlook the fine threads which were woven into the general fabric. Within the mainstream media there existed a critical undercurrent of editors and reporters who maintained their critical distance from the "dominant picture" presented in the earlier part of this section.

First, as the data have repeatedly shown, the media itself repeatedly published news that actually refuted the knowledge claims made in the dominant media strategies of the authorities. For instance, by the numerous stories about drowning incidents in Kedungombo as well as the dam's numerous water distribution devices in Grobogan, the media indicated that land appropriation problems were not the only things about which the dis-

placed villagers worried. In addition, by its numerous 'tiny' news about the land compensation problems in Grobogan and other downstream districts, distributed over a period of nearly two decades, the media has shown that those problems were not confined to the Boyolali and Sragen districts.

Second, the media coverage of Kedungombo benefitted from the unique competition between Yogyakarta and Semarang newspapers, discussed in Chapter Two. Mangunwijaya's public Service ad which could not be placed in the Semarang papers did appear in a Yogyakarta-based newspapers, the *Kedaulatan Rakyat*. This paper also published news about the student demonstrations in March 1989, illustrated with color pictures of the students and some of their banners, despite the official ban put on the Central Java authorities which was not effective in this bordering province. Similarly, the press ban on the news of Kedungpring court sessions news was also broken by a Yogyakarta daily, the *Yogya Post*.

And in contrast to the uncritical stance of the *Suara Merdeka* toward the civil engineering work of the Jratunseluna Project contractors, the *Kedaulatan Rakyat* nearly single-handedly maintained a watch dog role over the work of those contractors. In addition, this newspaper was also one of the few media that kept a keen eye over the manipulation of transmigration quotes reserved for the displaced villagers.

Third, apart from the *Yogya Post*, the *Detektif & Romantika* was another mainstream magazine that reported the Kedungombo court sessions, fluctuating between taking sides with the dam critics and taking sides with the dam advocates. As it turned out from my library research, this magazine had had a long record of reporting on social protests incited by the construction of dams and other river engineering projects in Indonesia since the mid 1970s. Hiding behind the ladies with guns on its cover pages, due to

its low circulation, and due to its close contacts with the law enforcement apparatus, this crime magazine had been able to provide a constant flow of Information about the social consequences of Indonesian development projects.

Fourth, on the local scene weekly newspapers such as *Dharma* with its Police background, *Bahari* with its Navy background, and *Bina* with its Forestry background were able to provide a different picture than that which came from the press officers of the provincial Army command as well as the Army-dominated provincial government.

Fifth, since Kedungombo was a national project, and the protests against its implementation had raised its publicity profile, continuous news about this project was generated in the media outside Central Java, which was beyond the reach of the Central Java censor apparatus, and was also too much to be supervised continuously by the national government censor apparatus.

Sixth, even within a large local newspaper group such as the *Suara Merdeka* in Semarang, which was under heavy surveillance of the security apparatus, there were constant attempts to attract attention to Kedungombo, using various ingenious editorial tactics. For instance, news about the drowning of five Kedungombo villagers, which had been covered by *Suara Merdeka* as straight news was carried over by its Sunday supplement, *Cempaka*, as a human-interest story.

On another occasion, the *Cempaka* weekly published a *wayang mbeling*²¹ story about one of the upper gods, Batara Narada, being sent to

A modernized shadow puppet story, which places the characters from the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics into present, modern-day context, using those characters to mock at the contemporary social issues.

earth to investigate a case where lesser gods were demanding compensation for their land, which had been used to build five reservoirs (Wahyono, 1990). In addition to that literature genre, poem on Kedungombo, written by student activists, had also been published by the *Wawasan* afternoon daily (Sanyoto, 1990a and 1990b). And for those who might have forgotten about the dam, a poem in the *Suara Merdeka* art section (Lorang, 1991) was a nice reminder.

Seventh, even in an Army owned newspaper such as the *Kartika*, a former student activist on its editorial board supported the Kedungombo movement in his own way. After his paper was prohibited by its military owner from harshly criticizing Kedungombo, he managed to redirect the paper's attention to the impact of the Jratunseluna Project on the villagers downstream of the dam. This explained the increasing coverage by the *Kartika* of this area, which was previously overlooked by the Semarang newspapers.

Eighth, some critical awareness about the adverse impact of large dams had already been spread through the mainstream media by a private news bureau, Depth News Indonesia (see for instance, Bajpai, 1989; Chandra, 1986; Joshi, 1989). This news agency, which is affiliated with an international network which intentionally aims at providing news about the other side of development, is closely linked with international and Third World oriented environmental organizations, such as the Nairobi-based Environmental Liaison Center (ELC) and the Penang-based Third World Network.

Ninth, a number of mainstream media journalists were active members or even leaders in student organizations, consumer organizations, and even political parties. These journalists therefore functioned as amplifiers of the concerns of those nongovernmental organizations, while simultane-

ously helping those organizations to be able to read the broader political map due to their access to the decision makers, including the security apparatus.

—^e interaction between the non-mainstream media and the mainstream media

Discussing the role of the media in educating the public about the adverse effects of large dams, and in particular, Kedungombo, is not complete without discussing the interaction between the mainstream and the non-mainstream media.

First, due to their lower circulation, the nonmainstream media were not so much considered as a threat to the political establishment, so that in most cases they were less heavily censored by the authorities. In that capacity, the nonmainstream media often functioned as a "refuge" for news that did not be published by the mainstream media. For instance, when all major newspapers in Indonesia were prohibited from covering the February-March 1989 student demonstrations, news about those events appeared in professional religious magazines.

Second, newspapers have a very short physical life and the timeliness of their news is also very brief, while the nonmainstream media mainly consisted of magazines and bulletins with a much longer physical life and a higher periodicity. Due to these characteristics, the nonmainstream media often functioned as a repository as well as a further disseminator of the news that had already been published in the mainstream media. For instance, the critique of a Muslim politician, Husni Thamrin, that the government's policy to acquire more land than what was really inundated, which was published in the *Media Indonesia*, was reproduced in the *Hidup*, a Catholic monthly magazine. Likewise, Emha Ainun Najib's criticism of Muhammadiyah for suspending a Muhammadiyah teacher in Sragen for

joining the villagers' public protest in Jakarta, which was published in the *Yogi/fl Post*, received a longer life due to its reprinting in the *Himmah* magazine of UII students.

Third, there existed various informal networks between mainstream and nonmainstream journalists based on religious, ideological, or other common concerns. These networks also multiplied the actual spheres of influence of both types of media. For instance, in monitoring the social impact of Kedungombo as well as in several other dams prior to Kedungombo, Christian journalists working for commercial newspapers worked closely with Christian journalists attached to non-commercial community development bulletins. ,

(d). Other factors that influenced the media coverage of Kedungombo

First, as observed by Michael Parenti in the context of the American media (Parenti, 1986: 213), the Indonesian media also tended to favor personality over issues, and official positions over popular grievances. This explains why Ismail's ban on Mangunwijaya's plan to save the Kedungombo children as well as Emha Ainun Najib's withdrawal from ICMI, were mainly framed as "personality battles," while the views of the villagers, and in particular their children, were practically ignored.

Second, the systematic exaggeration of Kedungombo's physical dimensions resulted from a synergy between the media's editing strategy and a long-standing tradition of dam builders. Catering to the Central Javanese readers in and outside their hometowns, the media enthusiastically clung to earlier statements from the dam builders about Kedungombo's greatness. It will be discussed later in this chapter, the dam builders also had a tradition of exaggerating the greatness of Indonesian dams. The synergy between these two tendencies eventually enlarged the perception of Kedungombo into the

largest dam in Central Java, in Java, in Indonesia, in Southeast Asia, and finally, in Asia.

Third, while suffering from a very short memory, the mainstream media did not seem to prioritize their documentation sections to compare the current news events with previous ones which had been documented by the media. For instance, by emphasizing the uniqueness of the Kedungombo people's struggle, they overlooked the fact that many elements in that struggle had occurred previously in many other disputes. As the appendices of this thesis shows, most of those cases had been documented by the mainstream media during the last three decades. Similarly, news of transmigration frauds in Kedungombo were also not compared with similar fraud cases that had happened in the district of Pati. Or, the deletion of Sragen villages from the official Central Java map was also not compared with similar acts of the government in relation to the villages on Mount Merapi a decade earlier.

Fourth, most reporters who covered Kedungombo and consequent dam disputes suffered from what one can call a "large dam illiteracy," which made them extremely vulnerable to the propaganda of large dam builders. Various news reports used the term "dam," "reservoir," and "hydro electric power generator" interchangeably, as if every dam creates a large reservoir, and as if irrigation dams have the same characteristics as hydro power dams. Many news reports also seemed to be mystified with the English words "green belt" and the very technical term "PMF," or "probable maximum flood," which was often wrongly spelled.

Fifth, with all the largest newspapers and news magazines being based in Java, the predominant "large dam illiteracy" of the mainstream media was also colored by a strong bias in viewing large dams from the Javanese

experience. Influenced by this Java-biased lens, which was further amplified by the Kedungombo controversy, many mainstream media tended to look at other dams built in the outer island from the Kedungombo angle, forgetting or not knowing that many dams in the outer island had lakes as their natural reservoirs, and that the tempering of the lakes and rivers had different effects upon the riverine communities in the outer islands than in Java.

Sixth, as shown by many press reports as well as articles written by the dam critics, the culture of large dams described in Chapter Two, strongly influenced many of these writers. Dams as symbols of the New Order, as symbols of redistributive justice, and as symbols of Indonesia's greatness penetrated most of those articles and statements.

Seventh, to balance the government's statements with dissenting views, the media depended on a handful of academics who were almost always ready to comment on any social issue, with or without a deep understanding of that issue. Together with the dam advocates, these commentators constituted what Edward Said calls the media's "community of interpretation," which shaped the public opinion about Kedungombo.

Due to the reluctance of the media to break out of this convenient small circle of "informed sources," the media coverage of dissenting views was mainly limited to what members of this "community of interpretation" said, which left many aspects completely out of the media's main frame, as discussed at length in Chapter Eight.

Eighth, censorship by the authorities as well as self-censorship by publishers and editors strongly influenced what could and what could not be published about Kedungombo. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the regional Army command interfered directly in the editorial policy of the *Kartika* daily concerning the paper's coverage of Kedungombo, and one

nonmainstream bulletin, the *Berita Hutan* of SKEPHI lost its publishing permit (STT) during the course of the mediated public debate about Kedungombo.

Various instances of self-censorship could be extraced from my method of testing the media's political space by sending my own articles to the media. An article by a student activist, who responded to an article of mine about the dam-influenced poetry in Indonesia, was not published by a newspaper in Semarang. *Banjarmasin Post*, a newspaper in South Kalimantan, which was far away from the scene of the controversy, was willing to publish that article. However, a part of that article which reproduced a poem about Kedungombo written by Agam Wispi was censored from the published article (Harsono, 1990). The content of that poem was actually not so much different from the protest poems written by the student activists. But since Agam Wispi had been associated with the banned People's Artists Association (LEKRA), and had resided in the Netherlands to avoid prosecution, his poem was self-censored by the newspaper's editor.

Ninth, the non-mainstream media were also not free from self-censorship. An article of mine about the history of the environmental movement, which rather critically described the relationship between the Environment Minister and major nongovernmental organizations in Indonesia, made it to the pages of a Semarang daily, the *Suara Merdeka*. However, even in its translated English version it did not make it to the pages of the *Environesia*, a bimonthly bulletin of WALHI (the Indonesian Environmental Forum).

Tenth, as discussed in Chapter Two, certain factions within the Army had its own agenda in allowing a substantial freedom to the students to express their dissent in relation to Kedungombo, and to the press to cover

those protests. Apart from using repressive measures, for instance in the "Land for the People" calendar case (see Chapter Six), the military also used more subtle persuasive techniques to direct the media coverage of Kedungombo.

In other words, the military not only had the power to decide on what the media was not allowed to publish, but also on what the media *should* publish more vividly. In March 1991, for instance, the Army commander of Surakarta organized a one-day press tour for 35 journalists from all the important media in Java to visit three government supported resettlement schemes and one hamlet community of dissenting villagers, Kedungpring. This press tour helped the security apparatus to frame the subsequent media coverage, as if only this single community were still resisting the government's policies on Kedungombo. To further dramatize that idea, Kedungpring was physically isolated from the other resisting villagers through posting a military guard on the hills above Kedungpring.

Eleventh, to increase their effectiveness in influencing the press, the Army also forged a partnership between some student activists, senior academicians and a military-controlled daily newspaper. This partnership occurred at Central Java's second largest daily newspaper, the *Kartika*. This newspaper was founded by the Diponegoro Army Command in 1965, but had always slumbered in the shadow of the much more profitable *Suara Merdeka*. In early 1991, however, the *Kartika* daily underwent a drastic metamorphosis. With Rp 2 billion invested by Gautama Setiadi, a real estate contractor in Semarang, it bought new typing and printing equipment, rented a new office building, and also recruited new reporters.

The new *Kartika* reporters were recruited from two sources. The senior ones were recruited from the *Suara Merdeka* and *Wawasan* dailies,

while the junior reporters were recruited from the *Manunggal* monthly, a campus newspaper of Diponegoro State University run by students. Darmanto Yatman, the chief editor of the *Manunggal*, a symbolic position which had to be held by a university professor, was appointed as the *Kartika*'s deputy managing editor. The position of the managing editor was held by a former *Suara Merdeka* reporter, while the position of the chief editor, which was mainly a symbolic position, was held by an old *Kartika* journalist, a retired Army officer. Most top reporters of *Manunggal*, who had supported the Kedungombo people during the previous two years, were recruited as *Kartika* reporters. One of them even got a seat on *Kartika*'s new editorial board.

Twelveth, the influx of student activists into *Kartika* was not an isolated incident. Dozens of student activists had turned to professional journalism after graduation or after dropping out of college. This new generation of more partisan-inclined journalists was influential in coloring the media coverage on Kedungombo, since they were also part of the student movement. Besides at the *Kartika*, some other press activists became full- or part-time journalists at the *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, *Berita Nasional*, *Jayakarta*, *Media Indonesia* dailies and the *Editor* and *Jakarta-Jakarta* weeklies.

Thirteenth, the relation between the mainstream media and the dam critics was rather lopsided, since the media could easily get away with slanting their news coverage into trials by the press. As discussed in Chapter Six, the media coverage of the "Land for the People" calendar case clearly involved a great degree of "trial by the press." No action was taken, however, by the organizations of the suspected student activists and the artist who drew that calendar, or by the nine organizational sponsors of the calendar, to

appeal to the Indonesian journalists' association to stop this "trial by the press," which is against the "presumption of innocence" principle.²²

The reluctance of the Kedungombo critics to challenge the extrajudicial trying of their colleagues, may be explained by three factors. First, they may have seen the mainstream media as the only guarantors of democracy left within the given political System in Indonesia. Second, being members of the media's respected "community of interpretation," they seemed to be quite tolerant to the media, which helped to give them that respected social status. Third, having to live from the low salaries which Indonesian university professors receive, they seemed to be quite hesitant to jeopardize their good relation with the media, which also assures an additional source of income from the honoraria paid for their columns and their-participation in media-organized seminars.

(e). The superiority of media-generated knowledge about the adverse impact of large dams over similar knowledge provided through formal educational institutions

Compared to the formal educational institutions in Central Java and Yogyakarta, the media provided a better service in educating the public about the adverse impact of large dams. The dam controversy provided the media with a "news peg"²³ to publish numerous articles on various aspects of dams, beyond those which have been discussed in the previous chapters.

²²) In two other political cases, namely the trial of Ret. Gen. H. R. Dharsono and the trial of the suspected murderer of a famous photo model, the Honorary Council of the Indonesian Journalists' Association had reprimanded newspapers which were involved in "trial by the press." See Anwar, 1988.

²³) "News pegs," or "handles," as Herbert Gans refers to them, are events on which reporters' can "hang" their stories (Ryan, 1991: 32). As my participant observation showed, events also provides the handles on which editors can "hang" the articles sent in by contributors, especially where the reporters themselves are constrained by heavy censoring by the authorities as well as their own publishers.

For instance, an engineering professor at Diponegoro University wrote an article on how dams obstruct the migration of certain fish species (Pranoto, 1990)²⁴ Other authors focused on the danger of reservoir-induced earthquakes (Widada, 1990; Pudja, 1991) and on the threat of reservoirs to historic and archaeological sites (Utomo, 1989).

Compared to this media-generated knowledge, similar knowledge provided through the electrical and civil engineering departments in Central Java and Yogyakarta was very minimal. For instance, a textbook on electric power stations written by an engineering professor at the Diponegoro State University, mentioned that the environmental impact of hydro power stations was limited to the noise of the transformers (Sulasno, 1989: 135). A concern for dams and the techniques to mitigate their adverse impact was also minimal among engineering students in Yogyakarta. From the 61 civil engineers who graduated from the Gajah Mada State University in 1990, only four persons¹ wrote their theses on dams. Out of those four theses only one contained social elements, since it focused on sedimentation in the Mrica reservoir (*Clapeyron* , No. 29/1990: 78-80).

The knowledge about the adverse impact of dams presented in the news and byline stories in the media did not only exceed the similar knowledge taught formally at the university level. Taking into consideration the fact that the mainstream media are also read by non-university trained readers, the media-generated knowledge about the "other side" of large dams also exceeded that was presented in numerous semi-fictive reading material

) Just for the records: Muchtar Achmad, an ichthyologist in Pekanbaru, Riau, had already raised this post in the local media nearly a decade earlier (*Genta*, Fourth Week of June 1983),

in anticipation of the Ketapung dam on the Kemuning-Kemuning River

provided for elementary, middle, and high schools in Indonesia (see for instance, Jacob, 1985; Koeswari, 1980; Samsuri, 1982; and Widuri, 1983).

Summary

‘ In this chapter, I have presented the findings of this thesis. First, I first discussed the nature of the language used in the media coverage of Kedungombo. Then I discussed the economic and political interests that were behind, or benefitted from, the drive to depopulate Kedungombo's green belt. After that, I discussed the interests served by the overall coverage of Kedungombo, and finally I discussed the role of the media in educating the public about the various aspects of the Kedungombo controversy. Under the latter topic I first presented the overall, or general picture presented by the media about this dam and its social implications. Then I described the emerging critical undercurrent of editors and reporters within the mainstream media who maintained a critical distance from the dominant picture provided before. Next, described the interaction between the non-mainstream media with the mainstream media. Finally, after listing the other factors which influenced the media coverage of Kedungombo, I described the superiority of media-generated knowledge about the adverse effects of large dams over similar knowledge provided through formal educational institutions in Indonesia.