

# The Resistance Towards the Kedung Ombo Dam Construction of 1985-1991

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**Abstract**— *This article discusses the resistance of the Kedung Ombo locals towards the construction of Kedung Ombo Dam in Central Java. The construction of the dam, which was initially aimed at increasing the welfare of the people around the dam, turned into a massive resistance caused by the dissenting opinions between the government and the Kedung Ombo Dam locals. The repressive attitude of the government in enforcing their will to the locals, triggered an autonomy resistance from the locals. This issue then widely spreads and later on involves various figures outside of the government and the locals, such as social activists, NGOs, and college students. The researcher uses historical method in the writing of this article, which includes collecting literatures and news from the same era of the particular event to support this research. From this research, it can be seen that the resistance of the Kedung Ombo locals didn't disrupt the dominance of Orde Baru governance. The researcher tries to complete previous researches by seeing the event chronologically, starting from the background and to the effects.*

**Keywords:** *Kedung Ombo, Dam Construction, Local Resistance, Repressive Attitude*

## I. INTRODUCTION

From The New Order era, it can be seen that the construction policies were more emphasized towards the effort to reach the GNP (Gross National Product) growth. This construction projects was later on became The Five Year Development Plan (Repelita) which was started in 1969. There is a different context in understanding the meaning and purpose of the development, the government tends to see the development as an effort to increase the governments' income, in which they often forget the public service and welfare of the society aspects. Andrinof A. Chaniago, a political observer from Universitas Indonesia, sees the period of the development in The New Order as the era of Indonesia turning into a "company country" in the politic and economy sectors. The development, which was initially aimed to increase the welfare of the society, shifts into the increasement of the governments' income. This point of view is then adopted by the local governments to increase their own income.

The regional development was mostly done without any negotiation and was seen as one-sided. The locals, which was supposed to benefit from this projects, was instead gain the opposite. Feeling that their rights was stolen by the government, the locals then held a denial and autonomy resistance. This resistance initiate the start of many social conflicts happened at The New Order era, one of which was the resistance of the Kedung Ombo locals towards the construction of the Kedung Ombo Dam in 1985.

The construction plan of Kedung Ombo Dam plays a pivotal role in expanding the area around Jratunseluna River which covers three residencies (Karasidenan), which are Pati, Surakarta, and Semarang. In addition, the construction also covers nine districts, which are Kudus, Semarang, Pati, Demak, Blora, Grobogan, Boyolali, Sragen, and Jepara. According to the plan, this project would cover as wide as 7900 km square of the surrounding area (Stanley, 1994: 73) and was used by the government to secure and control floods, and also to protect the industrial, farming, and residential area. The Construction of The Jratunseluna Project was expected to increase the irrigation water supply. Jratunseluna was essentially a sequence of dam construction projects in northern Central Java. After the project was finished by the year 1991, the government expected it would increase the water and electricity supply for the industrial and residential areas.

In its execution, the Kedung Ombo Dam construction faced many obstacles. One of the major issues was the residents' land acquisition efforts for the project. Surveys, technical preparations and qualification study which were done since 1969 became hampered in the process. This happened because there was a lack of understanding in the sociocultural conditions of the area and the inadequate approach of the executing land acquisition authorities. These problems started to appear in the middle of 1985. The people around the site rejected the compensation offerings for the land acquisition which were considered as too cheap by the locals. According to Mochtar Pakpahan (1990: 40), through the Central Java Region I Head Governor Decree No. 593/135/1987, the compensation of the land affected by the Kedung Ombo Dam construction plan in Sragen, Boyolali, and Grobogan was priced as much as 700 rupiah per meter.

Autonomy resistance came from the locals who couldn't find any chance or any external space for their existence. Some of them had struggled to earn a fair compensation, but to no avail because the dam construction kept on going. Despite that, most of the locals responded that the "no external space" means there are still "internal spaces" for them to fight in. They define the "internal space" (Budiman & Tornquist, 2011: 46) based on the reality that they now had nothing. This is the reason for them willing to do anything to get their land back. The farmers of Kedung Ombo chose to limit their action just for the purpose to fulfill their needs locally. They focused on the effort for obtaining the fair compensation they deserve and a better resettlement scheme.

There have been some research and writings about the resistance of Kedung Ombo locals towards the Kedung Ombo

Dam construction, but they didn't cover the full picture and only came from one point of view. For example, The book titled "Aktor Demokrasi" (Democratic Actors), which was published by The Study Institute of The Informational Flow (Institut Studi Arus Informasi), explains about the resistance movement in Indonesia. There are many case studies written in this book, and the resistance of the people of Kedung Ombo is one of them. This case was written as one of the chapter of this book. In The explanation of the case, this book is more aimed towards the aid of NGOs (Non-government Organization) and the process of the people resistance. Meanwhile, the cause of the event wasn't explained in details. George J. Aditjondro in a journal titled "Large Dam Victims and Their Defenders: The Emergence of an Anti-Dam Movement in Indonesia", published by The Department of Sociology, University of Newcastle are more focused towards the conflict in Kedung Ombo through the perspective of development discourse and general interest. According to Aditjondro, the conflict in Kedung Ombo caused a social jealousy between the Kedung Ombo locals that were victimized by the construction, and those who benefit from it, which refers to the government. The displaced villagers felt that the purpose of the construction, which is said for the locals' welfare, dam was nothing but a myth. They felt that they were nothing but sacrifices in the dam construction because for them the ones who benefit from this dam are the people who don't live in the dam construction area. This journal didn't explain the background of the case and the resistance process in details.

The writing of this article aims to complete the previous research and also to enhance the variation of the point of view in the Kedung Ombo Dam resistance, one of which is the governments' point of view through the construction policies of Kedung Ombo Dam. This research mainly aims to describe the resistance of Kedung Ombo people towards the dam construction. The writers tried to present the research problem which is the construction policy during The New Order era. Furthermore, this research also describes the construction policy of the Kedung Ombo Dam and the efforts made by the Kedung Ombo locals in resisting the government on the construction of Kedung Ombo Dam. Lastly, this research describes the settlement done by the two parties.

The method that was used in this research is the historical method which consists of 4 stages, starting with heuristic or data collecting, reviewing the sources both intrinsically and extrinsically, interpretation of the collected information and sources, and finally writing the historical work or historiography. At the first stage, the writers seek and collect related literatures. The sources that were used are books, journals, newspapers from the same era, and research articles. These sources are then verified by comparing the sources and interpreted based on the actual facts. Lastly, the writers arrange them into one systematical and chronological writing based on the guidelines of historical writings.

## II. THE NEW ORDER CONSTRUCTION POLICY

According to Soemitro Djojohadikusumo, there are differences between "economic progress", "economic growth", and "economic development". The economic growth refers to the economical dynamics in the neoclassical and neokeynesian school, while the economic progress refers to the view of classical school. The economic development in

this case is referring to the economic problems that exists and are faced by the developing countries including Indonesia. In its progress there is a development model which aims to reach the goal of development itself, in this case is the welfare of the society. There are two main strategies in the economic development according to Revrisond Baswir, which are neoclassical and structural models. The structuralis model underlines on the things related to the structural changes, various institutional, social institutions or the system existing in society and the democracy inside before executing the economy with the chance of less parties harmed in the economic development (Baswir, 2002: 26) which is a direct opposite of the neoclassical strategy that says the social welfare will be achieved when a massive development is executed, with the effect called the trickle-down effect (Clements, 1997: 38). This effect is a positive kind from the neoclassical strategy where the welfare will descend to the lower level if the development were executed to its full potential.

From these two strategies of economic development, The New Order government under the leadership of Soeharto was more prominent on the neoclassical economic model. This is based on the fact of the major setback of Indonesia's economy compared to the first world countries which Soeharto tried to pursue because of the economic downfall from The Old Order (Orde Lama) in which the production and investment sectors suffered setbacks since 1950 (Anne, 1986: 1). The second reason is the success of The Marshall Plan in recovering the economy of Western Europe countries post World War II. These two reasons then underlay the foundation of The New Order government purpose to reduce the political rights of the people and prioritize the economic development rather than the political related affairs.

This orientation later on became the start of the social conflicts happened regarding the construction policy during the reign of Soeharto (Baswir, 2002: 22). The expected trickle-down effect during the economic growth process in fact did not happened, that in result caused serious social impacts. This impacts got worse by the restriction of political and democratic rights of the people shown by the repressive attitude of the government in executing the construction project which were seen as one-sided because of the lack of any negotiation with the locals victimized by the infrastructure construction to support the economic growth and development. One of the real example of this social conflict is the construction of Kedung Ombo Dam in Sragen, Boyolali, and Grobogan. There are many obstacles at the process of the construction which led to the conflict between the government and the surrounding locals.

## III. THE DAM CONSTRUCTION AND THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICT

The construction of The Kedung Ombo Dam itself which starts from the body of the building, electrical installation, and water tower started in September 1984 and was expected to finish in April 1989. The construction was devised by an Indonesian company named Brantas Abipraya, while a Japanese company, Hazama Gumi, work as the contractor. The power plant construction was executed by The State Electricity Company (Perusahaan Listrik Negara or PLN).

The funding used on the construction of Kedung Ombo Dam came from various sources, which includes the state budget (APBN) and loans from two foreign banks, that are The Japan Exim Bank and The World Bank. A value of 74% from the whole construction funding or about 156 million USD (Document of World Bank: 1985) were the sum of money loaned by the World Bank. The total amount of this dam construction was more than the appointed budget, which was 280 Billion Rupiahs.

Table 1. The Kedung Ombo dam construction budget and funding sources

Year	State Budget	Funding Sources (in Billion)		Total
		EXIM	World Bank	
1985/1986	15.932		5.6	21.532
1986/1987	7.332	14.747896	7.147335	14.479335
1987/1988	2.7		17.936250	32.954146
1988/1989	1.82748	7.710779	6.738258	14.631785
Total	23.716748	22.458675	37.421843	83.597266

Source: Public Works Department, Director General of

From the above table, we can see that the budget of Kedung Ombo Dam was mostly came from the World Bank. 1987/1988 are the years with the highest budget with the amount of budget as much as 33 Billion. This was caused by the high expense of that particular year, such as the further development of the dam and land acquisitions. The total amount of the budget was supposedly 83 Billion, but in reality, the expense reached 280 Billion or roughly three times bigger than the appointed budget.

The construction of Kedung Ombo Dam which most of its budget came from the World Bank, wasn't executed quite as planned. The problem started to appear in 1985. The Kedung Ombo locals were protesting about the compensation offering on their land which was considered too cheap and far below the demanded price. They rejected the Data Collection and Land Acquisition team who were about to negotiate for the land acquisition. Even the village authorities and the Bakori (Badan Koordinasi Intelijen or Intelligence Coordination Agency) intimidation has little no to effect.

Multiple ways were used by the government to make the villagers around the dam to accept the compensation and to give their consent to be moved to the designated location by the government. Muko-muko Village in Bengkulu is the designated place chosen by the government as the relocation place for the villagers of Kedung Ombo. But, the one-sided data collection by the government without involving the Kedung Ombo villagers in the discussion about the relocation plan and the compensation became the cause of the protest and rejection from the people of Kedung Ombo.

There is a lack of any definitive amount of the compensation specified by the government. According to The Decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs Number 15 Year 1975 regarding The Land Acquisition for Government Project Purposes, the amount of the compensation should be discussed in a civil manner and be adjusted following the base price. But in reality, there is a significant difference between the base price and the market price. The people of Kedung Ombo felt that the price of their land were much higher than the one offered by the government. The demanded price of the Kedung Ombo peop was in the range of 15 thousand Rupiah per meter square. The emergence of The Decree of Central

Java Region I Head Governor on August 1985 became the reference to define the amount of compensation of the land and building in the process of the land acquisition in three Region II Districts, including Kedung Ombo.

The reigning Minister of Internal Affairs at the time, Soepardjo Rustam, stated in the work meeting of Commission II of The People's Representatives Council of Indonesian Republic (DPR RI) on The 25th of November, that the amount of compensation for the land affected by the dam construction was as much as three thousand Rupiahs per meter square. But in the end, the amount of compensation was defined by the government by The Decree of Central Java Region I Head Governor on the 2nd of May 1985 No. 593/135/1987 was as much as 700 Rupiah per meter square (Stanley, 1994: 87). This was obviously far below the demand of the Kedung Ombo people.

The problem of Kedung Ombo became more complicated when some cases of compensation funds misuse by the village officials was found. The villagers who were close to the officials, were given a higher amount of compensation, eventhough they had the same width of land (Suara Merdeka, February 19, 1988). The village officials also often changed the owner's name of the compensated land to their own names, so that they could receive the compensation twice.

Until 1988 the people of Kedung Ombo still refused to accept the compensation and relocation offers. Minister of General Development, Radinal Mochtar, finally released the instruction so that the land acquisition could soon be finished without delaying the construction for the sake of The Nation's integrity. The government had to finish within the land acquisition target. This was related to the loans from Exim Bank who without a doubt will hold their funds if the government couldn't finished the construction by the end of March 1988. Lastly, the construction executor released a policy about the compensation. The residents of Kedung Ombo were given a time limit to take their compensation funds until the end of March 1988 (Suara Merdeka, 22 June 1988).

A work visit to the construction site were made by The A Commission of The Regional I Council of The People's Representatives (DPRD) Central Java in the middle of December 1988. While visiting, they found that there are still 941 households living on the area of Kedung Ombo dam (Kompas, 4 January 1988). Lastly, they instructed to build posts and shelters for the 941 householders. The Boyolali Military Commanding District (Makodim) by forming The Security Task Force 0724 (Satgas Pengamanan 0724).

The ceremony of the dam inundation which were initially scheduled on January 12 1989, had to be rescheduled to 14 January 1989. This resulted in the joy of the villagers around the area of Kedung Ombo Dam. The villagers assumed that the ceremony would be held after the compensation problems were settled. But Radinal Mochtar, along with the local officials such as the Governor of Central Java, Chairman of The DPRD Central Java, and Chairman of The Commission V of DPR RI, and Regents from Sragen, Grobogan, and Boyolali kept inaugurating the inundation of Kedung Ombo Dam on January 14, 1989 at 09.55 AM local time.

After closing the dam gates, the level of water had increased to 57.20 meters in the first week after the closing.

This causes flooding in a few villages in Wonoharjo Urban Village (Kelurahan Wonoharjo) such as Kedung Lele, Dukuh Kedung Uter, Ceremai, and Jetis. As a result, the villagers tried to find a safer and higher place to live. They worked together to save their belongings. They took apart of their houses to gather the necessary materials to build temporary houses in higher places. The villagers also made small boats for transporting from one place to another.

The water levels keep rising to 76.23 meters, while the number of households who were still staying on the inundation area were 1786 householders (Suara Merdeka, February 28, 1989). Later on, they finally gave up and moved to a higher land. This water elevation caused various problems, one of which is the houses and school buildings sinking, which caused a lot of children in Kedung Ombo to stop going to school. Other problem they faced is the lack of clean water for their daily needs. To fulfill their daily needs, they usually need to walk for about 10-20 kilometers to Legi Market located in Solo.

The number of villagers who still live in the reservoir area as of March 23, 1989 were 5268 householders. As much as 27% of those householders were living in the area which were located on the water elevation between 81-95 meters. Most of the villagers of Kedung Ombo started to move to the area around of the dam, because of they didn't want to be too far apart from their source of livelihood which were located around the dam. The movement caused the emergence of new residencies and houses in the area.

There were 669 Householders who still refused to accept the compensation, while the other 1402 already accepted the compensation but still stayed on the reservoir area. Those who refuses as mentioned were located on Kemusu Sub-district. A different situation can be seen on the other sub-districts in the region around Sragen and Grobogan Regency. From the sub-districts of these two regions, there were only 5 householders who still refused to leave the reservoir area, while a total of 2262 householders already accepted the compensation.

In the process of The Kedung Ombo Dam construction case, there were many figures involved in helping the villagers of Kedung Ombo. They were involved both directly and indirectly in the resistance movement of the Kedung Ombo Villagers. These figures came from various places, individuals, NGOs, group of college students, and other figures from various organizations. One of those individual is Johny Simanjuntak, who was a legal aid activist. His contribution in the middle of 1980s was by giving informal educations to the villagers to take back their rights of their land. Some NGOs that were involved in this are The Indonesian Legal Aid Institute Foundation (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia or YLBHI) and its local network in Central Java and Yogyakarta. They had been involved in quite a long time in helping the villagers of Kedung Ombo in the legal process both in the court and campaigning in the international level. College student movements were also started from various colleges which were helped by The Gemi Nastiti Foundation. In addition to these external figures, internal figures were also emerging which came from the villagers themselves such as Village Head Djaswadi and Darsono, which were well-respected figures in the area. There were also groups who helped the villagers of kedung Ombo by giving a variety of help, their

contributions can be classified into the three categories: 1. Community-strengthening-oriented, 2. Legal advocate, 3. Political parties.

The people of Kedung Ombo demanded six preconditions or requirements which became the focus of the activist's actions in advocating the resistance towards the dam construction (Budiman & Tornquist, 2011: 7). The six requirements are:

1. Fair compensations.
2. Rights to be organized.
3. No violence and intimidation.
4. No military dominance in the government.
5. Human integrity.
6. Appreciation of the local cultural life.

In the timespan of 1989 the public figures of Kedung Ombo went to various cities, such as Yogyakarta and Jakarta to gather support and help they could get from NGOs such as YLBHI Jakarta Branch, LBH Yogyakarta Branch, GPS, BKPH MKGR, and DPP PDI. They were funded by the villagers of Kedung Ombo who sincerely wanted to help by giving their own money. The effort to get the legal aids from those parties unfortunately didn't went quite as expected. Some of them understandably felt disappointed by the attitude of LBH Yogyakarta Branch and revoked their procuration letter. The legal aid institution had the same perspective as the government who instructed the villagers to moved away from the area and to accept the compensation. But in the interview with Nur Ismanto on August 25 1989, The LBH Yogyakarta denied those accusations. They said that it was actually the LBH who broke off the contract, because the villagers of Kedung Ombo, who was the client, didn't have an unwavering loyalty.

#### IV. THE CONFLICT RESULT AND SETTLEMENT

After executing the dam inundation and limiting the access to the dam area, there were voluntary groups came to help and to accompany the Kedung Ombo villagers. The groups were the college students group called The Kedung Ombo Construction Victims Solidarity Group ("Kelompok Solidaritas Korban Pembangunan Kedung Ombo" or KSKPKO for short), next is the group led by Father YB Mangunwijaya, and lastly NGO-driven groups. The three groups who did their movements separately, would later on cause changes in the government's policies globally.

The Kedung Ombo locals' support and sympathy started to appear with the movement initiated by KSKPKO in three capital cities, which are Semarang, Jakarta, and Yogyakarta. Their steps which is writing and then sending a statement letter to the Chairman of DPR/MPR then forwarded to President Soeharto, Minister of Political Coordination and Security, Ministry of General Development, and the media successfully garnered the public attention. This issue then became the headline on various medias, both locally and nationwide.

The help that came from Father YB Mangunwijaya started from Kedung Ombo villagers visit to Mangkunegara Temple located in Solo. The villagers who felt that they still have a strong bond with the relatives of Mangkunegara tell their

conditions to the relatives. The relatives then promised to help the villagers of Kedung Ombo whose land were flooded. The Mangkunegara then tried to contact Father YB Mangunwijaya who at the time were hospitalized in Elizabeth Hospital Semarang Branch. Father YB Mangunwijaya immediately agree to the offer but on one condition, and that is he would only help the children which is about 3500 children. Mangunwijaya made a notice for anyone who might be willing to help the children in Kedung Ombo. The notice then published by *Harian Kedaulatan Rakyat* Newspaper on February 27 1989. The letter received positive feedback from the government authorities, such as Lieutenant General Harsudiono Hartas of The Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI), Minister of Internal Affairs Rudini, and Coordinating Minister of The People's Welfare Soeparjo Rustam. After being discharged from the hospital, Father YB Mangunwijaya then immediately visited the Kedung Ombo reservoir area in Kemusu Sub-district. He witnessed firsthand the blockade done by the military and other depressing scene in the reservoir area (*Kedaulatan rakyat*, 5 April 1989).

The permission for The Central Java Regional Government to help the children in Kedung Ombo as the applied procedures had been hampered for some time. The Governor of Central Java HM Ismail, who were met in his work room didn't allow Father Mangun and his colleagues to visit and observe the area around Kedung Ombo Dam. The news about the rejection of Father YB Mangunwijaya then became headlines in many media. The Father YB Mangunwijaya group finally received help from college students to distribute the aids to the reservoir area secretly.

The NGOs who played an important role in accompanying and giving legal aids to the Kedung Ombo villagers were The INGI, which is a communication forum between NGOs in Indonesia and foreign countries. INGI raised the Kedung Ombo case as the discussed issue in the conference held in Nieuwport, Belgium in the end of April 1989. This made the Kedung Ombo case as a hot topic discussed on a global scale. This conference also gave birth to The Aide Memoire which contains fifteen suggestions for the World bank in regards to the dam construction. Through the World Bank, this Aide Memoire successfully intervened the government to finish the compensation problems in Kedung Ombo Dam construction as soon and as effective as possible. The letter from INGI to the World Bank had caused a fuss in Jakarta, President Soeharto was furious in The Limited Cabinet Meeting of The Economy, Monetary, and Industry Division (*Sidang Kabinet Terbatas Bidang Ekuin*) in Bina Graha on July 5 1989 (Stanley, 1994: 191). He was embarrassed by the effects caused by INGI's Aide Memoire in its fifth conference. Soeharto requested the Internal Affairs Department to approach and give guidance to the NGOs and the people who attended the INGI meeting. He warned that what they had done had delayed and hampered the development of Indonesia.

The significant role of the media was by making the Kedung Ombo case as one of the most discussed issue of the public. But their role had been restricted along with the release of the official prohibition of publishing news about the Kedung Ombo case, including a series of movements made by The KSKPKO. The reporters no longer had access to gain entrance to the Kedung Ombo dam reservoir area.

The reports from the media related to the dynamics happened during the dam construction process had made a negative impression for The New Order reign. This got worse by the rejection of Father YB Mangunwijaya's social act by the Governor of Central Java which gained a lot of sympathy from society. The reign of Soeharto had been quite humiliated by the news about Kedung Ombo Dam construction which shows a lot of suffering from the villagers in many of its reports and from it also emerged many college students movements. Because of this, the government finally took steps to counter these negative views, which is by isolating and threatening the villagers to move as soon as possible, arranged a counter news to tell the masses that there was no apprehension done by the authorities on the villagers around the area of Kedung Ombo Dam. The government also made a series of charity to counter those charity done by the NGOs. The last step taken by the government was by restricting the students and NGOs activists movement who had humiliated Indonesia in front of the other countries.

The reign of President Soeharto initially had a rigid and repressive attitude, and also hold on to the principle of the compensation rules and the option to relocate. Soeharto also decided not to help the villagers who chose to stay in the reservoir area. But as the time goes, protests and pressures emerged from various parties. This made the officers, from central to locals, finally visit the reservoir area of Kedung Ombo Dam to directly gather information. The New Order Government then release another policy, which was to double the width of the land of Kedung Ombo villagers who were moved to Kayen. Moreover, The Governor of Central Java H. M. Ismail was forced to negotiate with the eight representatives of Kedung Ombo villagers which led by Jaswadi to be placed in the Perhutani area, for the villagers who were staying on the dam area.

By accepting the villagers' demand, it can be seen as a win for the struggle that they have done. This could only be achieved with the efforts from various parties involved in helping to solve The Kedung Ombo Dam construction case. The synchronization between the local residents and the helping parties such as NGOs and college students had made the government unable to fully implement the policies made for the construction of Kedung Ombo Dam such as the compensation and relocation. With the giving of Perhutani area to the villagers had made the government to finally settle the problem in the reservoir area. The replacement of the villagers to Kedung Lele was executed soon after the agreement between the two parties had been made. Each householder with the total amount of 600 householders, received a 0,1 ha land from the land of Perhutani. Although the problems around the dam had been settled, there were still as much as 164 householders who chose to stay in the reservoir area and in need of settlement. There was no clear decision for the 164 householders who still chose stay in the reservoir area (*Kedaulatan rakyat*, May 15 1989).

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The economic development in The New Order era uses the neoclassical strategy in its process. The focus of the development which relied on the economy which uses the neglect of political and democratic rights made the development which was aimed for the welfare of the people didn't get the expected results. The development in this era

often caused social conflicts as the impact of the repressive attitude from the government. One example is the major project case of Kedung Ombo Dam construction which had been a sensitive issue at the end of The New Order reign. This case gave a description about the resistance of villagers in an isolated region in Central Java whose land were evicted by a massive dam construction project funded by the World Bank. This dam construction covered the region of Boyolali, Sragen, and Grobogan. A top-down approach was used by the government, practices of bureaucratic corruption, and the repressive attitude from the government caused a resistance from the residents which spread to the other surrounding area, this issue even had been discussed both the national and international scale. The case of Kedung Ombo shows a real example of the power of the people in demolishing the dominance of President Soeharto's governance, even though the resistance never completely fulfill their demands.

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