

Governing the (Dis)Order: *Toke* and the Convergence of Artisanal Oil Mining and State Visibility in Sumur Baru

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RECEIVED 2023-04-02

ACCEPTED 2023-08-16

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the question of why and how ‘illegal’ artisanal mining in the oil-rich region of Indonesia remains in place despite official bans by the central government. By taking a qualitative ethnographic study on the practice in *Sumur Baru*, *Dusun Tue*, a village in South Sumatra Province, our inquiry takes seriously the formation of resilient labor in daily encounters with state institutions. We employ a governmentality approach and show how quotidian interactions between state and community has legitimized practices of artisanal mining. Sites become relatively governable in conditions of continuous displacement through ongoing negotiations between intermediaries (*Toke*) with state agencies. This practice is made possible by the use of *Sen Minyak* or oil money that binds *Toke* as key representatives of the community with police and state apparatuses as disciplinary representatives of the governmental state. This study thus shows how an extractive regime emerges, shifts, and reshapes in the local political economic contexts of Indonesia’s decentralization era.

KEYWORDS

Artisanal mining; Displacement; *Dusun Tue*; Governmentality; Labor Community; *Sen Minyak*; South Sumatra; Police; *Toke*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Artisanal mining caught our attention with the nationwide reportage on the popular protest in the oil-rich province of South Sumatra against the banning of ‘*Sumur Baru*’ *community-owned oil production* since 2019 (Sumselsiana, 2019). The protest occurred as a response against the Joint Decree of Forkopimda (*Forum Koordinasi Pimpinan Daerah*), an official forum comprising of the Regent (*Bupati*), *Kapolres* (*Kepala Kepolisian Resor*/Head of Regional Police), and *Dandim* (*Komandan Distrik Militer*/District Military Commander) (Sumselsiana, 2019). The Decree, instructed by SKK Migas (*Satuan Kerja Khusus Pelaksana Kegiatan Usaha Hulu Minyak dan Gas Bumi*/Special Task Force for Upstream Oil and Gas Business Activities), was a stricter measure to a series of protracted conflagrations in drilling sites, inciting nationwide public concern regarding human impacts and environmental damage.

Fast forward to 2023, where approximately 1,800 oil workers from Musi Banyuasin District, mostly villagers, assertively demanded the full legalization of artisanal mining in front of the governor’s office (Elko, 2023). By claiming that this upstream-downstream activity involving more than 350,000 villagers working in 7,000 drilling sites, the protesters wrote a statement in a poster stating: “*Lebih baik menambang minyak daripada keluarga kami mati kelaparan*” (It is better to drill for oil than have our families die of starvation) (Erlangga, 2023). This strongly signals pressures from communities on the importance of livelihoods from artisanal mining, and the strong desire to get legal recognition for their activities.

Against that backdrop, this examines the following question: in what ways does artisanal mining practices serve as a basis for local community livelihoods? We answer this question by ethnographic approach in one of the key sites of these activities. *Dusun*

Tue is one of the major oil-producing villages in Musi Banyuasin District since late 2021. This study focuses on artisanal mining at a site called '*Sumur Baru*', indicating that the land, funds, technology, and workers belong to local villager initiatives and follow along chains of upstream to downstream activities. It should also be noted that *Sumur Baru* differs from *Sumur Tua* where the latter is a state-controlled oil drilling site under the auspices of SKK Migas since 1970 (regulation of ESDM Ministry on old oil well management No 1/2008). This ethnographic study thus focuses mainly on addressing the questions of resistance and negotiation in *Dusun Tue* community, with a broader interest of presenting insights on issues of environmental governance.

This research is situated in the rise of current scholarship on extractive regime and corporate capture of the state around the world (see notably Prayogo et al., 2013; van Apeldoorn & de Graaff, 2022b). This case study demonstrates how recent international alliances reshape around the fierce contest over oil and gas. This has affected Jokowi's turn to centralized governance of natural resources. Some scholars have coined this trend in Indonesia as an 'authoritarian turn', deeply embedded within discourses of resource nationalism. This describes the top-down imposition of energy policy while evading public policy debate and weakening local autonomy of district governments (see notably Neilson, 2014; Warburton, 2017, 2018).

The trend towards centralization has sparked strong discontent among local leaders, such as the secessionist rhetoric of the Meranti regent in Riau Province (Alfarizi, 2022), not to mention rising discontent in the historically contentious regions of Papua and Aceh with their long history of ethnonationalism (see notably Anderson, 2015; Aspinall, 2007; Heiduk, 2014). The local leadership of South Sumatra and Musi Banyuasin have not explicitly expressed their discontent. However, in response to the banning of *Sumur Baru* they took an ambivalent stance. This is perceived as a coerced position given the policy's impact on eroding local sources of community livelihoods, not to mention its destructive effects on local decentralization policy.

Centralized governance of natural resources has sparked the rise of indigeneity politics and deepening of local patronage networks common in scholarship of the shadow state (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). However, local experiences in South Sumatra shows that oil is a contested resource when dealing with collective action. Artisanal mining communities remain resolute in their struggles for recognition and self-governing authority. This highlights the urgency of understanding power relations with which local communities together with state actors and institutions have experienced in the forms of displacement of their positions and roles. As Chandler (2014) and Evans and Reid (2014) argue, the formation of resilient communities or agency takes place in the form of resistance as social process.

Governmentality affords an approach that enables this study to describe and analyze the power relations between artisanal mining communities and the state in *Dusun Tue*. Power relations suggests a means or a strategy for affecting and shaping multiple agencies and transforming a place into an economic, cultural, and political space. In Foucault's conceptualization, governmentality is a set of rationalities, institutions, mechanisms, and tactics that are suitably understood as generalized structuring of power relations in action (Burchell et al., 1991; Foucault, 1982). It should also be understood as a relation of strategies to be traversal-transgressive in their actual performance (Foucault, 1978; 1982). In doing so, this study captures the relations of strategies undertaken by villagers and state apparatuses on the most productive grounds that makes 'illegal' collective livelihoods relatively governable.

In governmentality scholarship, there has been wide-ranging studies on natural resource governance and the multiplicity of popular resistance. In the Indonesian case,

the developmental practice by the state has produced multiple forms of resistance on the part of local populations (see notably Li, 2007; Li & Semedi, 2021a; Peluso, 2017a, 2017b; Suharko, 2016; Sujito & Ghofur, 2023; Widyanta, 2022). Studies on resistance have also characterized regional experience in Africa such as Nigeria and Ghana (see for instance Bybee & Johannes, 2014; Holterman, 2014; Katsouris & Sayne, 2013; Naanen, 2019; Obiri, 2016; Schritt & Schareika, 2018; Watts, 2004a, 2009), areas laden with violent conflict. This is equally evident in oil extraction regions that combine potently with forces of armed struggle in Latin America. For instance, the Hugo Chaves government in Venezuela failed to recalibrate its oil dependency, which occurred in concert with the increase of authoritarianism, leading to increasing domestic political conflict, and broader unrest from attempts at “regime change” (Strønen, 2020). Social movements in Bolivia presented a different trajectory, as Evo Morales’ nationalized the oil industry, which created its own uneven outcomes among the populace (Dangl, 2007).

In such comparative analysis, the result of our study in *Dusun Tue*, Indonesia, offers a distinctive experience whereby the resistance of artisanal oil mining communities is made possible by the competing governance modalities within the state structure. It reveals how the central and local government, and village administrations share different interests in terms of legitimacy and legality claims. This fact is common in the Indonesian experience in recent years, as can be found in other resource regions, such as Papua, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and North Maluku. Regarding the method, our study is relatively distinguishable from the scholarship above for its ethnographic enquiry. We highlight community resistance dilemmas on the ground and interrogate how the state governs natural resources within that context.

This article is organized into four sections. The introduction briefly described the research problems, conceptual framing, and comparative review of studies. The second section provides methodological engagement detailing the locus, informants, and stages of ethnographic study. The third section presents research results and discussion comprising the three main findings. The main findings point to the role of the *Toke* as the key interface and intermediaries between communities and the state, reshaping state institutions, especially the Police and its acts of duplicity. In this light, *Sen Minyak* serves as a central feature of governing artisanal mining. We conclude with an exposition of the overall analysis.

2. METHOD

Artisanal mining in *Dusun Tue*, Sanga Desa sub-district, affords a lived story of over a decade of evolving labor practices, from 2012-2023. *Dusun Tue* village comprises of 1,300 inhabitants, a strictly administrative unit of the government with its specific authority integral to the governmental state. On the other hand, *Dusun Tue* resembles a living space of community-based labor with specific traits of social cohesion, economic solidarity, and cultural sensibility that have been crafted centuries since at least Dutch colonial rule. The village has two faces making it visible to representation by the state, particularly the Police, and livelihoods for a community of oil producers, which all take part in drilling, refinery, and distribution.

Dusun Tue, was selected as the locus of this study because of the social fact that artisanal mining remains practiced amidst a series of official bans by the central government. In late 2021, a few months before the study began, a conflagration occurred three times at the drilling sites. These incidents received nationwide attention, and the government took punitive measures to end activities, including the frequent deployment of police intervention and military personnel in the field. The continued

resilience of the mining practices thus provided a unique case study from a qualitative ethnographic perspective, which we undertook over a period of three months (November 2021-February 2022). The researchers lived in the village, examining drilling and refinery operations, interviewing key informants, and convening a series of focused discussions with members of the labor community. All of these research activities aimed to capture the local knowledge, economic interests, and cultural sensibility that characterize community, identity, and agency. We also conducted interviews and focus groups with police and military personnel assigned to the village, district, and provincial levels of South Sumatra.

Interviews were conducted with 17 artisanal workers and 4 *Toke* on their roles and positions in the work chain of artisanal mining. It is meant to capture the daily practice and governmentality of the labor community. Simultaneously, we aimed to capture processes of state governmentality, and thus conducted interviews with representatives of three branches of the state. At the village level, we interviewed the village head and six village officials. At the district-province level, we interviewed 15 persons, comprising of the governor, officials of the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry (*Kementerian Energi dan Sumber Daya Mineral* or ESDM), Environment and Forestry agency, BUMD Petro Muba (*Badan Usaha Milik Daerah / regional-owned enterprises*), BPBD (*Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah / Regional Disaster Management Agency*), Satpol PP (*Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja / district branch for securing district regulations*), district-subdistrict police (*Bhabinkamtibmas / Bhayangkara Pembina Keamanan dan Ketertiban Masyarakat, Polsel / Polisi Sektor, and Polres / Polisi Resor*), and military personnel (*Babinsa / Bintara Pembina Desa, Koramil / Komando Rayon Militer, and Kodim / Komando Distrik Militer*). At the central government level, we interviewed and conducted focused groups with 5 officials of SKK Migas and Pertamina (*Pertambangan Minyak Nasional*).

After data collection and field notes, the researchers transcribed and encoded the result of interview. The researcher then analyzed and visualized the present encounters of three extractive regimes in the area of 7,754 of *Sumur Baru* (Elko, 2023). The overall activity is to capture and describe how the artisanal mining community of *Dusun Tue* has been constituted and developed as a site of community governmentality through daily encounters or negotiations with two distinguishable conducts of state institutions (district-provincial governmentality and central governmentality). This research method, including its in-depth ethnographic approach, affords reliability of analysis.

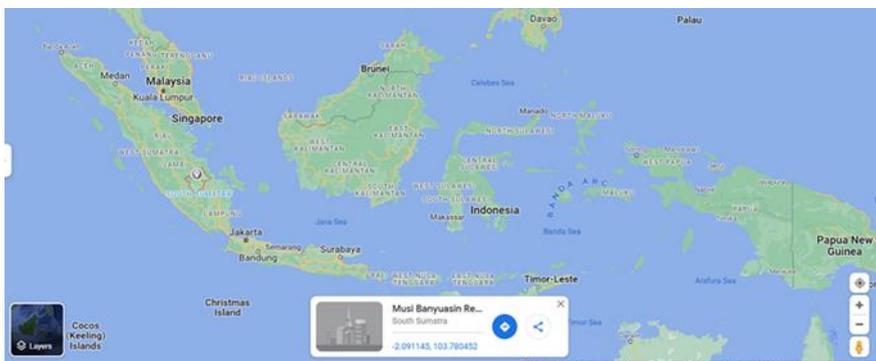


Figure 1. The Location of Musi Banyuasin District in the Territory of Indonesia

It is noteworthy that artisanal drilling has for a decade been a common practice in most of the sub-districts in Musi Banyuasin District. Such practices are evident in the

following sub-districts: Sanga Desa, Babat Toman, Plakat Tinggi, Keluang, Lawang Wetan, Bayung Lencir, Tungkal Jaya, Sungai Lilin, Sungai Keruh, Lalan, Lais, Batanghari Leko, and Babat Supat. *Dusun Tue* locates in Sanga Desa sub-district, comprised of 19 villages. Throughout this study, *Dusun Tue* is regarded as describing the entire artisanal oil mining area, although it is not denied that each village has certain characteristics (see Figure 1-3).

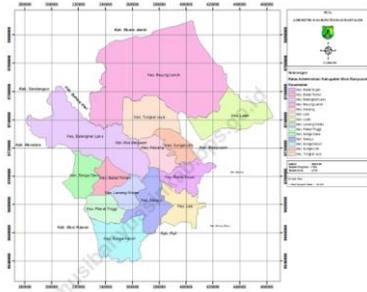


Figure 2. Sub-district in Musi Banyuasin Regency
[Sources: Badan Pusat Statistik (2022)]



Figure 3. Villages in Sanga Desa Sub-district, Musi Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia
[Source: Badan Pusat Statistik (2021)]

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before we turn to the three main findings presented in next three sub-sections, the sociological and historical contexts provide important prerequisite for understanding the labor conditions of the artisanal mining community. *Sumur Baru* serves as the main livelihood site in *Dusun Tue* (see Figure 4-6). It has been the source of community innovation, subsistence, and resilience after shifting away from rubber plantations and groves over the past few decades. In 2012, following on from the global fall of rubber prices, villagers initiated oil extraction on their land establishing chains of production involving a large number of villagers. A few outsiders were also involved for their specific skilled work. A transition of livelihoods is not an easy process. It has taken years to adapt, collaborate, and expand local human resources and capabilities, establishing upstream-downstream technologies, distribution networks, weathering volatility of market prices, and ensuring flexibility in grappling with the irregularity and inconsistency of state legal frameworks. The latter has been the most pressing challenge for villagers.

Sumur Baru is situated within the contesting narratives of welfare exerted by three extractive regimes: Village/community, District-Province, and Central Government. For the central government, oil has been a strategic national resource for economic sovereignty, people's welfare, and national security. Following bills on oil and gas, specifically 22/2001 and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resource's ensuing decree, the Job Creation Act of 11/2020 increased the urgency of state governing, controlling, and capturing oil and gas revenues, while increasingly limiting opportunities for local government and local populations to access energy resources in their regions. This reflects the heightened discontent among leaders towards resource and energy-rich regions, such as the case of the Regent of Meranti, Riau province, who expressed desire to secede from Indonesia (Alfarizi, 2022). This trend applies similarly in Musi Banyuasin and other districts in South Sumatra, where the issue is not only limited to revenue sharing but includes the legitimacy of oil drilling at *Sumur Tua*.

The tension between central and local governments demonstrates two conflicting governmental narratives concerning their respective policy frameworks, including the

Job Creation Act and the Regional Autonomy Act, which are not implemented in tandem with one another. As such, the village administration expresses their narrative of welfare and development and their legitimate authority to govern local resources in order to share benefits from artisanal mining for village prosperity. Artisanal mining in *Dusun Tue* reflects grassroots initiatives and a negotiation with conflicting governmentalities above. The issuance of The Village Act 23/2014 has equipped village laborers with firmer legal-political standing. Most of the village officials, particularly the elected heads, are key players in this informal industry.



Figure 4. Sumur Tua in Dusun Tue [Source: Sununianti, 2022]



Figure 5. Sumur Baru or artisanal oil mining [Source: Sununianti, 2022]



Figure 6. Artisanal Oil Refinery [Source: Sununianti, 2021]

The collective fund is aimed at financing social and cultural events in the village. In line with the ambivalent role of the regent and the governor in the SKK Migas policy framework, village officials supported by villagers manage a small portion of the profits from the artisanal oil mining extraction process based on the revenue of each oil well for the development of village infrastructure and shared social welfare. Although not fully legalized, steps taken by the village administration stem from a rather long collective narrative of community subsistence and resilience, a lived legacy of their predecessors transitioning from rubber groves to artisanal mining. Here the village becomes an actual site of triple discursive rupture in governmental ruling over territory, population, and resource. In other words, the village is a proxy for central and regional governments through the extension of the village head, but it is also a proxy for the mining community given that the village head is also a miner and community leader (See Table 1).

Dusun Tue is a historical and sociological community that has been reshaped within the different practices of resource extraction back to the colonial Dutch regime of extraction in the region where oil was first found and drilled in the early 1900s (Zed,

2003). Their history is laden with stories of coping, adapting, and negotiating with changing state policies on rubber and oil, corporate state behavior, and state-backed big extractive corporations (Anang, 2018; Natamarga, 2021). Changes in livelihoods in the form of material production translates into a strong sense of collective autonomy.

Table 1. Three Governmentalities at Work in Dusun Tue

Artisanal Community Governmentality (<i>Dusun Tue</i>)	Local Autonomy Governmentality (Musi Banyuasin District-South Sumatra Province)	Central Governmentality (Central Government)
Actors–Agencies–Institutions		
<p>Labor Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Head, Village officials also taking part as <i>Toke</i> and workers, <i>Toke</i>, workers in artisanal work chain. • Collective enterprise, work-chains from drilling, refinery to distribution, collective-capacity building, self-capacity building/know-how learning, risk management in both personal and collective fashion. 	<p>Authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor, Regent, Offices of ESDM, Environment and Forestry, BUMD, BPBD, Satpol PP. • Along with the central government, is assigned to take part in banning <i>Sumur Baru</i> but faced with the pressing demands from local authority for the sake of development, local justice, and local autonomy. 	<p>Authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SKK Migas and Pertamina. • The task to secure and accelerate oil production of <i>Sumur Tua</i> and to ban <i>Sumur Baru</i>. • <i>Sumur Baru</i> is perceived as a spoiler or reducing national oil reserves in the province, with destructive impacts on environment and eroding social norms and social practices.
<p>State/security Apparatuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhabinkamtibnas (Sub-District Police of Sanga Desa) was tasked to secure <i>Sumur Tua</i> operation and to oversee/to ban <i>Sumur Baru</i> activity. • Babinsa (Koramil, Sub-District Military Command) was tasked to secure <i>Sumur Tua</i> and frequently assist the Police in banning <i>Sumur Baru</i>. 	<p>State/Security Apparatuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polres and Polda were tasked to secure <i>Sumur Tua</i> and to ban <i>Sumur Baru</i> but were confronted with pressing challenges of social instability, potential rise of crimes resulting from the banning. • Kodim and Kodam, <i>idem</i>. 	<p>State/security Apparatuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polri was tasked to secure <i>Sumur Tua</i> and to ban <i>Sumur Baru</i> by UU Migas and Ministerial Decree of ESDM. • TNI, just like Polri, ensures that Kodam, Kodim, and Koramil implement the laws.
Rationality–Strategy–Tactics		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artisanal oil miners and villagers question the development policies of prosperity for their people. • Miners challenge the regime of scientific truth by demonstrating ancestral, religious, and land views through religious and cultural syncretism by combining material, symbolic, and sacred ideas. • Miners question the sovereignty of the government by problematizing central 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In economic and security rationality, local government torn between the need to increase Revenue Sharing Funds (<i>Dana Bagi Hasil</i>) from the central government and the increase in crime rates resulting from the banning and resultant unemployment. They publicly support central government regulations, while simultaneously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government rationality focuses on development progress through scientific expert authority to promote corporate mining for national development, while artisanal mining is conceived as reducing corporate mining production. • <i>SKK Migas</i> controls and regulates the behavior of artisanal mining communities by issuing and enacting the law,

Artisanal Community Governmentality (<i>Dusun Tue</i>)	Local Autonomy Governmentality (Musi Banyuasin District-South Sumatra Province)	Central Governmentality (Central Government)
<p>government legal claims. Not only do the miners show that the law can be negotiated, but they also insist that artisanal mining can be legalized. They build relationships across the boundaries of the state apparatus, even entering the formal political space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mining community questions sovereign power and neoliberalism traits in central government policy by making public the narrative of “resource curse” with examples of poor transportation, lack of telecommunication, and infrastructure, as well as poverty and high crime rate. • The mining community resists disciplinary governance (legal claim, national interest) by crafting folklore, village communal rights, property rights as citizen, and pride of being a resilient community historically and sociologically. 	<p>allowing artisanal mining to operate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In political rationality, the local government is divided between implementing central government regulations as a lower branch of state administration and exercising its political autonomy in order to secure political legitimacy before electoral constituencies. • Local government supports legalization of artisanal oil mining to obtain mining royalties and strengthen regional-owned enterprises. This support is made public through a series of large-scale protests conducted by artisanal mining communities. 	<p>frequently monitoring, and banning the practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State sovereignty becomes an ideological pillar of the state controlling territory and resources, necessitating the deployment of military and police. • Military and the police are often deployed with coercive measures as a means to execute the program and to be promoted to higher rank. • The police take an ambivalent stance, enacting and violating the law simultaneously. • Enacting the regulation and the use of coercive measures aimed at constructing artisanal mining as immoral, illegal, and criminal. Meanwhile, the regional-owned enterprises are perceived as official, legal, and beneficial to national citizenry.

Moreover, the villagers do not resist but assert their rights and claims over oil extraction on their lands. Artisanal mining displays the community’s mimetic agency in the production of welfare, collective identity, and the problematic of security such as crimes and poverty when attaching to the question of unemployment and uprootedness. It is community governmentality that offers greater room for the community, particularly the role of the *Toke* as its representative, who is in constant negotiation with state apparatuses such as police (*Bhabinkamtibmas*, *Polsek*, and *Polres*), military personnel (*Babinsa/Bintara Pembina Desa*, *Koramil/Komando Rayon Militer*, *Kodim/Komando Distrik Militer*), Public Order Agency (Satpol PP), Regional-Owned Enterprise (BUMD) and Regional Legislative Assembly (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* or DPRD).

3.1 *Toke* interface between community and State

Toke comes to the fore as a seemingly powerful form of agency, resembling a patron or strong man in the chain of production. They include individuals who own the land of the drilling site (*Tuan Tanah*), the owner of the drilling machine (*Pemilik Bor*), or those who invest in the larger fund in *Kongsi* (a sort of joint venture arrangement, where other villagers also invest modest amounts of money). There are few *Tokes* in the village, one

Toke could serve as *Tuan Tanah* and *Tuan Bor* at once, and they relate closely to each other not only in matters relating to artisanal mining but also in social-cultural affairs. However, this does not mean that there is no economic competition among *Tokes*.

In coping with the state apparatus, they act in tandem, protect each other, and seek ways to support one another from ‘legal-administrative’ issues. Through informal conversations and in-depth interviews, we learned that there has been a stronger sense of unity in coping mechanisms on how to handle pressure from the state apparatus or to mitigate risks. The risks mostly relate to incidents at the site such as site burning spreading to other sites and causing ecological problems. Such risks incite the state apparatus to take deploy harsher measures like temporary banning, detentions, and criminal proceedings.

Toke play a decisive role in the overall chain of oil production, comprising hundreds of oil wells, processing sites nearby, and trans-local distribution. *Tokes* serve as a cohesive form of agency in the operation of patronage networks. Through their everyday involvement in collective action in miner communities from upstream to downstream activities, these patronage bonds serve *Toke’s* own interests as well as meet the collective interests when dealing with other parties (government and media). Although located at the center of this overall enterprise, the fortune and prosperity of the community are entirely dependent on the effective networks of all those involved. The network comprises of *Tim Kongsi* (joint venture), *Pengawas Sumur* (drilling supervisor), *Penjaga Keamanan* (site security guard), *Tim Pengebor* (well digger team), *Tim Pembuat Bak Seller* (tub makers), *Pemolot* (oil driller), *Pemerax Minyak* (oil pickers), *Penampung Minyak* (oil collectors), *Pemasak Minyak* (oil refiners), and *Penarik Minyak* (oil transporters). Villagers with various economic and gender backgrounds take active part in this division of collective labor, even involving workers from neighboring areas (see Figure 7).

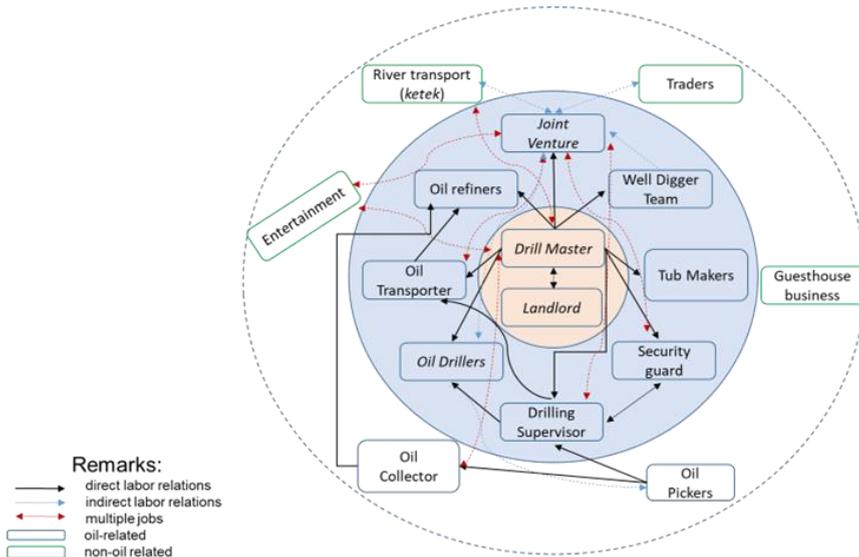


Figure 7. Labor Chain of Artisanal Oil Mining in Dusun Tue

This ethnographic study finds that the agency of *Toke* is highly significant as bearer and figure of collective agency. They are at the forefront of negotiation with multiple agencies of the state at the village and district level and in most cases, take personal

risks relating to the banning or seizure of their means of production. Moreover, this agency embodies and performs popular politics of the *Dusun Tue* community. They are the voices and the faces of the community whose main narrative is ‘oil is in our land’, and making the best use of it for community welfare. Until now, the labor community led by *Toke* has not taken violent protests against the top-down policy of *SKK Migas*.

This study reveals that in negotiating with the police and military, *Toke* are driven by a ‘win-win’ strategy to the artisanal mining as ‘a governmental problem’. Even in the most extreme case of site burning, *Toke* must take a proactive stance to negotiate with the police and to be responsible as much as possible for preventing the mining assets from legal seizure and being put into prison. The following testimony from one of the *Tokes* illustrates this:

“When the drilling site conflagrates, the police will look for Tuan Tanah and Tuan bor. We should not be afraid, and directly go to the police office. It is better to acknowledge your mistake than to be chased as an outlaw. For site burning, we could pay the police from 150 to more than 120 million rupiahs. Both Tuan Tanah and Tuan bor share this financial burden. There is no written agreement but mutual understanding ensures that the burning does not put them and their artisanal activity in a worse condition ” (*Toke Bagindo*, December 2021).

Such a strategy has historical and sociological roots in the life of the *Dusun Tue* community. There were almost no state development programs there and the community has learned to rely on collective reliance. The villagers rarely look at the state as last resort in times of economic crisis or difficult periods of occupational change. The artisanal community acquired new skills by themselves from neighboring villages having taken artisanal mining as their livelihood in the early 2000s. This is also made possible by *Toke* in terms of territorial-financial mobility, networks of trans-village workers, and their risk-taking in previous rubber farming ventures.

It is also noticeable that in *Dusun Tue*, cultural activity embedded in artisanal mining provides the material fabric of the community. Collaborative work in the oil industry directly affects their economic solidarity beyond the genealogical line. Solidarity in the workplace continues to shape their mutual assistance. It could easily be observed in matters such as financial contribution for marriage arrangement-ceremony, enrolling children in senior high school (*Sekolah Menengah Atas/SMA*) and university in sub-districts and districts, and financial assistance when neighbors have health issues in the hospital. These social practices are conditioned by a sort of commonality, as also evident in work ethic of *Tim Kongs*.

In preparing for opening the new well, *Toke* and *Kongs* participants carry out specific rituals such as ‘*meniduri tanah*’ (sacred union with land) and make offerings and blessings to ancestors embodied in a sort of special tree, *Rengas Gemuruh*. All villagers are Muslims and such practices have been a cultural feature centered on the material fabric of the community (rubber farming and oil production), which is a modern and industrial livelihood. This intertexture of ‘religion’, ‘tradition’, and ‘modernity’, explicates the core ethics of their collaborative work; that is, the problem found in the chain of oil production, such as small-scale oil deposits or well burning, indicates that the participants must have committed unethical acts.

The village administration of *Dusun Tue* does not fully reflect a village institution structure, and formal institutional mechanisms are the top-down manifestation of the governmental state. The current village head is also a *Toke*, elected directly by the villagers as he competed in the ballot box with a candidate supported by another *Toke*. But this race to village leadership proves to have less destructive effects on community

cohesion for a noticeable reason, among others, the village administration has to be the administrative state of the ‘illegal’ community. The village leadership is imbued with tacit responsibility upon which community welfare, security, and territory must be defended at all costs. As the Village head, *Toke* must serve in at least two roles, as an interface between a governmental state in which his authority-legality is officially enacted and for the governmental community that bestows on him popular representation and legitimacy.

3.2 State apparatuses, for the sake of dual appearance

The governmental state in *Dusun Tue* is evident by the presence of police and military personnel dealing with *Toke* or inspecting drilling sites. Coping with the police and military personnel daily is a *Toke’s* main concern. The apparatuses are perceived as the bodily presence of the central government. This is also confirmed in our interviews with police and military personnel that their presence in the village relates solely to artisanal mining as an ‘illegal’ industry in the village. There is a surveillance post, located at the village border along the main road to neighboring villages and sub-district towns, where at least four police officers carry out their daily tasks of checking the pickup trucks moving out of the village. Meanwhile military personnel, especially *Babinsa*, visit the village regularly, and often arrive without notice, meeting with segments of workers randomly in different sites of drilling, refinery, and selling. Both police and military are present in separate occasions, rarely seen conducting joint inspections, except when dealing with incidents like site burning.

Their presence has been crucial as the interface between the state and the oil-producing community. Besides being visited regularly by *Toke* in the office, the police in uniform clothes have been visible on the side, talking with strict tones and definite talking points that they are there on behalf of the state. Villagers fully grasp what is the ‘state’ through the police conduct—visiting, inspecting, and checking. In their view, the police represent the true face of the governmental state while the military is sort of a shadow state that cannot be fully neglected. The police is authorized to perform on-site searches, publicly banning and detaining the *Toke* and other workers if necessary. Meanwhile, the military personnel’s conduct amplifies the visibility of the governmental state from a different angle which is a ‘shadow state’, partly because the main task of the military is to address *Sumur Tua*.

Conduct by police and military provide us with a broader representation of how oil has been the central government’s affairs entirely. Military conduct does reflect the legacy of militarization-securitization of oil extraction in the name of the ‘national interest’ (Brata, 2018; Jati, 2021; Sununianti, 2017, 2018). Throughout the Indonesian history of energy-based economy, oil remains to be the core component of resource nationalism. Oil extraction in South Sumatra and elsewhere contribute significantly to this sovereignty-incited economy (see notably Robison, 2009). It has been the root cause of protracted armed conflict in Aceh and Papua, and the driving force of developmentalism. In Jokowi’s second-term administration, the narrative of oil and gas as a source of national defense and prosperity has been calibrated with geopolitical pressure relating to energy disruption and proxy wars to control energy-rich countries. In South Sumatra, securitization of oil production unfolds more intensely, and artisanal mining in *Dusun Tue* and neighboring villages rapidly turns into governmental gazes, sparking greater public debate, and consequently making the military on the ground more attentive to this non-state economy.

In contrast to military conduct based on the narrative of oil as property of the state, police personnel from Sanga Desa *Polsek* and Musi Banyuasin *Polres* have regularly interacted with *Toke* and oil workers with less strict usage of such narratives. For the

police, artisanal mining is precisely located between two opposing demands, between national interest and local welfare. To the local police, artisanal mining is a community-based economy for survival and resilience, while *SKK Migas* addresses this grassroots industry as violating the legal ruling, referring to the issuance of Ministerial Decree on ‘*Tim Koordinasi Penanganan Aktivitas Pengeboran Liar Sumur Minyak Bumi oleh Masyarakat di Provinsi Jambi dan Provinsi Sumatera Selatan*’ (2021).

Through in-depth interviews, the police argued that artisanal mining should be better legalized for the economic betterment of the villagers. And yet, they keep inspecting the sites to indicate that as state apparatus they are always present to remind *Toke* and villagers about the ‘illegality’ of this collective livelihood. A police line is often put in at certain sites, complete with large posters showing photos of both heads of *Polres* and *Polsek* with statements banning the oil drilling such as ‘*dilarang melakukan aktivitas illegal drilling dan penyulingan minyak illegal—melanggar UU No. 22/2001* (illegal drilling and illegal oil refinery are prohibited activities as they break Law No. 22/2001)’ (see Figure 8.). The state apparatuses at the district level have formally banned and seized drilling sites in certain areas since 2017 (See for instance Erfizal, 2021; Ika, 2017; Putra, 2019; Ramadhoni, 2020). Under the banner of -Forkopimda, it involves the district attorney and court in the matter of legalizing the seizure notably in the case of site burning.



Figure 8. Banner prohibiting illegal oil mining and refining [Source: Sununianti, 2021]

Furthermore, Bill 22/2001 on Job Creation does not elucidate the status of artisanal mining by the local community. The state ruling is mainly intended to national development, pro-growth, and pro-poor programs by referring directly to Article 33 of the National Constitution of 1945 intended for the best benefits of all citizens, common people, or ‘*rakyat*’. However, to the police, and likewise to the local government’s stance, the question of *Sumur Baru* is not merely enmeshed in the development matrix within a legal-administrative approach but also goes beyond to include political-ethical parameters touching on the pressing issue of people’s welfare and how the state apparatuses can best respond to it on the ground. The following statement was extracted from an interview with the Police Commissioner of South Sumatra Provincial Police (*Polda*).

“The banning of Sumur Baru belongs to the authority of the District Government because it relates to the practice without a license. To us, as the police, we are tasked with policing. This is the District Government’s jurisdiction and authority to ensure the villagers have jobs and income after

the banning. We support the villagers, in cases where they have no employment or other abilities to afford their basic needs. We have no full authority of taking action because they drill the oil in their backyards, but we can sanction them based on the absence of a drilling license. The oil reserve is huge; 300 drilling sites are being closed off compared to the existing thousands. After being closed off, we put in a ‘police line’. We could not seize the site as it is located precisely within their backyard. We just seized drilling machines and related assets. They are not brave enough to throw the police line away. We have one Babinkamtibmas for one village, serving to monitor the village” (Interview, Public Relation of South Sumatra Provincial Police, Police Commissioner, February 6th, 2022).

While sharing similar sensibilities with the police, district officials show the most proximate encounter with the question of *Sumur Baru*. District leadership including DPRD (Regional Legislative Assembly) takes the issue as not entirely a developmental problem external to the state policy framework but partially integral to the governmental structure. In their view, oil workers are local populations whose livelihoods and social cohesion fall under both their institutional and personal responsibilities. Framed within the Bill on Local Autonomy 23/2014, villagers or oil workers, are the direct subject of local development and the agency of grassroots citizenship. To district officials, artisanal mining has been considered integral to the development indexes of efficiency and accountability in the achievement of their overall objectives of local autonomy. They support the formalization-legalization of artisanal mining as illustrated in the following interview.

“This initiative has legal standing, but the problem lies on the process of getting approval from Cooperation Contractors (Indonesian: Kontraktor Kontrak Kerjasama or K3S constituting the central board for oil-gas governance) which has authority over the region. That is the problem; this board will not issue the license. To be more effective, the artisanal mining community should directly propose this initiative to the Director General of ESDM (Dirjen) and they will then instruct the K3S for formalization-legalization of the activity. If this route is taken, the problem will be solved soon! (DHL Official, Musi Banyuasin District, January 25th, 2022).

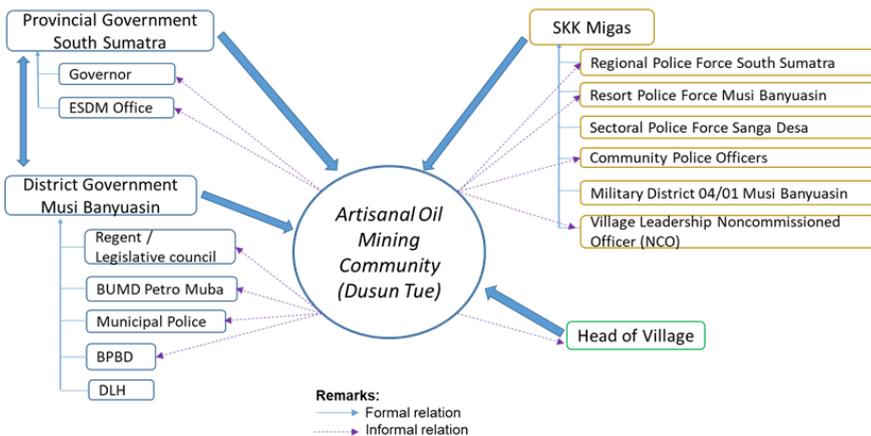


Figure 9. Power Relation in Artisanal Oil Mining of *Dusun Tue*.

However, artisanal mining remains persistent despite governmental banning and seizure. The fact on the ground shows there are three extractive regimes at work: central governmentality, local governmentality, and artisanal community governmentality. As discussion in the next session will show, the encounter between these extractive regimes has created a sort of governable space where both the oil-producing community and state apparatuses on the ground exchange governmental agency creating a degree of visibility and resilience. Instead of analyzing the issue as governance problem of a mere technical-institutional background, we need to look more carefully at how both parties define what is a ‘problem’ centered on governing artisanal mining practice on the ground. A village is no longer a mere place but actually a contingent space within which the government and community agency operates in displaced manners (See Figure 9).

3.3 Governing the (dis)order through Sen Minyak

In light of recent studies on the ‘shadow state’ or ‘shadow economy’ (see notably Peluso, 2017a; Widiarti, 2013) or illegibility and illegality (Anderson & Jongruck, 2017) artisanal practices in *Dusun Tue* illustrates something radically different when considering oil production as a source of national welfare and survivability of the grassroot community. In *Dusun Tue*, there is no logic of exclusion and violent resistance at all. This is primarily due to the ongoing contestation of welfare narratives influencing all parties into paradoxical but mutually influential encounters. And yet, the artisanal practice turns out to have been a contingent space to identify popular sovereignty on the part of local villagers and national sovereignty on the part of the central government.

The recentralization of oil-gas governance by *SKK Migas* takes place in the context of deep-seated effects of local autonomy practices and localized electoral politics. *Dusun Tue* villagers are increasingly aware of the strategic position of the village head, the Musi Banyuasin District Head and the Governor of South Sumatra in voicing their demand for formalization-legalization. On the other hand, the villagers are the political electorates crucial for their sustainable legitimacy as district-province leaders. Narratives of local welfare, local resource, and local people as the developmental subject have characterized their collective understanding of the recognizable rights over land, resources underneath them, and their productive force (skill, technology, and finance).

Both police and district officials repeatedly emphasized the economic benefits of artisanal mining concerning the question of community welfare, social cohesion, and the rapid decrease in criminality in the region, including the absence of tapping cases against oil firms. They look at artisanal mining as governmental problems within their specific governmental tasking coordinates distinguishable from SKK Migas. The latter focuses less on local development than on national development projection. This is to say, the economic productivity of artisanal mining is perceived as integral to the achievement of local development objectives, while simultaneously sustaining the political credibility of local leadership. By emphasizing that the presence of *Sumur Baru* prevents the oil firms from tapping and other disruptive acts, it implies that the police and district officials are keen to see the changing measures taken by the ministry of Energy and Mineral Resource (ESDM) in response to the workers’ demand for formalization and coherent regulatory framework since 2019 (Sumsel, 2019; Sumselsiana, 2019).

This study finds that the artisanal mining practice resembles a set of ambivalent encounters between villagers, *Tokes*, village officials, police officers, military personnel, and district officials. It offers a glimpse of the social order of the disorder,

within a bounded space of interactions among governmental agencies whose presence is not to negate each other but to constantly reaffirm their ambivalent roles, then affecting the resilience of the artisanal practice. Rather different from the problematic of governmentality practice as argued for instance by Li (2007; Li & Semedi, 2021) or Peluso (2017b, 2017a), artisanal practices in *Dusun Tue* discloses that both community and state officials of disparate jurisdiction are interlocking and acting out to displace agency. Once again, their underlying interest is to render the state's performance visible and the community's livelihood resilient.

Artisanal mining in *Dusun Tue* and its narrative of local welfare predominates pertinent social cultural attachments on the part of governmental agency and accountability. For instance, the district and sub-district police officers, including the military personnel, perform displaced agency. On one side, they execute tasks of publicly ensuring the illegality of the artisanal mining, while letting the sites operate regularly on the other side. In doing so, the police and the military retain a social respect from the community at large despite their regular inspections under the *SKK Migas's* initiative. This act is also evident among the district officials. The District Head and the members of the DPRD rarely condemn artisanal mining. There is no local regulation/PERDA enacted to get the Bill and the Ministerial Decree more grounded and workable, except for PERDA 26/ 2007 on managing *Sumur Tua*.

Such displaced agency signals genuine initiative locally within the district's governmental accountability. The displacement in the agency could be seen in district branches such as notably DLH, BPBD, and BUMD Petro Muba. The officials performed incoherent stances regarding implementation of the SKK Migas policy. As a district-owned firm, Petro Muba does not treat *Sumur Baru* as a threat to its enterprise production and distribution. In stark contrast with SKK Migas, the firm endorses the possible formalization-legalization of the mining as proposed by the District Head and the Governor. The firm attempts to persuade the villagers through *Toke* to sell crude oil and provide finished products to the firm but this has so far not materialized due to the standardized pricing not being beneficial for the sellers. Meanwhile, ironically, the firm presumably suffers operational costs when exploiting *Sumur Tua*.

The question is thus how the displacement of the agency operates and sustains the artisanal practice. This ethnographic inquiry unveils the centrality of financial affairs, locally called "*Sen Minyak*". It holds the villagers and state apparatuses together. From a sociological perspective, *Sen Minyak* is the amount of money given to the police and the military personnel. This practice is seemingly similar to bribery in the 'shadow state'. By locating *Sen Minyak* in the context of displacement agency, the money is crucial as cohesive acts in constant negotiation between *Tokes* and the police-military personnel. Money offered to the state apparatuses on the sites or in the police office signifies mutual risk management. *Sen Minyak*, as a signature of governing together something out of order, is covered routinely in the form of cash to lower-level police and military personnel. The latter distributes the money to the higher level official in *Polsek-Polres* and *Koramil-Kodam*. The amount of money given varies, ranging from IDR 500,000 to hundreds of millions of rupiah depending on profit sharing generated and specific problems or challenges found at the drilling sites.

It is through the lens of *Sen Minyak* that the police and military personnel perform governmental power of the state in their displaced act on sites. They keep the artisanal practices as 'illegal', while simultaneously allied on a daily basis with *Toke* and oil workers. Equally, *Toke* has to deal with the apparatuses, in most cases personally instead of holding joint meetings with another *Toke*. This is a common practice, surreptitiously consented, as *Tokes* share stake and risk in separate sites of oil drilling

up to distribution. Again, it stands not as bribery precisely because the oil production remains to be in between debatable parameters of legality-illegality, and more suitably as net pricing of revenue-sharing between the productive agency of the government community and the complicit yet displaced agency of the state.

As told to us by *Tokes* in interviews, the amount of revenue sharing differs from time to time depending on their calculated and actual profits. It is a price of the risky game for police and military personnel, that of contesting the state against itself, to keep the collective livelihood alive and benefit all stakeholders. The *Tokes* serve as an interface between community and the state, identify themselves separately as fully representing village workers in ways that financial tribute is to guarantee their conduct on two fronts. This assists in sustaining their social-cultural legitimacy within the community governmentality on one side and their governing agency in alliance with the apparatuses on the other. In light of their unifying agency as patrons in the work chains, *Tokes* become legitimate subjects collaborating with formal state apparatuses.

The persistent practice of *Sen Minyak* thus translates into the continuing legitimacy of artisanal mining practices. It reveals another constitutive aspect of collaboratively governing mining practice. *Sen Minyak* is not meant to compensate for the police-military acts of securing the mining from the external threat. In rather stark contrast, it aims precisely at precluding the police from being the threat itself, such as closing off the sites permanently, blocking the roads where the oil trucks pass by, or at worse, detaining the *Tokes* or oil workers. This also applies to the police because the money serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it ensures their presence as state apparatuses in the sites, and secondly, legitimizes their siding with villagers in coping with frequent banning by SKK Migas through -Forkopimda. Here the *Sen Minyak* turns out to be a knitting act, making possible artisanal mining a governable practice and *Dusun Tue* as a governable space of labor in the community.

4. CONCLUSION

This ethnographic inquiry in *Dusun Tue* discloses the mutual encounters between the villagers as a labor community with bonds of patronage led by *Toke* and state apparatuses, notably among local police officers and district officials. This encounter unveils the ruptures in governmental state and community governmentality at work. Such rupture or displacement has made possible the artisanal mining resilient practice despite official banning from the central government through -Forkopimda. The police officers and the *Toke* are regarded as the displaced agency to the activity that makes it governable. In such a context, *Sen Minyak*, a financial tribute to the apparatuses, turns out to have been the discursive signifier within the special governmentality of artisanal mining.

Narratives of welfare and sovereignty, propagated by SKK Migas have continuously been contested by the oil-producing community, village administration, and local leadership of Musi Banyuasin district and provincial administration of South Sumatra. Rallying issues such as whose land, which regulation, and for whose prosperity, are central themes regarding artisanal mining as a governmental problem, permeating divisive discourse of welfare and sovereignty among three branches of the governmental state as the agencies have their respective governmental authorization. This has indicated a current governmental trend in authoritarian technocracy. Such conflicting articulations have contributed to the more recent voicing of popular demand among communities for artisanal mining to be fully legalized in the province. Without governmental rupture, it is rather unlikely for the popular dissent to gain publicly declared support from both district and provincial leadership. In short, the findings of

this ethnographic study enlighten governmental problems of artisanal mining as inherent to (neo)liberal state governmentality as well as its discursive modality for understanding collective politics in South Sumatra, Indonesia, and elsewhere.

Author Contributions: The contributions of each author are as follows: VVS designed, conducted data collection and systematized the findings. AS assisted in structuring the analysis and abstraction of findings. HN generated theoretical ideas.

Competing Interests: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funding sponsors had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, and in the decision to publish the results.

Acknowledgments: We would like to express our gratitude to -all the informants in this study. The authors are also grateful to the anonymous peer reviewers for their precious comments on this paper.

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