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Making Transparency in Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia: Local Transparency and the Materio-Spatial Configuration of Oil

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Abstract

Norm localization plays a crucial role in shaping the extent to which global norms are transformed into values and political imperatives at the national and subnational levels. Viewing norm localization as a political process influenced by materio-spatial elements, this article uses an empirical investigation to explore how the materiality of oil determines the localization of transparency in the extractive sector. Drawing from the case of two oil-producing villages in Bojonegoro Regency, East Java, Indonesia, and their experiences between 2000 and 2018, this paper investigates the role of the materio-spatial configuration of oil—the physical and political features of oil, as determined by its biophysics—in the localization of transparency. This paper shows that the localization of transparency in the extractive sector is a “work of assemblage”, wherein the materiality of oil enables associated actor–networks (with various agencies and objectives) to shape and embed transparency within the local context.



Given that oil is a global commodity, the localization of transparency is not a linear process, but rather an ever-changing mechanism, one that spans from the local through the subnational, national, and even transnational. The larger the oil reserve, the greater the efforts of efforts actor–networks to embed transparency within the local context. Using the new-materialism approach and post-structuralist perspective, this paper seeks an alternative explanation of norm localization, as a process through which transparency is implemented, in the extractive sector. This paper attempts to contribute to the discussion of norm localization, which has recently been dominated by debate between the constructivist and institutional approaches.

Keywords: oil materiality, norm localization, actor–network, assemblage



1 Introduction

In the last three decades, global governance has become a pervasive issue in global discourse. Brought by the transnational actors, it has emerged as a key concept closely associated with the goal of accountable, legitimate, and democratic government (Gupta, [2008](#); Bexell et al., [2010](#); Singh & Bourgoquin, [2013](#)). In new democracies and post-authoritarian countries, such as Indonesia, there has been increased pressure to boost accountable government and business operations in various sectors, thereby developing socially responsible behavior and obtaining reputational consideration (Bexell et al., [2010](#); Singh & Bourgoquin, [2013](#)). Global governance is thus widely perceived as a moral and political imperative, one associated with the diffusion of global norms—defined by Khagram et al. ([2002](#)) as “the shared expectations or standards of appropriate behavior accepted by states, international organizations, and/or non-state actors” (p. 14).

Variety in localization mechanisms has stimulated questions regarding how global norms are translated and adapted at the domestic level, as well as the factors that shape localization patterns and processes. These questions have prolonged the debate on the politics of localizing norms (Acharya, [2004](#), [2011](#); Bebbington et al., [2018](#); Hatcher, [2020](#); Winanti & Hanif, [2020](#)), including transparency—the norm of extensively promoting information disclosure across a range of issues and sectors (Mason & Gupta, [2014](#)).

This paper contributes to the discussion by examining the localization of transparency at the sub-national level. Acharya ([2004](#)) defines norm localization as the process through which global norms are transmitted and adapted within the context of local practices, beliefs, standards, networks, and institutional arrangements. This paper seeks an alternative explanation for norm localization by using the materiality of natural resources to understand the localization of transparency norms. Given that Indonesia is a resource-rich country, this is useful for understanding the extent to which transparency has become a standard of appropriate behavior accepted by states, international organizations, and/or non-state actors. In this regard, oil provides contributes the most to Indonesia’s natural resource revenue. In 2019, state revenue from the oil sector was 83.62 trillion rupiahs (around US\$5.78 billion), representing 4.26% of total state revenue (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, [2020](#), pp. 7–8).

To understand the phenomenon of norm localization, this paper raises an empirical question: how has the materiality of oil influenced the localization of the transparency norm in the extractive sector at the subnational level? This study’s main finding is that the materiality of oil enables actor–networks’ exercise of knowledge, organizational skills, and authority to assemble various actors and

achieve diverse objectives in local contexts. This associational formation generates the materio-spatial configuration of oil, which enables oil to (a) act as an essential material for developing a governable space that can serve as a testbed for transparency norms; (b) inspire various actors to use transparency when reorientating their movement and creating organizations; and (c) facilitate actors' use of transparency in leveraging their ideals and achieving their instrumental goals.

This paper uses the cases of two oil-producing villages in Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia (see Figure 1), each of which was selected to represent one approach to oil production: traditional and modern. Following Watts (2004), this paper perceives those villages are part of the “oil governable space” (p. 57), a space demonstrating government practices concerning the complexity of humanity and oil. The surrounding area—the largest onshore oil field in Indonesia—is called the Cepu Block, and geologically it is part of the Rembang zone in the Northeast Java Basin (see van Bemmelen, 1949, p. 29). These cases are taken to demonstrate that the materio-spatial configuration of oil—which covers the geological and geographical characteristics of oil, as well as the related production chains and political decisions—plays an essential role in selecting and facilitating the incipient norms within particular contexts.

Figure 1. Location of the fieldwork



Note. Created by the author. Map of Bojonegoro Regency enlarged from Muizzuddin (2021), CC BY-SA 4.0; Bojonegoro Regency districts details from Kantor Bupati Bojonegoro (n.d.); Map of Indonesia overall from NordNordWest (2013), CC BY-SA 3.0.



The first case is Wonocolo Village, Kedewan District, which is taken to represent “shallow oil”, an oil deposit that is located only about 400 meters below the surface. Oil has been extracted from the area through the so-called “old wells” since the colonial era, beginning in the 19th century. While the oil field is under the control of the national government—through the state-owned oil company Pertamina, the region’s village cooperatives (KUDs) are permitted to undertake extraction as the old wells have been deemed insufficiently productive for industrial extraction (Chaeruddin, [1994](#)).

The second case is Gayam Village, Gayam District, which represents “deep oil”, an oil deposit located approximately six kilometers underground, sealed by reef and bedrock of the hardest formation. Extraction of this oil has required significant investment and modern technology, and thus since 2005 operations have been undertaken by ExxonMobil Cepu Limited (EMCL) in conjunction with Pertamina and four local government enterprises (ExxonMobil, [2019](#)).

This article’s discussion of transparency is based on empirical data collected during three field research sessions, held between 2017 and 2019.¹ We conducted 20 interviews in Bojonegoro Regency, with respondents coming from the governmental and non-governmental sectors; these included the director of a local government enterprise, as well as members of civil society organization (CSOs)² and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The analysis focused on the localization of transparency, particularly the extent to which transparency is associated with oil’s materiality and production chains.

¹ Data used in this article were collected through three collaborative programmes involving the Universitas Gadjah Mada Faculty of Social and Political Science and its partners: (1) the 2017 “Assessment on the Initiation of Bojonegoro Oil Fund” with the Natural Resource Governance Institute; (2) the 2017 “Adaptive Resource-based Conflict Management Strategies in Decentered and Multilevel Governance Contexts” with the University of Melbourne; and (3) the 2018–2019 “Citizen Engagement and Natural Resource Governance Education” with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The author would like to express their gratitude to the programmes’ director, Dr. Nanang Indra Kurniawan, for permission to use this data. The author of this article is wholly responsible for the content of this article.

² Also referred to as community-based organizations (CBOs).

To develop its analysis, this paper is structured as follows. First, to identify problems in the current studies, it explores the literature on norm localization and transparency, as well as the new materialism approach and its contribution to the study of norms. Next, this paper describes the Cepu Block as an oil governable space generated through a process of territorialization. Third, it demonstrates the making of transparency in the local context, showing that actor-networks are influenced by the materio-spatial configuration of oil when implementing transparency initiatives. This paper concludes with some reflections on the findings, with a particular focus on the effects of the materio-spatial configuration of oil on the localization of norms.

2 Theoretical Framework

This paper departs from two studies that recommend exploring material features in the study of norm localization: one by Zimmermann (2016), which mentions that materiality is underrepresented in norm studies, and one by Lujala (2018, p. 370), that recommends considering the materiality of natural resources when implementing transparency. In its examination of these material features, this study follows Bunker (2003) in using the materio-spatial configuration of natural resources as a conceptual framework for understanding the economic, social, and political influence of natural resources within the logic of extractive economics.

Within the context of resource governance, transparency is expected to profoundly mitigate the “resource curse” (Caspary, 2012; Collier, 2010; Ross, 2003). In the early 1990s, many international organizations (such as Global Witness) promoted transparency as a fundamental prerequisite for creating a “production-friendly system” in resource-rich countries that were experiencing conflict, poverty, and violence as a result of natural resource production. Organizations such as Publish What You Pay and Transparency International have urged international financial institutions—including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Asian Development Bank—to set transparency as a prerequisite for assistance. In turn, these financial institutions have pressured borrowing countries to effectively manage revenues from the extractive sector, thereby promoting development and alleviating poverty (Global Witness, 2003). They have suggested several instruments for enhancing citizen engagement in monitoring revenue from the extractive industry. One commonly implemented strategy being the disclosure of information regarding decision chains, as realized through open project plans and contracts, revenue management, and post-mining rehabilitation (Barma et al., 2012; Mayorga Alba, 2009; Mehlum et al., 2006). To further institutionalize transparency, the World



Bank established the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2002 as a legal framework for reforming a once-secretive sector and promoting information disclosure. Their plan was to encourage citizens and promote multi-stakeholder engagement in development and revenue management (Mayorga Alba, [2009](#)). Within the context of Indonesia's political decentralization, Bria and Muhammadi ([2020](#)) report that EITI has been introduced through the political work of NGOs networks that promote transparency in the extractive industry as well as civil society actors, local communities, and ruling regimes. In conjunction, the EITI has enhanced the linkages between the extractive industry and the livelihood of the people (pp. 14–15).

Several studies have criticized the institutionalization of transparency. Gupta ([2008](#)) criticizes the “procedural” turn in implementing transparency as a solution to such diverse problems as environmental pollution and financial efficiency, holding that the assumed link between transparency and legitimate and democratic government is problematic and could lead to opposite notions such as improving and avoiding state-led mandatory regulations. In the same vein, Haufler ([2010](#)) points to barriers to the adoption of transparency within industrial sectors, especially the oil sector. Support for transparency has come mostly from major corporations; smaller companies and state-owned firms tend not to support such initiatives (p. 69). This work critically distinguishes between transparency as an idea and as an institution, holding that the “idea” of transparency has found global acceptance while the “institution” of transparency (such as through EITI) requires further political work to interlink diverse sectors (see Robinson, [2021](#)). In this sense, resource revenue management provides a strategic “tipping point” for state actors, NGOs, international organizations, and international financial institutions to be on the same page in the practice of transparency (Haufler, [2010](#)). Building on Gupta ([2008](#)), Haufler ([2010](#)) suggests “governance by disclosure” as a means of expanding the idea of transparency across diverse issues and ensuring its acceptance amongst a multiplicity of actors.

Despite significant efforts to harness and institutionalize transparency, the literature implies a limitation in efforts to capture its discursive practices. Analysis of transparency institutionalization is trapped by essentialism, including an assumption that the framework to institutionalize transparency is a neutral instrument that can be performed universally. However, by considering the contestation of newly democratized environments, Winanti and Hanif ([2020](#)) provide a substantial contribution by demonstrating that the localization of global norms is a process undertaken in contrasting local political contexts. They argue that patterns of norm localization have depended crucially on the capacity of local political leaders, who instrumentally harness global norms as a basis for consolidating their power base at the local level. However, as in the mainstream

literature, they employ an actor-based perspective that perceives the transparency norm as a static “thing”, one that follows what Zimmermann et al. (2017) refer to as a “linear” process: norms are brought by norm entrepreneurs, entering new contexts, where they are adopted by norm takers (such as political leaders and domestic CSOs) to achieve their instrumental objectives. This perspective is limited in its exploration of other actors, i.e., those not norm entrepreneurs or norm takers, which could serve to facilitate actors in diffusing and grafting the incipient norm. Zimmermann (2016) suggests exploring existing socio-material dimensions to delve deeper into local interpretations of global norms. Likewise, Lujala (2018, p. 370) strongly suggests that understanding the characteristics of resources will affect the institutionalization of transparency.

Considering material to be an essential feature, this study employs the perspective of new materialism to investigate materiality and enrich the understanding of global norms in the politics of natural resources. Castree (1995) and Bunker (2003) emphasize non-human elements such as natural resources, and their effect on the commodification of nature, including the capital, knowledge, technology, and human labor elements of the process. Bunker (2003) understands the materio-spatial as using “the logic of extractivism” to shape economic, political, and social spaces:

naturally occurring spatial and material features set the parameters within which socially constructed technologies, markets, and geopolitical forces determined the organization of labor, [...] the composition of capital, the infrastructure capital was invested in, and the organization and structure of the state. (p. 224)

One should investigate the essential elements of the complex decision chains attached to the logic of extraction (like Watts [2004] studied in Nigeria). Given oil’s status as a global commodity, the localization of transparency occurs on multiple scales, and thus reshapes the existing governable space that has been delineated by the state (see Müller, 2015).

Localizing transparency is the “work of assembling”, using assemblage to connect oil’s materiality with various agents (e.g., transnational actors, government institutions, oil companies, villagers) and objectives (e.g., organizational goals, livelihood, innovation, international acknowledgment, development). This assemblage is intertwined with and enabled by the materio-spatial characteristics of oil (see Baker & McGuirk, 2016).



In the case of the Cepu Block, Exxonmobil's announcement of the discovery of a huge oil reserve in 2001 inspired actor-networks³ to work together to craft a workable set of tools, thereby forming an associational network of actors with diverse knowledge, experiences, agencies, and objectives, to persuade Bojonegoro Regency to promote local transparency. The discovery of oil also provided momentum for a particular agenda, vocabulary, and set of ambitions regarding transparency to become widely used. The greater the size of the oil reserves, the greater the opportunity for transparency to become a normative value and institutional practice (see DeLanda, [2006](#), pp. 47–67).

3 The Materio-Spatial Configuration of Oil: Defining the Cepu Block

Driven by the state, the process of territorialization and defining the Cepu Block has been strongly associated with the materiality of oil. This physical and political shaping is the so-called materio-spatiality of oil (Bunker, [2003](#); Müller, [2015](#)). Also shaping the materio-spatiality of oil as a global commodity has been the regulations, policies, and political authorities, all of which have created a governable space that spans the local, national, and global. At the same time, the distinct biophysics of oil—i.e., “shallow oil” and “deep oil”—have further diversified governable spaces. Nevertheless, in both cases, oil's understanding as an essential asset of the state has situated it under government regulation.

The national government of Indonesia created the Cepu Block through decades of oil exploration and exploitation, a technical process that imposed specific physical and geological boundaries.⁴ At the same time, it also formed a political field, in which the decision to mobilize investment, experts, knowledge, and technology in the entire oil production chain presented power (Bunker, [2003](#); Castree, [1995](#)). In this regard, Indonesia has defined oil as a strategic asset as well as a national commodity. Article 33 § 3 of the Indonesian Constitution [[1945](#)] states that oil, as a state asset, must be utilized for the greatest prosperity of the people. Since Indonesia began its political reform in 1998, this tenet of the Constitution has been provided tangible legal form through Act No. 22 of [2001](#) on Oil and Natural Gas. This regulation, passed within the context of political decentralization, situates oil as the commodity that is not only under the authority of the national government but also requires the engagement of

³ See Latour ([2005](#)) and Law ([2009](#)).

⁴ This chapter uses the term field as a synonym for “geological province”, that is, the dominant structure within a specific territory. The Cepu Block is part of the Northeast Java basin, a tertiary basin that was created approximately 66 million years ago. Indonesian deposits from this era contain large oil pockets (Koesoemadinata, [2011](#); Koesoemadinata & Pulungono, [1974](#)).

producing regions' local governments. These regulations emphasize that oil extraction does not only involve a production chain, with various technical aspects, but also decision chains with political power.

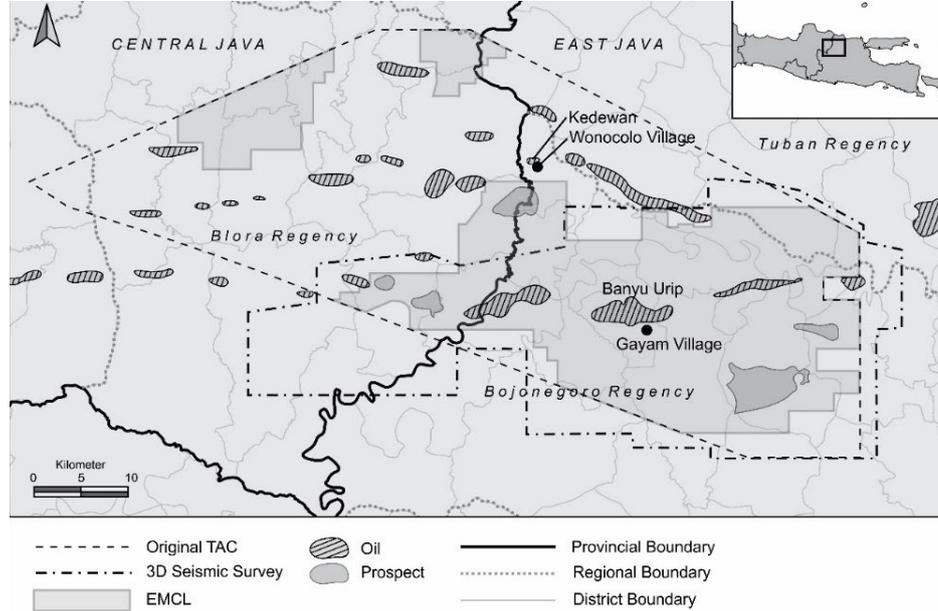
Initially, the block was defined through oil exploration, a process through which oil reserves are identified, their potential productivity is estimated, and their capacity for industrial exploitation is predicted. Using seismic surveys, this process creates vertical and horizontal maps of oil-containing areas. The national government, which has a legal mandate over the industry, used exploration to project the total exploitation area and to designate the territorial boundaries of the productive area (which remain under government control). The Cepu Block was identified and mapped through an exploration process that lasted almost two centuries. As oil pockets were identified—supported by more advanced seismic technology—efforts were made to estimate the total oil reserves. Exploration peaked between 1970 and 1990, and with the support of seismic technology, the government was able to identify sizable reserves. The exploitation of these reserves became a major driver of the national oil and gas industry (Koesoemadinata, [2011](#)).

The exploration found that the Cepu Block is the oldest petroleum system in Indonesia (Koesoemadinata, [2011](#)). Part of the Northeast Java basin, it is administratively divided between the regencies of Rembang and Blora in Central Java, and Bojonegoro and Tuban in East Java (Tryono, [2015](#)). Pringgoprawiro ([1983](#)) writes that the Cepu Block formed between the Miocene and Oligocene geological epochs (around 7.25–33.9 million years ago). Geologically, it consists of four layers, each of different ages and depths. The oldest formations are the deepest, while the newest formations are closest to the surface. From the deepest to the most recent in the Rembang stratigraphy there is: pre-tertiary rock, Ngimbang, Kujung, Prupuh, Tuban, Tawun, Ngrayong, Bulu, Wonocolo, Ledok, Mundu, Paciran, Lidah, and Selorejo (Hariyadi et al., [2016](#)). In most cases, these formations are named after the location where they were first discovered.

Oil pockets have been found at various depths and in various formations. Early seismic technology, used between 1880 and 1970, was only able to define shallow prospects (see Figure 2, Original TAC line). The advent of three-dimensional technologies in the 1980s enabled officials to map deep prospects more effectively (Koesoemadinata, [2011](#)). Shallow prospects, at depths of approximately 2,000 meters, are most common in the Wonocolo and Ledok Formations. Deep prospects, meanwhile, were found in the Ngrayong, Tawun, and Kujung Formations, and are located at depths of up to 6,000 meters. Such biophysical differences between “shallow” and “deep” have had significant implications for the development of the oil production pipeline in the respective prospects.



Figure 2. The Cepu Block oil fields and prospects in relation to Wonocolo and Gayam Village



Note. TAC = technical assistance contract; EMCL = ExxonMobil Oil Cepu Limited. Map provided to the author by Galih Kartika.

The exploration of oil reserves is followed by exploitation, a lengthy process that involves setting appropriate areas, establishing partnerships with operators, constructing processing facilities, operating systems, and extracting/storing oil. In the Cepu Block, the state, wielding the authority to control the extraction process, has involved various technologies and actors in all stages of the production chain. As such, extraction has also involved a complex chain of political decisions.

Owing to its onshore location, the Cepu Block and its production chains involve diverse agents: local villagers, labor, government officials, government institutions, companies, and civil society organizations. Each has its own goals and ideals, and its understandings of welfare and development. These actors are not static, by dynamic. They change over time and adapt to the changing materiality of oil throughout the production process. Actors are likewise affected by the political situation; for instance, the political reform and decentralization that began in 1998 provided an impetus for involving local governments in the decision-making chain. Decision-making chains have been fluid, crossing various physical and temporal boundaries, and involving actors and activities at the local, national, and global levels.

At the same time, differences between “shallow” prospects and “deep” prospects influence every step of the production chain, with implications for the central government’s authority and control of oil in the Cepu Block. Shallow prospects, which are located near the surface and relatively small in size, do not require significant investment or advanced technology. Administratively, shallow prospects are mainly located in the Kedewan oil field, which is located around Kedewan District, Bojonegoro Regency (Figure 2). These shallow prospects, located less than 1,000 meters below ground level, can be extracted using simple technology. As such, oil extraction tends to involve agents with relatively modest knowledge, political, and financial capacities, including (since the 1930s) allowing villagers around the oil field. Consequently, in the 1980s, the national government has divested authority over Kedewan away from PT Pertamina EP Cepu (PEPC)⁵, instead tasking village cooperatives⁶ (KUD) with collecting and transporting oil to PEPC. With the beginning of political decentralization, local governments have had the opportunity to become directly involved in oil production in its administrative area, and thus, in 2017, the Bojonegoro Regency Government—through PT Bojonegoro Bangun Sarana (BBS),⁷ a local government-owned enterprise—obtained the right to operate in Kedewan. To supervise oil operations in the area, the national government has delegated mining authority and control to the Special Task Force for Upstream Oil and Gas Business Activities⁸ (SKK Migas). This body has several tasks, one being monitoring the interactions of Pertamina and its operators during the extraction and lifting of oil from the field in Kedewan District, Bojonegoro, to the refinery in Cepu District, Blora. On paper, 400–450 barrels of oil are lifted from the field every day.

5 A subsidiary of PT Pertamina.

6 Koperasi Unit Desa

7 Originally established as PT Bangkit Bangun Sarana, it was renamed by Bojonegoro Regency Regional Regulation No. 6 of [2011](#).

8 Satuan Kerja Khusus Pelaksana Kegiatan Usaha Hulu Minyak dan Gas Bumi



Meanwhile, exploiting deep prospects—large pockets that are located far beneath the service—requires more financial capital, advanced technology, and specific knowledge. As such, the national government involved PEPC as a contractor and ExxonMobil Oil Cepu Limited (EMCL)⁹ as an operator in its exploitation of the Cepu Block. Deep prospects require high levels of capital investment and technology, and thus the national government has worked closely with several oil contractors and assigned them high-level authority in securing national oil production (Arora-Jonsson et al., 2015). The national government has also sought investment through high-level negotiations with prospective countries, such as the United States. Ultimately, the national government approved for EMCL to work in cooperation with PEPC through a technical assistance contract (TAC) to map and drill the deep prospect in the Banyu Urip field (see the legend of Figure 2: 3D Seismic Survey).

This was followed by a 30-year cooperation contract, signed on September 17, 2005, and valid from 2005 to 2035. As Indonesian politics decentralized, the national government invited local government-owned enterprises to involve local contractors (Pudyantoro, 2019). Ultimately, EMCL was assigned the Cepu Block together with Ampol Cepu¹⁰, PEPC, and four local government enterprises: PT Sarana Patra Hulu Cepu (Central Java), PT Asri Dharma Sejahtera (Bojonegoro), PT Blora Patragas Hulu (Blora), and PT Petrogas Jatim Utama Cendana (East Java). On March 15, 2006, this contract was followed by the signing of a joint operating agreement, which appointed EMCL as an operator (with 45% of shares). The day before the signing, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice came to Jakarta as part of oil business negotiations between the administrations of George W. Bush and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Office of the Historian, n.d.).

The Banyu Urip field produces 220,000 barrels of oil per day, and thus represents 30% of national oil production. The deep prospect is located mainly in the Banyu Urip oil field, which is located in Gayam District, Bojonegoro Regency (Figure 2). Gayam is a new district, formed through Regional Regulation No. 22 of 2011 based on recognition of the village's proximity to oil operations (Mahmudi, 2015). Pursuant to Regent Regulation No. 4 of 2014, eight of Gayam District's twelve villages are located in the "first ring" around extraction activities (i.e., located less than 600 meters from the oil field or directly affected by extractive activities).

9 A subsidiary of ExxonMobil.

10 A subsidiary of Ampol, also known as Caltex Australia.

4 The Making of Transparency in Bojonegoro

In April 2001, ExxonMobil announced that it had discovered oil reserves—amounting to approximately 450 MMBO—in Banyu Urip (ExxonMobil, [2019](#)). Suyoto Ngartep Mustajab, the regent (*bupati*) of Bojonegoro from 2008 to 2018, said that the discovery of large oil reserves in Banyu Urip inspired various agencies to incorporate information disclosure into their political activities:

We now have plenty of resources. Now we are getting a lot of oil and gas revenue. I realize that oil and gas exploration is rising, and with that comes high expectations. I see the public potential with that, so we need public trust, and we need to explain what will happen, how much revenue we will receive, and where is the money going, and what for? This should be transparent. (OGP Support Unit, [2016](#))

This discovery also raised public awareness of the need for information concerning the oil industry and its operations (Table 1).

Table 1. Mass actions demanding the disclosure of information regarding oil extraction in the Banyu Urip field, 2004–2010

Date	Action and Demand
February 2004	Fourteen village heads whose administrations were affected by the acquisition of land for oil extraction established an organization named Seputar Masyarakat Banyu Urip Jambaran [Around Banyu Urip–Jambaran Community] (SEMAR). This organization pushed the regent to clarify the planned project. The village heads warned that they would mobilize mass action if the local government did not reveal the information (Azca et al., 2004 , p. 93).
April 2005	The Forum Komunikasi Masyarakat Banyu Urip Jambaran [Banyu Urip–Jambaran Community Communication Forum] (FORKOMAS BAJA) demanded information on the cooperation in the Cepu Block. They mobilized to pressure the Indonesian Parliament’s Mining Commission to involve the local Bojonegoro government in decision chains and to share oil revenues with producing agencies. Mass actions placed significant pressure on the national government, which at that time considered Pertamina and ExxonMobil as holding operation rights (Tempo, 2008).



August 1, 2005	Forum Warga Bojonegoro [Bojonegoro Citizens Forum] demanded transparency regarding the cooperation between the Bojonegoro Regency Government and PT Surya Energi Raya (SER)—a company owned by Surya Paloh (chairman of the ruling political party)—and its 4.48% participating interest in the Cepu Block. The Forum mobilized thousands of villagers to conduct demonstrations in front of the Bojonegoro local parliament (detikNews, 2005 ; Khodim, 2005).
March 20, 2006	The Koalisi Masyarakat Banyuurip [Coalition of Banyu Urip Communities] organized 300 local residents to urge EMCL to disclose information regarding (1) the land acquisition process; (2) the impacts of oil exploitation on the security and health of local communities; (3) the impacts of oil exploitation on local residents' livelihoods and environments; and (4) compensation and work opportunity for the communities near the oil field (Sunudyantoro, 2006).
March 21, 2006	The Serikat Pemuda Banyu Urip [Banyu Urip Youth Union] (SPBU) organized 500 people to force EMCL to reach an agreement with residents before starting oil exploitation. They demanded that EMCL (1) prioritize hiring from the surrounding villages; (2) take responsibility for environmental impacts during and after oil exploitation; (3) openly reveal information regarding land prices and its land acquisition plan; and (4) distribute 2% of contractors' profit for community services (Zaki et al., 2013).
April 2, 2008	The residents of Ngasem District, whose land was affected by the oil project, held a mass action asking for information regarding the compensation they would receive. They forced EMCL to give compensation directly to landowners rather than through third parties, as in the previous phase of disbursement (detikNews, 2008).
September 5, 2008	The residents of Dander District rallied against PT Alhas Jaya Group (AJG), an EMCL contractor, demanding clarification regarding job opportunities. They demanded that AJG fulfill its promise to employ residents around the oil field during the engineering, procurement, and construction processes (Chodim, 2008).
November 15, 2010	The residents of Ngasem District, whose properties were affected by the oil exploitation, complained to EMCL. They protested that EMCL did not provide information and consent before the drilling process (detikNews, 2010).

Note. Processed from fieldwork and news study.

Meanwhile, the discovery of large oil reserves attracted various international financial institutions to promote the monitoring of oil revenues. The World Bank, for example, visited the local government of Bojonegoro in 2014 and encouraged the implementation of their Rapid Assessment and Action Plan to Improve Service Delivery (RAAP-ID) program, a technical assistance program supported by the governments of Canada, Switzerland, and the European Union. This program aims to encourage the local government to use revenue from the oil and gas industry for education services, maternal health, and business licensing (The World Bank, [2016](#)). Such interest in its oil pushed Bojonegoro into the spotlight of the world stage (Davies, [2009](#)).

Hence, the biophysics of materiality matters (Bunker, [2003](#)). This study found that, the greater the quantity of oil, the greater the efforts of actors or networks to embed transparency initiatives in the extraction process. Although oil has been known, extracted, and traded in Bojonegoro since the 19th century, actor–networks only began promoting transparency initiatives when large oil reserves were announced in 2001. This discovery inspired actors and networks to exercise their knowledge, organizational skills, experiences, networks, and authority to socialize the ideal of transparency with various actors in Bojonegoro. While NGO–networks used transparency norms to raise public awareness to monitor the oil industry, political leaders used the ideal value of transparency to entrench their power. For example, the Bojonegoro Institute (BI) and Institute Development of Society (IDFoS)—NGOs based in Bojonegoro with extensive national and transnational networks—intensively promoted transparency through various strategies and instruments. They encouraged the local government to increase its disclosure of information regarding oil extraction and oil revenue management. This idea was received well by Suyoto, a political actor elected for two terms as the regent of Bojonegoro (2008–2013 and 2013–2018), and his power to introduce transparency initiatives in his offices enabled him to obtain political support from the national governments as well as from the electorate.

Although biophysical differences affect the localization of transparency, oil's essential status as a strategic national asset consistently leaves it under the purview of state authorities. In this sense, the regency government network connected its transparency initiatives to its oil wealth, thereby leveraging political support. Meanwhile, the NGOs associated transparency initiatives with “deep” oil rather than “shallow” oil, and thus reoriented their movements towards the former.



NGO Networks

The discovery of large oil reserves inspired NGO networks to change their strategies, embedding the idea of transparency in their programmatic activities. The Institute Development of Society (IDFoS) reformulated its activities to incorporate oil extraction in its activities. Established in 1999, this NGO evaluated its programs in 2005 and reorientated itself to demand the clarification of the risks and effects of oil operations around the Banyu Urip field. Ahmad Taufiq (personal communication, April 4, 2019), the director of IDFoS from 2012–2017 recalled,

from 1999 to 2001, IDFoS reoriented its movement, not only working on parliamentary issues but seeking to build transparency, trying to build openness, and promote civil society involvement in development. Moreover, in 2000–2001, that was the beginning of the ExxonMobil company. [To respond,] we started by monitoring the land acquisition process in the transition from Humpuss Patragas to ExxonMobil. ... In 1999–2001, the issues of openness in oil and gas management and civil society engagement in management began to emerge. Based on our evaluation in 1999–2001, we started to focus on what we call TPA: Transparency, Participation, Accountability. From 2001 onward, we pushed for a so-called TPA Bylaw.

In encouraging transparency, IDFoS collaborated with another NGO, YAPPIKA¹¹. In 2007, this collaboration—supported by the Canadian International Development Agency—proposed the Strategic Plan on Public Participation in 2007 to enhance transparency in the local government (Rahayu, 2007). Complementing the strategic plan, IDFoS encouraged contractors (especially EMCL) to release information regarding the distribution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds in 2010–2011. This initiative got support from no less than fifteen CSOs—including the Bojonegoro chapters of Nahdlatul Ulama and the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement¹², the Indonesian National Student Movement¹³, and the Independent Farmers Organization¹⁴ (IDFoS Indonesia, 2012)—and was run simultaneously with a collaborative program between IDFoS and the Bojonegoro Government to map and evaluate oil companies' distribution of social responsibility and empowerment programs in

11 Yayasan Penguatan Partisipasi, Inisiatif, dan Kemitraan Masyarakat Indonesia [Foundation for Strengthening Participation, Initiative and Partnership of Indonesian Society].

12 Pengurus Cabang Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia Bojonegoro (PC PMII Bojonegoro)

13 Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia (GMNI)

14 Organisasi Petani Independen

Bojonegoro (IDFoS Indonesia, [2014](#)). This initiative encouraged the regent to issue a regional regulation (No. 5 of [2015](#)) on the distribution of CSR. Although the alliance succeeded in promoting its goals, several of the proposed principles were not fully accommodated. Joko Hadi Purnomo (personal communication, May 23, 2017)—the 2017–2022 director of IDFoS—noted that this regulation did not guarantee citizen engagement in the decision-making process (necessary for them to articulate their needs) and lacked any penalties for lack of compliance.

The discovery of significant oil reserves also inspired several CSO activists to establish new organizations aimed at articulating the need for information. The current director of the Bojonegoro Institute (BI) since 2012, A. W. Syaiful Huda (personal communication, April 7, 2019), mentioned that the institute's establishment was related to the discovery of oil. He recalled that BI began between 2004 and 2005 with a mass demonstration, held by the Bojonegoro Citizens Forum and organized by several CSOs activists. Demonstrators demanded transparency in the local government's decision to work with PT Surya Energi Raya (SER), owned by ruling political party chairman Surya Paloh, in extraction. As one of the signatories of the Cepu Cooperation Contract, the local government of Bojonegoro had a 4.48% participating interest in oil extraction through PT Asri Dharma Sejahtera (ADS), a local government enterprise. In 2006, ADS signed a revenue-sharing agreement with SER, under which SER received a 75% share of profits; only 25% was taken by ADS (Publish What You Pay Indonesia, [2017](#)). As A. W. Syaiful Huda recalled,

BI was founded in 2004, at which time Bojonegoro was busy talking about the discovery of the largest oil and gas field in Banyu Urip, Cepu Block. ... What we thought next was how this oil could affect people's welfare, ... to follow the issue, we made a forum, the Bojonegoro Citizens Forum. ... BI proposed the involvement of village government-owned enterprises as a model for injecting regional capital and interests. [This model] was supported by the residents and governments of villages, because when village government-owned enterprises are involved in the capital injection, there will be a clear sense of ownership. Then, we need to have access to information [from the oil industry]. Third, [using this model] we are not only monitoring industrialization, but also engaged in the management process. At that time, the people's support was proven by a massive demonstration. About 100 trucks worth of people demonstrated at the Regency Government, at the local parliament, at the executive office demanding clarification.



Although its proposed model for managing participating interests was rejected by the local government, BI became Regent Suyoto's main partner in introducing transparency initiatives in Bojonegoro. In providing policy recommendations, BI utilized extensive transnational networks with transparency and anti-corruption initiatives, such as Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), Transparency International Indonesia, and Publish What You Pay Indonesia. Between 2004 and 2018, BI focused its transparency initiatives on oil revenue management in Bojonegoro. Several BI programs received financial and technical assistance from international organizations, mainly from the Revenue Watch Institute (RWI)¹⁵, United States Agency for International Development, and Indonesia's Partnership for Governance Reform¹⁶ (Bojonegoro Institute, [n.d.](#)). A. W. Syaiful Huda described the process of approaching Suyoto as follows:

[Approaching the district government] began around mid-2008. We have also maintained our integrity, not used funds from the local budget and so on. This makes them [the district government] believe that BI is serious in bringing about change in Bojonegoro. ... We provide something that they [the local government] need. We trained them so they could calculate or make projections regarding their share of the revenue, because this [calculation] is very vital for projecting the local government budget. If he [the regent] had budgeted for a few billion, but this money wasn't available, government projects or programs may fail and existing ones may need to be rescheduled. Since we were not very good at calculating the revenue share at that time, we collaborated with ICW, we made a simulation, made a formula, then trained local government officials on calculating their share of the revenue. (personal communication, April 7, 2019)

As mentioned above, BI provided technical assistance for the local government to increase its institutional capacity in projecting its share of oil revenues when preparing the local budget. Following the commencement of oil extraction activities in 2005, Bojonegoro received a share of oil revenues. Under Act No. 33 of [2004](#) on Fiscal Balance between the Central and Regional Government, Bojonegoro—as a producing regency—receives 6% of Indonesia's oil revenue (Direktorat Jenderal Perimbangan Keuangan, [n.d.](#)). Since 2006, oil revenue sharing (see Figure 3) has been the Bojonegoro government's largest source of income, responsible for approximately 28.4% of its total annual budget. Recognizing the significance of this revenue, BI also encouraged the Regent to

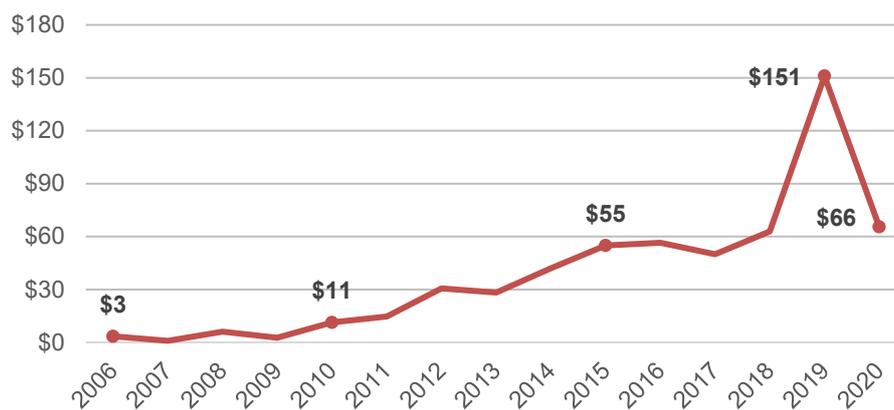
15 The Revenue Watch Institute (RWI) merged with Natural Resource Charter in 2013 to form the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI).

16 Kemitraan bagi Pembaruan Tata Pemerintahan

promote public engagement in local budgetary discussions by disclosing as much information as possible regarding oil revenue management. BI argued that disclosure would not only reduce corruption and mismanagement, but also increase the local government's reputation for accountability (A. W. S. Huda, personal communication, April 7, 2019).

BI, with the support of its transnational NGOs networks, facilitated the local government in cooperating with the Revenue Watch Institute (RWI) and Open Society Foundation's Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (OSF-LGI). Per this agreement, signed in June 2008, RWI and OSF-LGI provided the local government with the technical tools necessary to manage its oil revenues (Prijosusilo, 2012). Furthermore, they carried out this activity in Bojonegoro as part of the EITI campaign to urge national and local governments around the world to adopt global transparency standards in their extractive industries.

Figure 3. Oil revenue shares transferred to the Bojonegoro Regency government by the national government, 2006-2020 (in millions of US\$)



Note. USD 1 = IDR 14,457 (exchange rate on April 29, 2021). Data for 2015–2020 from Badan Pengelolaan Keuangan dan Aset Daerah Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro [BPKAD Bojonegoro] (2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e, 2020)¹⁷. Data for 2006–2014 from Bojonegoro Institute (personal communication, April 7, 2019).

¹⁷ Data is coded as No. 4.2.1.2.8: “Bagi Hasil Dari Pertambangan Minyak Bumi” [Profit Sharing from Oil Mining]. For example, in 2020 it was IDR 947813578721 (BPKAD Bojonegoro, 2020), which is about US\$66 million.



Supported by its NGO networks, BI encouraged the local parliament to implement a transparency bylaw. CSO Activist Joko Purwanto (personal communication, April 5, 2019) recalled that the local government accepted its proposal, issuing local regulations and revealing information regarding oil and gas revenue management and oil companies' social-environmental responsibilities through Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2012. NGOs promoted this regulation as an example of best practices in increasing transparency. Ultimately, in 2016, Bojonegoro was chosen for an open government pilot project. As a result of such initiatives, information not available publicly in the 1990s (for example, oil lifting and revenue spending) can now be found on the Bojonegoro Regency website and other official sources.¹⁸

The Regent and His Networks

Inspired by the oil boom in Bojonegoro, Regent Suyoto extensively incorporated the idea of transparency into the industry. During his two terms in office (2008–2013, 2013–2018), he collaborated with transnational NGO networks to introduce transparency. Building on these programs, Suyoto made policies to institutionalize information disclosure in various sectors. As such, Suyoto became widely known as a key figure who promoted the ideas of open government (Arti, 2017; Mulana et al., 2008; Novenanto, 2017; Winanti & Hanif, 2020).

Suyoto used the ideal value of transparency to leverage his popularity, thereby getting political support from the national government as well as obtaining the trust of citizens. Oil thus provided Suyoto with an essential device for bolstering his power. Suyoto explained,

[W]hen implementing oil and gas governance, and other sectors in Bojonegoro, transparency must be a basic principle that should be applied in the all units of work ... open access to public information, [open] as widely as possible, will foster public trust, thereby creating accountable governance. (Wedia, 2015)

¹⁸ For example, bojonegorokab.go.id and www.kanalbojonegoro.com.

Joko Purwanto (personal communication, April 5, 2019), a senior CSO activist and founder of BI, recalled that Suyoto had shown an interest in transparency in oil extraction and oil revenue management since he was first elected. As such, he began communicating with various proponents of transparency, especially BI and IDFoS. As discussed above, BI (supported by RWI-LGI) provided Suyoto and his bureaucracy with the technical assistance necessary to institutionalize transparency. This encouraged Suyoto to implement several policies, including (1) holding public hearings at the city hall every Friday; (2) passing a local regulation on open and transparent information for oil and gas revenue management and oil companies' social and environmental responsibilities (the aforementioned Regional Regulation No. 6 of [2012](#)); and (3) promoting Open Government Partnership compliance (2016–2017). Suyoto framed those policies as “innovations”, as similar ones had never been implemented by Bojonegoro's previous local leaders (J. Purwanto, personal communication, April 5, 2019; see also Siregar et al., [2017](#)). Furthermore, Suyoto's interest in the transnational network of transparency was related to his desire to gain an international reputation (Wedia, [2013](#)).

In addition to the oil boom that inspired the political strategies, the notion of oil as the essential asset for the country—that situates oil under the authorities and control of the governments—enabled Suyoto as the regent of Bojonegoro to take part in the oil resource management of his administrative territory. The issuance of Act No. 22 of [2001](#) on Oil and Natural Gas entrenched the local government's authority to take part in oil governance. This regulation is part of the legal framework aiming to open engagements from various parties in the oil and gas sector that previously was cloaked by the secrecy under the dominant operation of the state-owned Pertamina (Pudyantoro, [2019](#)).

As mentioned above, Regent Suyoto considered Bojonegoro's oil resources to be regional resources under the authority and control of the local government. Unlike NGOs, which were inclined to pay more attention to transparency in deep oil extraction, Suyoto strongly showed his commitment to institutionalizing transparency throughout the entire extraction chain in his administrative territory. Oil resources provided a particularly strategic device for Suyoto to connect transparency with public needs and considerations. However, the biophysical differences between “shallow” and “deep” oil affected Suyoto's efforts to localize transparency.



Regent Suyoto associated shallow oil with open information regarding artisanal oil production through the old wells of Kedewan field, issuing Regent Regulation No. 30 of [2017](#) on Guidelines for Miners and Groups of Miners in the Old Oil Wells in Bojonegoro (see Kantor Bupati Bojonegoro, [2017](#)). In passing this policy, which required the registration of all oil miners, existing oil wells, and oil lifted from the field, Suyoto sought to generate local revenue from artisanal oil production. The policy also stipulated that PT Bojonegoro Bangun Sarana (BBS), a local government enterprise, would hold operating rights over the old wells. Suyoto issued this policy after receiving approval from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, SKK Migas, and Pertamina. This policy was in line with Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Regulation No. 1 of [2008](#) regarding the Guidelines for Oil Mining in Old Wells, which encourages local governments to enhance the management and production of oil from old wells (Kantor Bupati Bojonegoro, [2017](#)).

This policy applies to the shallow oil in the Kedewan field, which has been extracted using traditional means by local communities for at least three generations. According to miner and investor Siswanto (personal communication, April 7, 2019), information on artisanal oil production is widespread and well-known by local communities, and several have used their inherited knowledge and skill accumulation to operate oil businesses across the entire production chain: exploration, exploitation, and refinery. They are also able to open the new oil wells using modified water drilling machines. However, as Director of BBS Tony Irawan (personal communication, November 6, 2017) informed me: information on such oil production is not as well-known in the local government, and a result, the local government has collected insufficient income from the field.

As such, the local government has tasked BBS with performing accountable artisanal oil extraction in Wonocolo, thereby placing it into competition with the village cooperatives (KUDs) that have operated for decades. Unlike cooperatives, which only reimburse miners for oil lifted, BBS reimburses miners for lifting while also providing them with health insurance and social security. At the same time, BBS provides money to the local government to cover the environmental effects of its activities. As a result, BBS provides less money to miners than cooperatives, and thus has had difficulty recruiting miners (T. Irawan, personal communication, November 6, 2017). This policy has been rejected by local communities, who feel that it ignores residents' decades of managing the oil field (Siswanto, personal communication, April 7, 2019).

At the same time, Siswanto (personal communication, April 7, 2019) mentioned that residents of Wonocolo Village have enjoyed extensive access to information regarding oil production, and have even taken advantage of this information to operate their own artisanal oil businesses and become the masters of their land. Siswanto said, “to begin, a local company needs the support of local communities. Without that kind of support, we cannot realize our own company. Perhaps, locals can only watch [the oil extraction]”.

Even before issuing a policy related to information disclosure in the old wells of the Kedewan field, Suyoto attempted to institutionalize transparency in deep oil extraction. Following the commencement of the Banyu Urip oil project, Suyoto passed Regional Regulation No. 22 of [2011](#) to create a new district (Gayam District) out of affected villages, thereby facilitating communication between EMCL and residents (Mahmudi, [2015](#)). Subsequently, Suyoto issued Regional Regulation No. 23 of [2011](#)—better known as the Local Content Bylaw—to accelerate regional economic growth by recommending that EMCL prioritize “local resources” when supporting its engineering, procurement, and construction projects. According to the head of the Bojonegoro government regulations sub-division, Ira Madda Zulaikha (personal communication, June 15, 2017), this law shows the local government’s efforts to take advantage of oil and gas projects to encourage regional development and promote citizens’ welfare.

The location of oil resources in the middle of existing settlements raised communities’ concern for oil production (Table 1). Residents of Gayam Village, one of the villages located near Banyu Urip’s main facilities, strongly demanded information regarding job opportunities as well as the social and environmental impacts of engineering, procurement, and construction projects (Fadhil, personal communication, May 24, 2017). Fadhil, a CSO activist in Gayam Village, recalled that, between 2002 and 2006, he was involved in a youth network known as the Banyu Urip Youth Union (SPBU). This CSO organized youths at the village level to conduct mass action demanding greater opportunities for involvement. Youths realized that, due to their insufficient education and the highly technical nature of deep oil extraction, they had little chance of being hired by EMCL. Meanwhile, the village heads and other members formed the Around Banyu Urip–Jambaran Community (SEMAR) and Banyu Urip–Jambaran Community Communication Forum (FORKOMAS BAJA) to gain information and access to human resources and in the engineering, procurement, and construction projects.



5 Conclusion

Fundamentally, the materiality of oil enables and facilitates actor-networks to conduct political work to embed transparency in local contexts. This study has shown that the materio-spatial configuration of oil affects the localization of transparency in the extractive sector through intertwined processes that are presented as “works of assemblage” (Baker & McGuirk, [2016](#); Müller, [2015](#)).

First, the materiality of oil has provided Indonesia with a fundamental asset to territorialize the physical and political field that is known as the Cepu Block (Bunker, [2003](#); Müller, [2015](#)). Although the state created an oil governable space that situated oil as a strategic asset that is always under the authority of the governments, its status as a global commodity shaped the Cepu Block into a field with local, national, and global implications. Along with the global norms for enhancing engagement for democratic good governance in the extractive sector, oil has emerged as a strategic commodity that is managed not only by the national government but also engaged with the authority of local governments in the producing region. Biophysical differences have created diverse governable spaces, namely “shallow” prospects and “deep” prospects. Shallow prospects provide governments with easy resources for generating involvement in artisanal mining. Meanwhile, deep prospects—often significantly larger—provide the national government with “strategic resources” for assigning operators with high-level authority and state-like power in securing oil production (Arora-Jonsson et al., [2015](#)). Such a deep prospect has also provided the local government of Bojonegoro with a testbed for increasing its institutional capacity in managing oil wealth (Table 1).

Subsequently, the biophysics of oil inspired actor–networks to embed the idea of transparency in their programmatic activities. In this sense, the larger the quantity of oil, the greater the efforts of actor–networks to embed transparency initiatives (Bunker, [2003](#); DeLanda, [2006](#)). Although oil had been extracted and traded in Bojonegoro since the 19th century, transparency initiatives only commenced after the discovery of oil reserves, as announced by ExxonMobil in 2001. The oil boom inspired NGO–networks to encourage the local government of Bojonegoro to disclose information on oil revenue management and the oil industry. Oil revenue management emerged as a tipping point that facilitated actor–networks’ efforts to integrate transparency initiatives, values, and ideals into political activities (Haufler, [2010](#)). At the same time, the oil boom coincided with the deterritorialization of oil governable space, and thus, engagement—once limited to the national government—was opened to local governments and various non-governmental organizations. Thanks to the successful transnational advocacy activities of NGO–networks, transparency in Bojonegoro became widely cited as a “best practice” (Gillies, [2010](#)) of democratic “good governance” in natural resource extraction (Ribot et al., [2006](#), p. 1865).

At the same time, transparency provided the Bojonegoro government with a bundle of means to enhance accountability and participation; change policy frames; and shift power relations between the state and citizens (Bebbington et al., [2017](#)). Furthermore, the materiality of oil also provided the local leader—Suyoto, the two-term regent of Bojonegoro—with a strategic device for using transparency to shift power relations within the oil governable space. Enabled by the oil boom, Suyoto incorporated transparency into the citizens’ expectations of the oil industry to leverage his power and authority over the governance of oil in his administrative territory (Winanti & Hanif, [2020](#)).

To summarize, the materiality of oil has enabled actor–networks to embed and shape transparency in local contexts. Oil’s materiality has made it possible for actor–networks to assemble transparency within different political networks, working with diverse actors with divergent political motivations (Prince, [2010](#), p. 171).



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