

# Exploring Hashtag #WadasMelawan on Twitter as A Form of Digital Resistance Against Ecocide

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**Abstract.** A polemic regarding Wadas Village has not been fruitful yet. The villagers of Wadas Village, one of the villages in Bener District, Purworejo Regency, have been voicing the polemic as a form of resistance against the ecocide of Wadas Village. The ecocide related to mining activities of andesite stone as one of the building materials of Bener Dam has raised a lot of protest from various individuals and communities, especially in virtual worlds such as Twitter. One of the most vocal Twitter account that actively voice out their resistance on Twitter by using the hashtag #WadasMelawan is @Wadas\_Melawan. The method applied in this research to analyze tweets is qualitative research with a virtual ethnography approach. The tweets used as the data of this research are limited to tweets dated from March to May 2022 that have the hashtag #WadasMelawan created by the Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan. The result of analyzing the data shows that a lot of Wadas villagers are against the mining activities of the andesite stone. The villagers are worried about the potential ecocide as it can lead to the loss of their livelihood which is used as the mining site and the higher possibility of erosion. The intransparency from the Government regarding this polemic is the reason why the Wadas villagers finally created the polemic. As for the reason Twitter is chosen is that Twitter is deemed as a platform with the least restrictions. The tweets by Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan are expected to be heard and finally able to encourage the government to reconsider each development program, improve coordination with the local community, and give more attention to the sustainability of the ecosystem, specifically in Wadas Village.

**Keywords:** Hashtag, Virtual Ethnography, Ecocide, Social Media, Twitter

## 1 Introduction

Social phenomena often raise variative reactions from societies which can be seen easier through social media. The reactions can either take a supportive form or a non-supportive form toward the affected community. The social movement may take the form of various activities which propose

to support certain communities whose rights have been monopolized by another party.

One of the social phenomena that have become the attention not only of Indonesian people but also international activists were the phenomena that happened in Wadas Village which was related to a national infrastructure project. Wadas Village is located in the middle of Bener District, Purworejo Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, which only has a 1,5 km distance to the center of the district. Wadas Village is 405,820 hectares with most of the areas covered by dryland and highland.

The project is a Bener Dam project held in the area of Wadas Village. In the process of building the Bener Dam, there are two projects that are planned to be conducted. The first project is to prepare the land which will be used as the place to build the Bener Dam and the second project is to mine andesite stone as the building material for Bener Dam. Published by nasional.kompas.com, due to the Bener Dam project's need for a supply of andesite stone as the building material, the government planned to mine the stone from Wadas Village.

The plan of mining the andesite stone from Wadas Village led to a conflict between ... and the villagers as the villagers refuse to let the government mine in their village (Wibisono dan Nusantara, 2022). The reasons of why the villagers are against the plans are (1) Wadas Village is not originally a mining area, (2) the villagers are worried that the potential of erosion increase if the mining process is conducted, (3) the mining process also has high potential to cause damage to 28 location point of Wadas Village's sources of water which can affect the agricultural land which further can lead to the loss of the villagers' livelihood, (4) the villagers also sues the government due to the violation of the Regional Regulation which is the Regional Spatial Planning for Purworejo Regency year 2011-2031 regarding spatial planning.

The refusal of the mining process led to the birth of resistance action by Wadas villagers which was addressed towards the miners and officers in the mining site. The resistance action also is done online through social media Twitter with the use of trending up the hashtag #WadasMelawan. Between hundreds of accounts that participated in the trending of the hashtag, there is one account which stands out. The account mentioned is @Wadas\_Melawan, a verified Twitter account that on 31st July 2022 at 20:10 WIB had been followed by more than 29000 followers with 2,294 tweets of their resistance against the mining process in Wadas Village.

The way this phenomenon was rising through the power of social media was the reason that the researchers are interested to explore. It is already known that the development of technology in Indonesia has made social media an inseparable thing from humans (Apriyani, 2021). Mahdi (2022) said that the active social media users in Indonesia reached 191 million people in January 2022 which increased by 12.35% compared to the previous year. Social media is not just used as a communication and information gathering ideas, but also used as one of the tools to voice out society's opinion. Twitter itself was chosen as the field of exploration because, despite the hashtag existing in many platforms of social media, it drew more attention on Twitter. Twitter also has become a platform for many activists to freely voice out their opinions due to its anonymous availability.

## 2 Method

This research applied a qualitative approach with the virtual ethnography method which is also commonly called digital ethnography to reveal the various elements that represent real-life culture through the combinations of characters seen in the virtual media (Underberg and Zorn, 2013). From time to time, researchers try to understand patterns of relationships, behaviors, and sequences in the digital environment through ethnography (Kaur-Gill and Dutta, 2017). This research focuses on activities on the digital platform Twitter using the hashtag #WadasMelawan.

The Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan is a Twitter account that is against the ecocide in Wadas, Indonesia. This account is important for the research because it is more active in expressing its resistance to the ecocide of andesite stone mining compared to other accounts that participate in using the hashtag #WadasMelawan. The @Wadas\_Melawan account has 28 994 followers and has uploaded 2 294 posts since 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019. Although the @Wadas\_Melawan account has been active since September 2019, the #WadasMelawan account just began to use the hashtag #WadasMelawan in January 2020. The hashtag itself was first used to express the resistance to ecocide in Wadas by @JDAgraria, an account whose content was dedicated to agrarian topics.

This research used data that were collected through observing digital activities in the @Wadas\_Melawan with the hashtag #WadasMelawan, and the virtual interactions of these activities as a virtual space community is then examined.

## 3 Result and Discussion

Through the analysis of pictures, videos, and text posted on the Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan, the researchers categorized the data as three parts of how the hashtag of #WadasMelawan was used. The first one was as a symbol of resistance against ecocide, second one was as a symbol of support towards preservation of Wadas Village's resources and the last one was as a tool to gather as much support as they can to keep the villagers' peaceful life.

### 3.1 #WadasMelawan used as a symbol of resistance against ecocide

Based on the categorized and analyzed data that has been done by the researchers on the specific period of time which is the Twitter post was posted from March to May 2022, the researchers saw that the highest interaction was in March 2022. Through a more detailed analysis, the peak of the interaction received by the Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan as the main digital activist of the Wadas Melawan movement was on 10 March 2022 with 3424 likes, 1232 comments, and 67 retweets which contain of the following message.

*“Sampai saat ini, pemerintah masih berusaha membujuk warga untuk menyerah, menaikkan harga tanah. Sejak awal, sampai detik ini, warga Wadas tetap pada pendiriannya: Kehilangan Tanah, Sama Halnya Kehilangan Sejarah. (Up until now, the government is still trying to persuade the villagers to give (our village) up by raising the buying price of our land. Ever since the beginning, and until this very second, Wadas villagers still follow our principle: Losing Our Land Means*

Losing Our History.).

**Table 1.** Table of Post's Interactions Data.

<b>Tweet Date</b>	<b>Total Comment</b>	<b>Total Retweet</b>	<b>Total Like</b>
March 23	4	103	341
March 21	26	570	1509
March 16	1	12	66
March 16	0	9	56
March 16	8	234	982
March 9	7	69	224
March 25	12	350	1087
March 25	0	45	113
March 1	7	88	307
March 4	3	145	449
March 5	2	140	440
March 8	0	10	49
March 10	0	14	58
March 10	4	136	404
March 10	21	317	769
March 22	1	23	88
March 7	3	24	61
March 10	4	56	147
March 10	67	1232	3424
March 15	0	0	27
March 21	6	59	159
March 4	17	312	774
March 9	2	47	136
March 11	7	91	217
March 16	2	44	127
March 16	0	1	9
March 23	2	32	115
March 23	25	119	374
March 23	5	36	100



**Fig 1.** Screenshot of Post by @Wadas\_Melawan on March 10th.

The post shows that the hashtag #WadasMelawan was used as a symbol of resistance against the effort of ecocide in their village.

### **3.2 #WadasMelawan used as a symbol of support towards preservation of Wadas Village's resources**

The resistance was not the only thing shown by the use of the hashtag #WadasMelawan. Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan also used the hashtag to show their support for the preservation of Wadas Village's resources whether it is natural resources or cultural resources. One of the examples is the post on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 which can be seen in the picture. The post was not focused on the resistance to ecocide, but it pictured the activity of Wadas villagers to show that they support the villagers.

### **3.3 #WadasMelawan used as a tool to gather as much support as they can to keep the villagers' peaceful life**

Some of the posts are also used to gather as much support as the Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan can to help the villagers keep their peaceful life. The account reached out to the villagers from other villages and even the citizens from another country to ask them to show some support and solidarity for Wadas villagers either through simple or long yet touching words. @Wadas\_Melawan posted their pictures on several posts and use the hashtag #WadasMelawan to invite other people to give support for Wadas Village. Below is one of the posts uploaded by @Wadas\_Melawan on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.



**Fig 2.** Screenshot of Post by @Wadas\_Melawan on March 16th.



**Fig 3.** Screenshot of Post by @Wadas\_Melawan on March 25th.

## 4 Conclusion

Most of the posts are showing the resistance of Wadas Village against ecocide in Wadas even though it was not always in the form of firm resistance, but also can be in the form of giving support to Wadas' culture and gathering support to help Wadas villagers' voices to be heard. The posts by Twitter account @Wadas\_Melawan are expected to be heard and finally able to encourage the government to reconsider each development program, improve coordination with the local community, and give more attention to the sustainability of the ecosystem in Wadas Village. The researchers also expected the issue to be solved as soon as possible with the best possible outcome.

As for the drawback of this research, there was a lack of credible sources to be interviewed for deeper understanding, the data sample was only limited to three months which were the posts uploaded in March, April, and May. Further research can be conducted with further interviews to gain more understanding of the issue of Wadas Village ecocide and using more data samples whether from a longer period or focusing on other social media.

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