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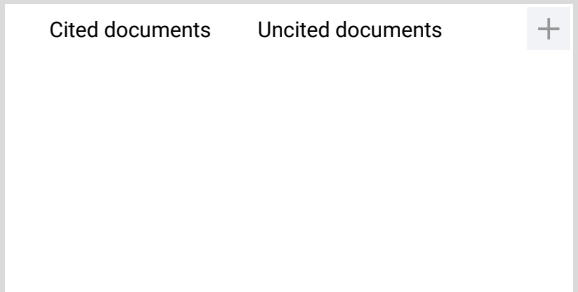
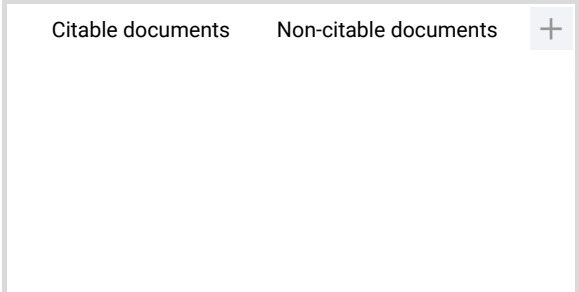
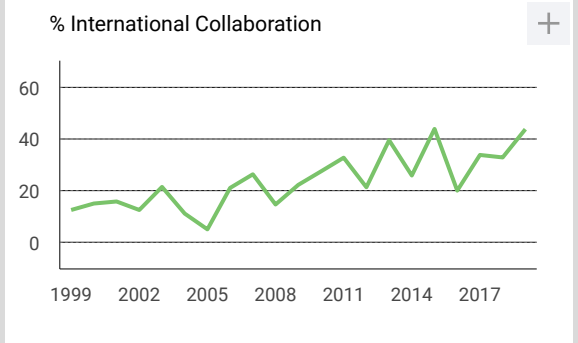
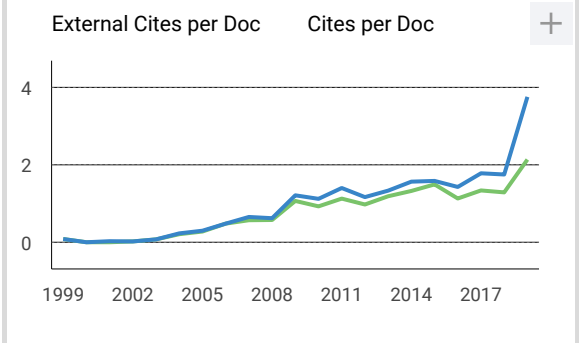
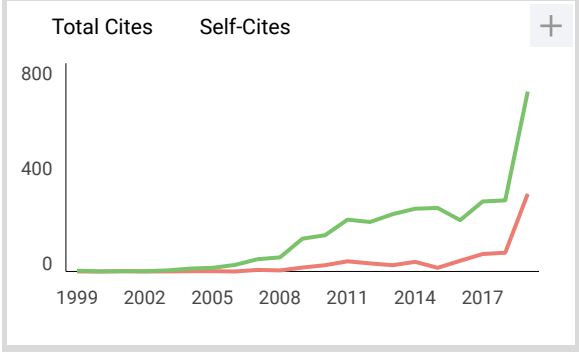
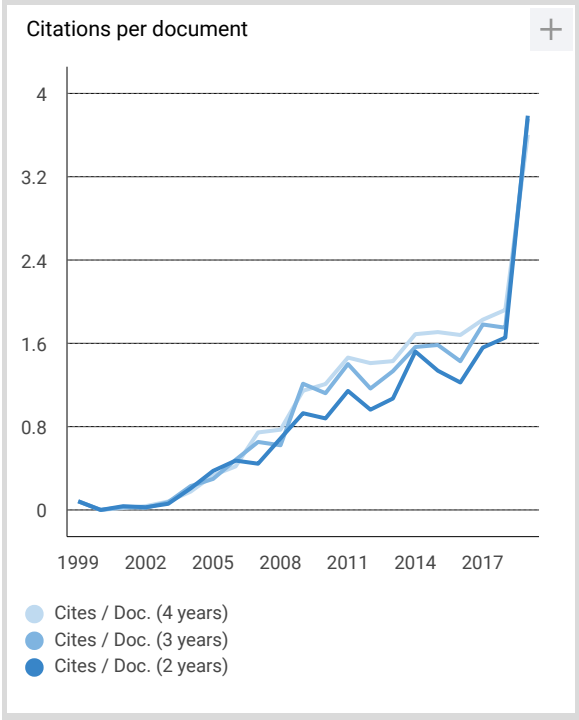
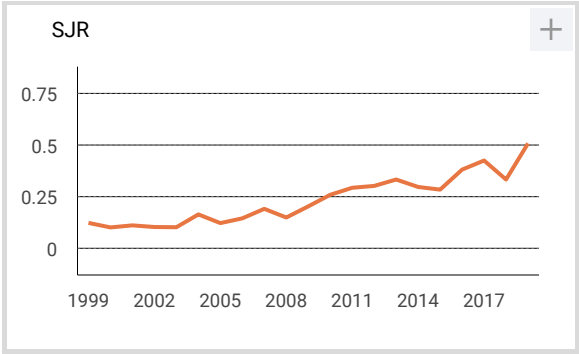
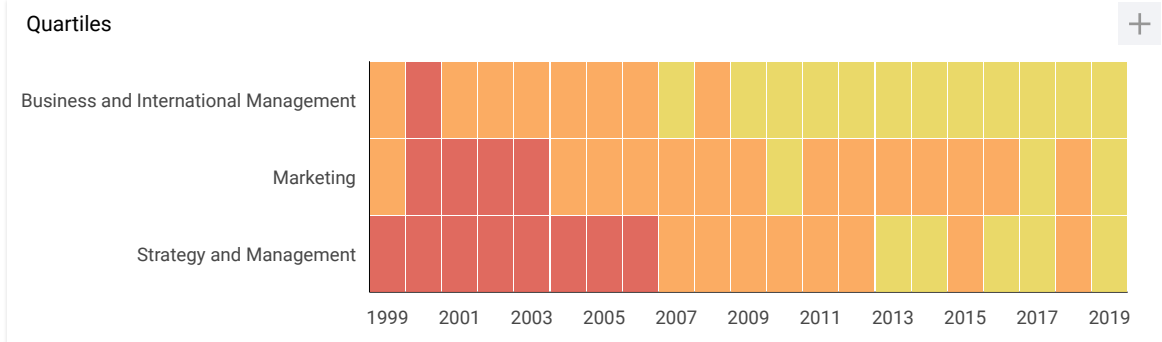
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The enactment of public relations functions: insights from the Indonesian mining industry

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the process in which organizational members construct and enact public relations (PR) functions as well as how the organization accommodates local values in the PR enactment.

Design/methodology/approach – A case study of three large mining companies representing multinational, state-owned, and privately owned mining companies in Indonesia was employed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 37 key informants (three top executives and 34 members of PR units).

Findings – The Indonesian private mining company and the multinational corporation actively engaged in their environment during the post-Suharto era. They perceived the local community to be more powerful than ever before as a result of the socio-cultural and political changes in the country. They changed their organization designs to gain organizational legitimacy by establishing independent PR divisions at the mining sites and assigning field officers who had the same cultural background as the community. These companies enacted the role of PR as relationship agents and cultural interpreters. Unlike these two companies, the state-owned mining company did not actively search for information from its environment. It relied on the government support for its organizational legitimacy and ignored the environmental changes.

Originality/value – This study is one of the first few studies examining the enactment of PR functions in Indonesia, an emerging country that is under-represented in the marketing and PR literature.

Keywords Indonesia, Public relations, Mining industry, Enactment theory, Organization interpretation model

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Public relations (PR) practices vary across the world. Some practices follow the standardized world-wide principles as proposed by The International Association of Business Communications Excellence Study (Grunig *et al.*, 1995; Grunig and Grunig, 2002; Vercic *et al.*, 1996), while some others reflect the contextual utilization of the principles (Grunig *et al.*, 2006; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2015; Sriramesh and Vercic, 2009). Similarly, PR models have also been found to differ across cultures and political systems. As a result, an additional dimension (i.e. personal influence model) has been proposed to extend the well-established Grunig's four models of PR (press agency model, public information model, two-way asymmetrical model, and two-way symmetrical model) (Grunig *et al.*, 1995; Huang, 2000; Jo and Kim, 2004; Park, 2002; Rhee, 2002; Sriramesh, 1992; Valentini, 2010; Gallicano, 2009). Nevertheless, why certain PR practices are more common in particular countries remains an issue worth investigating (Jo and Kim, 2004).

These issues raise fundamental questions about how and why organizations perceive PR in particular ways. More importantly, how these perceptions affect PR practices within these organizations is an important topic worth investigating. Essentially an organization can represent an interpretation system (Daft and Weick, 2001; Bodhanya, 2014; Sund, 2015).

Q1



In this context, PR is constructed by the organization through an interpretation process involving organizational members' analysis and interactions with their environment. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the process in which organizational members construct and enact PR functions as well as how the organization accommodates local values in the PR enactment. Using an interpretive approach, it is argued that PR is not a static process, but it is essentially part of a cyclical organizing process.

The current study focuses on the perceptions of PR practitioners and top management members of large mining companies operating in Indonesia. The Indonesian mining industry was chosen as the research context for two main reasons. First, mining industry is a significant contributor to the Indonesian economic growth (Winzenried and Adhitya, 2014). However, it has been perceived as one of the most damaging industrial sectors with a number of worker rights violations and environmental issues (Muhammad *et al.*, 2005). Historically, mining companies, especially foreign ones, were among the pioneers of PR implementation in Indonesia (Dahlan, 1978; Muntahar, 1985; Sigit, 2008). Second, Indonesia, the world's fourth most populated country and the largest economy in Southeast Asia (CIA, 2016; UNDP, 2016), represents a part of the world that is under-represented in the PR literature. Specifically, the present study aims to address the following research question:

- RQ1.* How do perceptions of an organizational environment among PR practitioners and top managers of the Indonesian mining companies influence PR functions and practices of these organizations?

Theoretical background

Organization and environment: an interpretive model

The current study is based on two assumptions about organizations. First, organizations are active, open social systems that process information from the environment (Weick and Daft, 2001; Bodhanya, 2014). When facing uncertainties within the environment, organizations will seek information, interpret the environment, and respond strategically to build competitive advantage (Sund, 2015; Weick *et al.*, 2005). These processes depend on the characteristics of the organization and its environment.

Second, an organization is either the process or product of shared meaning among organizational members (Putnam, 1983). It reflects the process of ongoing interactions to interpret and construct social realities among organizational members (Thompson, 1980; Weick *et al.*, 2005). As stated by Bodhanya (2014, p. 131), "social reality is enacted by human actors who construct their worlds through their experiences and their interactions." In line with this, Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 570) define an organization as "an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action, to channel it toward certain ends, to give it a particular shape, through generalizing and institutionalizing particular meanings and rules." Based on this interpretive perspective, an organization exists in the ongoing action-reaction pattern among its members. Such pattern is called the organizing process (Weick, 1979), where the main concerns are about "how patterns of organization are achieved, sustained, and changed" (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985, p. 727). Weick (1979) argued that a company, for instance, is not an organization. Instead, it is engaged in the organizing process characterized by a constant change. Its members enact a structure by forming, maintaining, and dissolving relationships among themselves and their environment (Weick, 1979). Thus, organizations are always in a continual state of falling apart and rebuilding.

Models of organizational interpretations

Weick and Daft (2001) proposed that the main products of organizations are interpretations, not decisions. The interpretation becomes an enacted environment within which an organization makes its decisions and acts. Consequently, building up interpretations about

environments is a basic requirement of individuals and organizations (Weick and Daft, 1983). Organizational members act on the environment, respond to or ignore some of it, and talk about it with other people. They interpret their environments by translating the events, developing models of understanding, bringing out meanings, and assembling a conceptual scheme (Weick and Daft, 1983).

Weick and Daft (2001) noted that organizations develop specific ways to understand their environment. How an organization interprets its environment depends on two factors: the organization's assumptions about environments and the extent to which the organization intrudes into the environment to understand it (Weick and Daft, 1983, 1984). If an organization assumes that the environment is objective and that events and processes are measurable and determinant, then they will try to find the "correct answer" that they believe already exists in the environment. They try to discover the "correct" interpretations by seeking for clear data and solution. This type of organization adopts linear thinking and logic through intelligence gathering, rational analysis, vigilance, and accurate measurement (Weick and Daft, 1983, 2001). On the other hand, when organizational members find difficulties in understanding their environment, they tend to perceive the environment as unanalyzable. Consequently, they will create their own environment. The key is "to construct, coerce, or enact a reasonable interpretation that makes previous action sensible and suggests next steps" (Weick and Daft, 1984, p. 287). Thus, the interpretation shapes the environment more than the environment shapes the interpretation. The results of this process are to allow the organization to deal with equivocality, to force an answer useful for the organization, to create an environment, and be part of it (Weick and Daft, 1984).

In terms of the level of intrusion into the environment, organizations can be classified into active and passive ones (Weick and Daft, 1984). Active organizations search the environment for an answer. They allocate resources to explore the environment by forming specific departments and mechanisms for researching and/or creating environments (Thomas, 1980), sending agents into the field to search for answers (Wilensky, 1967), testing or manipulating the environment (Weick and Daft, 1983), and changing the rules or manipulating critical factors in the environment (Kotter, 1979). In contrast, passive organizations do not search for answers in the environment (Weick and Daft, 2001). They accept whatever information the environment provides. They do not engage in trial and error, nor are departments assigned to discover or manipulate the environment. They may establish receptors to sense whatever information they get from the environment. By accepting the environment as given, they become test avoiders (Weick and Daft, 1983).

In addition to active and passive organizations, there are some other organizations that are informal and unsystematic in their interpretation process of the environment. This type of organization usually accepts the environment as given and becomes active only during a crisis (Weick and Daft, 2001). A crisis urges organizations to search for new information or consciously influences the external events that they assume cause the crisis.

Furthermore, the level of an organization's intrusion is dependent on three main factors: the conflict between the organization and the environment, competitive intensity, and environmental hostility (Weick and Daft, 2001). The allocation of resources to the intelligence gathering function will increase when the environment is perceived as threatening (Weick and Daft, 1983), the competition for scarce resources is intensive (Kotter, 1979), and the environment is hostile (Weick and Daft, 1983).

Based on the organization's belief about the environment and the organization's intrusiveness toward the environment, Weick and Daft (1983, 2001) categorized organizations into four types: undirected viewing, enacting, conditioned viewing, and discovering (see Figure 1).

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ENVIRONMENT	Unanalyzable	<p>UNDIRECTED VIEWING Constrained interpretations Non-routine, informal data Hunch, rumour, chance opportunities</p>	<p>ENACTING Experimentation, testing, coercion, inventing environment Learning by doing</p>
	Analyzable	<p>CONDITIONED VIEWING Interprets within traditional boundaries Passive detection Routine, formal data</p>	<p>DISCOVERING Formal research Questioning, survey, data gathering Active detection</p>
		Passive	Active
ORGANIZATIONAL INTRUSIVENESS			

Source: Weick and Daft (1984, p. 289)

Figure 1.
The organizational interpretation model

Enactment as an organizing process

The enactment concept is a synthesis of self-fulfilling prophecies, retrospective sensemaking, commitment, and social information processing (Weick, 1988). It exchanges the idea of environment as given for the one as constructed (Czarniawska, 2005). It involves the process of making ideas and visions real by acting upon them, where the outcome is an enacted environment, i.e., “an orderly, material, social construction that is subject to multiple interpretations” (Weick, 1988, p. 307).

The concept of enactment was first introduced by Weick (1969) as part of the organizing process in 1969 and was developed further in 1979. Weick (1969, p. 91) stated that “organizing consists of the resolving of equivocality in the enacted environment by means of interlocked behaviors embedded in conditionally related processes.” The aim of organizing is to reduce equivocality. Weick (1969) claimed that equivocality is different from uncertainty and ambiguity. Uncertainty and ambiguity in organizations refer to the “absence of meaning” or “confused meaning” (Weick, 1979, p. 174). Meanwhile, equivocality refers to information having two or more clear and reasonable meanings (Weick, 1979). This implies multiple alternatives from which organizational members need to choose.

Furthermore, the process of organizing is also known as the organizational conversation (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004), in which organizational members relate to each other through some common objects of concern. The conversation aims to determine a foundation of action and maintain the coordination between an organization’s members in responding to their environment. This is a process to reduce equivocality through repetitive and reciprocal behavior among organizational members.

The organizing process involves three choice points: the enactment of a specific environmental change with some degree of equivocality, the selection of an interpretation to reduce the equivocality, and the retention of causal relationships manifested in the interpretation (Bantz, 1989; Weick, 1969).

Ecological changes are the source of raw materials with equivocality that the organizational members need to make sense of. Enactment is closely connected to ecological changes, since the changes can create an enactable environment (Weick, 1969). Organizational members are usually not aware of environments when things run smoothly. Only when there are changes do they start to make sense of what is happening. Weick (1979, p. 130) remarked that “enactment is the only process where the organism directly engages an external ‘environment.’” When changes occur, organizational members isolate the changes for closer attention. This is a bracketing process “to construct, re-arrange, single out and demolish many objective features of their surroundings” (Weick, 1979, p. 164). Organizational members may cause ecological

changes as well. These changes force them to do something next, which produces further ecological changes.

Since enactment is linked to ecological changes, the process provides the equivocal raw materials, which then are removed by the selection process. In the selection process, organizational members examine previous cues, label them, and link them with past experiences or actions, and choose reasonable stories that are good enough for carrying on current activities (Weick, 2001). Selection is about producing an answer to the question: "What's the story here?" (Weick, 2001, p. 237). This involves "editing, pruning, and winnowing" activities (Weick, 2001, p. 237), which is essentially "an ongoing, unknowable, unpredictable streaming of experience in search of answers to the question" (Weick *et al.*, 2005, p. 410). With selection, an organization selects interpretations of the environment. This is usually in the form of a cause map that contains interconnected variables. Organizational members tend to choose a cause map that helps them to reduce equivocality. Cause maps that are not helpful are eliminated. Thus, cause maps allow organizational members to interpret what happens in situations they face, as well as to express themselves in that same situation and be understood by others (Weick, 1979).

Methodology

Research context

The Indonesian mining industry was chosen as the research context of the current study. Despite being a significant player in the country's economic sector, the industry has a questionable reputation for social responsibility and its relationships with many of the key stakeholders (such as general public, local government, media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)). Further, the socio-cultural and political changes in Indonesia, from an authoritarian into a democratic system during post-Suharto (who ruled Indonesia between 1966 and 1998) era provide a significant context to examine how the national and local context led to the development of PR functions and practices.

Historically, PR was first introduced in Indonesia during the 1950s when a number of multinational companies (such as PT Stanvac and PT Caltex Pacific International) commenced business in the country and needed to build good relationships with the Indonesian Government and general public (Ananto, 2004; Putra, 1996). The foreign and domestic capital investment laws, passed in 1967, resulted in an increasing number of foreign and domestic investors (Putra, 1996). As a result, the number of PR agencies and PR practitioners working within organizations also increased significantly (Ananto, 2004).

The Suharto Government, who ruled Indonesia for 32 years, had suppressed public opinions. PR was limited to a one-way communication process (Ananto, 2004). PR practitioners were mainly assigned to providing the media with favorable publicity while ensuring that unfavorable publicity was kept out. They were merely communication technicians who executed policy assigned by others in companies and were not involved in the decision-making process (Ananto, 2004; Putra, 1996).

During the Suharto era, the government provided security around mining areas through the use of the military power. The mining industry enjoyed a privileged position, where direct communication with the government was made possible through official reports (Wiriosudarmo, 2001). This system meant that the mining industry could avoid communicating with the public and was able to ignore the public's demand for information about its operations (Wiriosudarmo, 2001).

Suharto's resignation in May 1998, however, gave new hope for the growth of the PR profession. Since 1999, when freedom of speech and expression became legal, the number of mass media outlets increased. People became more concerned about the democratic system, law protection, and human rights. Today there are more public movements that are demanding transparency, accountability, reliability, responsibility, and fairness.

This democratic atmosphere (Thompson, 2008) has had an influence on the way companies manage their relationships with the public.

As Indonesia has moved toward a more democratic system, there have been more public pressures on mining companies and the number of conflicts with the community has increased (Wiriosudarmo, 2001). In addition, the Indonesian Government issued Law No. 12 of 1999 which decentralizes many authorities (including environment, health, education, public works, and land management) to local government. Virtually all strategic sectors are affected by the decentralization policy, including the mining industry, as most aspects of mining operations are under the jurisdiction of local government (Wahju, 2002; Wiriosudarmo, 2001). This background accordingly provides an important site for exploring the way the companies interpret their ecological changes and how their perceptions shape the way they manage their relationships with their stakeholders.

Research method

In order to systematically investigate the enactment process of PR, a case study approach toward the Indonesian mining industry was adopted. Case study method is appropriate for the present study since the phenomenon of how PR is constructed could not be separated from its context. The case study allows the researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under the investigation, since it is conducted in a natural setting where the process is studied (Andrade, 2009). Through the case study, the researchers were able to undertake a detailed analysis of the cases chosen within their setting, understand them from the participants' points of view, note many different factors that influence the process, and pay attention to how those factors relate to each other (Daymon and Holloway, 2002; Yin, 2009).

More specifically, the present study utilized a multiple case design. Three large mining companies were selected to represent three different ownership types of mining companies operating in Indonesia: multinational corporation (MNC), state-owned, and privately owned Indonesian mining companies. The specific companies were selected from a list of mining companies provided by the Indonesian Mining Association. The selection criteria include: having an articulated PR policy; having a unit responsible for conducting PR activities; starting its operation during Suharto era and continuing to operate until post-Suharto era; and allowing researchers to access the data within the organization. A brief description of the three companies is summarized in Table I.

	Company A (the Indonesia private mining company)	Company B (the multinational mining company)	Company C (the state-owned mining company)
Year of establishment	1991	1997	1968
Location	A remote area isolated from the district government	One island of Indonesia	Nine mining sites across Indonesia
Brief description	Will cease its operation by 2021 Previously owned by foreign investors, but in 2001 all of its shares were sold to an Indonesian private company	The company has contributed significantly to the province's income Employs 7,200 people, where 60% of them are from the local community	It is a result of a merger of several single state-owned mining companies Sold 35% of its shares to the public in 1997

Participants in the study

Top management	1	1	1
PR practitioners	16	12	6
Total number of participants	17	13	7

Table I.
Brief profiles of the three companies

The primary data for the present study were collected through semi-structured interviews. As shown in Table I, 37 informants participated in the interviews, representing two groups: top-level management members who were directly responsible for the PR unit, and members of units who were responsible for PR functions at the operational level. The interviews were carried out using an interview guide which contained a list of questions and topics needed to be covered. Since most participants are Indonesians, the interview guide was translated into Indonesian. This translation was checked and approved by a translator who was accredited by The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters of Australia. During the interview process, a copy of interview guide was provided to the interviewees, so they could ask for clarification on any specific terms and/or questions that they did not understand. All interviews were tape-recorded with the permission from the interviewees. The average time of the interviews was between 45 and 60 minutes. Data collected from semi-structured interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using NVivo program. In addition to interviews, several official documents were also collected and analyzed, such as newsletters, magazines, brochures, annual reports, code of ethics, and any other files of company activities.

Findings and discussion

The organizational interpretation model

Organizational interpretation of its environment depends on its assumption whether environments are analyzable or unanalyzable and its intrusiveness toward its environments (Weick and Daft, 1983, 1984, 2001). Using the organizational interpretation model, the findings suggest that the three mining companies under investigation can be classified into different positions in the matrix (see Figure 2).

In the Suharto era, the Indonesian private company (Company A) and the state-owned company (Company C) can be classified as conditioned viewing organizations. This type of organization is not intrusive and assumes that environments are analyzable (Aguilar, 1967). The participants from these companies perceived the situation during the Suharto era as more stable and controllable. This is shown in a statement from a participant who felt secure during the Suharto era:

For us, we feel secure during the New Order era, because the government provides security. Thus, if there were public movements that threatened the company, the government straightaway handled

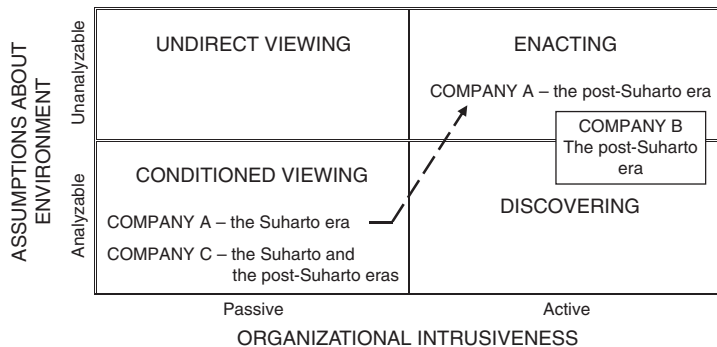


Figure 2.
The organizational interpretation model of the Indonesian mining companies

Company A: the Indonesian private company
Company B: the multinational company
Company C: the state-owned company

Source: Adapted from Weick and Daft (1984)

them. Whether we agree or disagree that the government was abusing the human rights, we never got involved in it. For us, the security approach supported by the government in the New Order era made us secure (Participant A₄).

Other statements from the participants who claimed that: “the number of social conflicts was low” (Participant A₁₀), “[...] that the government provided us with security assurance” (Participant C₁), and “we just needed to deal with the central government” (Participant C₄) reflect the participants’ confidence that the environment was manageable.

They used rational analysis and relied upon routine to act toward their environment. This kind of organizational approach mostly relies on statistical data, facts and figures, documentations, or publications to decide on their future actions. If there was a change, they believed that the answer to handle the problem was already there, as shown in this statement: “If there were public movements that threatened the company, the government straightaway handled them” (Participant A₄). These findings show that they believed in uniform relationships among significant objects around them and that environments were analyzable. They perceived the environment as something given and that the answers to all problems were found within the environment. Thus, they did not take any further steps to learn about the environment. They mostly relied on routine documents, such as annual reports or publications to determine their further actions.

The findings also suggest that during the Suharto era, the Indonesian private company and the state-owned company were less intrusive. Intrusiveness refers to the extent to which the organization actively or passively engages in the environment to understand it (Weick and Daft, 2001). These companies were passive organizations. Statements from participants, such as “there was no urgent need to perform good relations with local communities and establish PR unit at the mining area” (Participant A₁) or “the role of the military was very dominant to secure mining area” (Participant A₁), indicated that they relied on other resources to manage environments. They did not actively search for answers in their environment. There was no specific department assigned to better understand their environment. Even though there was a unit at the mining site that also conducted PR functions, the unit simply functioned as a receptor to sense whatever data happened to flow by the organization.

The socio-cultural and political changes in the post-Suharto era, however, were perceived by the participants from the Indonesian private mining company (Company A) as a chaotic situation. They experienced uncertainties, such as there being no protection from the military anymore and mining policy became less clear as the decentralized system moved authority to the local government and demands from the communities over issues such as land compensation, were perceived as destabilizing. As observed by one of the participants:

These have changed political settings. Communities strongly rejected the involvement of local government in solving conflicts with the company. At the same time, the government was not willing to secure the mining by providing military support as it was during the Suharto era (Participant A₄).

Participant A₃, who was responsible for handling relationships with the local government, pointed out that the decentralized government in the post-Suharto era also affected the company, since most aspects of the industry were under the jurisdiction of local government. He admitted that in the post-Suharto era, the company needed to build relationships with the local government. He observed that the local government started to show its authority, as implied in his example:

In our daily activities, we accept many proposals that according to our procedures are not appropriate. For instance, if the MUSPIDA[1] needs to attend a national meeting in Jakarta, they will ask for airfares. If there is an event, they will ask for accommodation, catering, transportation [...]. We cannot easily refuse their proposals [...]. We need their authorization for our mining operations (Participant A₃).

Conflicts of interest between the companies and the communities as well as the local government were perceived by participants as destructive conditions for the company. In this situation, the participants perceived the environment as unanalyzable as they found difficulty in understanding the situation. Weick and Daft (2001) asserted that when environments are changing, organizational members perceive them as less analyzable. To understand the changing environment, qualitative data rather than statistical data along with judgments and intuitions of organizational members have a larger role to play in the interpretation process. For instance, to explore the community's aspirations, participants from the Indonesian private mining company (Company A) claimed that they conducted focus group discussion, facilitated by some NGOs.

The Indonesian private mining company (Company A) became more active during the post-Suharto era. They allocated resources to intrude into environments and to search for activities. As stated by Participant A₅, the company had to allocate resources and develop strategies to handle social pressures and conflicts, which have tended to be uncontrollable. The establishment of an independent unit to manage relationships with external environments and the appointment of field officers who live in the community support this finding. Company A established an independent unit at the mining site that is responsible for PR functions. The unit consists of five departments: Community Empowerment, Land Management, External Relations, Project Management and Evaluation, and Government Relations, and was chaired by a general manager who was always involved in board meetings with other senior executives. The participants claimed that this unit was the biggest unit in the company. There were approximately 99 members of staff within this unit. The organizational design of this unit suggested that the company focused on allocating resources to understand the community. Company A also created mechanisms, such as a community feedback system and social mapping, to research and draw interpretations about the environment. Therefore, Company A's organizational interpretations in the post-Suharto era can be classified as the enacting mode.

These mechanisms are also considered as compromising the organization autonomy. When the organization experiences conflicts with its stakeholders, the organization can keep enacting its organization autonomy by gaining protection for the organization, such as by taking legal action to protect the organization (Chittuparamban, 2013). This approach, however, may escalate the tense of conflicts. Accordingly, Company A chose to compromise their organization autonomy by allocating resources to deal with the conflicts.

The findings from the state-owned mining company show a different trend. Although the operations have been started since the Suharto era, the pattern in accessing the environment during the Suharto and post-Suharto eras remains the same. This was due to the fact that the legitimacy of Company C was still given by the government. As the participants from Company C noted, the company did not show an active intrusiveness to research the environment during the Suharto era. PR activities at the mining site had to be coordinated with the PR unit at head office. The participants revealed that as a state-owned company, they were obliged to follow government regulations. The government provided the company with the standard operating procedures, such as a guideline for conducting PR programs. The findings also showed that they did not conduct research to explore the environment. Their annual reports and financial reports became their database and reference to determine their next actions.

This pattern in the state-owned mining company remains unchanged in the post-Suharto era. The participants admitted that the socio-cultural and political condition in the post-Suharto was different from the one during the Suharto era. However, there were no significant resources allocated by Company C to research the environment. The company did not interpret the environment in a new way. Thus, in the post-Suharto era, the company is still classified as a conditioned viewing organization that remains passive in its interpretations and enactment of its environment.

The participants from the multinational mining company (Company B) responded to the interview questions based on their experiences in the post-Suharto era. A comment from its top manager: "I cannot comment [about what happened in the Suharto era] because we did it after Suharto" showed that interpretations focused only on what was happening currently. The MNC started its construction in 1997 and commenced its commercial production in 2000. The findings show that the company developed a combination of the discovering and enacting interpretation models.

Located in one island of Indonesia, the MNC was the first mining company operating in the area. Being a new company operating in an area where mining industry was something new to the local community led the MNC to actively intrude on the environment. Gaining social acceptance and organizational legitimacy is one of the biggest challenges faced by a new company (Stinchcombe, 1965; Singh *et al.*, 1986). Consequently, a new company tends to actively research the environment (Kimberly and Miles, 1980). The MNC needed to introduce the mining industry to the community and to convince them to accept the industry and the company. Participants from the MNC perceived the environment in the post-Suharto era as unpredictable and unanalyzable. This is in line with Weick and Daft's (2001) statement that new organizations tend to perceive environments as unpredictable and unanalyzable as they do not have enough previous experiences about the environment. To understand their environment, the MNC revealed that they conducted a perception survey that was facilitated by an independent survey company. This indicated the discovering model, which presumed an analyzable environment and a well-prepared survey was conducted to communicate the information back to the organization (Weick and Daft, 2001).

The socio-cultural and political changes in the post-Suharto era, however, have influenced the company to assume a less analyzable community environment. Therefore, the MNC invested some resources to construct and enact their local environment. This indicates an enacting organization. When the company started its commercial operation early in the post-Suharto era, it established an independent unit to manage relationships with the external publics. Each external public, that is, the government, community, media, and NGOs, was managed by a different unit. Thus, each public could be handled separately. The MNC assigned field officers who were 100 percent local people and recruited from the community. The company also conducted a participatory rural appraisal[2] that they claimed as the way to discover the community's aspiration. Based on the way the company interpreted their environment, it can be concluded that the MNC (Company B) could be classified as an organization in between the enacting and discovering models.

The enactment of PR functions

When organizational members perceive that their environment is unanalyzable and contains equivocality, the enactment process occurs (Weick, 1979). The findings of the current study suggested that PR functions are influenced by the enactment process of the companies. The present study found active bracketing activities conducted by the organizational members to construct their environment. Enactment is mostly triggered by ecological changes that the organizations perceived to be crucial to manage (Weick, 1979). The socio-cultural and political changes in the post-Suharto era have been perceived by participants from the three large mining companies as factors influencing their enactment process.

The findings showed that the participants noticed unexpected events, unpleasant situations, and sudden deviation from their routines. Only if there are anomalies within environments will the organization recognize that there are ecological changes. There were two possibilities that the participants could do: ignore the anomalies, or construct a new environment and enact it. The findings suggested that the Indonesian private mining company and the MNC chose to construct and enact the environment in new ways. As maintained by enactment theory, to reduce uncertainties due to ecological changes, the

participants not only interpreted the events, but also enacted them based on their interpretations. The participants stated that they had to enact the environment due to the characteristics of the mining industry that mineral resources could not be removed to another area and that they had to deal with the community directly.

This ecological change, however, was not enacted by the state-owned mining company in a new way. As discussed earlier, this company was classified as a passive organization. Although they recognized the socio-cultural and political changes in the post-Suharto era, the participants perceived the situation as controllable. Weick (1979) remarked that there are three circumstances where the enacted environment substitutes for the natural environment: when the organizational members accept the enacted environment and perceive it as unequivocal, when the organizational members who try to understand current equivocality perceive the incoming equivocal input as something known rather than unknown, and when the organizational members literally do exactly the same as what they have done before and ignore the current ecological changes.

There are two possible explanations to understand why the state-owned mining company did not enact the event. First, they perceived the event (i.e. the change from an authoritarian to a democratic system) did not cause any significant impacts on the company or did not lead to equivocality. Thus, they did not need to enact a new environment. There was no need to negotiate with the communities to gain public acceptance, as its organizational legitimacy was given by the government. The alternative explanation is that they enacted the standard operating procedures in conducting PR that they believed were still able to guide their routine activities. Thus, the company did exactly the same as what they had done before and ignored the current ecological changes.

In enactment, organizational members created cause maps to explain their interpretations and actions. This is a selection process. When organizational members experience chaos, they will try to sort this chaos into items or events that are then linked, serially ordered, and connected. Cause maps contain an "if-then assertion." There were cause maps created by the participants in the present study, such as:

If the company wants to be a good neighbor, the company cannot close its eyes for not giving positive contribution to the neighborhood (Participant B₆).

If the company breaches the *adat* law, there will be a war (Participant A₁₂).

If there is no permission from the community, the company will not be able to mine the mineral (Participant A₁ and Participant B₁).

How these cause maps together with the enacted environments shaped the organizational design and structure and PR practices are summarized in Figure 3 for the Indonesian private mining company and the MNC and Figure 4 for the state-owned mining company.

The participants revealed that the first action their companies did to reduce uncertainties due to political changes in the post-Suharto era was allocating resources to replace the military force in anticipating and handling potential conflicts with the communities. These actions describe how active organizations allocate resources to research and construct the environment, as well as how they follow up the decision with further actions (Weick and Daft, 1984). The participants claimed that they invested resources to build relationships with the community. This supports the proposition that enactment is about taking action to react to what they believe in. The companies enacted the environment by changing the company's organizational structure. They established an independent unit at the mining site to manage PR functions.

Further, the participants believe that there was a shift of power from the central government to the community. The community was perceived to become more powerful than ever before. In their views, community includes not only ethnic groups who resided in

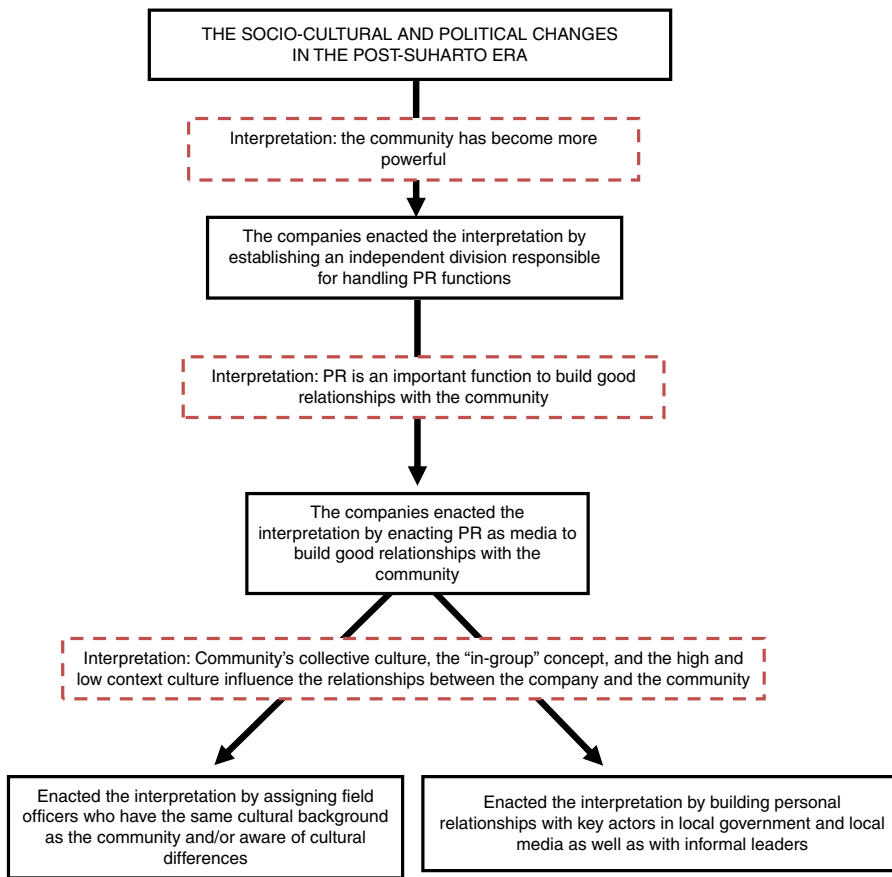


Figure 3. The enactment of PR functions in the Indonesian private mining company and the multinational mining company

the mining area, but also local government from village level to district level, local media, local NGOs, and any other local community groups, such as local entrepreneur groups or other interest groups. It can be argued that the community may not really hold power over the companies. Enactment theory, however, maintains that enactment is not about finding the right answer; instead, it is about finding reasonable actions (Weick, 2009). It is not about the decision-making process either. Instead, it is about what the organizational members think they face and their perceptions that are confirmed by the actions they take (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2013). In other words, it is about how actions tend to confirm their perceptions. Thinking and acting are not separate activities but are intertwined and operate through the mechanism of sensemaking (Bodhanya, 2014). The companies enacted such perception by changing the focus of their PR practices from building relationships with the central government into relationships with the community.

The present study also found that the participants perceived community's collective culture, the "in-group" concept, and the high-context culture are important factors in building relationships with the community. There are four reasons why participants perceived community culture as important. First, the participants stated that land acquisition often caused conflict between the company and the communities due to the ownership status of the cultural land as well as the cultural value of the land itself. They observed that the company

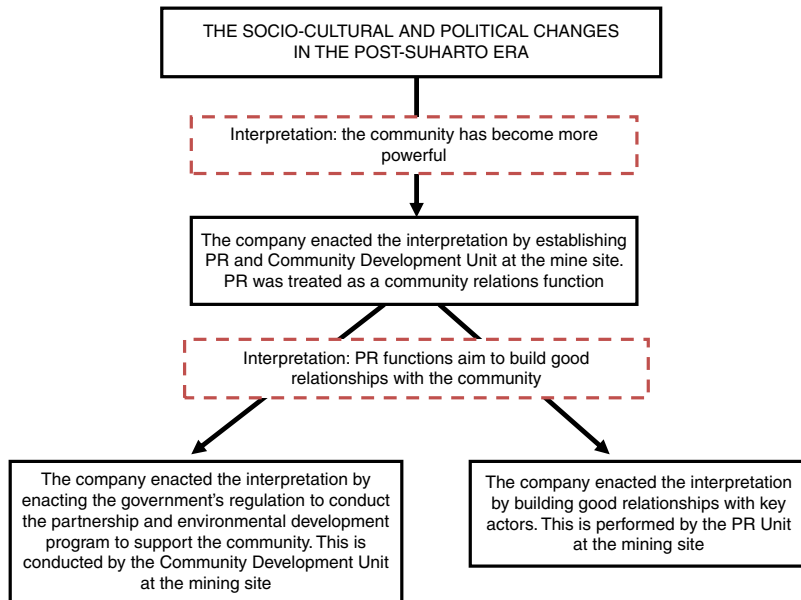


Figure 4.
The enactment of the Indonesian state-owned mining company

and the community had a different perception of the value of the land. The community considered land as part of their lives that must be preserved for their ancestors. Meanwhile, the company treated the land as a mining commodity with a currency value.

Second, the participants observed the dominant collectivistic value among the ethnic groups living around the mining area. They characterized the collective community as a group that prioritized group goals over personal goals, and that individuals were more likely to be attached to their leaders. Within this culture, the participants believed that the community was dependent on powerful figures, such as ethnic group leaders, elderly people, religious leaders, *adat* leaders, or the wealthy. Individuals may also be able to gain power because of charisma, educational background, formal important position in the government, or family relationships with powerful figures. In the current study, those people were considered by the participants as key actors within communities.

Third, the participants stated that the community members preferred to speak in their ethnic languages rather than in Indonesian. They also observed that in remote areas there were still some ethnic groups who could not speak Indonesian fluently. They pointed out that understanding ethnic languages was also important since some languages (such as Javanese language) recognized stratification to show hierarchy and respect. The importance of ethnic language can be seen from the following quote:

We mostly communicate in *Bugis* language. We can communicate easily and closely. They treat me as their family. [...] also helps me to approach them [Participant A₁₁].

Finally, the participants asserted the importance of religion in the community. They observed that the community perceived religion as part of their life. The majority of the community members practiced religion, where Islam was the dominant religion of the community around the three mining companies under study. In line with this, Muslim leaders were also noted by the participants as key actors within their community.

The participants revealed that cultural factors influenced the way they conducted PR practices. Therefore, the companies build personal relationships with key actors in the

communities in enacting their PR. This action is also considered as the institutionalization process, which is defined as “the process of incorporating social patterns such as norms and practices into the structure and the functioning logic of these organizations” (de Freitas and Medeiros, 2015, p. 319). In the Indonesian private mining company and the MNC, the personal relationship approach was further enacted by expanding the organizational design by assigning field officers under the Community Relations Department. Most of field officers were local people who understood local languages and cultures. This enables the field officers to be accepted as part of the community, which in turn contributes to the social acceptance of and support for the mining companies.

Conclusions

Enactment theory maintains that there are uncertainties within the environment that urge organizations to seek interpretations, which then underline their actions (Weick, 1969, 1979, 2001). The organization develops specific ways to interpret its environment, whether by actively or passively engaging in their environment. The present study found that the Indonesian private mining company and the MNC actively engaged in their environment during the post-Suharto era. These companies allocated resources to search for information to help them interpret and enact their findings. Unlike these two companies, the state-owned mining company did not actively search for information from its environment. This company relied mainly on routine data or documentation to interpret their environment.

PR was enacted by the companies as a response to the ecological changes in the post-Suharto era. There were two processes involved: the process of selecting the interpretation of the ecological changes and the process to decide how to act upon the interpretation chosen. The socio-cultural and political changes in the post-Suharto era have been seen to cause ecological changes. The participants interpreted this as a condition in which the community became more powerful. This was the environment created in the mind of the participants. The interpretation was influenced by their past experiences, i.e. experiences during the Suharto era. When they selected the interpretation, they tried to make sense of what happened and carry on the current activities. The participants then enacted the environment by creating the appearance of it or by doing something about it. They then decided to act upon this interpretation by enacting PR, which focused on managing relationships between the company and the community. The companies also enacted the environment by establishing an independent division at the mining site that was responsible for handling PR functions. The companies enacted a substantive approach by changing their organization designs to gain organizational legitimacy.

The enactment of PR as community relationships functions has contributed to a further enactment process. The participants perceived the community’s collective culture influenced the relationships between the community and the company. They enacted this interpretation by building personal relationships with key actors and leaders, since they believed that the peoples’ opinion was more likely to be linked to their leaders’ view. This shows how the companies employ societal values to conform companies’ behaviors to social expectations. This enactment contributes to a further enactment in the Indonesian private mining company and the MNC. These companies actively engaged in their environment by assigning field officers who had the same cultural background as the community and/or an awareness of cultural differences. They believed that the community would accept the field officers as part of their “in-group” and accordingly would act as agents as well as interpreters for the company in building relationships with the community. Thus, they enacted the role of PR as agents and cultural interpreters.

What these processes show is that the action to enact the interpretation was influenced by the participants’ beliefs. It is about “believing is seeing,” which tends to follow a self-fulfilling prophecy. When the participants believed that by doing something good for

the community they could build good relationships with them, then their actions would confirm this belief. The participants behaved in such a way as to bring about the confirmation or rationalization of their beliefs (Weick *et al.*, 2005). These self-fulfilling beliefs, whether true or false, had consequences in determining their social reality.

Limitation and future research

The current study employed enactment theory and multiple case study design to investigate how perceptions of an organizational environment among PR practitioners and top managers influence PR functions and practices of the organizations. The research context is large mining companies operating in Indonesia. The present study contributes to the PR literature by describing how organizational members construct and enact PR functions and practices as well as how the organization accommodates local values in the PR enactment in an emerging market like Indonesia.

Ideally, having more diverse case studies across a wide variety of industries would provide a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics and complexity of PR practices, especially in emerging markets. In practice, data availability and access is always the biggest challenge in conducting such a study. Nevertheless, the present study covers three companies representing three different types of ownerships: Indonesian private company, multinational, and state-owned company. Future research may explore how PR practices and functions are enacted in a cross-industry and/or cross-country context.

Notes

1. MUSPIDA (*Musyawarah Pimpinan Daerah*) is a group of local leaders that consists of leaders of the local government, police, and military.
2. Participatory rural appraisal is a method of interacting with the communities, to understand them and learn from them. This method initiates the participation of the communities to share their problems as well as encourages the communities to analyze their problems and find solutions for them. This method aims to understand the community from the community's point of view (Narayananamy, 2009).

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