



Ethical Dilemmas of Green Leadership in Corporate Social Responsibility: Implications for Community Welfare in the Cirata Geulis Program

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Abstract

This study examines how green leaders navigate ethical dilemmas during the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs in vulnerable communities and how these decisions influence community welfare. Challenging the prevailing assumption within Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) scholarship of a linear alignment between ecological and social objectives, the study explores right-versus-right moral tensions in community-based CSR practices. A qualitative single embedded case study was conducted on the Cirata Geulis Program of PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata. Data were collected through interviews with six key informants, field observations, and analysis of program documents. The findings identify three major forms of ethical dilemmas: temporal conflicts between immediate livelihood needs and long-term ecological processes; tensions between governance accountability and community relations; and the representation of social conflict through monetized corporate metrics. Program actors responded through phased livelihood support, mediation and rule formalization, and the pragmatic use of Social Return on Investment indicators. These responses helped sustain participation and program continuity but did not fully resolve concerns related to livelihood security, procedural fairness, and community representation. The study extends GTL by positioning community welfare as a critical dimension for understanding green leadership in vulnerable settings, particularly concerning livelihood security, participation, and the fairness of program decisions.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana pemimpin berwawasan lingkungan menavigasi dilema etis dalam pelaksanaan program Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) pada komunitas rentan serta bagaimana keputusan tersebut berimplikasi terhadap kesejahteraan komunitas. Berangkat dari kritik terhadap asumsi Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) yang cenderung memandang tujuan ekologis dan sosial dapat diselaraskan secara linear, penelitian ini menelaah dilema moral right-versus-right yang muncul dalam praktik CSR berbasis komunitas. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus tunggal tertanam pada Program Cirata Geulis PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara

Keywords

Green Transformational Leadership, Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethical Dilemmas, Community Welfare, community empowerment

Kata Kunci

Green Transformational Leadership, Corporate Social Responsibility, Dilema Etis, Kesejahteraan Komunitas, pemberdayaan komunitas.



terhadap enam informan kunci, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumen program. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga bentuk dilema utama, yaitu konflik temporal antara kebutuhan penghidupan segera dan proses ekologis jangka panjang; ketegangan antara akuntabilitas tata kelola dan relasi komunitas; serta representasi konflik sosial melalui metrik korporasi yang dimonetisasi. Aktor program merespons melalui dukungan penghidupan secara bertahap, mediasi dan formalisasi aturan, serta penggunaan pragmatis indikator Social Return on Investment. Respons tersebut membantu mempertahankan partisipasi dan keberlanjutan program, tetapi belum sepenuhnya menyelesaikan persoalan keamanan penghidupan, keadilan prosedural, dan representasi komunitas. Penelitian ini memperluas pemahaman GTL dengan menempatkan kesejahteraan komunitas sebagai dimensi penting dalam menilai kepemimpinan hijau di komunitas rentan.

Introduction

The perspective of Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) has been widely employed to explain how leaders promote pro-environmental behavior, drive green innovation, and successfully implement sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that GTL enhances organizational sustainability strategies and environmental performance (Abbas, 2024; Chen & Chang, 2013; Xu et al., 2025). However, the existing literature predominantly conceptualizes the relationship between GTL and CSR as a positive, linear association. Green leaders are generally assumed to possess the visionary capability to seamlessly align economic, social, and environmental objectives. Consequently, the literature often overlooks the intense value conflicts and moral trade-offs that emerge when these sustainability goals become inherently incompatible. The ethical dilemma dimension of green leadership, in which leaders must choose between two competing, equally legitimate obligations, described by Kidder (1995) as a "right-versus-right" tension, remains largely underexplored within GTL research.

This gap becomes particularly significant in the context of emerging economies, where CSR implementation frequently occurs within communities characterized by high socioeconomic vulnerability and strong resource dependence. In such environments, sustainability decisions are rarely straightforward "win-win" scenarios. Enforcing ecological regulations, for instance, may protect the environment but simultaneously disrupt the immediate livelihoods of communities living in extreme poverty. In these contexts, the effectiveness of green transformational leaders is determined not only by their ability to inspire green innovation but also by their capacity to navigate competing demands among corporate efficiency, social justice, and ecological preservation while safeguarding the welfare of the communities they serve.

From a social welfare perspective, however, the relevance of CSR cannot be assessed only through environmental performance or program continuity. Community-based interventions also influence livelihood security, participation, access to productive resources, and the capacity of vulnerable groups to shape decisions affecting their lives.

Social development connects economic participation with broader improvements in social well-being and inclusion (Midgley, 2014), while community development emphasizes local agency, social justice, and collective capacity (Ife, 2016). Within CSR settings, these concerns are particularly important because corporate actors often control funding, institutional rules, and program evaluation, whereas community members may depend on the intervention for immediate livelihood opportunities. Community welfare therefore provides an important lens for examining how green leadership decisions distribute benefits, risks, and participation within vulnerable communities.

Around the world, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) represent a unique arena for these tensions, as they are increasingly expected to reconcile strict commercial and public-service mandates with growing demands for environmental accountability (Garde-Sanchez et al., 2018). In Indonesia, energy-generating State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) face a particularly acute version of this challenge. Their core mandate to safeguard an uninterrupted national electricity supply often comes into direct tension with their responsibility to empower vulnerable communities through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Muafi, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2011).

This broader institutional tension is clearly illustrated by the operations of PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata. The company manages the Cirata Reservoir, a vital national hydroelectric and floating solar power infrastructure in West Java, and is confronted with a major ecological challenge, namely the proliferation of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*). Although removing this invasive species is essential for maintaining power plant efficiency, the reservoir also serves as the primary source of livelihood for thousands of local residents. To address this challenge, the company initiated the Cirata Geulis (Generating Sustainability for Livelihood Resilience) program. The program seeks to transform an ecological problem into economic opportunities by empowering vulnerable groups, including women, older adults, and people living in extreme poverty, to process water hyacinth into handicrafts, animal feed, and mushroom cultivation media.

However, implementing this community-based circular economy initiative generated profound ethical trade-offs for the program's leadership. Determining how to balance the urgent survival needs of vulnerable groups with the demands of sustainable corporate governance required continuous moral judgment. The complexity of these competing objectives makes the Cirata Geulis program an appropriate empirical setting for understanding how green transformational leadership operates under conditions that have received limited attention in the mainstream GTL literature.

To address this gap, this study examines the following research question: How does the green transformational leader of the Cirata Geulis program navigate the ethical dilemmas that emerge during CSR implementation within a vulnerable community? Rather than treating the identification of these dilemmas as a separate inquiry, this study considers their specific forms as an integral outcome that emerges directly from the empirical findings.

By addressing this research question, this study makes several contributions. Theoretically, it extends the GTL literature by emphasizing the ethical dilemma inherent in green leadership and linking it to community welfare concerns. Rather than assuming

that environmental and social objectives are inherently aligned, the study investigates how leadership decisions impact livelihood security, participation, community relations, and the distribution of program outcomes. Practically, the study provides a grounded understanding of how corporate social responsibility (CSR) actors negotiate ecological goals and community welfare in socioeconomically vulnerable contexts.

Literature Review

Green Transformational Leadership: Development and Limits

Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) refers to a leadership style in which leaders articulate an environmental vision, inspire followers toward pro-environmental behavior, and embed sustainability values into organizational practice. Over the past decade, empirical research has consistently linked GTL to a range of positive organizational outcomes. Chen and Chang (2013) show that green transformational leadership strengthens green product development performance by shaping employees' green creativity. Building on this line of work, Chen et al. (2014) and Çop et al. (2021) demonstrate that GTL fosters green organizational ambidexterity and green team resilience, both of which translate into stronger environmental performance (Chen et al., 2014; Çop et al., 2021). Singh et al., (2020) further shows that GTL drives green innovation, while Özgül's and Zehir's (2021) systematic review across multiple national contexts and economic sectors confirms that GTL is positively associated with sustainable organizational performance more broadly (Özgül and Zehir 2021; Singh et al., 2020). Most recently, Abbas (2024) shows that GTL strengthens the relationship between corporate social responsibility and green technological innovation, positioning green leadership as a moderating mechanism that helps firms translate CSR commitments into environmental outcomes (Abbas, 2024).

This positive association has continued to hold as the literature has expanded into smaller firms and more diverse institutional settings. Majali et al., (2022) find that GTL enhances green product innovation and, in turn, firm performance among small and medium enterprises, extending the construct's relevance beyond large corporations (Majali et al., 2022). Ledi et al., (2024) similarly show that GTL improves environmental performance both directly and indirectly through green innovation, with the strength of this pathway contingent on a firm's green dynamic capability (Ledi et al., 2024). In an emerging-economy setting closely related to the CSR context examined here, Xu et al., (2025) confirm that GTL mediates the relationship between corporate social responsibility and environmental performance among Chinese small and medium enterprises (Xu et al., 2025).

Taken together, this body of literature converges on two features. First, it is overwhelmingly quantitative, relying on cross-sectional surveys and structural equation modeling to test hypothesized relationships among GTL, green behavior, and firm-level outcomes. Second, and more consequentially, it treats the relationship between GTL and CSR as a positive linear association: a green leader who possesses the right vision and behavioral repertoire is assumed to be capable of aligning economic, social, and

environmental goals. Even the more recent, contextually varied studies have not fundamentally departed from this assumption. Ledi et al. (2024) themselves acknowledge that research on the boundary conditions under which GTL translates into environmental performance remains limited, and Saleem, Mateou, and Malik (2024) find that GTL's direct effect on environmental performance becomes statistically insignificant once mediating mechanisms such as employee green empowerment and self-efficacy are taken into account, suggesting that the pathway from green leadership to outcomes is considerably more contingent than the dominant narrative implies. Yet even these more nuanced accounts continue to frame GTL's limits in organizational or psychological terms; none examine the moment when environmental and socio-economic goals are not merely difficult to align but directly in tension. What this literature does not examine is the moment when these goals cannot be aligned, when a decision that serves environmental sustainability undercuts a community's economic needs, or when maintaining organizational accountability threatens social cohesion. The ethical-dilemma dimension of green leadership, in other words, remains largely unexamined.

Corporate Social Responsibility, Community Empowerment, and Welfare in Indonesian State-Owned Enterprises

In Indonesia, the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) is shaped by a distinct regulatory and socio-economic context. The foundational framework is established by Law No. 40 of 2007, which mandates that companies utilizing natural resources execute Social and Environmental Responsibility (TJSL) initiatives to improve the quality of life for both the company and the community (Kusumadewi et al., 2023). Specifically for BUMNs, this obligation is further governed by regulations such as Peraturan Menteri BUMN RI No. PER-06/MBU/09/2022, which requires these programs to target sustainable development and community welfare (Kusumadewi et al., 2023). Consequently, these state-owned entities are expected to fulfill a dual mandate, requiring them to maintain their core commercial and operational viability while simultaneously driving inclusive economic development and empowering surrounding populations (Rizky & Krisnawati, 2025).

However, what distinguishes this context from conventional CSR models is the profound socio-economic fragility of the targeted populations. BUMN operations frequently intersect with communities experiencing extreme poverty, irregular labor conditions, and high dependency on local natural resources. In such precarious environments, CSR interventions are not merely supplementary community relations exercises; they are fundamentally tied to the daily subsistence and social welfare of vulnerable demographics (Kusumadewi et al., 2023). Routine corporate decisions, such as restricting resource use for environmental restoration or modifying empowerment subsidies, carry disproportionate consequences for the community's basic survival.

It is precisely within this fragile intersection of corporate mandates and socio-economic vulnerability that ethical dilemmas emerge as a practical reality. An ethical dilemma in this context is not a choice between right and wrong, but a "right-versus-right" conflict, which is a choice between two mutually exclusive but equally justifiable moral

imperatives (Kidder, 1995). For instance, a green leader managing a BUMN CSR program must constantly weigh the "right" of enforcing strict corporate environmental accountability against the "right" of demonstrating compassion for a community's immediate survival needs. Consequently, understanding CSR implementation in developing economies requires treating these ethical dilemmas not as theoretical anomalies, but as the primary analytical lens through which the impact of leadership on community welfare is evaluated.

In this study, community welfare is understood not merely as increased income or the continuation of a CSR program. It encompasses the capacity of vulnerable participants to sustain their livelihoods, engage in decision-making, receive fair treatment within program governance, and benefit from collective resources over time. This perspective aligns with community development approaches that emphasize agency and participation, rather than viewing communities solely as recipients of corporate assistance (Ife, 2016; Midgley, 2014). Similarly, studies show that CSR becomes more relevant to social welfare when corporate resources are integrated with community participation, local capacity, and sustainable livelihood development (Hayati et al., 2023; Anzali et al., 2025).

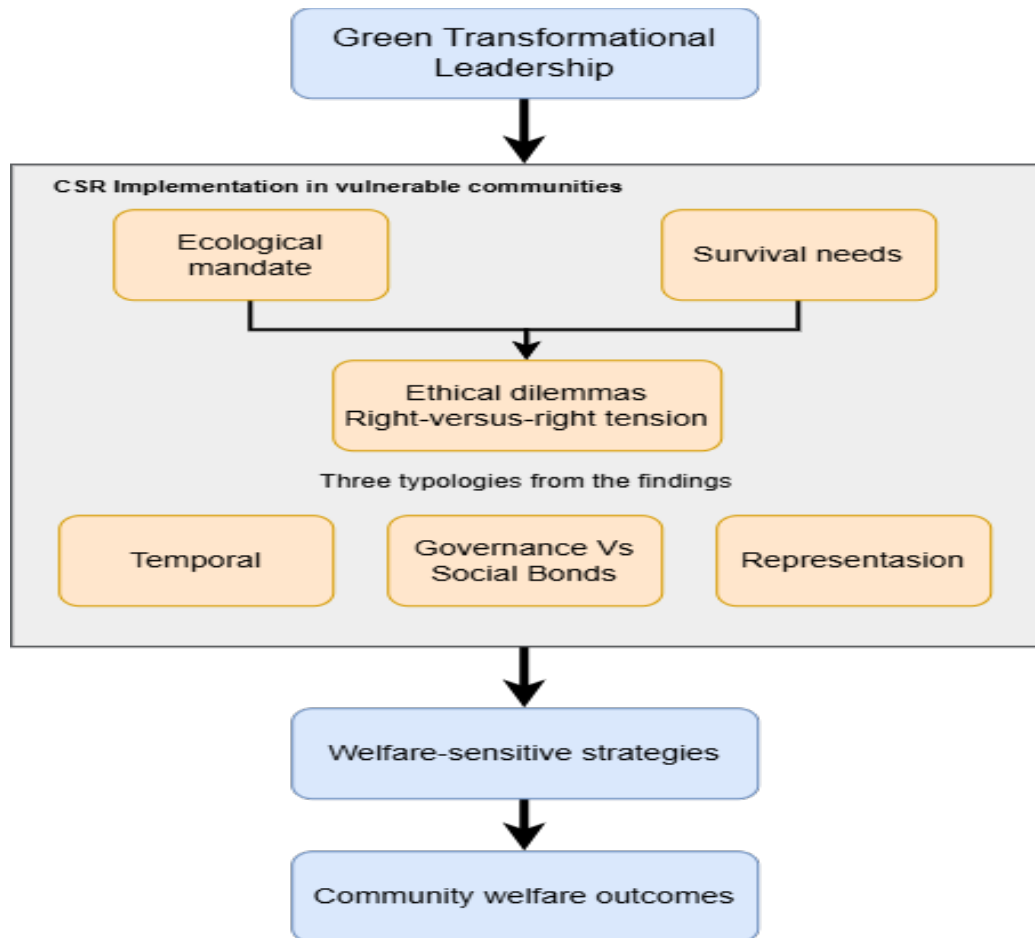
Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

A review of the existing literature reveals a significant theoretical gap within the Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) discourse. Current studies predominantly assume a linear and frictionless alignment among ecological, economic, and social objectives. Consequently, this literature fails to capture the practical reality of grassroots Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) implementation in vulnerable communities, where green leaders frequently face severe moral trade-offs between long-term sustainability targets and the immediate socio-economic survival of the local population.

To address this gap, this study proposes a conceptual framework anchored entirely within the GTL perspective. Moving away from multi-theoretical approaches that can obscure the primary leadership dynamic, this study utilizes GTL as the single theoretical foundation. Within this framework, the concept of ethical dilemmas serves not as a separate overarching theory, but as the primary analytical lens to examine the leader's decision-making process. The framework illustrates that a green leader encounters specific ethical tensions in the field and must act as a moral agent rather than merely an environmental visionary.

Ultimately, the leader's responses to these dilemmas are interpreted not only in relation to the continuity of the CSR initiative but also through their implications for community welfare. In this study, welfare implications are examined through livelihood security, participation, procedural fairness, and the sustainability of collective benefits.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study



Method

Study Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative field research design using a single embedded case study approach (Yin, 2018). The Cirata Geulis Program served as an overarching case, while its four distinct community-based circular economy initiatives, CIECRA, ECI, Medal Saluyu, and Simagmur, constituted the embedded units of analysis. This design enabled the study to examine ethical dilemmas both at the macro-program level and in their specific micro-manifestations across different beneficiary groups. Data collection took place at the Cirata Reservoir area, spanning the Purwakarta, Cianjur, and West Bandung regencies within the operational area of PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata, and was conducted in August 2025.

Participants

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the criterion of direct involvement in the strategic decision-making or grassroots implementation of the Cirata Geulis program. To capture the multi-level dynamics of ethical dilemmas and ensure systematic data presentation, six key informants were interviewed and coded sequentially from P1 to P6. At the corporate level, informants included the Assistant Manager, Ridwan Ramadhan (P1), representing the primary green transformational

leader, and the CSR Officer, Geraldly Noorzamarend RP (P2), to provide insights into institutional mandates, program governance, and leadership trade-offs. At the community level, four local leaders managing the embedded units were interviewed: the representative of the CIECRA craft group (P3), the representative of the Medal Saluyu livestock group (P4), the representative of the Simagmur maggot and mushroom group (P5), and the representative of the ECI livestock-feed group (P6).

Data Collection

Data was collected through three complementary and triangulated methods: field observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Field observations focused on production sites and group activities, including the CIECRA production house in Cipeundeuy village, the Medal Saluyu communal livestock area, and the Simagmur bioponds, and were recorded through field notes describing physical conditions, work processes, and group interactions. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in August 2025 and were guided by a protocol organized around three thematic areas aligned with the research questions: (1) the nature of trade-offs encountered in program decisions, such as continuing versus withdrawing assistance, or enforcing corporate rules versus preserving social relationships; (2) the moral reasoning and institutional considerations behind specific decisions; and (3) the perceived consequences for community welfare and program continuity.

Document Corpus

Document analysis drew on formal corporate reports and community records made available for this study. The primary corpus comprised the Laporan Inovasi Sosial PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata (2025), the Laporan Social Return on Investment (SROI) (2025), and the annual Social Mapping updates. These documents provided vital quantitative and narrative data regarding program history, beneficiary economic profiles, environmental metrics (e.g., water hyacinth clearance volumes), and formal organizational policies (such as the AD/ART bylaws) that contextualized and corroborated the interview and observational findings.

Data Analysis, Trustworthiness, and Participant Protection

Data were analyzed using coding procedures adapted from grounded theory techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The analytical coding proceeded systematically: (1) open coding extracted raw instances of conflicts and leadership decisions from the transcripts and documents; (2) axial coding categorized these raw codes into relational tensions (e.g., accountability versus communal harmony); and (3) selective coding synthesized these categories into the three final typologies presented in the Results section. This coding process was anchored exclusively within the Green Transformational Leadership perspective, focusing on how leaders navigated "right-versus-right" ethical dilemmas to safeguard community welfare.

Trustworthiness was established through rigorous data triangulation, cross-verifying accounts across corporate informants, community leaders, field observations, and formal company documents. To uphold ethical research standards and protect informant confidentiality, all informants are referred to by alphanumeric codes (P1 to P6) in this manuscript. Verbal and written informed consent was obtained from all

informants prior to the interviews, explicitly covering the use of their statements and operational data for academic publication.

Result

Overview of the Empirical Context: The Cirata Geulis Program

The empirical setting of this study revolves around the Cirata Geulis (Generating Sustainability for Livelihood Resilience) program, a socio-ecological intervention initiated by PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata. The program was designed to address a critical ecological threat, specifically the massive overpopulation of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and the mismanagement of organic and livestock waste in the Cirata Reservoir, while simultaneously tackling extreme poverty in the surrounding coastal villages. According to the Laporan Inovasi Sosial PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata (2025), the program had cleared and processed 1,724.2 tons of water hyacinth as of October 2025, transforming the invasive weed from an operational hazard into productive economic resources. To contextualize the gravity of the initial threat, the representative of the CIECRA group reflected on the community's prior despair: "Before this program, the water hyacinth was a curse. It choked our reservoir, broke our boat engines, and killed our fish. We never imagined that the very weed starving us could eventually help us feed our families." (P3, Interview, August 2025).

To implement this circular economy model, the program operates through four embedded units of analysis, each representing a community-based enterprise: (1) CIECRA, which utilizes dried water hyacinth for artisanal crafts; (2) ECI, which processes the weed into alternative animal feed; (3) Medat Saluyu, a communal livestock group that converts animal waste into organic fertilizer and produces water hyacinth silage; and (4) Simagmur, which integrates maggot cultivation with organic mushroom farming using water hyacinth as a substrate mixture for mushroom baglogs.

The Social Mapping report records that this intervention engages 144 direct beneficiaries, of whom 79 come from highly vulnerable demographics, including low-income female farmworkers, unemployed youth, elderly individuals, and people with disabilities. This intricate web of vulnerable stakeholders means that operationalizing the circular economy is fraught with human complexity. As the primary Green Leader highlighted, the reality on the ground frequently contradicts the neatness of program blueprints: "On paper, a circular economy looks perfect. But on the ground, we are dealing with human lives, extreme poverty, and daily desperation. Balancing the company's strict environmental targets with the community's raw survival needs is a constant moral tightrope." (P1, Interview, August 2025).

While the program indicates an effort to align ecological restoration and socio-economic empowerment, navigating the daily operations of these four embedded units places immense pressure on the program's leadership. It is precisely within this intersection, balancing the urgent livelihood needs of vulnerable groups with the rigorous demands of sustainable operational governance, that the green leader encounters a series of profound ethical trade-offs. The subsequent sections detail the three typologies of

ethical dilemmas that emerged during this CSR implementation, highlighting how the leader's resolution strategies directly impacted community welfare.

Figure 2 Water hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) infestation blanketing the Cirata Reservoir



Source: Social Innovation Report PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata, 2025

Temporal Dilemmas: Immediate Livelihood Needs versus Long-Term Circular Processes

The first major tension encountered during the implementation of the Cirata Geulis program was the temporal dilemma, rooted in the contrasting time horizons of the beneficiaries' survival needs and the maturation cycle of circular economy initiatives. According to the Social Mapping report, prior to the intervention, female farmworkers in Sukahaji Village earned approximately Rp 35,000 per day during harvest seasons, while casual female workers in Cipeundeuy Village are recorded as earning Rp 70,000 to Rp 100,000 per month. For these groups, economic orientation was strictly short-term, driven by the immediate necessity of daily survival.

Conversely, the transition to a sustainable circular economy, such as cultivating maggots, farming organic mushrooms, processing alternative animal feed, or weaving water hyacinth crafts, inherently requires a gestation period. Cultivating mushrooms from water hyacinth baglogs (growing media) and fermenting water hyacinth into viable animal feed take weeks to yield financial returns. This temporal mismatch created a practical ethical dilemma for the program's leadership: demanding vulnerable individuals to invest their time and labor into sustainable ecological processes meant stripping them of their immediate, albeit meager, daily wages.

This precarious reality was voiced directly by local leaders across different embedded units. The representative driving the Simagmur group articulated the daily desperation of the female farmworkers: "We understand the mushrooms will bring good money later. But my members kept asking what they were supposed to eat today. We can't feed our children with promises of next month's harvest. If they don't get paid today,

they will stop making the baglogs and go back to being casual laborers." (P5, Interview, August 2025). A parallel urgency was echoed by the representative of the ECI group regarding the extreme poor in Margalaksana Village: "Processing water hyacinth into animal feed takes time, and building a stable market takes even longer. But the casual laborers in our group, who used to get paid daily, couldn't afford to wait for the feed to sell. They needed income immediately just to survive the week." (P6, Interview, August 2025).

This urgent grassroots pressure placed the program's leadership in a profound temporal dilemma. Reflecting on this trade-off, the Green Leader expressed their internal conflict: "We faced a very difficult situation at the beginning. We couldn't just tell these mothers to patiently wait for the mushrooms to harvest next month, because they needed to buy rice for their children today. But if we just gave them cash charity, the empowerment program would fail." (P1, Interview, August 2025).

To navigate this tension, the program's leadership refrained from forcing a binary choice between achieving immediate economic relief and pursuing long-term sustainability. Instead, empirical data reveals that an accommodative, incremental strategy was employed to bridge the temporal gap and protect community welfare. Within the Simagmur unit, the leadership introduced a "waste savings" (tabungan sampah) scheme. Rather than waiting for the final sale of the harvested agricultural products, community members who collected and deposited organic waste were provided with immediate, non-cash compensation in the form of basic food staples, such as eggs, cooking oil, and harvested mushrooms. Meanwhile, for the ECI and CIECRA groups, the leadership implemented an intense "phasing-in" strategy. By providing comprehensive operational subsidies, such as raw material transport and production equipment, and securing early institutional buyers, the program effectively guaranteed an initial, stable income stream while the broader commercial market for the alternative feed and crafts matured.

These mechanisms served as an immediate safety net, subsidizing the beneficiaries' daily survival needs while the longer-term ecological processes matured. Furthermore, the leadership transitioned toward a 'phasing-down' stage only after the economic cycle of the groups stabilized. Program documents record monthly incomes during this stabilized phase ranging from Rp 1,200,000 to Rp 2,600,000. By systematically accommodating short-term survival urgencies within the framework of long-term ecological goals, these mechanisms provided transitional livelihood support while longer-term production cycles developed. Within the available evidence, they helped participants remain involved in the program while responding to immediate subsistence needs. However, the reported income figures should not be interpreted as evidence of broader community welfare improvement.

Figure 3 Members of the Simagmur group producing mushroom baglogs from a dried water hyacinth mixture



Source: Social Innovation Report PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata, 2025

Governance versus Social Relations: Enforcing Accountability in Vulnerable Groups

The second significant ethical dilemma observed during the implementation of the Cirata Geulis program centered on the tension between enforcing formal program governance and maintaining cohesive community relations. As the community groups evolved into structured socio-economic enterprises, the necessity for administrative accountability and financial transparency became paramount. However, imposing rigid corporate governance standards upon vulnerable, close-knit rural communities frequently clashed with deeply ingrained local values of kinship and social harmony.

Documentary evidence highlights a critical incident within the Simagmur group, where an internal conflict arose concerning financial mismanagement. An investigation revealed that two members, specifically the group's treasurer and a production team member who also provided the operational land, had misappropriated group funds. This ethical lapse was largely driven by the crushing pressures of extreme poverty, as 70% of the members relied heavily on the group to fulfill their daily subsistence needs. The complexity of judging this infraction within a tight-knit community was articulated by the representative of Simagmur, highlighting the socioeconomic desperation behind the act: "It is easy to call it theft from the outside. But when you know their families and see their empty kitchens, it breaks your heart. They took the cash because they needed to buy food for that day. They didn't do it out of malice, but out of absolute necessity." (P5, Interview, August 2025).

This reality presented a severe moral trade-off for the program's leadership. Enforcing strict institutional accountability required immediate punitive action, yet doing so risked triggering horizontal community conflict. The Green Leader expressed this delicate balancing act: "In a standard corporate setting, financial misappropriation means immediate termination or police involvement. But here, we are dealing with our

neighbors living in extreme poverty. If we punish them harshly, we destroy the community trust we spent years building and ignore their human struggle. But if we let it slide, the entire program loses its accountability and collapses." (P1, Interview, August 2025).

A parallel dilemma emerged within the Medal Saluyu communal livestock group regarding strategic governance. A sharp division occurred between the former group leader, who advocated for selling up to 90% of the sheep population to maximize immediate financial returns for the members, and the program's long-term vision, which mandated retaining at least 30% of the livestock to ensure breeding sustainability and the continuity of organic fertilizer production. The pressure to prioritize immediate communal payouts over structural sustainability was captured by the current representative of Medal Saluyu: "The old leader had strong influence, and many members wanted the quick cash. They saw the sheep simply as a way to get a big payout right now. Telling them they couldn't sell their own livestock caused a lot of anger and friction within the village." (P4, Interview, August 2025).

Once again, the leadership faced a difficult choice between accommodating the collective desire of the members for swift economic relief and enforcing the foundational rules of sustainable resource management. The CSR Officer noted: "If we allowed them to sell 90% of the sheep, the organic fertilizer production would halt, and our circular economy model would die. But enforcing the 30% retention rule meant directly clashing with a respected local elder. We had to choose between saving the program's ecological goal or keeping the group's harmony intact." (P2, Interview, August 2025).

Instead of resorting to unilateral corporate mandates, the leadership addressed these dilemmas through careful mediation, prioritizing restorative justice over punitive measures. In the Simagmur case, the leadership facilitated a mediation process that culminated in the dismissal of the two offending members to safeguard program integrity. However, the program assets were fairly separated, and the operations were relocated without escalating the conflict, placing a strong emphasis on maintaining *silaturahmi* (communal bonds) despite the infractions. Similarly, in the Medal Saluyu case, the leadership firmly upheld the 30% retention policy to protect ecological regeneration, which resulted in the voluntary resignation of the former leader and four of his followers. To prevent future ruptures, the leadership subsequently institutionalized formal organizational bylaws (AD/ART) and formal conflict resolution procedures. By doing so, the green leader navigated the delicate boundary between demanding accountability and preserving the social fabric essential for the program's survival and the community's long-term welfare.

Figure 4 Activities at the communal livestock shed of the Medal Saluyu livestock group,



Source: Social Innovation PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata, 2025

The Representation Dilemma: Protest Proxies and the Ethics of Monetization

The final ethical tension, the representation dilemma, operated at the macro-level of the overarching case. This dilemma emerged from the methodological and moral challenge of defining the program's boundaries, specifically regarding who gets included in the empowerment units versus the broader excluded communities, and translating their volatile social conflicts into quantifiable corporate metrics. Documentary evidence reveals that the relationship between the company and the surrounding community was initially fraught with tension. Driven by extreme poverty and a lack of alternative livelihoods, some community members harbored deep-seated social jealousy, which culminated in direct protests and demonstrations demanding employment from PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata. Program documents explicitly record incidents of social unrest that required formal mediation involving local authorities (Muspika).

This friction highlighted a profound crisis of representation, where marginalized communities felt entirely excluded from the economic wealth generated by the company's operations. A local community representative articulated the root of this initial hostility: "We saw the massive power plant in our backyard, generating electricity and wealth for the city, while we were starving and choked by water hyacinth. Protesting was our only way to be seen. We demanded jobs because we wanted a share of the life they were living inside the company's fences." (P6, Interview, August 2025).

To address this unrest, the Cirata Geulis program was positioned as a proxy for direct employment, offering community empowerment instead of corporate jobs. To justify the value of this empowerment to corporate shareholders, the leadership utilized the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework. The SROI report explicitly monetized the easing of social tensions under the metric "Penghematan Dana Unjuk Rasa" (Savings from Protest and Riot Funds), calculating the avoided costs of protests at Rp 121,081,000 in 2022 and Rp 91,118,000 in 2023. It should be noted that these figures represent the

company's own methodological estimate of avoided costs; SROI calculations inherently carry limitations in fully translating complex, qualitative social realities into monetary equivalents (Maier et al., 2015).

While this monetization provided a highly effective corporate justification, it plunged the green leader into a profound ethical dilemma regarding the commodification of social relations. The Green Leader expressed the moral discomfort of reducing human harmony to a financial spreadsheet: "Using SROI is a double-edged sword. On one hand, I have to prove to the board that empowering these groups saves the company money by preventing riots. But ethically, it feels deeply uncomfortable. Are we saying that community peace is just a cost-saving metric? Putting a price tag on a community's halted anger feels reductionist, but without that financial proxy, the corporate office wouldn't fund the social intervention." (P1, Interview, August 2025).

Ultimately, the leadership resolved this dilemma by pragmatically accepting the SROI methodology not as a definitive moral judgment, but as a necessary translational tool. Monetizing the protest proxy allowed the green leader to bridge two fundamentally different languages: the emotional and economic desperation of the vulnerable communities, and the strict, metric-driven rationale of corporate governance. The pragmatic use of SROI helped maintain institutional support for the empowerment program. However, sustaining corporate funding should be distinguished from demonstrating improvement in community welfare, particularly because the study does not directly capture the perspectives of protest participants and non-beneficiaries.

Figure 5 Empowerment products as a proxy for employment



Source: Social Innovation Report PT PLN Nusantara Power UP Cirata, 2025

Cross-Case Synthesis: A Matrix of Ethical Dilemmas

To systematically consolidate the empirical findings derived from the four embedded units, a cross-case synthesis was conducted. The qualitative data reveals that the ethical dilemmas encountered by the program's leadership were not isolated incidents, but rather recurring structural tensions inherent in the operationalization of community-based corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.

Table 1 summarizes the three primary typologies of ethical dilemmas, mapping the specific groups involved, the competing moral values characterized as right-versus-right

trade-offs, the subsequent resolution strategies employed by the leadership, and the supporting empirical evidence. This matrix demonstrates that the leadership consistently avoided binary decision-making, opting instead for accommodative, welfare-sensitive, and pragmatic strategies to bridge corporate mandates with grassroots realities.

Table 1 Matrix of Green Leaders' Ethical Dilemmas in CSR Implementation

Typology of Dilemma	Embedded Units Involved	The Competing Values (Ethical Trade-offs)	Leadership Resolution Strategy	Empirical Evidence
Temporal Dilemma	Simagmur, ECI, CIECRA	Immediate Survival vs. Empowerment: Providing immediate cash relief to alleviate extreme daily poverty (e.g., farmworkers earning Rp 35,000/day) <i>versus</i> waiting for the long-term maturation cycle of circular economy processes.	Incremental Accommodation: Implementing a "waste savings" (tabungan sampah) scheme to provide immediate non-cash compensation (eggs, oil, mushrooms). Applying a phasing-in to phasing-down strategy as community income stabilized, effectively safeguarding community welfare.	Social Innovation Report; SROI Report; Interviews (P1, P3, P5, P6).
Governance vs. Social Relations	Simagmur, Meda Saluyu	Institutional Accountability vs. Communal Harmony: Enforcing strict corporate rules against financial misappropriation and unsustainable practices <i>versus</i> preserving social kinship (silaturahmi) and preventing horizontal conflicts among vulnerable neighbors.	Restorative Mediation & Institutionalization: Facilitating fair asset separation and operational relocation without punitive escalation. Upholding ecological rules (30% sheep retention) leading to voluntary resignations, followed by the establishment of formal bylaws (AD/ART) to protect long-term welfare.	SROI Report (Mediation records, AD/ART establishment); Interviews (P1, P2, P4, P5).
Representation Dilemma (Monetization)	Macro-Program Level (Overarching Case)	Corporate Justification vs. Ethical Nuance: Utilizing SROI to commodify and monetize "social peace" to secure funding <i>versus</i> the	Pragmatic Translation: Accepting the SROI methodology as a translational tool. Monetizing the "Savings from	SROI Report (Financial Proxies for Protest Funds); Social Mapping Data;

ethical discomfort of reducing genuine human struggle and protest threats into a mere cost-saving corporate metric.	Protest Funds" (Rp 121,081,000 in 2022; Rp 91,118,000 in 2023) to facilitate securing sustained institutional support for the empowerment programs and community welfare.	Interviews (P1, P6).
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Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in vulnerable communities is fraught with complex moral tensions, challenging the prevailing assumption in Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) literature that ecological and socio-economic goals are inherently and seamlessly aligned (Chen & Chang, 2013; Singh, 2020). By identifying three distinct typologies of ethical dilemmas (temporal, governance versus social relations, and representation), this study illustrates that green leaders operate primarily as moral agents navigating a terrain of competing validities. The tensions observed within the embedded units of the Cirata Geulis program are not simplistic choices between right and wrong. Instead, they constitute profound right-versus-right dilemmas, where the corporate mandates for ecological sustainability and accountability hold equal moral weight against the visceral survival needs and social cohesion of the grassroots communities.

From a social welfare perspective, the three dilemmas represent different dimensions of community well-being. The temporal dilemma concerns livelihood security, particularly the ability of economically vulnerable participants to absorb delayed economic returns. The governance dilemma concerns procedural fairness and participation, because organizational rules influence membership, access to productive resources, and community relations. The representation dilemma concerns voice and recognition, particularly whether corporate indicators adequately represent how communities experience exclusion, protest, and empowerment. These dimensions suggest that successful CSR implementation cannot be assessed solely through environmental outcomes or organizational continuity; attention must also be given to who receives benefits, who bears transition costs, and whose voices influence program decisions.

The first major tension, the temporal dilemma, manifests as the clash between immediate livelihood needs and long-term circular processes. In the context of the Cirata Geulis program, the green leader faced the moral urgency of extreme poverty, where vulnerable demographics required immediate daily wages to survive. However, the nature of ecological interventions, such as mushroom and maggot cultivation, demands a gestation period before yielding financial returns. This finding advances the GTL literature by highlighting a critical boundary condition: in socio-economically fragile

environments, green leaders cannot merely articulate a distant environmental vision without regard for external constraints, as such contextual pressures have been shown to significantly weaken the translation of green leadership into practice (Oktrivina et al., 2025). They must ethically and practically reconcile the pacing of long-term ecological projects with the immediate reality of human hunger to ensure community welfare is not compromised.

To navigate this temporal tension, the green leader's response exemplifies a deeply accommodative strategy. Rather than treating the conflict as a binary problem to be definitively solved (either by abandoning the ecological project for immediate cash handouts or by ignoring the community's plight to fulfill corporate timelines), the leadership embraced the complexity of the situation. The implementation of the "waste savings" (tabungan sampah) scheme served as an accommodative strategy that allowed both opposing demands to coexist. By providing immediate non-cash compensation, such as staple foods, while the long-term ecological processes matured, the leader managed the trade-off dynamically. This indicates that effective sustainability leadership in developing contexts relies heavily on accommodative thinking, enabling leaders to sustain grassroots participation and safeguard community welfare without sacrificing environmental integrity.

Furthermore, the tension between enforcing structural accountability and maintaining communal harmony, the governance versus social relations dilemma, illustrates the fragility of applying rigid corporate compliance to communities bound by informal social safety nets. As the community groups transitioned into structured socio-economic enterprises, the corporate necessity for strict financial and operational governance inevitably collided with local values of kinship (*silaturahmi*). Instances of financial misappropriation in the Simagmur group and strategic disputes regarding sheep population retention in Medal Saluyu highlight this conflict. The green leader was caught between the justice of corporate accountability, which demands punitive action to protect the program, and the mercy required when recognizing that such infractions are often driven by structural poverty rather than sheer malice.

In resolving the governance versus social relations dilemma, the leadership once again avoided binary traps, demonstrating a restorative approach to conflict management. Rather than enforcing unilateral corporate mandates that could irrevocably fracture community trust and devastate local welfare, the green leader employed restorative mediation. In the Simagmur and Medal Saluyu cases, the resolution involved prioritizing long-term programmatic integrity, such as safely relocating operations and upholding the strict 30% sheep retention rule, while simultaneously preserving communal dignity through fair asset separation and the avoidance of punitive escalation. By subsequently institutionalizing formal bylaws (AD/ART), the leadership worked to balance the need for corporate accountability with the cultural necessity of social harmony. This synthesis suggests that in community-based CSR, ethical leadership requires the continuous and dynamic balancing of institutional structure with relational empathy.

The third and perhaps most conceptually profound ethical tension, the representation dilemma, emerged from the moral challenge of translating volatile grassroots conflicts into quantifiable corporate metrics. Driven by extreme poverty and a sense of exclusion from the wealth generated by the nearby power plant, initial community hostilities manifested as protests demanding direct corporate employment. To secure corporate funding for community empowerment as a proxy for direct employment, the leadership utilized the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework. By explicitly monetizing the easing of these social tensions under the metric "Savings from Protest Funds", the program exposed a critical ethical paradox: the commodification of social peace. While SROI provided a highly effective corporate justification for the CSR intervention, it simultaneously forced the green leader into a state of moral discomfort, reducing genuine human struggle and the cessation of community anger to a mere cost-saving metric on a corporate spreadsheet.

The leadership navigated this representation dilemma not by rejecting the corporate metric, but by pragmatically accepting it as a necessary translational tool to secure community welfare. The green leader operated at the boundary of two fundamentally distinct institutional logics: the emotional and socioeconomic desperation of the vulnerable communities, and the strict, metric-driven rationale of corporate governance. By accepting the ethical compromise of commodifying social peace through SROI, the leadership engaged in pragmatic management. They utilized the language of the corporation (monetization) to secure institutional support and funding that, according to informants, has helped keep the grassroots ecological and empowerment programs running. This highlights that ethical sustainability leadership often involves accepting moral compromises to achieve greater and systemic socio-ecological goods that directly benefit community welfare.

Collectively, the navigation of these three typologies of ethical dilemmas necessitates a theoretical expansion of the Green Transformational Leadership (GTL) construct. Existing GTL literature predominantly characterizes the green leader as a visionary and motivator who seamlessly aligns follower behavior with organizational environmental goals (Chen & Chang, 2013; Singh, 2020). However, the empirical realities of the Cirata Geulis program demonstrate that in resource-dependent and socioeconomically vulnerable contexts, a green leader is primarily a moral mediator. The effectiveness of GTL in such environments is not solely determined by the ability to foster green innovation, but rather by the leader's capacity to manage the continuous, grueling trade-offs between corporate efficiency, ecological preservation, and social justice. Consequently, this study argues that the conceptualization of GTL must integrate ethical dilemma management as a fundamental competency designed to protect community welfare.

This institutional friction is particularly pronounced within the context of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) operating in developing nations. Unlike private corporations, SOEs in Indonesia (BUMN) bear dual and often conflicting mandates: they must operate as profitable, efficient entities ensuring national energy security, while simultaneously fulfilling state-driven socio-economic development roles in vulnerable communities

(Kusumadewi et al., 2023; Rizky & Krisnawati, 2025). The Cirata Geulis case demonstrates that when SOE CSR programs intersect with extreme poverty, corporate decisions carry disproportionate human consequences. Withdrawing support, strictly enforcing business rules, or halting organic waste subsidies does not merely impact a community's profit margin; it threatens their fundamental daily subsistence. Thus, the ethical stakes for green leaders in SOEs are exponentially higher, requiring a recalibration of how corporate sustainability is governed, evaluated, and directed toward community welfare.

In summary, the Cirata Geulis program reveals that at the volatile intersection of environmental restoration and poverty alleviation, ethical dilemmas are not programmatic anomalies; they are the core terrain of sustainability leadership. The typology of temporal, governance-relational, and representational dilemmas offers a grounded, analytical framework for understanding the invisible moral labor of green leaders. By moving beyond the linear, conflict-free limitations of traditional CSR literature and empirically demonstrating the necessity of accommodative management strategies, this study provides a nuanced, reality-based conceptualization of Green Transformational Leadership centered on community welfare. Ultimately, to lead sustainably in vulnerable contexts is to accept the profound discomfort of competing validities, navigating the gray areas where corporate metrics meet human vulnerability.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how green leaders navigate the ethical dilemmas inherent in the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within vulnerable communities. Through an embedded case study of the Cirata Geulis program, the findings reveal that green leaders do not resolve ethical dilemmas through simplistic binary choices, where one competing value is entirely sacrificed for another. Instead, they employ an accommodative, welfare-sensitive strategy to dynamically balance competing demands. The identification of three distinct typologies (temporal dilemmas, governance versus social relations, and representation dilemmas) demonstrates that managing the intersection of ecological restoration and poverty alleviation requires profound moral mediation. Rather than merely enforcing corporate mandates, the green leader acts as a pragmatic mediator, synchronizing the slow pace of sustainable circular economies with the urgent, daily survival needs of the grassroots demographic to safeguard community welfare.

Theoretically, the study extends GTL by showing that green leadership in vulnerable communities involves not only environmental vision and organizational change but also the negotiation of welfare consequences. The Cirata Geulis case suggests that livelihood security, procedural fairness, participation, and representation are important considerations when evaluating corporate community empowerment. For social welfare practice, the findings indicate that environmental CSR should combine ecological objectives with safeguards that protect vulnerable participants during economic transitions and provide meaningful space for community voice in program governance. Practically, this study offers a robust and grounded typology of ethical dilemmas that is

highly relevant for State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and community-based enterprises in Indonesia and other developing nations. For SOE managers and policymakers, this typology provides a navigational framework to anticipate, legitimize, and manage the inevitable moral frictions that arise when strict corporate metrics collide with human vulnerability.

Despite these contributions, this study is not without limitations. As a single embedded case study localized within the Cirata Reservoir in West Java, the findings are deeply contextualized within a specific socio-ecological and state-owned corporate setting. Consequently, the generalizability of the specific resolution strategies may be limited. Future research should consider comparative multiple-case studies across different industrial sectors, private enterprises, or cross-cultural contexts to test the transferability of this typology. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine how these accommodative, non-binary strategies impact the long-term ecological resilience and economic independence of community enterprises. Ultimately, sustainable CSR in vulnerable communities requires environmental objectives and corporate accountability to be pursued alongside livelihood protection, meaningful participation, and fair community-level decision-making.

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