



HAL
open science

From Transmigrasi to Relokasi

Adeline Martinez, Bambang Hidayana

► **To cite this version:**

Adeline Martinez, Bambang Hidayana. From Transmigrasi to Relokasi. Archipel, 2023, 104, pp.57-74. 10.4000/archipel.3004 . halshs-04017532

HAL Id: halshs-04017532

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04017532>

Submitted on 17 Jun 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International License



Archipel

Études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien

104 | 2023

Varia

From Transmigrasi to Relokasi

De la transmigration à la réinstallation : la gestion gouvernementale des catastrophes dans la région du Merapi

Adeline Martinez and Bambang Hudayana



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/archipel/3004>

DOI: 10.4000/archipel.3004

ISSN: 2104-3655

Publisher

Association Archipel

Printed version

Date of publication: February 27, 2023

Number of pages: 57-74

ISBN: 978-2-910513-90-0

ISSN: 0044-8613

Provided by Aix-Marseille Université (AMU)



Electronic reference

Adeline Martinez and Bambang Hudayana, "From Transmigrasi to Relokasi", *Archipel* [Online], 104 | 2023, Online since 01 March 2023, connection on 17 June 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/3004> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.3004>



The text only may be used under licence CC BY-ND 4.0. All other elements (illustrations, imported files) are "All rights reserved", unless otherwise stated.

ADELINE MARTINEZ & BAMBANG HUDAYANA***

From *Transmigrasi* to *Relokasi*: Governmental Disaster Management of the Merapi Volcano Uplands (Indonesia)***

Introduction

Located in the subduction zone of the Indo-Australian and Eurasian plates, the Indonesian archipelago is regularly subject to destruction from natural hazards. One of the most significant contemporary disasters for Indonesia – and the world – was undoubtedly the tsunami caused by an earthquake in December 2004, which devastated the northern coast of Sumatra and caused the death of hundreds of thousands of people. In addition, the country is home to over 130 active volcanoes. In October-November 2010, the eruption of the Merapi volcano in central Java caused more than 350 deaths, displaced around 400,000 people and destroyed more than 2,300 homes (Suroño *et al.* 2012, p. 129). In this context, the Indonesian government set up a policy for post-disaster reconstruction. With the help of an international development fund, the government put in place a reconstruction program targeting the volcano's highland inhabitants whose homes had been destroyed by the eruption. This program, called *Rekompak*, aimed to rebuild houses and livelihoods and relocate homes located in the prone risk area, a few kilometers away from their original territory.

* Associate Member of the Institut de Recherche Asiatique, CNRS, Aix-Marseille Université.

** Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Universitas Gadjah mada.

*** Adeline Martinez gratefully acknowledges the National Research and Innovation Agency of the Indonesian Republic to allow her a research's permit to conduct her own research on Merapi volcano between 2015 and 2016 (permit's number 38/SIP/FRP/SM/II/2015). The authors would also like to thank Patrick Vanhoebrouck for the careful rereading of the article.

However, the majority of the inhabitants concerned by this proposal refused the resettlement of their village. According to 2011 statistics collected by the regency (*kapupaten*¹) of Sleman, 56.93 % of the families living in the regency affected by the proposal declined the proposed relocation of their dwelling². This fact is surprising, especially when these statistics correspond to the area most severely affected during the eruption. Considering the basic humanitarian and risk prevention principles, it appears that maintaining one's place of living in an area with major risks is nonsensical. In addition to political ecology literature (Dove 2007, 2007b, 2008; Dove, Hidayana 2008), anthropological studies previously conducted in the Merapi region offer culturalist interpretations of the phenomenon. These authors see the belief system of the inhabitants (Triyoga 1991) and "beliefs in the spirits of Merapi and the rituals linked to them" (Schlehe 1996, p. 404; Schlehe 2010) as the main explanatory factors for a general feeling of security among Merapi's inhabitants, a feeling that would explain the massive refusals to resettle. These interpretations then minimize the weight of sociohistorical relationships between the central government and the volcano's populations in explaining these choices.

The aim of this article is to revisit the history of these relationships through the prism of risk management on Merapi. Through a diachronic approach, we document how the resettlement policy implemented in 2010 inherits its logic and orientations from past policies. In addition, we also show to a certain extent, how it marks a rupture from the past concerning the emergence in risk and disaster management on an international scale.

To do this, we first look at the measures taken to manage the victims of natural disasters in the 20th century. Secondly, we examine the reasons for the priority given to disaster victims in the transmigration program. In the third part, we consider the responses of the volcano populations to these policies. Finally, this diachronic return allows us to discuss the turn taken by the recent resettlement policy in light of this specific history and the international context of disaster management.

1. In Indonesia, the administrative territorial organization is broken down into provinces (*provinsi*), which in turn are subdivided into regencies (*kabupaten*), districts (*kecamatan*), villages (*desa*), hamlets (*dusun*) and –the last and smallest unit– neighborhood groups (*rukun tetangga*).

2. Bapeda Kabupaten Sleman, 2011, *Data warga untuk memilih harapan tempat tinggal*; Pemerintah Kabupaten Sleman; Bapeda Kabupaten Sleman, 2010, *Data Sebaran KRB3 dan 2 Gunung Merapi*.

Continuing Incentives for Displacement Since the Beginning of the 20th Century

The Indonesian government's desire to empty the Merapi highlands of its inhabitants is nothing new. It is based on long-standing national policies of population management in Java dating back to the Dutch colonization. In 1905, the Dutch colonialists initiated the *kolonisatie* or *emigratie* as one of the three pillars of the "Ethical Policy." It embodied the desire to reduce the demographic imbalance within the archipelago (Tirtosudarmo 2013, p. 5-6). The "inner" islands (Java, Madura, Bali) were deemed overpopulated compared to the "outer" islands (Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Papua), which were also lagging behind in development (Levang 1997). Faced with a projected Malthusian disaster in the "inner" islands, and particularly in Java, the colonial government sought volunteers from these regions to settle on other islands of the archipelago and form the nuclei of this program. In addition to the desire to manage population growth in Java, two major interests supported this program. On the one hand, the necessity to establish an increased control on the "external" areas, geographically distant from the centers of power. In addition to this security interest, there was also the desire to widely increase the living standard of the population of the archipelago, an element identified as necessary for the development of economic interests:

"Dutch industry began to see Indonesia as a potential market, which required a rising of living standards there. [...] Business interests, therefore, supported more intensive colonial involvement in the causes of peace, justice, modernity and welfare. The humanitarians justified what the businessmen expected to be profitable, and the Ethical Policy was born" (Ricklefs 1981, p. 143).

The rapid population growth in Java was seen as the underlying cause of the decline in the welfare of the population: poverty, disease, malnutrition, etc. Emigration of people from Java to the "outer islands," especially Sumatra, was seen by the government as the only viable solution. Thus, the foundations of the policy of transmigration (*transmigrasi*) were born. As early as 1930, the province of Yogyakarta became a recruitment zone –mainly for Sumatra– and it continued to be so after independence, as Patrice Levang (1997, p. 39) indicates.

In this way, the *kolonisatie* and *transmigrasi* quickly appeared to be effective tools for managing all sorts of demographic and territorial problems, including the management of "natural" disasters.

By tracing the eruptive history of the Merapi volcano and considering the government responses to these eruptions, we can notice that the incentive to relocate follows the peaks of volcanic activity. The government's will to evict the populations took root during the Dutch colonization. Thus, as early as 1930-1931, a first expression of this resolve appeared. Handoyo, who has worked on agro-ecological adaptations to the volcanic environment on Merapi, points to the existence of a resettlement proposal following the 1930 eruption (1985,

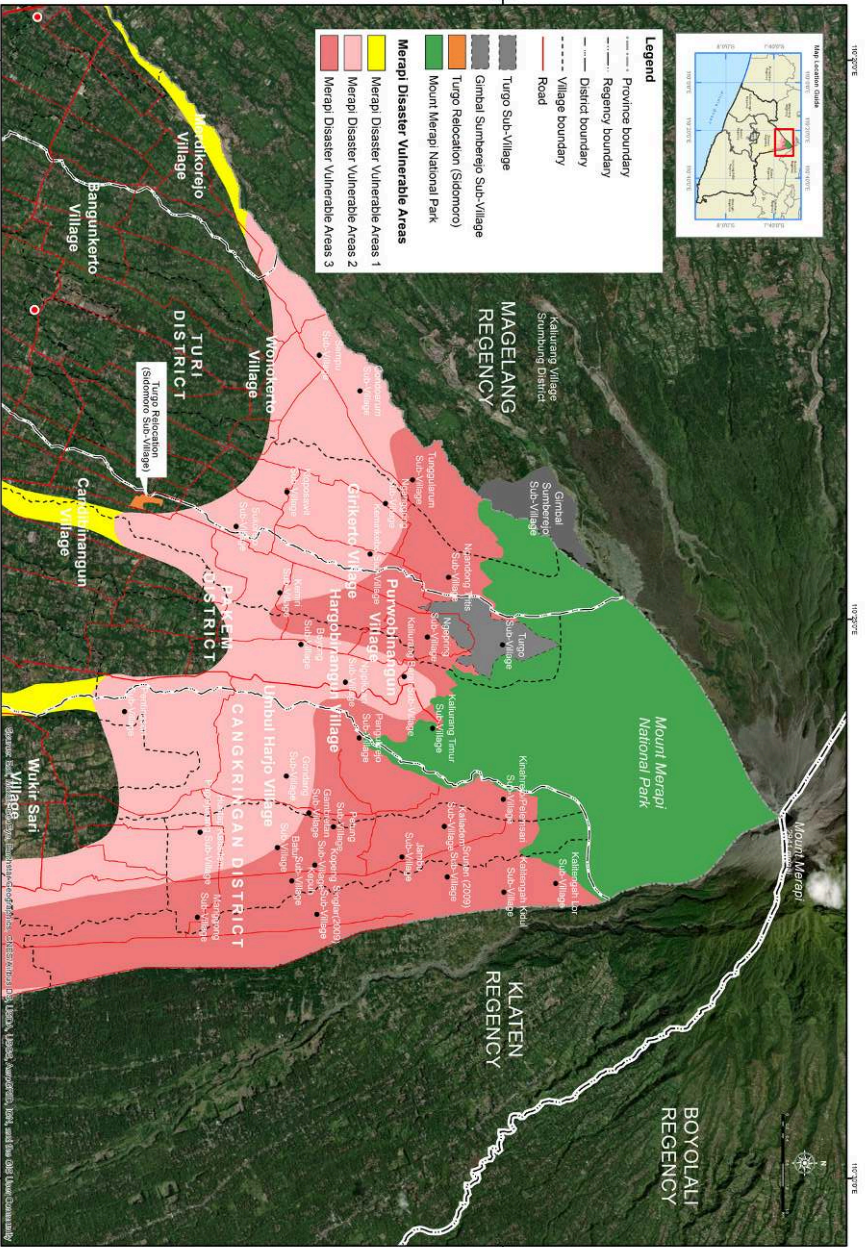


Fig. 1 – Villages, National Park and Prone Disaster Areas at Merapi Volcano. © Adeline Martinez, Bambang Hidayana, 2022.

p. 21). A report from the General Directorate of Transmigration (*Direktorat Jenderal Transmigrasi*, undated) confirms the relocation of 600 people from Yogyakarta to Bengkulu (southwestern Sumatra) due to a “natural disaster³.” The victims of the eruption were then integrated into the *kolonisatie* policy. This first initial measure was to hence inaugurate and determine the general trend of management of disaster victims in the twentieth century, namely the desire to relocate the inhabitants of the volcano highlands.

After the country’s independence, the Indonesian government continued to offer eruption victims the option to join the transmigration program and even, according to the interviews with villagers concerned by the policy conducted by the volcanologist Katherine Donovan, to force them to do so (2010, pp. 46-47). After the 1961 eruption, the village of Gimbal was wiped off the map and all of its inhabitants were included in the transmigration program that would take them to Way Jepara in Sumatra (Laksono 1985, p. 191). This case, documented by the Indonesian anthropologist Laksono, is particularly interesting to document. It shows how the Indonesian government at the time could be insistent and even coercive with regard to the volcano populations that it intended to transmigrate.

The village of Gimbal was located on the southwestern flank of the Merapi volcano, at an altitude of approximately 700 meters. After the eruption of 1961, through the *Bedol desa* program, the government undertook to relocate 4,517 people from the area that it considered dangerous. This type of transmigration is seemingly conducted when the government intends to evacuate a village or an entire region after it has decided to use the area for development or other projects (Tirtosudarmo 2013, p. 52). The expression *bedol desa* is derived from Javanese: *bedol* means “to remove, to take away” and *desa*, in addition to referring to the territorial and administrative unit above the *dusun*, refers to the idea of a small rural community with dense and strong social networks. This program is therefore about “removing a rural community,” by implication, from its original location. According to Laksono (1985) –one of the first Indonesian anthropologists who has studied relocations of Merapi’s populations–, even though the village of Gimbal had not been affected by the eruptions of 1961, 1954 and even 1930, the 785 inhabitants of Gimbal were included in the transmigration program without direct consultation with the villagers. Only the agreement of the “*desa* chief” (*lurah*) was taken into account by the government. Only thirteen families objected to their transmigration and found refuge in other villages in the region.

Gimbal lost its administrative status and the village disappeared from official maps. For several months, before leaving for Sumatra, the inhabitants were housed in a temporary camp. Access to their village was forbidden: the

3. Adeline Martinez consulted this report during her fieldwork in the *Pusat Studi Kependudukan dan Kebijakan* of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta in 2016.

roads were guarded by the police. The general socioeconomic conditions deteriorated. To compensate for the perceived lack of food, both for people and livestock, the inhabitants of Gimbal tried to return to their former village during the day, hiding from police controls, to harvest the fruits of their farmland and fodder for their animals. Some of them were even forced to sell their houses to earn some money when they had not been previously destroyed by the police (Laksono 1985, p. 202).

After their resettlement in Sumatra, the economic situation of the Gimbal people did not improve (Laksono 1978, 1985). They were distributed among several villages and some of them experienced great difficulties in adapting. Laksono (1985, p. 200) reports that within two months of arrival in Sumatra, between 27 and 29 people died. In the end, 34 families decided to return to Java and live in their original villages on the slopes of Merapi. They set about rebuilding their homes, joining the few families who had not left. Other “returnees” from Sumatra joined them to gradually rebuild the village that had been taken from them a few years earlier. In 1965, considering the progress of the reconstruction and the fact that the Merapi volcano showed no signs of danger, the government legalized their presence in this territory on the condition that each landowner pay 10% of the value of his or her land to finalize the registration of property rights (Laksono 1985, p. 199-200).

The example of Gimbal reveals quite clearly the actions of the government at the time concerning the implementation of a transmigration program. The first thing that stands out is the absence of a consensual decision regarding the departure of the population. It is also worth noting that the socioeconomic needs of the inhabitants were not taken into consideration during their transit stay in the camp and finally, the implementation of the transmigration program in the region was definitively coercive with the total prohibition of access to the village territory and the destruction of homes.

But this case does not seem to have been an isolated one. Indeed, Guinness and Suratman (1977, p. 85) note that in 1974, the map as it did to Gimbal, the government undertook to relocate the affected populations to another island through the same *Bedol desa* program. In 1978, due to a smaller eruption of gas and ash, it again attempted to relocate the inhabitants of Turgo by officially wiping the village off the map once again (Dove 2008, p. 333). The November 1994 eruption also marked the resurgence of government incentives, and a new resettlement proposal for the villages hit by the eruption was launched at a press conference organized by the Yogyakarta Special Region government. This provided for the temporary relocation of victims before they joined the transmigration program (Schlehe 1996, p. 404).

Finally, after the 2010 Merapi eruption, the government did also not fail to again offer to families affected by the disaster. As described by Judith Schlehe (1996, p. 403), the government is continuously pushing to resettle

these populations through the transmigration program, confirming that “governmental resettlement efforts spike upwards after every major eruption” (Dove 2008, p. 333).

These incentives are not limited to the Merapi region, as similar proposals have existed on the island of Bali since 1963, as mentioned by Patrice Levang (1997, p. 85), and in West Java in 1982 following the eruption of Gunung Galunggung (Laksono 1995, p. 5). Far from being exhaustive, these examples nevertheless show that national disaster management policy related to volcanic eruptions has relied to a large extent on the inclusion of disaster victims (real or not) to transmigration programs. From the perspective of the Indonesian government, from the beginning of the 20th century until today, transmigration has been one of the appropriate tools for the management of victims of “natural” disasters, especially in the Merapi region.

Disaster Victims as Ideal Transmigrants

We will now examine the persistence and recurrence of these policies. Beyond a demographic management strategy, transmigration makes it possible to integrate a plurality of population management objectives within the Indonesian territory. When the program was initially created, the victims of natural disasters were not explicitly concerned by transmigration measures, but they have gradually been integrated and have even become priority beneficiaries. Behind the stated demographic objectives of transmigration (Levang 1997, p. 40), this program enabled the Indonesian government to deal with a number of cyclical demographic problems. Indeed, as Patrice Levang notes, natural disasters and armed conflicts generate movements of refugees whose integration into the transmigration program seems to be an appropriate solution for the government:

“Thus, the integration of liberation army soldiers into the settlement projects is aimed more at facilitating their demobilization than at developing agricultural production. The violent clashes between rival armed gangs in West Java in the 1950s resulted in hundreds of refugees flooding into the region’s towns. The settlement of refugees in Lampung [Sumatra] helped to solve the problem as quickly as possible. Similarly, to help the thousands of victims of the eruption of Gunung Agung in Bali in 1963, the authorities distributed one-way tickets to Sumatra. The permanence of the program makes it possible to reserve priority access to sites for victims of natural disasters at any time” (Levang 1997, p. 45).

According to this author, transmigration appears to be the least costly means of managing all the problems posed by forced displacement in the country. After refugees from local conflicts and victims of natural disasters, the government found in this program the necessary tool to also displace people living in areas destined for development projects, such as the construction of a dam in Wonogiri (Central Java) in 1976, which led to the displacement of

2,000 people to Sumatra (Guiness, Suratman 1977, p. 88). Patrice Levang is not the only one to note this double use of transmigration. Thus Suratman and Guinness wrote as early as 1977:

“Politicians have been slower to accept this new emphasis, for the idea of transmigration as a ready solution to some of the worst consequences of rural Java’s high population density is deeply rooted. Flood victims, the rural landless, farmers whose land is unproductive or needed for the construction of a dam or for reforestation, and urban poor, can be sent away with the offer of new hope in a new land” (Suratman, Guinness 1977, p. 78).

Specific budgets are allocated for this type of displacement project through the so-called *Bedol desa* program. Transmigration thus goes beyond the logic of rebalancing the national demographic structure and the development of the Indonesian territory to include the management of all the demographic problems that are established in its territory. Nevertheless, a special place is given to the victims of natural disasters within this program since they are given priority in the recruitment of candidates for transmigration and their selection is freed from the usual recruitment criteria. Patrice Levang shows that the government, at the same time as it broadens the recruitment base for transmigrants, gives priority to victims of natural disasters:

“The priority given to victims of natural disasters is easily understood, given the frequency of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tidal waves and other floods in Indonesia. In accordance with the commandment already mentioned [which gives privilege to people who migrate collectively], no selection is usually made among the victims of natural disasters” (Levang 1997, p. 86).

Beyond the high recurrence of natural disasters in Indonesia and the need for the government to provide aid during and after of these events, the priority given to populations affected by environmental degradation is also explained by the positive observations made in transmigrant villages by administrators:

“Officials are unanimous: the centers hosting settlers from these two categories – victims of natural disasters and expropriated because of public interest projects – are by far the most dynamic” (Levang 1997, p. 88).

The author explains that two elements characterize the victims of natural disasters or expropriation. First, they are farmers who own their land. They represent a type of person sought after by the recruiting authorities. Indeed, the most important and primary recruitment criterion, in the context of agricultural development policy, is that of being a “real farmer”.

The majority of transmigration volunteers were landless farmers, young and less experienced than the administration would have liked. The arrival of a group of farmers who had previously owned their own land and had solid farming experience guaranteed the success of a settler village. Second, the fact of being moved as a group, through the *Bedol desa* programs, at the

village or hamlet level appears to be a second advantage characterizing these populations. Indeed, the success of *Bedol desa* transmigrated villages has always been emphasized by the transmigration department (Suratman, Guinness 1977, p. 89; Tirtosudarmo 2013, p. 52). By exhibiting a strong social unity linked to a network of “debts of recognition (*hutang budi*)” (Lombard 1990, III, p. 82), these people display the solidarity necessary for the sustainability of new settler villages. In this sense, Patrice Levang presents them as “ideal transmigrants”. In general, the success of transmigration cases using the *Bedol desa* method is recognized and widely encouraged within state institutions.

Together with the need to respond to the problems caused by natural disasters (personal relief, financing of reconstruction, risk reduction, etc.), offering transmigration to the population allows the government to recruit volunteers needed to make the program work. It seems, then, that the policies implemented by the government respond more to several objectives than to the single, first and publicly stated and assumed goal, namely, the distribution of the demographic imbalance. From this perspective, the persistence of incentives for victims of volcanic eruptions, as is the case in the Merapi region, is underpinned by interests that go beyond disaster risk management alone. In this respect, this analysis is in line with the comments of certain Indonesian researchers who, as early as the 1990s, expressed the relativity of the government’s perception of volcanic risk in relation to the economic and political stakes of transmigration:

“It seems clear that the government, because of great political and economic interests related to transmigration, considers the risks in Sumatra [in transmigrant villages] less important than they actually are and the risks of disaster in Merapi greater than they actually are” (Laksono 1995, p. 3).

Throughout the twentieth century, transmigration was an immediately available solution to all sorts of problems related to the management of Indonesian territory and its population. The government has been persistent on the transmigration of Merapi villagers because villages were identified as the ideal communities for the efficient implementation of the program. Declaring “at-risk” areas off-limits to habitation both manages the problems associated with the volcanic threat and provides suitable candidates for the successful establishment of transmigrant villages on the outer islands. From the government’s point of view, this method offers multiple advantages, but it does not consider the resistance of the inhabitants to leave their volcano to integrate transmigration.

Systematic Refusal of Transmigration

In the face of these constant incentives to move, the targeted populations show unparalleled resistance. The government has difficulty finding volunteers. Moreover, among those who agree to transmigrate, many have

returned. These refusals are long-term and reflect a general mistrust of the transmigration program and even of the government.

Researchers working on the Merapi volcano are unanimous. The government's proposals are regularly and widely rejected (Dove 2007b, 2008; Donovan 2010; Laksono 1980, 1985; Lavigne *et al.* 2008; Schlehe 1996, etc.).

Michael Dove also points out the population refusal during the relocation of Turgo in Sidomoro which constituted the first real attempt at "resettlement" (*relokasi*). A large part of the village's population refused to move and among those who accepted, only a few of them permanently stayed in Sidomoro. The majority of the population still lives in Turgo (Dove 2007, p. 27-28). Such refusal of a relocation program by the Indonesian government echoes that observed by Laksono (1985) following the 1961 eruption impact on the village of Gimbal. The refusals of the transmigration program do not only concern victims of natural disasters. Patrice Levang also recounts that:

"In the late 1970s, the impoundment of the Wuriantoro Dam in the Wonogiri region resulted in the flooding of several villages. Despite the repeated efforts of the Administration and the particularly advantageous conditions offered to volunteers, a large number of villagers refused to join the transmigration" (1997, p. 93).

One of the first arguments isolated by the authors on the issue of refusal is that the policies proposed by the government are sometimes apprehended as another form of uncertainty and represent in the eyes of the inhabitants a greater danger than the eruptive threat: "Residents of danger zones [...] are less afraid of Mount Merapi than of the government's measures" (Schlehe 1996, p. 403). Michael Dove adds, "Many villagers, in short, saw the government's resettlement program as just another danger... and they preferred the danger they knew to the danger they did not" (Dove 2007, p. 27). He goes on to quote an evacuee interviewed by the press after the 1994 eruption: "If you have to die because of the dangers of Merapi, it's the same as dying because you gave up on the state" (Dove 2007, p. 28). A survey of Merapi's residents' response to an eruption conducted by Laksono in 1977 shows that in the event of an eruption, 88 % would consider moving to another village temporarily or permanently, 8 % would rely on God, and only 4 % would turn to the government (1985, p. 206). This general distrust is reported by several authors in the post-disaster Javanese context (Schlehe 1996, Dove 2007, Lavigne, *et al.* 2008, Donovan 2010a), but examples of transmigration rejection can also be found in other post-disaster contexts.

For example, Cécile Quesada, speaking about the evacuation of the island of Niuafu'ou (Tonga in Southern Pacific) in 1946, which was hit by an eruption, collected accounts that revealed the population's distrust of the government and the decisions it made: "We were not afraid of the fire, we were afraid of the government" (interview collected and cited by Cécile Quesada 2006, p. 194). Here, as on the slopes of Merapi, the government arouses as

much, if not more, concern among the volcanoes' inhabitants as the danger of eruption itself. Several factors may explain this feeling. It is possible to put forward the idea that, in a widespread manner, the unknown generates more anxiety and distrust than a known danger and, moreover, one that has already been experienced previously and is therefore the object of knowledge, experience and understanding. In the case of the Yungayano for example, inhabitants of the city of Yungay in Peru, studied by A. Oliver-Smith (1992) in the years 1970, there was a reluctance to accept the plan of relocation set up by the government. Indeed, after the passage of mudslides on the city, the government asked its inhabitants to be relocated elsewhere yet obtained only a generalized refusal as an answer. The author analyzes this refusal to obey as an expression of the fear of having to readapt to unknown situations and to a new environment presenting, as such, a high degree of uncertainty and stress. This fear is coupled, according to the author, with a desire to return to "normality": to rebuild their lives as they were before the disaster (Oliver-Smith 1992, p. 265).

For the people of the Merapi region, the policies proposed by the government are much more dangerous than continuing to live in a place where the rules of the game and the parameters of uncertainty are more controlled. The decision to relocate would be conjoined with the perceived socioeconomic risks of transmigration and the difficulty of adapting to a new environment (Laksono 1978, pp. 30-31).

Finally, transmigration programs are criticized by returnees, who left with their wives and children a few years earlier in the hope of a better economic future, and who, disappointed by the experience, were giving a very negative image of it upon their return. In the history of the region, these "returnees" are numerous. For example, like the people of Gimbal, many returned to Java "because of disease, heat, and other harsh natural conditions in Sumatra" (Schlehe 1996, p. 404). Perhaps the accounts of these disappointing experiences reinforce the general distrust of the government and the transmigration program. This uncertainty does not hold a candle to the representation of the dangers associated with volcanism as well as the multiple socio-ecological benefits and resources of the volcanic land (Martinez 2019).

Resettlement Policy: A Turning Point in the History of Volcanic Risk Management?

After several decades of disaster management in which *transmigrasi* was the main tool of the government, the beginning of the 21st century ushers in a break in the general trend⁴. Indeed, in 2004, "the tragedy of the earthquake and tsunami

4. This break is nevertheless to be qualified since the government did not fail following the 2010 eruption to propose once again to the affected people that they join the transmigration program to Kalimantan. These proposals raised a lot of criticism as

in and around Aceh prompted the Indonesian government and the world to seriously consider disaster management issues,” as stated on the National Agency of Disaster Management (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana*) website⁵. At the national level, this trend was confirmed in 2008 with the establishment of a budget allocated to risk reduction and disaster management, and with the creation of the BNPB and concomitant legal tools. At the international level, this disaster “propelled the issue of risk and natural disasters to the top of the agenda” (Revet 2009, p. 12) and prompted multilateral agencies to make considerable budgetary investments in the field of disaster prevention. It is in this generalized context of awareness of the importance of issues related to “natural” risk and climate change that the current resettlement policy in Indonesia was born. Its creation echoes the changing perspectives of State and international institutions on risk and disaster management over the past decade.

The resettlement policy implemented after 2010 marks a turning point in the history of natural risk management of the Merapi volcano. This plan is part of the state’s desire, which began after the 2000s, to define its scope of action more precisely and to improve its skills in terms of risk management. Less coercive and more concerned about the future and rights of victims of natural disasters, the State formalized this dynamic with the publication of a new law on disaster management on the national territory in 2007. This text clearly emphasizes that disaster management cannot exist “under the government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono” without its corollary, which is development:

The authority of the government in disaster management includes:

- a. The establishment of disaster management policies in line with national development policy.
- b. The creation of a development plan that incorporates elements of disaster management policies⁶.

This change is reflected in the way that risk and disaster management measures are implemented on Merapi. Thus, even if the main objective remains that of emptying the areas at risk of their inhabitants, the means employed and the way in which relocation is carried out differ from the methods previously used by the government. One of the major differences is geographical. Once condemned to move to another island of the archipelago through transmigration, people living in risky areas are now offered resettlement geographically close

evidenced by A. Moatty’s interviews in the Central Java region (2015: 202-203), see also Martinez, 2013.

5. BNPB, “Sejarah dan misi visi BNPB,” BNPB website (<http://www.bnpb.go.id/profil>), consulted the 20 July 2016.

6. Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 24 Tahun 2007 tentang Penanggulangan Bencana, Presiden Indonesia, 26 April 2007.

to their former place of life – in the same “village” (*desa*). At the same time, resettled people are no longer dispossessed of their property rights, as was the case in the *Bedol desa* programs in which land was requisitioned by the state.

These two criteria are proving to be significant enough changes that some hamlets are now accepting the relocation of their homes. These two factors represent major differences from the former disaster management policy. They are also central to broader considerations related to the challenges of reconstruction, development, and volcanic risk management.

After the 2010 eruption, the value of the Rekompak resettlement plan to the Indonesian government was twofold. First, it made it possible to rebuild the homes and livelihoods of the victims. Secondly, it offered the possibility of reinforcing the volcanic risk management policy by moving the victims out of the “at risk” zone and by multiplying the disaster preparation training for the population. This policy is part of a double logic: on the one hand, a logic of aid to the affected populations and on the other hand, a logic of risk prevention. The creation of this reconstruction and resettlement program allows the government to face the challenges – particularly financial – of reconstruction by granting international aid, and at the same time, the implementation of a risk management and reduction plan in accordance with the recommendations of the National Agency of Disaster Management (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana*). All people located in risk areas and whose homes have been destroyed are invited to move their place of living outside the said areas. If they agree to relocate, they are offered compensation for the reconstruction of their houses as well as various livelihood support programs (including funding for the purchase of one cow per family in the Yogyakarta area). This government support for livelihood recovery and development contributes to two related but distinct objectives.

The first is to create income-generating activities for disaster-affected populations to rebuild their livelihoods after the disaster. The second objective of development actions is to combat the factors that make people vulnerable to natural disasters. Vulnerability theorists refer to these as the “root causes” of disasters (Wisner *et al.* 2004 [1994]), i.e. “the ongoing societal and man-environment relations that prefigure [disaster]” (Hewitt 1983, p. 27). These are thus described as endogenous sociohistorical processes leading to the production of situations of vulnerability to “natural” hazards. These theories, which emerged in the 1970s in response to the “hazard-centric” research of American disaster studies (Revet, 2011: 158), see the general organization of society as the source of inequalities in vulnerability within its population (Wisner *et al.* 2004 [1994]; Hoffman, Oliver-Smith 2001, p. 5). Following this orientation and confronted with the multiple refusals of the inhabitants to move and often even to evacuate (Dove 2007 and b and 2008, Donovan 2010, Lavigne *et al.* 2008, Mei *et al.* 2013, Schlehe 1996, Martinez 2013, Laksono 1985, 1978,

1995), risk prevention and management in Merapi remains problematic. These refusals are explained by the fact that these people experience an insecure economic situation and that consequently, a general development of the standard of living of the populations of Merapi would alleviate the difficulties of managing eruptive crises. In this framework, disaster-prone populations are presented as the “left-behind” of development. Consequently, development measures are advocated by multilateral agencies (e.g. OECD, World Bank) as part of their disaster management prerogatives. It is therefore not surprising that the Rekompak resettlement plan, which is largely funded by such institutions, has a developmental orientation in its disaster management program. Thus, Rekompak’s orientation and approach to disaster management is in line with this international trend in disaster management.

Alongside these considerations, population relocations are in themselves factors in the impoverishment of the populations concerned. This was clearly highlighted by Michael Cernea and his team in their investigations of resettlement induced by World Bank-financed development projects (Martinez 2012). Since the identification of these impoverishment risks in population relocations (Cernea, Mc Dowell 2000), the World Bank has required its borrowers to comply with a number of measures and standards when relocating populations. Therefore, each resettlement project must be accompanied by measures to counteract the potential socioeconomic risks of relocation. It is within this framework that the objectives of the Rekompak program emphasize the provision of financial and technical assistance to support entrepreneurial projects within the communities concerned and to bring about a general development of living standards.

It should be noted here that the perspective initiated by the World Bank, which consists of accompanying the process of resettlement with development projects, particularly economic ones, is in line with the developmentalist orientations of disaster risk management. From the point of view of the government, international institutions and risk management professionals, development seems to be an adequate response: disaster prevention and management cannot be carried out among populations without giving them access to development – defined as a general improvement in living standards.

Conclusion: The Political Relativity of “Natural” Risk

In conclusion, the cases of population displacement on the slopes of Merapi raise questions about the relative nature of the notion of volcanic risk. The latter does not seem to be the subject of consensus among the various groups involved. During the twentieth century, the government constantly tried to integrate victims of natural disasters into the transmigration program. But, as shown in this article, the government has failed to carry out the transmigration program on Merapi volcano. Many refused to move because governmental

policies did not understand and did not take into account disaster risk management from the perspective of the community.

For decades, the governmental program ignored the concepts of risk and disaster based on Merapi's population local knowledge and lifestyle. In addition, the will of transmigrating uplands' villagers did not only respond to the humanitarian interests of risk management only. It became clear how people living in risky areas, and thus prone to eruptions, had the characteristics of the "ideal transmigrant" necessary for the success of the transmigration program. From then on, the government's interest in encouraging these populations to move was twofold: both to establish the management of "at risk" territories and at the same time to recruit candidates for transmigration. Faced with this observation, it appears that during the twentieth century, the "volcanic risk" in Indonesian risk management policy is never taken into account by itself. It is part of an economic and political context of demographic management and development of the national territory. Annabelle Moatty (2015, pp. 244-245) has also shown that "reconstruction processes are never neutral" and that the territorial redevelopment strategies put in place in post-disaster contexts are conditioned by constraints and issues that are external to and prior to the sole issue of disaster management. For the government, identifying "at-risk" areas has made it possible to designate the recruitment areas for transmigrants, who are also perceived as the "ideal transmigrants". This remark does not question the fact that certain regions are indeed subject to the probability of occurrence of a volcanic hazard, but rather that the possibility of it is also used as a parameter in an overall management of the national territory where economic and security interests predominate (Tirtosudarmo 2013, p. 3).

Moreover, in the eyes of the Merapi populations affected by transmigration incentives during the twentieth century, this program appears, as we have seen, as a significant "risk" factor. The concern here relates to the difficulties associated with the economic survival of the families after their settlement on the outer islands. It has been shown that transmigrants' settlements are not always successful (Guiness, Suratman 1977, pp. 93-97). The adaptation to a new environment, the non-guaranteed success of land cultivation, and the enormous workload of the first few years all contribute to making the move a source of considerable economic risk for transmigrant families. This fact contributes to the construction of a negative image of the transmigration program. For the populations of Merapi, it appears that the economic risks related to transmigration are no less important than those related to volcanic hazards. Nevertheless, we can hope that the developmentalist turn in Indonesian disaster management policies engaged during the last fifteen years may lessen this gap – a gap which still is a latent form of conflict – between the State's interests in term of citizen protection and the Merapi population's interests related to livability and to village groups' social becoming.

References

- Cernea Michal M., Mc Dowell Christopher (dir.), 2000, *Risk and Reconstruction – Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees*, Washington D.C., The World Bank.
- Direktorat Jenderal Transmigrasi, undated, *Realisasi Penempatan Transmigrasi dari Kolonisasi (1905) Sampai Pelita 1*, Departement Tenaga Kerja, Transmigrasi dan Koperasi, Jakarta.
- Donovan Katherine, 2010, *Cultural Responses to Volcanic Hazards on Mt Merapi, Indonesia*, PhD. Geography, University of Plymouth.
- Dove Michael R., 2007, “Volcanic Eruption as Metaphor of Social Integration: a Political Ecology Study of Mount Merapi, Central Java,” in Connell J., Waddell E. (eds.), *Environment, Development and Change in Rural Asia-Pacific: between Local and Global*. London Routledge, pp. 16-37.
- , 2008, “Perception of Volcanic Eruption as Agent of Change on Merapi Volcano, Central Java,” *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 172, pp. 329-337.
- Dove Michael R., Hidayana Bambang, 2008, “The View from the Volcano: an Appreciation of the Work of Piers Blaikie,” *Geoforum*, Volume 39, Issue 2, pp. 736-746.
- Guiness Patrick, Suratman, 1977, “The Changing Focus of Transmigration,” *Bulletin of Indonesian Economics Studies* Vol XIII, n°2, July, pp. 78-101.
- Handojo Adi Pranowo, 1985, *Manusia dan Hutan: Proses Perubahan Ekologi di Lereng Gunung Merapi*, Yogyakarta, Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Hewitt Kenneth, 1983, “The Idea of Calamity in a Technocratic Age,” in Hewitt Kenneth, (eds.), *Interpretations of Calamity from the Viewpoint of Human Ecology*, London, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, Boston, pp. 3-32.
- Hoffman Suzanna M., Oliver-SMITH Anthony, 2002, “Introduction: Why Anthropologist Should Study Disasters,” In Hoffman Suzanna M., Oliver-Smith Anthony (eds.), *Catastrophe and Culture. The Anthropology of Disaster*, Santa Fe, School of American Research Press, pp. 3-22.
- Laksono Paschalis M., 1978, *Survey Sosial Ekonomi Budaya di Daerah Bencana Alam Gunung Merapi, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta dan Jawa Tengah*, Yogyakarta, Lembaga Kependudukan, Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- , 1980, *Pengambilan Keputusan Bertransmigrasi: Kasus Daerah Terancam Bencana Alam Gunung Merapi*, Master’s Thesis, Fakultas Sastra, Jakarta, Universitas Indonesia.
- , 1985, “Persepsi Setempat dan Nasional Mengenai Bencana Alam: Sebuah Desa di Gunung Merapi,” in Dove Michael R., *Peranan Kebudayaan Tradisional Indonesia dalam Modernisasi*, Jakarta, Yayasan Obor Indonesia, pp. 191-214.
- , 1995, “Tafsir Local dan Nasional Letusan Gunung Merapi,” in *Workshop Sarasehan terbatas Korban Bencana dan Solidaritas Sosial : Interpretasi Antropologi atas Bencana Merapi*, Jurusan Antropologi, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, 31 Januari.
- Levang Patrice, 1997, *La Terre d’en face. La transmigration en Indonésie*, Paris, Editions de l’Orstom.
- Lombard Denys, 1990, *Le Carrefour javanais. Essai d’histoire globale. Vol. III - L’héritage des royaumes concentriques*, Paris, éditions de l’EHESS.
- Martinez Adeline, 2012, *Les Déplacements forcés. Regards sur une catégorie divisée*. Mémoire de Master, Département d’anthropologie, Aix-Marseille Université.
- , 2013, *(Non) déplacement forcé et continuité du social en contexte post-catastrophe naturelle. Approche comparative des deux villages montagnards Pelemsari et Kali Tengah*

- Lor, *Java Centre, Indonésie*. Mémoire de Master, Département d'anthropologie, Aix-Marseille Université.
- , 2019, « Un espace social “viable” dans un environnement “à risque” ? Analyse des rapports à l'espace d'un village réinstallé des hautes terres du volcan Merapi (Java, Indonésie) », *Moussons* n°34/2, pp. 141-167.
- Mei Estuning Tyas Wulan, Lavigne Franck, Picquout Adrien, Bélizal (de) Edouard, Brunstein Daniel, Grancher Delphine, Sartohadi Junun, Cholik Noer, Vidal Céline, 2013, “Lessons Learned from the 2010 Evacuation at Merapi Volcano,” *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* Vol. 261, July, pp. 348-365.
- Moatty Annabelle, 2015, *Pour une géographie des reconstructions post-catastrophe : risques, sociétés et territoires*, Thèse de doctorat en géographie, Université de Montpellier.
- Oliver-Smith Anthony, 1992, *The Martyred City: Death and Rebirth in the Andes*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.
- Quesada Cécile, 2006, *Vivre sur une île-volcan. Approche anthropologique des relations entre hommes et volcan à Niuafo'ou (Tonga, Polynésie Occidentale)*, Thèse de doctorat en ethnologie, Paris, École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.
- Revet Sandrine, 2006, « Le risque négocié. Conflits et ajustements autour de la reconstruction de Vargas (Venezuela) », *Autrepart* n° 37, 2006, pp.163-181.
- , 2011, « Penser et affronter les désastres : un panorama des recherches en sciences sociales et des politiques internationales », *Critique internationale* n°52/3, pp. 157-173.
- Ricklefs Merle Calvin, *An History of Modern Indonesia*, London, Mac Millan, 1981.
- Schlehe Judith, 2006, “Reinterpretations of Mystical Traditions. Explanations of a Volcanic Eruption in Java,” *Anthropos* 91, H. 4/6, pp. 391-409.
- , 2010, “Anthropology of Religion: Disasters and the Representations of Tradition and Modernity,” *Religion* 40, pp. 112-120.
- Surono, Jousset Philippe, Pallister John, Boichu Marie, Buongiorno Maria Fabrizia, Agus Budisantoso, Costa Rodriguez Fidel, Supriyat, Prata Fred, Schneider David, Lieven Clarisse, Hanik Humaida, Sri Surmarti, Bignami Christian, Griswold John, Carn Simon, Oppenheimer Clive, Lavigne Franck, 2012, “The 2010 Explosive Eruption of Java’s Merapi volcano – A “100-Year” Event,” *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research*, 241-242, pp. 121-135.
- Tirtosudarmo, 2013, *From colonization to nation-State. The Political demography of Indonesia*, Jakarta, LIPI Press.
- Voight B., Constantine E. K., Siswamidjyo S., Torley R., 2000, “Historical eruptions of Merapi Volcano, Central Java, Indonesia, 1768–1998,” *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 100, pp. 69-138.

