

Transformation of Built Capital of Transmigrant Communities in Indonesia: Case Studies in Central Sumatra

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1.SUMMARY

Indonesian transmigration projects is the biggest government sponsored resettlement project in the world. Since country's independence from Dutch colonization in 1945, the government has been promoting an internal migration and resettlement project based in agrarian rural reform; capital-intensive development; large-scale migration; and the intensified commercialization of agriculture. Indonesian transmigration projects have been sponsored by massive international agencies such the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Between 1979 and 1984, it resettled almost 2.5 million people, around 535,000 families¹. Resettlements had huge environmental and social impacts on human rights and environment, resulting in many controversies. While transmigration accelerated national and rural development through its contributions in agricultural production, the program also has been criticized for severe mismanagement as well as unanticipated impacts.

The main objective of this thesis is to study the built capital conditions of transmigration projects and transformations performed by dwellers and communities to adapt and cope with challenges of resettlement. Built capital the main key factors to sustain a minimum life quality in resettlement and promote healthy communities², and it was studied based in land holding, infrastructure and housing conditions. Data collected and key findings show that the quality of built capital plays a crucial role in people's decision to stay or leave a resettlement often determining the resilience, adaptation, and living conditions of dwellers.

The study targeted two transmigration resettlement projects in Sumatra Island. Sitiung 1 is located in Dharmasraya regency, West-Sumatra and constitutes the biggest transmigration project of Indonesia; is a dam-forced displacement resettlement project from 1977 that moved 3,000 families coming from same village in Wonogiri, Java. The other project is in Mekar Sari village, Kumpeh, Jambi province. In 1986 it resettled 500 families from different backgrounds, including Javanese and local transmigrants from Jambi. Kumpeh is located in a swamp area—it is an oil palm plantation-oriented settlement. Field surveys were conducted in both sites between July 2015 and November 2017. Analysis was drawn from questionnaire survey and measurement survey of total 211 households.

It was found that with transformations in built capital, dwellers tried to improve their living conditions. Sitiung was found to have a better built capital situation than Kumpeh, with 59% of dwellers in permanent-living conditions, meaning good access to infrastructure and high durability of the houses. While in Kumpeh 83% of dwellers are still found in temporary-living conditions, lacking infrastructure, problems with chronic floods and houses still build with wood in poor conditions.

Transformation of built capital in long-term adaptation process of these two cases will be explored and compared in this thesis. Until now, nothing has been written about the outcomes of these projects, little is known about their built capital or what kind of role physical transformations played in the adaptation process. This can help the development of strategies to better assist transmigrants and communities in current and future projects to adapt and cope with challenges in a sustainable way for improving their physical environment and living conditions.

¹D. Benoit et al., eds., *Transmigration et migrations spontanées en Indonésie: Propinsi Lampung* (Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia) : [Bondy, France: Departemen Transmigrasi ; ORSTOM, 1989).

²Cheryl Jacobs, "Measuring Success in Communities: The Community Capitals Framework," 2011,