



Transmigration in Indonesia: A Systematic Review of Policy Direction, Socio-Ecological Impacts, and Implications for Village Administration (1959-2025)

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's transmigration program, as a long-term policy instrument, has left a complex and often contradictory socio-ecological legacy. This article presents the results of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 43 studies to analyze policy evolution, identify patterns of impact, and extract implications for village governance from 1959 to 2025. This synthesis reveals three key findings. First, transmigration policy underwent a paradigm shift from a state-oriented and socially engineered system (1959–1999) to a complex and often uncoordinated multilevel governance system (2015–2025). Second, socio-ecological impacts demonstrate a consistent pattern of massive transformation of ecological landscapes and various threats to local communities, albeit offset by social capital-based adaptation practices. Third, the success of post-transmigration rural governance relies heavily on local adaptive capacities such as inclusive leadership and knowledge networks. The three-era periodization used reflects the centralistic New Order regime, the post-reform transition and decentralization, and the contemporary phase with its complex and multi-level governance complexities. It is methodologically constructed based on thematic clusters and discourse shifts documented in the literature. By integrating policy analysis, political ecology, and local governance within a single synthetic framework, this study fills a gap in previous, fragmented research, while offering a more holistic and critical perspective for assessing the past and future of transmigration in Indonesia.

Kata Kunci:

Transmigrasi
Administrasi desa
tanah

ABSTRAK

Program transmigrasi Indonesia, sebagai instrumen kebijakan jangka panjang, telah meninggalkan warisan sosio-ekologis yang kompleks dan seringkali kontradiktif. Artikel ini menyajikan hasil Systematic Literature Review (SLR) terhadap 43 studi

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Integrasi sosial
Tata Kelola Lokal

untuk menganalisis evolusi kebijakan, mengidentifikasi pola dampak, dan mengekstraksi implikasi tata kelola desa dari periode 1959 hingga 2025. Sintesis ini mengungkapkan tiga temuan utama. Pertama, kebijakan transmigrasi mengalami transformasi paradigma dari sistem yang berorientasi negara dan direkayasa secara sosial (1959–1999) menuju sistem tata kelola multilevel yang kompleks dan sering tidak terkoordinasi (2015–2025). Kedua, dampak sosio-ekologis menunjukkan pola konsisten dari transformasi besar-besaran lanskap ekologis dan berbagai ancaman bagi masyarakat lokal, meski diimbangi oleh praktik adaptasi berbasis modal sosial. Ketiga, keberhasilan tata kelola pedesaan pasca-transmigrasi sangat bergantung pada kapasitas adaptif lokal seperti kepemimpinan inklusif dan jaringan pengetahuan. Periodisasi tiga era yang digunakan mencerminkan rezim Orde Baru yang sentralistis, transisi dan desentralisasi pasca reformasi, serta fase kontemporer dengan kompleksitas tata kelola yang kompleks dan bertingkat, dikonstruksikan secara metodologis berdasarkan klaster tematik dan pergeseran wacana yang tercatat dalam literatur. Dengan mengintegrasikan analisis kebijakan, ekologi politik, dan tata kelola lokal dalam satu kerangka sintesis, studi ini mengisi celah dari penelitian sebelumnya yang cenderung terfragmentasi, sekaligus menawarkan perspektif yang lebih holistik dan kritis untuk menilai masa lalu dan masa depan transmigrasi di Indonesia.

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's transmigration program, which was originally constructed as a strategic instrument to achieve equitable development and reduce population density, has long been dominated by an official narrative emphasizing national integration and interregional justice. From an official perspective, transmigration is projected as a social engineering mechanism capable of creating new economic spatial arrangements outside conventional growth centers, with villages as the main locus of implementation (Hardjono, 1988). However, this optimistic narrative obscures the socio-ecological complexities that are fundamental challenges in its implementation. Münch's (2015) perspective on social integration reminds us that the integration process in the context of transmigration is not linear, but involves complex negotiations between social, cultural, and economic systems that often lead to disintegration when participatory mechanisms are ignored. This contradiction becomes even more acute when examined through the lens of decentralization by Prud'homme (1995) and Faguet (2014) who warn of the dangers of fragmentation of authority in the governance of national-scale programs.

Empirical findings consistently reveal a significant gap between official rhetoric and reality on the ground, particularly in three critical domains. First, claims of equity are confronted by the reality of systemic land ownership conflicts, where recognition of indigenous peoples' rights is often sacrificed for the sake of land allocation for transmigrants (Dewi et al., 2024; Sanjaya et al., 2022). Second, the narrative of social integration has proven fragile when faced with poorly managed cultural and economic tensions, as revealed in a study of social vulnerability in Lampung (Susetyo et al., 2024). Third, development approaches that ignore ecological carrying capacity have triggered massive environmental degradation, including deforestation covering 59 million hectares (Tsujino et al., 2016), which has exacerbated the cycle of environmental migration as conceptualized by Mayer (2013). This pattern of inequality confirms Bandelow et al.'s (2025) thesis on multidimensional policy changes that are often non-linear and contradictory.

What is missing from the official narrative is the understanding that transmigration is not merely a demographic relocation program, but a complex socio-ecological transformation process that requires an adaptive governance approach. The research gap lies in the limited number of studies that integrate policy evolution analysis, socio-ecological impacts, and village governance implications into a comprehensive analytical framework. Most of the literature is

fragmented into sectoral approaches without linking macro-policy dynamics to micro-implementation realities. Furthermore, official narratives tend to ignore the accumulation of legacy environmental debt and historical burdens that local communities have had to bear as a result of previous programs.

Based on the identification of these gaps, this systematic literature review aims to: (1) Analyze the evolution of Indonesia's transmigration policy during the period 1959-2025 using a multidimensional policy change framework; (2) Identify consistent patterns of socio-ecological impacts across different geographical areas; and (3) Extract operationalizable village governance implications for spatial planning, basic services, and conflict resolution. By critiquing the official narrative through empirical evidence and relevant theoretical frameworks, this study seeks to unravel the contradictions of transmigration policy while offering alternative perspectives for policy reconfiguration that is more responsive to Indonesia's socio-ecological complexities.

B. METHOD

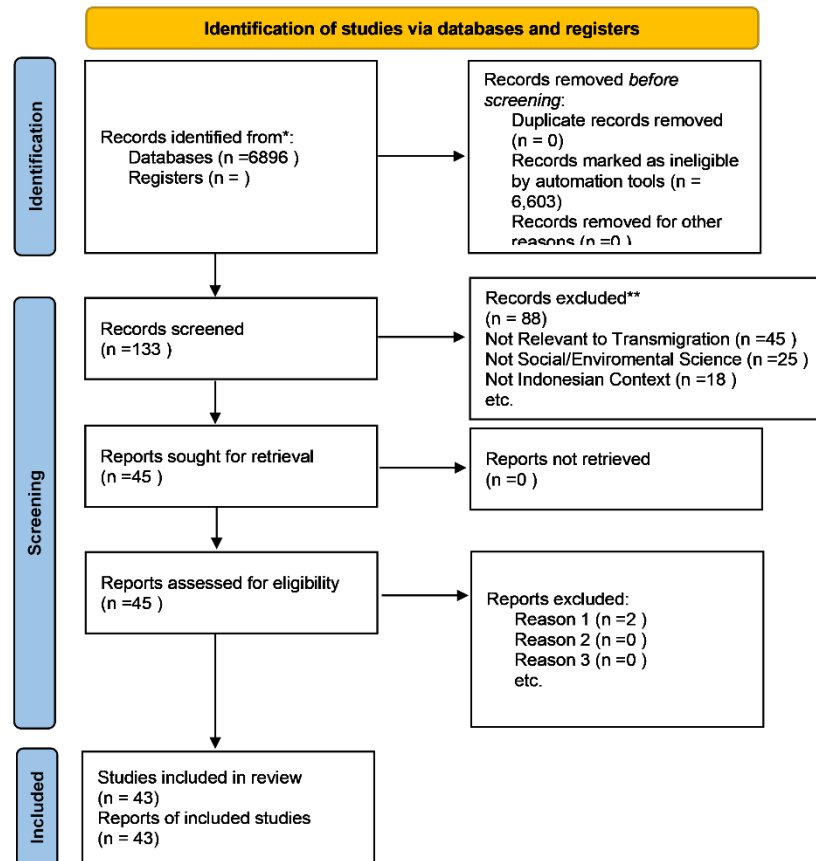
This article was compiled using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, which refers to cross-sectoral best practices (Clark et al., 2021; Lefaiivre & Slobogean, 2013; Martin et al., 2017; Mengist et al., 2020; Prill et al., 2021). This method was chosen because scientific evidence on transmigration is scattered across various disciplines and a long period of time. SLR allows for transparent, structured, and replicable synthesis of evidence, thereby summarizing cross-era patterns while producing relevant operational implications for village governance. The core of this approach lies in the formulation of specific research questions at the outset, a systematic and documented search process, explicit selection criteria, and a synthesis tailored to the nature of the data found.

Research questions are formulated with the help of the PICOS framework to ensure focus and clarity:

1. Population: Literature reviews discussing transmigration programs or phenomena in Indonesia.
2. Intervention: Transmigration policies, programs, or practices implemented by the government.
3. Comparison: Developments or impacts between policy periods, differences between destination regions, or comparisons with spontaneous migration patterns (if analyzed in the study).
4. Outcome: Socio-ecological impacts, policy evolution, and institutional governance models at the village level resulting from transmigration programs.
5. Study Design: Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed), policy reviews, and relevant literature reviews.

The study identification procedure began with a search of three leading scientific databases: Scopus (5,988 identifications), Science Direct (708 identifications), and Google Scholar (200 identifications). The selection of these three sources was based on their comprehensiveness. Scopus and Science Direct provide high-reputation journals with strict indexing, while Google Scholar is able to reach grey literature, reports, and publications from local institutions that may not be indexed in commercial databases. A total of 6,896 articles were initially identified, then filtered based on title and abstract, resulting in 133 documents that met the initial criteria. The screening process and reasons for exclusion are summarized visually in the PRISMA table (attached).

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram



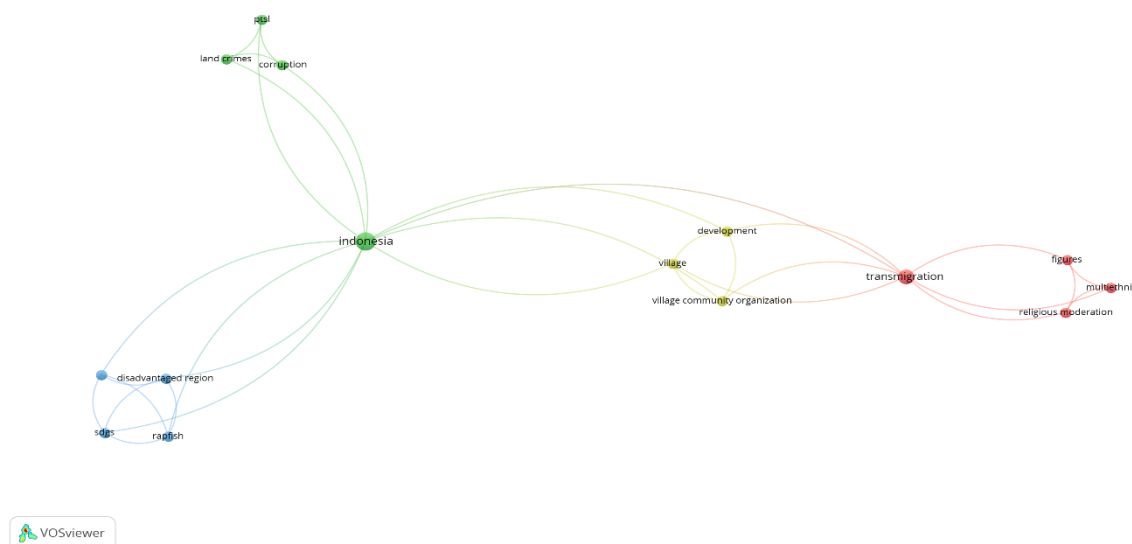
Source: by the authors

The next stage of screening focused on topic relevance. A total of 88 studies were excluded, with the following details: 45 were irrelevant (discussing general, international, or urban migration without a transmigration component), 25 were outside the domain of social/environmental sciences (e.g., medical or pure engineering studies), and 18 were not Indonesia-specific. Of the 45 articles that were assessed for full-text eligibility, 2 duplicate articles were removed, leaving 43 final articles that met all inclusion criteria and were analyzed in depth.

Data extraction and interpretation techniques were carried out in a gradual and comprehensive manner. Data from the 43 selected studies were extracted into a structured template covering bibliometric information, methodology, key findings, and research context. To obtain a macro overview of the scientific landscape, an initial bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer software. The resulting network visualization (Figure 2) graphically mapped relationships and keyword co-occurrence, revealing dominant and interconnected research theme clusters. This analysis confirmed three main clusters that were consistent with the themes identified through manual synthesis one cluster centered on issues of policy, governance, and resettlement; the second cluster contained keywords such as land use, deforestation, conflict, and livelihood, representing socio-ecological impacts; and the third

cluster confirmed the geographical focus of studies on regions such as Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. The central position of the words Indonesia and land in the network confirms the national context and agrarian issues as the main axis of the transmigration discourse.

Figure 2. Network visualization



Source: Vosviewers

Data interpretation then continued thematically to synthesize the evidence in depth. VOSviewer visualization not only validated thematic patterns but also visually showed the density and connectivity of research discourse, which in turn strengthened the analysis of study characteristics. The majority of studies (67%) were published in the period 2015-2025, dominated by qualitative approaches (42%) and mixed methods (30%), with a geographical focus spread across Sumatra (26%), Sulawesi (21%), and Kalimantan (14%). The research themes centered on three areas: Socio-Ecological Impacts (20 studies), Village Governance & Institutions (19 studies), and Policy Evolution (14 studies), a structure that is clearly reflected in the keyword network map. By mapping the conceptual relationships between themes, this visualization provides significant value in answering research questions, particularly by showing how issues such as policy, land conflict, and local dynamics are intertwined in shaping the complex reality of transmigration. The qualitative findings were then reinforced by a critical assessment of the methodological quality of the studies (35% high, 51% moderate, 14% low), which was taken into account in the weighting during the final synthesis to ensure the robustness of the analysis.

While rigorous, this method has limitations. First, searching only three databases may have missed studies indexed in other specialized repositories. Second, publication bias may have occurred because studies with insignificant results or internal reports are often not published publicly. Third, the inclusion of only Indonesian and English-language studies may have overlooked literature in regional languages. Finally, the dominance of research in the last decade may provide an unbalanced perspective on the dynamics of early transmigration. Despite these limitations, this transparent and critical SLR procedure provides a solid

foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of transmigration in Indonesia.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a critical synthesis of 43 studies that met the inclusion criteria for this Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The findings are organized to answer the research questions and reflect the thematic dynamics of Indonesian transmigration research over six decades (1959–2025). The analysis reveals the evolution of scholarly focus paralleling developments in the national political and policy context. In the early period (1959–1999), the literature was dominated by evaluations of socio-ecological impacts and the logic of central government macro-policies. Entering the reform era (2000–2014), themes diversified with decentralization, with attention shifting to institutional implications at the local level. The dominance of research in the most recent decade (2015–2025) shows not only a surge in quantity but also a significant qualitative shift, with issues of governance, village institutional adaptation, and multidisciplinary approaches becoming mainstream. The synthesis was conducted thematically, taking into account the methodological diversity (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed) and the quality of each study, thus providing a strong foundation for in-depth discussion. The following discussion will interpret these thematic patterns, relate them to relevant theoretical frameworks, confront conflicting findings, and formulate theoretical and practical implications for the future of transmigration policy and research in Indonesia.

The Evolution of Transmigration Policy from Centralized to Contextual (1959–2025)

To answer the first research question regarding changes in transmigration policy, this analysis utilizes the lens of policy regime theory (Bleiklie, 2006) and the multidimensional operationalization of policy change (Bandelow et al., 2025). Bleiklie's (2006) framework helps identify how the shift in national political regimes from the authoritarian-centralistic New Order, through the transitional Reform era, to contemporary decentralized governance, shaped the logic, objectives, and instrumentation of transmigration policy. Meanwhile, Bandelow et al.'s (2025) framework allows for a more refined distinction in analyzing change, not only at the level of policy content (objectives and narratives), but also at the dimensions of instruments, governance (actors and power relations), and outputs on the ground. The synthesis of 43 studies demonstrates that the evolution of Indonesian transmigration policy is not a linear process, but rather a complex process reflecting the dynamic interaction between political regimes, dominant development discourses, and local resistance or adaptation.

During the foundation period of 1959–1999, transmigration policy operated under a centralized and socially engineered New Order policy regime. As Bleiklie (2006) identified, this cohesive, top-down policy regime produced a stable and monolithic policy framework. Studies such as Wertheim (1959), Arndt & Sundrum (1977), and MacAndrews (1978) consistently portrayed the program as a state instrument to achieve dual objectives such as population redistribution from Java and the opening of frontier regions for the consolidation of national power and economic development. From a multidimensional perspective (Bandelow et al., 2025), changes during this era primarily occurred in the content and instrument dimensions, with the governance dimension remaining highly static. Policy content was dominated by narratives of modernization and national security. The instruments used were physical and administrative-mass, such as large-scale land clearing and population transfers based on quantitative targets. The governance dimension was characterized by the absolute dominance of central state actors, with minimal roles for local governments or local communities as subjects. Although early studies such as Whitten (1987) and Fearnside (1997) began to emphasize its profound impact on the ecological environment, these critiques failed

to shift the policy paradigm rooted in the core policies of the New Order regime. As a result, the regime caused drastic changes to the demographic and ecological landscape, often ignoring socio-ecological sustainability and exacerbating the potential for conflict.

The period 2000-2014 marked a phase of disruption and transition in the policy regime following the fall of the New Order. Political decentralization and regional autonomy, as features of the new regime, fundamentally changed the governance dimensions of transmigration policy (Bleiklie, 2006). Power and responsibility began to be distributed, though often in unclear and overlapping forms. Potter's (2012) study noted a shift in narrative content from mere settlement to local economic development, where transmigration areas began to be viewed as productive areas integrated with industries such as oil palm plantations. This shift reflected the adaptation of policy objectives (content dimension) to market logic and decentralization. However, changes in governance dimensions without effective coordination have given rise to new complexities. Land conflicts have become a central theme, as documented by Barter & Côté (2015) and Wibowo et al. (2013), who show how competing forestry, plantation, and transmigration policies create tensions at the local level. On a different scale, Bazzi et al.'s (2016) study demonstrates methodological advances in evaluating policy outputs and outcomes through quantitative panel data, providing empirical evidence on the determinants of transmigrants' economic success. This period, therefore, was marked by fragmentation in the policy regime, with significant changes in governance dimensions and content, but often resulting in contradictory outcomes between economic goals and social cohesion.

Entering the 2015-2025 era, transmigration policy operates within a complex and differentiated multilevel policy regime. This regime is no longer dominated by a single actor, but involves interactions between the central government and regional governments, global actors (through the SDGs and climate change agendas), the private sector, and local communities (Bleiklie, 2006). Multidimensional analysis (Bandelow et al., 2025) reveals integrated changes across nearly all dimensions. Within the content dimension, objectives have expanded and become more elaborate. On the one hand, the narrative of economic productivity remains strong, but on the other, discourses of ecological sustainability (Tsujino et al., 2016; Wilmsen et al., 2025) and social inclusion (Pratiwi et al., 2022; Syahid et al., 2025) have gained significant ground. The instrument dimension has also evolved, encompassing not only physical instruments but also information-based instruments such as the Human Footprint Index (Harbi et al., 2021) and institutional measures such as strengthening social capital (Nurlinah & Haryanto, 2024). The governance dimension has become the most dynamic arena. The concept of governability (Nurlinah & Haryanto, 2024) and multilevel political analysis (Warganegara & Waley, 2022, 2024) highlight how success now depends on the ability to manage diverse networks of actors with differing interests. Issues of corruption in agrarian programs (Wirawan & Widowaty, 2025) and the formation of new frontiers (Mukrimin & Acciaioli, 2023) highlight the dark side of this governance complexity. Policy outputs under this regime have also become highly spatially differentiated, highly dependent on the configuration of actors and local institutional capacity.

Overall, the evolution of Indonesian transmigration policy demonstrates a trajectory from a centralized and closed policy regime (the New Order), through a fragmented transitional phase (the early Reformation era), to a multilevel and complex regime (contemporary). Bandelow et al.'s (2025) theory helps confirm that change does not occur uniformly across all dimensions, with the governance dimension (actors and power relations) often being both the most resistant and the most decisive. This synthesis also reveals that although policy discourse has evolved to accommodate sustainability and participation, implementation on the ground is often still trapped in legacy paradigms and power structures. Thus, transmigration policy

change is layered, with new elements superimposed on or negotiated with old logics and practices, resulting in a hybrid and tension-filled policy landscape.

Recurring Patterns of Socio-Ecological Impacts Across Regions

To answer the second research question regarding consistent patterns of socio-ecological impacts across regions, a synthesis of 20 relevant studies reveals a paradox: despite differing geographic and temporal contexts, transmigration programs tend to produce similar impact footprints, particularly related to landscape transformation, social fragmentation, and accelerated land-use change. However, this consistency is not a product of chance, but rather the result of structural and political mechanisms embedded in program planning and implementation. This analysis will interpret these concrete findings through the lens of environmental mobilities theory (Boas et al., 2018) and examine environmental migration narratives as advocacy tools (Mayer, 2013), while also considering the complexities of social integration (Martelli et al., 2020).

Empirically, recurrent patterns of impacts are evident. In Sumatra, studies by Fearnside (1997) and Tsujino et al. (2016) chronologically documented a cycle of deforestation and land degradation initiated by land clearing for settlements and subsistence agriculture, often transformed or driven by the expansion of monoculture plantations such as oil palm. A similar pattern is seen in Kalimantan, where the conversion of peat swamp forests for transmigration land not only releases carbon but also disrupts the hydrological cycle, increasing fire vulnerability. In regions with significant indigenous populations such as Papua and the interior of Sulawesi, studies by Pahmi et al. (2023) and Humaedi et al. (2024) show that these impacts are unevenly distributed. Indigenous communities such as the Suku Anak Dalam or Tau Taa Vana often experience ecological and cultural displacement, where their access to traditional forest resources is disrupted by new land ownership and use patterns introduced by transmigration programs, exacerbating vulnerability and inequality.

This is where the environmental mobility framework (Boas et al., 2018) provides a valuable critical perspective. Transmigration can be understood as a form of engineered environmental mobility a state-manufactured human mobility that directly triggers other mobilities such as species mobility (biodiversity loss), land mobility (erosion), and carbon mobility. This concept allows us to see that consistent socio-ecological impacts arise because the transmigration program operates as a project of simplification, reducing complex ecological and social landscapes into measurable units (land per family, specific commodities) for national administrative and economic purposes. The consistency of impact patterns, therefore, reflects the consistency of central planning logic applied to diverse ecosystems, often ignoring local ecological knowledge. The study by Harbi et al. (2021) with their Human Footprint Index quantitatively demonstrates the distinctive and measurable anthropogenic footprint of this transmigration settlement pattern.

On the social side, consistency lies in the emergence of resource tensions and conflicts, as documented by Barter & Côté (2018) and Wibowo et al. (2013). However, behind this consistency, there is variation in the forms of social integration. Martelli's (2020) approach to social integration through shared practices can help explain why social impacts are not always homogeneously negative. Pratiwi et al.'s (2022) study of knowledge networks among descendants of migrants in Lampung, and Syahid et al.'s (2025) study of multiethnic leadership show that in some locations, spaces for shared practices such as farming, trading, or religious activities can create new social capital and reduce friction. This integration is a bottom-up process that often occurs despite (or in response to) rigid top-down policy designs. In other words, while the structural impacts are consistent (landscape changes, resource pressures), the social outcomes are highly dependent on local agency and community adaptability. These findings challenge the linear narrative of environmental migration (Mayer, 2013). While

environmental migration is often framed as a response to environmental change, in the case of transmigration, we observe a complex cycle, these programs are the primary cause of environmental change (deforestation, degradation) in destination areas, which in turn can create new vulnerabilities that trigger the need for further mobility, both for the transmigrants themselves and for the affected communities around them. The narrative of transmigration as a solution to demographic inequality and poverty, therefore, often overlooks the long-term ecological costs and their distributional inequities. Wilmsen et al.'s (2025) analysis of temporal ruptures strengthens this argument by showing how large-scale development projects like transmigration create permanent discontinuities in people's relationships with their environment.

In conclusion, the consistent pattern of socio-ecological impacts across the region is more a product of the political ecology of state planning than simply a technical consequence. This pattern results from the application of a uniform development logic, a land tenure regime that alters relationships with nature, and short-term economic priorities. This critical interpretation leads to important policy implications: impact mitigation efforts cannot be solely technical (e.g., improved agricultural technology), but must challenge the logic of centralized planning and acknowledge the politics of impact distribution. A more sustainable future for transmigration programs requires a shift from the engineering mobility paradigm to a recognition of the ecology of mobilities (Boas et al., 2018), where human movements are designed with a deep understanding of local socio-ecological dynamics and with inclusive justice mechanisms for all affected parties, both migrants and recipients.

Implications of Village Governance for Spatial Planning and Basic Services

To answer the third research question regarding the impact of migration on village governance, an analysis of 19 relevant studies shows that transmigration projects represent both a concrete practice of decentralization and a test of the resilience of local institutional capacity. The results indicate that transmigration is closely correlated with the operational areas of spatial planning, basic service provision, and conflict resolution, and is significantly influenced by the dynamics of post-reform decentralization. This study utilizes the decentralization theory of Prud'homme (1995) and Faguet (2014), as well as the concept of social integration through shared practices by Martelli (2020), to demonstrate that the success or failure of post-transmigration village governance depends not only on resource allocation but also on the quality of interactions between the formal institutional structures of decentralization and the informal social processes that develop at the community level. In the area of spatial planning, studies by Wirawan and Widowaty (2025) and Warganegara and Waley (2024) reveal a fundamental contradiction between the top-down planning logic derived from the history of transmigration and the complexities of land ownership and use at the local level. The Land Certification Scheme (PTSL), intended as a tool for spatial planning and legal certainty, often becomes fertile ground for corruption and manipulation, with local elites exploiting the gap between newcomers' administrative knowledge and the traditional demands of local communities. These findings confirm Prud'homme's (1995) concerns about the risks of decentralization, namely the risk of abuse of power and policy fragmentation when oversight and accountability mechanisms are weak. However, on the other hand, research by Nurlinah and Haryanto (2024) on governance shows that innovative cooperative spatial planning models have emerged in several regions. Here, village governments act as mediators, facilitating agreements between transmigrant groups and indigenous communities on the delimitation of agricultural land, settlements, and common pests. This process aligns with Faguet's (2014) view that decentralization can improve policy responsiveness, provided effective participation mechanisms are in place. Research by Martelli (2020) suggests that collective practices in

landscape management, such as the development of shared drainage infrastructure or standardized crop rotations, are pathways to integration and also play a practical role in spatial planning, beyond formal maps.

In the realm of basic service provision (clean water, health, education), the implications of transmigration create acute dilemmas for village governance. Studies show that transmigration settlements are often built with standardized basic service infrastructure that quickly becomes inadequate with population growth and environmental degradation (e.g., contaminated water sources). Village governments are faced with surging demands from a heterogeneous population with varying expectations. This is where the decentralization perspective is tested. Prud'homme (1995) warned that inter-regional fiscal disparities make it difficult for transmigrant villages, often located in disadvantaged areas, to finance service improvements. However, empirical findings reveal interesting variations in responses. Several studies, such as that by Khoeriyah et al. (2025), found that villages with strong levels of social capital and leadership are often built through movement practices or collective activities such as farmer groups or joint religious activities (Martelli et al., 2020) and have successfully developed cooperative models or community contributions to enhance basic services, for example by building informal schools or self-supporting village health posts. This is an example of how social integration transforms into institutional innovation. Conversely, in villages where social conflict is high and leadership is weak, decentralization has resulted in fragmented and discriminatory services, where access to services often follows ethnic lines or arrival times.

Conflict resolution is an area where village governance implications are most crucial. The persistence of land and resource conflicts identified in RQ2 requires resolution mechanisms at the local level. Barter and Côté's (2015) study of recurring conflict patterns and a study of community forestry conflicts (Wibowo et al., 2013) show that customary institutions are often weakened or ignored, while formal courts are inaccessible or distrusted. In this vacuum, village governments and religiously moderated village deliberation forums (Syahid et al., 2025) emerge as primary conflict resolution venues. Their success depends heavily on two factors identified by theory: first, the legitimacy of village institutions in the eyes of all groups (Faguet, 2014), and second, the existence of bridging practices (Martelli et al., 2020) that create spaces for positive interaction beyond conflict. Concrete examples from field studies show that villages that successfully mitigate conflict are those where the village head or religious leader is able to act as a neutral broker and redirect resource competition into collaboration on mutually beneficial village projects, such as road construction or village markets.

Critically, this synthesis leads to several argumentative conclusions. First, transmigration magnifies and accelerates the consequences of decentralization. It exacerbates the risks identified by Prud'homme (1995) in areas with low initial institutional capacity, but also unlocks local innovation, as envisioned by Faguet (2014) in places where leadership and social capital are strong. Second, Martelli's (2020) concept of integration through shared practices provides a vital micro-sociological framework for understanding how effective governance can emerge from below. Good village governance in a post-transmigration context is not only about structures and budgets, but also about the ability to create and maintain spaces of shared practice that build trust and new collective norms. Third, these findings challenge approaches that focus too much on the hard aspects of governance (rules, structures). In fact, soft governance, in the form of mediation skills, consensus building, and strengthening shared identity, is often the primary determinant of success in spatial planning, service delivery, and conflict resolution.

Therefore, the operational implications for village administration are clear: building village governance capacity post-transmigration requires a dual investment. On the one hand, strengthening administrative and fiscal capacity (hard governance) is necessary to manage complex planning and service delivery. On the other hand, and no less important, is investment

in building social infrastructure by facilitating dialogue forums, cross-group community development activities, and inclusive leadership training for village officials. Only with an integrated approach that reconnects the logic of administrative decentralization with the realities of social integration can village governance effectively manage the complex legacy of transmigration and direct it toward more inclusive and sustainable development.

The dominant analytical patterns of the 1959-1999 period not only documented the New Order's transmigration policies but also fundamentally shaped the epistemological framework and limitations for understanding this phenomenon into the contemporary era. The approaches developed during this foundational period were dominated by the structural-functional modernization perspective and state-centric theory, which produced a single narrative of transmigration as a social engineering project by a rational state. Wertheim (1959), for example, positioned this program within the framework of classical modernization theory, in which the state acted as the primary agent redistributing Java's "surplus" population to create demographic balance and stimulate economic development in the hinterland. This analysis crystallized the understanding of transmigration as instrumental policy, a tool for achieving the macro-goals of the nation-state.

The dualism of objectives identified by Arndt and Sundrum (1977) between settlement and regional development, and MacAndrews' (1978) analysis of the political function of power consolidation, further strengthened the paradigm of state-centric policy analysis. In this paradigm, the state became the primary unit of analysis, while local communities, ecological dynamics, and cultural complexities were often reduced to dependent variables or technical constraints. However, the most important and yet most problematic legacy of this period was the analytical separation between social and ecological dimensions. Although pioneers such as Whitten (1987) and Fearnside (1997) began to introduce environmental critique, their analyses, focused on deforestation and land degradation, remained sectoral and not yet integrated with political-ecological analyses that examine power relations in environmental transformation. Methodological limitations, such as reliance on secondary government data and a lack of in-depth ethnographic work, resulted in the muted voices, strategies, and resistance of local actors in the early literature.

The analytical legacy of 1959-1999 served as both a critical foundation and a target for transformation for research and policy in the following two decades. The shift in political regimes in 1998 catalyzed changes in dominant theoretical frameworks. Monolithic state-centric approaches began to be challenged and replaced by multi-level governance and political ecology frameworks. Issues that had been marginally addressed in previous eras, such as land conflicts, the vulnerability of indigenous communities, and sustainability, exploded into mainstream focus.

The 2000-2014 era can be seen as a period of direct correction to the legacy of the New Order. While classical analyses ignored conflict, studies such as Barter & Côté (2015) and Wibowo et al. (2013) instead made it a central object, revealing how past top-down policy designs gave rise to recurring disputes. The emerging narrative of local economic development (Potter, 2012) was a response to critiques of the narrow settlement paradigm of the Arndt and Sundrum (1977) era. The use of robust quantitative panel data by Bazzi et al. (2016) also represented a methodological leap, allowing them to test the macroeconomic claims of the previous era with more rigorous empirical evidence.

Entering the 2015-2025 era, the epistemological transformation is becoming increasingly complete. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches have become the new norm, explicitly attempting to bridge the gap between social and ecological analysis that existed in the classical era. Concepts such as governability (Nurlinah & Haryanto, 2024) and temporal rupture (Wilmsen et al., 2025)) emerged from this synthesis. They analyze not only policy as

text but also much deeper socio-ecological processes (policy as practice). The focus on indigenous communities and environmental inequality (Humaedi et al., 2024; Pahmi et al., 2023) decisively corrects the Java-centric and state biases that neglected the most affected parties in earlier analyses.

Table 1: Paradigm Transformation of Transmigration Analysis: From the Foundation Era (1959-1999) to the Synthesis Era (2000-2025)

Analysis Aspects	1959-1999 Era (Classic Pattern)	2000-2014 Era (Correction & Transition)	2015-2025 Era (Synthesis & Complexity)
Primary Unit of Analysis	The state (central) as a rational actor.	State, Local Government, Corporations, (multi-actor).	Multi-level actor networks (local-national-global) Socio-Ecological Systems.
Human-Nature Relationship	Organized; nature as a passive resource to be utilized.	Conflict; nature as an arena of competition and scarce resources.	Symbiosis & Rift; nature as active agent and vulnerable subject.
Dominant Methodology	Macro policy analysis, secondary data, historical-descriptive.	In-depth qualitative case study, initial panel quantitative data.	Mixed methods, participatory approach, spatial modeling, complex quantitative indices.
Analyzed Policy Narratives	Modernization, national security, social engineering.	Decentralization, local economic development, conflict resolution.	Sustainability, climate resilience, environmental justice, social inclusion.
Local Community Representation	Policy objects, passive recipients, target communities	Victims of conflict, negotiating parties, rights holders.	Agents with local knowledge, vulnerable subjects, actors in resilience networks.

Source: processed by the author

D. CONCLUSION

Based on a critical synthesis of 43 studies, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) concludes with three main findings. First, the evolution of transmigration policies demonstrates a paradigmatic shift from centralized social engineering (1959-1999) through a post-decentralization, fragmented transitional phase (2000-2014), to complex, multilevel governance (2015-2025), where global sustainability narratives often clash with extractive local ecological political realities. Second, a consistent and layered pattern of socio-ecological impacts is identified, where programs often presented as solutions actually systematically create new landscapes of vulnerability, where the burden of environmental damage and social conflict falls heaviest on indigenous communities and marginalized groups, even across diverse geographic locations. Third, the implications for village governance are crucial. Success now relies heavily on local adaptive capacities, such as social capital, inclusive leadership, and knowledge networks to manage the conflict between top-down spatial planning, basic service delivery, and equitable conflict resolution.

However, these findings must be viewed in light of the study's limitations. Limited database coverage (Scopus, Science Direct, Google Scholar) may miss gray literature or local publications. The predominance of post-2015 studies may also bias contemporary perspectives against long-term historical analysis. Nevertheless, the overall argument points to the conclusion that Indonesia's transmigration history is no longer simply a population movement program, but rather a long process of spatial formation in which power relations, ecological memory, and struggles for justice are constantly tested. This conclusion emphasizes that the

future of politics lies not in old patterns of mass relocation, but in the ability to learn from consistent patterns of impact and strengthen local governance structures that are truly sensitive to emerging socio-ecological complexities.

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