

Chapter 12

Media and Visual Representation of Disaster: Analysis of Merapi Eruption in 2010

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Abstract Mass media increasingly play an important role as the foremost source of information for general society, including in the disaster period. Newspapers typically feature cover-filling headline photos of disasters. It signifies the main discourse strategy and represents the disaster discourse of the newspaper on the whole. This chapter aims to discuss the discourse on disaster in Indonesia based on a study of two newspapers that covered the Mt. Merapi eruption in 2010. This study applies the method of visual discourse analysis, paying special attention to how images construct certain views of the social world.

The author argues that such media representation is rooted in the modern scientific discursive formation on Mt. Merapi and its eruptions, which is mainly sponsored by the state, and the discourse formed to promote some truth claims which are based on some binary-opposition views. Five main themes are found, i.e. the eruption of Merapi, evacuation processes, evacuation team, evacuation center, and damaged and ruined houses. The author finds that representations include: Mt. Merapi as a signifier of God, as a powerful-sacred subject, powerless and weak people, and mixed perceptions on the government ability to handle the emergency processes. Concerning the picture of the Mt. Merapi eruption, it is typically portrayed as a powerful natural phenomenon that claimed fundamental assets of local people. The second theme concerning the evacuation processes represent the despair of people who believe they have evacuated too late. The third theme concerns the evacuation center and shows helpless survivors waiting for external aid and suffering a lack of adequate shelter and aid management. The damaged and ruined houses theme also represents that the eruption has claimed the most fundamental assets of local people who have shown an 'eccentric' attitude by refusing to be evacuated. Lastly, the theme concerning the representation of the evacuation team shows the state performing strongly in emergency response; depicted as always prepared to evacuate the residents, while community volunteers are largely ignored in the printed media.

This study has important contributions for policy, formulating and developing early warning systems, mitigation strategies and emergency plans, as well as post-

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disaster recovery actions that holistically take into account cultural, social, economic and environmental capitals of affected societies.

Keywords Disaster discourse • Merapi eruption • Visual discourse analysis

12.1 Introduction

Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Geologically, the Indonesian archipelago is located along the Pacific Ring of Fire, from Sumatra, Java and Nusa Tenggara to North Sulawesi. Indonesia is also located amidst several tectonic plates: the Australian plate, the Eurasian plate, the Pacific plate and the Philippines Sea plate. Consequently, Indonesia is prone to natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis. As a country with tropical humid climate, Indonesia is also vulnerable to floods, landslides and several diseases (Sudibyakto et al. 2012: 7).

In an uncertainty situation caused by disaster, the demand for disaster information increased sharply. Media enthusiasm to report disaster is basically caused by the character of disaster itself, which has high news value in terms of scale, impact, importance, and human interest (Wenger 1985). The broader spectrum of disaster would be followed by the longer and more intensive media coverage. At the moments of disaster, media would gain substantial increase of audiences (Fernando 2010). In this condition, mass media hold great power because their news would usually be the most referred source of information.

This study is based on theoretical assumption that media play an important role in forming the public discourse on the disaster. Discourse is defined as the way to think as well as to act based on that thinking that goes beyond, even forms and regulates the subjects in the discourse itself (Macdonell 1986: 87). Discourse consists of various statements and is always articulated through various forms of texts which are connected and support one another, in certain regularity. The order constructs what is said as discursive formation, “systems of dispersion, in that they consist of the relations between parts of discourse” (Foucault 1972: 37). Discourse is powerful, not because it is supported by strong institutions, but because it always has truth claims of its produced knowledge. Discourse becomes powerful because of its productivity: creating knowledge, subject and object, as well as the claims of truth of such knowledge (Foucault 1979).

This chapter focuses on media texts about disasters, taking the news of Mt. Merapi eruption in 2010 as a case of study in order to reveal the underlying disaster discourse. The last eruption of mount Merapi was chosen for several reasons. First, Merapi is the most active volcano in Indonesia, erupts effusively (non-explosive) every 3–5 years, explosively every 8–15 years, and violently every 26–54 years (Thouret et al. 2000). Thus, the study is very important for the development of the future media coverage on the eruption.

Second, many scholars argue that the 2010 eruption was an extremely big eruption, a ‘100 year’ event, not the regular eruption that occurs every 3–5 years (Surono et al. 2012). This long-period eruption, from October to November 2010, had significant socio-eco-

conomic impacts. For instance, 386 people became victims and no less than 356,816 people were evacuated (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 11 December 2010); while the official data from government only mentioned 15,366 displaced people (Hudayana et al. 2012: 36).

Third, as it differs from the previous eruptions, it was intensively covered by mass media (Fauzanafi 2012). During the emergency crisis period in November 2010, almost all mass media, both local and nation-wide, covered the eruption day to day, hour to hour, with very long news duration. A nation-wide television station created a special report for the eruption and allocated special broadcast time, while another station produced breaking news every hour to update on the condition of the eruption.

The presence and role of mass media was crucial as well as problematic. Because of strong competition among mass media for news speed, accuracy was often ignored. For example, one television station, on the basis of paranormal divination, broadcasted a message that the huge eruption will soon occur and the material will run up to 60 km from the peak, destroying almost the entire territory of the province. Naturally, this was followed by panic and chaos among local people. Eventually, the television programme was banned from broadcasting anymore for an unspecified period of time by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission. Thus, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do Indonesian newspapers construct knowledge about disasters, especially about the eruption of Mt. Merapi in 2010?
2. What are the discursive formations underlying disaster knowledge construction?

For the purpose of complementarity, this study examines the photograph headlines representing the eruption in two Indonesian newspapers: *Kompas*, the largest national newspaper, and *Kedaulatan Rakyat* (KR), a local newspaper in Yogyakarta Special Province in which Mt. Merapi is located. The study limits the issue period from October to December 2010, and considers three stages of disaster coverage, namely pre-disaster (including mitigation and preparation), disaster emergency time and post-disaster recovery. Mt. Merapi began to erupt in late October 2010, and continued until early November 2010. Pre-disaster coverage that emphasizes an early warning system should have been started from the beginning of October 2010 when Mt. Merapi's status was raised from 'normal' to 'beware'. Meanwhile, after the eruption, the emergency phase lasted until December 2010.

Photo headlines are chosen for several reasons. First, in general, people tend to believe that 'the camera never lies'. The camera image is a reflection of objective reality. Photography, with its technological capabilities, offers 'true image' and 'truth-value' of the facts recorded (Hamilton 1997: 83). Second, photography brings the sensation of 'being there', as if the reader were at the location when the photographer took the image. Rothstein (in Hamilton 1997: 83) states, "The lens of camera is, in effect, the eye of the person looking at the print". A photograph is not only information, but also involves emotional experience with the sensation of 'being there'. Stryker (in Hamilton 1997: 83) said, "Good documentary should tell not only what a place or a thing or a person looks like, but it must also tell the audience what it would feel like to be an actual witness to the scene". Thus, disaster photos are very important in disaster coverage and play a crucial role: telling the experience of exposure to a disaster, as if the reader is experiencing it directly.

12.2 Method

This study is a piece of qualitative research, which aims to describe and analyses social phenomenon of disaster photos in Indonesian newspapers.

The data were collected through two slightly different ways. First, collecting issues of the two newspapers, *Kompas* and *Kedaulatan Rakyat*. Second, collecting empirical data about the 2010 eruption of Mt. Merapi, through observation and interviews, which are very instrumental for interpreting headline photographs. This relied on my firsthand observation and involvement as a volunteer. During November – December 2010, I became a volunteer of *Jalin Merapi*, a group of volunteers who deal with the management of disaster information, which optimizes all media, especially new media, such as mobile phone and social media, to reduce disaster risk and impact. I was the editor as well as the reporter for online media, specifically dedicated to the mitigation of the Mt. Merapi eruption. At that time, I interviewed many local people, volunteers, donors and government officers, as well as observing many survivor camps and destroyed villages. The work, including news archives, can be seen at <http://Merapi.combine.or.id/> (Nazaruddin and Habibi 2012).

In the data analysis phase, the study employs a critical discourse approach which focuses on how disaster discourses are formed through the objects, ideologies and power relations within. This research applies a visual discourse analysis method, as outlined by Rose (2007: 141–171). To dismantle the discourse in visual text, Rose advises to observe and identify the dimensions of rhetorical and social production of text, by following these steps: identify the main themes of the text, analyze the truth proposed by the text, observe the complexities and contradictions in the text, and search for the omitted or invisible dimensions in the text, as well as the visible.

12.3 Literature Review on Disaster and Media Representations

The research fills a gap in disaster studies, especially related to media representation of disasters. Previous studies related to media representations of disasters can be categorized into different topics, namely disaster journalism, the effect of disaster coverage, media roles during a disaster and media representation of disasters.

Disaster journalism studies were developed after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami but studies on the effect of media coverage of disasters are still rare. Jurriens (2014) stated that disaster journalism is a new genre in the era of Indonesian press freedom.

Gama (2009) researched the effect of media coverage on the Surakarta flood in 2007 and concluded that media coverage had an emotional effect on the audience. Yusuf (2006) focused on the ambivalent roles of media during disasters, covering the sadness of disaster news, while at the same time period, often broadcast happiness and celebrations.

Media were also absent in the mitigation and early warning system (Rahayu 2006), as well as non-existent during the recovery phase, as they had moved on to

another issues. Thus, disaster coverage is incomplete, fragmented, lacking deep understanding, and has no vision towards recovery (Nazaruddin 2007; Hermawan 2007; Masduki 2007). Jurriens (2014) studied the alternative media, either journalistic or artistic, and concluded that Indonesian community radio, popular theatre, performance art and community video have a positive contribution to disaster relief and community resilience. Unfortunately, they have been undermined by mainstream Indonesian commercial media.

The other discussion is about the relation between media coverage and disaster aid. Masduki (2007) has criticized the Indonesian mass media trend for having a dual role when covering disasters, i.e. the primary journalistic role of broadcasting disaster news and the charity role of collecting and distributing disaster relief as the secondary one. According to Masduki, both of these roles are not necessarily in line and sometimes even contradict each other.

The next topic often discussed by Indonesian scholars is the media representation of disasters. Wahyuni (2008) argued that media coverage on disaster tends to create what is called as media event, which could provoke and make the crisis situation worse. Media events could be defined as public ceremonies or extraordinary historical situations which are planned outside the media and broadcasted in real time on television, integrating the attention of dispersed society and highlighting a specific set of values (Katz and Liebes 2007; Jimenez-Martinez 2014). Lukmantoro (2007) criticized the common label of various disasters, such as “Aceh Tsunami”, “Jogja Earthquake”, or “Jakarta Flood” as commodification and simplification. Purwoko (2007) who has analyzed media coverage on the 2007 Jakarta flood concluded that the media framed the flood as a social disaster, not a natural disaster. Laksono (2007) discussed the photographs of the Yogyakarta and Central Java earthquake in 2006 and concluded that issues of social equality were prominent in the media coverage. Laksono also argued that the media frame is similar to the state’s formal discourse, characterized by much simplification through statistical data, especially after the first week of the crisis period. Novenanto (2012) who has studied alternative social media about *Lapindo mud spill* disaster in East Java and argued that such alternative media have sharpened the ongoing social conflicts amongst people and the respective companies cause the spills. Cholil and Astuti (2012) who have studied an online forum concerning the Yogyakarta and Central Java earthquake in 2006 identified two kinds of discourse, namely religious and humanity discourse, in which the latter is more dominant than the former.

Nazaruddin (2007) criticized the practice of disaster journalism and proposed some ethics, namely accuracy, voice of the voiceless, especially the survivor, commitment to recovery, and control and advocacy. On the other hand, Badri (2011) proposed disaster sensitive journalism, i.e. prioritizing public interest and empathy towards the survivor, which should always be related to the disaster management at each stage, from pre-disaster to emergency and rehabilitation stages. Hermawan (2007) argued that the media have a strong attitude similar to that of a ‘jumping louse (*kutu loncat*)’, jumping from one issue to the other based on its popularity. Other scholars emphasize their criticism of the dramatization and sensationalization of news (Nazaruddin 2007; Masduki 2007; Yusuf 2006). Arif (2010) described and analyzed

his experience as a journalist in covering the 2004 Tsunami. The title of his book, “Jurnalisme Bencana, Bencana Jurnalisme” already lays clear the important conclusion of the book, that the practice of disaster journalism could be the disaster itself.

There are also some studies that are closely related to this chapter. Ahimsa-Putra (2000), who has studied media coverage of the 1994 eruption of Mt. Merapi, argued that there are three groups of interpretation of the Mt. Merapi eruption which compete with each other in Indonesian newspapers, namely ‘warning interpretation’ as proposed by spiritual leaders, ‘temptation interpretation’ as suggested by government, and ‘destiny interpretation’ as believed by the survivors. Hidayana (2012) concluded that the discourse of the 2004 eruption in *Kedaulatan Rakyat* (KR) represents the mystical world-view of Javanese people about natural disasters. Even KR becomes the source for the Javanese to get mystical interpretation of the disaster, including its social political implications from the mystical perspective. Fauzanafi (2012) categorized 1456 photographs on the 2010 Merapi eruption in four Indonesian newspapers. According to Fauzannafi, the frequent themes of the photos are survivors and emergency camps, the ceremony of aid distribution and the face of a popular person such as actress or political leader. Focusing on the television coverage on 2010 Merapi eruption, Astuti (2011) concluded that there were various problems in the media report, caused by the weakness of the news gathering processes, the low quality of journalism, and the lack of media awareness of public interest in the disaster report.

12.4 Results and Discussion

This study finds 43 headline photos about the Mt. Merapi eruption in *Kedaulatan Rakyat* during the period from October to December 2010. Meanwhile, in the same period, *Kompas* had 17 headline photos of Mt. Merapi. In this chapter, the author discusses the five most adopted themes which represent the emergency handling of disasters, starting from the eruption of Merapi itself, evacuation processes, evacuation teams involved, the handling of survivors in the evacuation centers and lastly the damages incurred from the eruption. For each sub-section, the author presents pictures from both newspapers, describes the pictures and presents the analysis of representation.

12.4.1 *Merapi Eruption Photographs: A Theme of Representation That Merapi Is Great, and People Are Weak*

The Mt. Merapi eruption became the most frequent theme in *Kedaulatan Rakyat* as well as *Kompas*. Altogether there were 15 headline photos on the theme, 11 photos in *Kedaulatan Rakyat* and 4 photos in *Kompas*.



Fig. 12.1 Close up photographs of the eruption

When categorizing the photo based on its technique, there are three types of image presentation, namely close-up (Fig. 12.1), long shot (Fig. 12.2) and extreme long shot (Fig. 12.3). The author proposes that these pictures are symbolic of the divine and sacred power of Merapi through the close up and long shot techniques. Mt. Merapi is a single subject in the photographs, which represent a very strong, powerful, even terrible and deadly subject. The presence of a human figure in photojournalism is a requirement to represent the subject of the event or action. The author proposes that people are represented as weak by the use of the extreme long shot technique. Both are discussed accordingly:

12.4.1.1 Merapi Is Divine and Sacred

The study finds that there are two main objects presented in almost all the eruption photos: the peak of Mt. Merapi and the ash clouds or loosely termed '*wedhus gembel*' (referring to the shape of the ash clouds that looks like a sheep or *wedhus gembel* in Javanese).

The close up technique focuses on the peak of Mt. Merapi whereas the long shot technique highlights the *wedhus gembel* in order to show that it is as large as the volcano itself, while the extreme long shot technique is used to indicate the eruption from a long distance by capturing the mountain in the background and either human or other objects in the foreground.

In the first category, a close-up of the peak of Mt. Merapi (Fig. 12.1) no other object in the photos is represented except the peak of Merapi with red lava or with ash clouds coming out of the dome. It sends a 'horror' message of the Mt. Merapi eruption. Horror discourse is also produced by the long shot photos (Fig. 12.2), featuring *wedhus gembel* entirely. The size of the ash clouds is compared to the size of Mt. Merapi itself. Thus, Mt. Merapi is represented as a very powerful volcano. The discourse could also be concluded from the pan down technique, by which the photos were taken from below with the camera facing up, which signifies the power of the pictured object (Berger 2013).



3. KR, Tuesday, 2 Nov 2010



4. KR, Saturday, 30 Oct 2010



5. KR, Wednesday, 3 Nov 2010



6. Kompas, Friday, 5 Nov 2010

Fig. 12.2 Long shot photographs of the eruption

The metaphor of Mt. Merapi as a divine power and humans as profane, could also be further observed in the traditional myths about Mt. Merapi that are deeply rooted in Javanese culture. For example, local people believe that Mt. Merapi is not just a mountain, but also a kingdom of unseen spirits with the crater as its palace. Thus, for the local people, the crater of the mountain is '*kraton makhluk alus*' (the palace of the spirits), while the slopes of Mt. Merapi are the place for human beings (Triyoga 2010: 56–70; Schlehe 1996: 404; Dove 2008: 332; Donovan 2010: 122; Hudayana 1993: 13). In this sense, the photographs help to reproduce the myth of the sacred Mt. Merapi.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 199) emphasize that the composition of 'top down' is very important in visual text because it shows the real versus the ideal dimensions, sacred versus profane, or another dichotomy in accordance with the particular cultural context. Thus, in the eruption photos, we can infer the composition of the top down as a metaphor for the divine versus secular, or sacred versus profane. Mt. Merapi, which occupies the topline of the photo, is a sacred symbol of divine power. While humanity and its culture, which occupies the bottom side of the picture, is a symbol of the powerless profane world subject to or governed by the sacred.



7. KR, Saturday, 23 Oct 2010



8. KR, Wednesday, 27 Oct 2010



9. KR, Saturday, 13 Nov 2010



10. KR, Thursday, 11 Nov 2010



11. KR, Wednesday, 15 Dec 2010



12. KR, Monday, 15 Nov 2010

Fig. 12.3 Extreme long shot photographs of the eruption



13. Kompas, Saturday, 30 Oct 2010



14. Kompas, Thursday, 11 Nov 2010



15. Kompas, Tuesday, 2 Nov 2010

Fig. 12.3 (continued)

12.4.1.2 People Are Weak

The third technique is the extreme long shot, in which people or other objects become the foreground and the volcano and its eruption are used as the background (Fig. 12.3). Interestingly, there are some similarities in representing human figures. First, the man is shown in the bottom of photos at a small size. Second, the figure is not staring at either the camera or the audience, but is looking at the volcano.

Instead of being the subject of the photograph saying something to the reader, the human figure in the photographs mostly looks at the volcano. Burgin (2003) states that the gaze is very important in photography. Who sees, who is seen, and how to see, indicate the subject and object in the photo. Thus, the photographs confirm that Mt. Merapi is the subject, while human is the object. Actually, the human presence in some of the photos, though very small, becomes the focus of the camera and the centre of reader’s attention. People become the dominant element in the text, or details that absorbs our attention. Thus, human presence is indeed important, not as the centre of attention, but rather to reinforce the myth that they are powerless objects facing and looking at the powerful subject: Mt. Merapi.

This discourse is coincident with the modern rational Islamic teaching which believes that eruptions are God's destiny and cannot be predicted by people. This kind of teaching is deeply rooted in Indonesian society. Ahimsa-Putra (2000), who has studied the interpretation of the 1994 eruption of Mt. Merapi in Indonesian newspapers, said that one of the important interpretations which are commonly delivered by mass media are religious-based interpretations which understand the eruption as a warning from God to people. At the moment of the 2010 eruption, such religious-based interpretation was also popular in the Indonesian mass media. Recently, the exposure and influence of religion is growing, including in the local communities on the slopes of Mt. Merapi (Humaidi et al. 2012).

12.4.2 Evacuation Process Photographs: Representation of the People in Despair

During the research period, there were four photos with the evacuation theme, which have three important signifiers: trucks as transportation for evacuation, sad facial expressions, and injured survivors (Fig. 12.4). They produce a discourse of emergency evacuation, survivor's sadness, survivor's togetherness and autonomy in the evacuation process. This discourse is based on a discursive formation claiming that state is great, has prepared to evacuate citizens, and that people were unprepared and did not listen to the government, refused to be evacuated, and eventually wound up getting injured.

Kedaulatan Rakyat displayed two photos on the evacuation theme; both of them have the same main signifier, a truck being used in the evacuation process. The truck in the photo represents togetherness as well as the autonomy of the survivors in the evacuation process. The trucks pictured in the photos were not trucks prepared by the government for the evacuation, but instead owned by local residents. The use of private trucks represents autonomy while the many people being transported represents togetherness.

Photo 19 accurately represents the deep sadness of survivors. All parts of the woman's facial expression, as the focus of the picture, are a symbol of pain: the wistful gaze, tears and shining lips. Meanwhile, the dreamy gaze of the man at her side is a signifier for disbelief at what he had just experienced or the now unclear future. However, regardless the specific meaning of this gaze, it still signifies pain. Scattered dust over the entire body is a sign that they have not yet cleaned up. Thus, it also signifies that the photos were taken at the time of the emergency evacuation process.

In general, evacuation themed photographs show the emergency situation and the survivors' sadness. Furthermore, the photos actually represent the 'eccentric' attitude of local people, who did not believe and listen to the government's advice to evacuate earlier. They were eventually evacuated when the condition was really critical, i.e. when the volcano had been very dangerous. In these conditions, they were evacuated by force, even at night. Local people eventually evacuated after they were injured, either by ash flows or clouds. Here, the state apparatus is represented



16. KR, Thursday, 4 Nov 2010



17. KR, Saturday, 27 Nov 2010



18. Kompas, Wednesday, 27 Oct 2010



19. Kompas, Saturday, 6 Nov 2010

Fig. 12.4 Evacuation photographs

as helpful and prepared. This is where a dichotomy raised. The headline photograph seems to create a discourse that local people did not listen to the government, refused to be evacuated and therefore were injured, while authorities, in contrast, had prepared to evacuate.

The cultural beliefs are strongly related to the attitude of *Mbah* Maridjan as the mystical guardian of Merapi at that time. In the previous 2006 eruption, the people of the upper slopes were already asked to evacuate immediately, including Kinahrejo hamlet (7 km from the summit), in which *Mbah* Maridjan stayed. But as *Mbah* Maridjan himself refused to evacuate, the people in general also refused to evacuate. At that time, *Mbah* Maridjan's belief that Kinahrejo is safe was proved empirically and the eruption did not affect there. This reinforced trust in *Mbah* Maridjan.

During the 2010 crisis, *Mbah* Maridjan changed his attitude a little bit, suggesting people should move down as asked by the government, while he himself would remain in the village because of his responsibility as the guardian. However, his presence was interpreted that the hamlet is safe from the eruption. At that time, the vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, pregnant women and children, were already

evacuated, but the vast majority, including many elderly people, remained in the hamlet even though the volcano was in the highest status of ‘*awas*’ (beware). Finally, when Mt. Merapi first erupted explosively on Tuesday, 26 October 2010, at 18:00 PM when daylight was fading, they fled in panic. Unfortunately, 37 people died, including *Mbah* Maridjan. Many of them were the residents who were too late to flee, or young men who climbed back to evacuate other residents (Nazaruddin 2013).

The attitude of local people was also the same in the previous eruption of Merapi, as has been described in previous studies, such as Lavigne et al. (2008), Dove (2008) and Donovan (2010). These previous studies usually relate this resistant attitude to two main causes; people’s cultural beliefs which lead to the trust that their villages are safe, and their fear of abandoning their livestock. At moments of emergency, the local people would keep the livestock in their house, because they cannot bring their livestock to the camps. They are also worried of losing their cattle, because it would be a serious threat to their survival after the eruption. Hence, losing cattle is a more concrete and serious threat than the eruption itself (Lavigne et al. 2008: 285; Donovan 2010). This kind of rational-economic thinking was rarely covered by mass media. They just represent the local peoples’ responses who do not want to evacuate as strange and silly behavior, without a proper background description (Fauzanafi 2012).

It also confirms what Douglas and Wildavsky (1982: 221) have emphasized as ‘risk perception’, a sociocultural phenomenon affected by social values and organization that affect perception about what is considered dangerous and guide responses to a hazard. Thus, media have created discourse and narratives on the perception of the state, determined scientifically and objectively, as “real risk”, while “perceived risk” by the local people is irrational and even excluded (Oliver-Smith 1996).

12.4.3 Evacuation Team Photographs: Representation of Capable Government Apparatuses

In this theme, Kompas displayed more headline photos than Kedaulatan Rakyat. There are three parties often emphasized in this theme: the military agencies police and search and rescue (SAR) (Fig. 12.5). They are represented as having very important roles in emergency responses. In this sense, the media have excluded the work of other various groups of ‘un-uniformed’ volunteers. The media have also discoursed that volunteers have different characteristics with the survivor, such that volunteers are helpful and vice versa survivors are helpless. The media has ignored that many of volunteers are local people who also become survivors. These representations are the manifestation of the discursive formation that the state is powerful and the local people are powerless.

At first, it can be seen that there are only three groups of people carrying out evacuation and relief activities: the military, police, and SAR, discernible from their



20. KR, Friday, 12 Nov 2010



21. KR, Sunday, 14 Nov 2010



22. KR, Saturday, 20 Nov 2010



23. Kompas, Monday, 8 Nov 2010



24. Kompas, Wednesday, 10 Nov 2010



25. Kompas, Friday, 3 Dec 2010



26. Kompas, Monday, 6 Dec 2010

Fig. 12.5 Evacuation team photographs

uniform. Sometimes, in the photo captions, they are named as “evacuation team”, “SAR team” or “volunteer”. Apparently, the journalist is too lazy to write a number of institutions involved in the work of evacuation (Nazaruddin 2010b; Hermanto 2011). In their sloth, they only mention institutions that are considered important or already popular, while other institutions simply referred to as “volunteers”.

There are two important issues here. First, the very prominent representation of these parties in the headline is very instrumental in the handling of the Mt. Merapi eruption in 2010. Unfortunately, there is no proper representation of the work of other volunteers, who are usually without uniforms. Likewise, in the captured photo, they only mentioned as ‘volunteers’ or ‘another volunteer’, which ultimately obscures who they are and their roles. In contrast to specific mention, such as ‘Special Forces (*Kopassus*)’, ‘*Yon Armed*’, or ‘Yogyakarta SAR team’, this will definitely highlight the role of these institutions. Thus, there is marginalization of the role of volunteers in non-military, police or SAR. Strictly speaking, there is an excessive exclusion of various groups of volunteers.

The exclusion also occurred concerning the job description of volunteers outside the exposed area of ash clouds. It seems that the work of volunteers is only to evacuate the people, the dead bodies of victims or to clean up the debris. In fact, during the 2010 eruption, the work of volunteers was very complex. Most of their locations are even not in ruined areas, but in the evacuation camps where the survivors were still alive and needed help.

In addition, there is also a problem of the dichotomy between volunteer and survivor. Volunteers are not survivors, and vice versa. On one side, the volunteers are powerful and helpful with a variety of activities that they do to help the survivors. On the other hand, survivors are described helpless, only waiting for the help from volunteers. The media ignore that many of the volunteers are local people who have become survivors. They live in evacuation camps, but they are not only waiting for help. Instead, they are actively involved as volunteers, managing and distributing aid to camps, managing public kitchens, organizing recreational activities and more (Nazaruddin 2010b). Some experts have recommended that media coverage of disasters should provide not only a narrative on sorrow and devastation, but also on stories of survivorship and bravery, which are very rarely published (Walters and Hornig 1993; Worawongs et al. 2007).

Disasters generally reveal certain fundamental behaviors of people, especially toward material resources, such as altruism, self interest, private property, competition, reciprocity or trust. Disasters also create high tension between the moral order of the society and individual rational choices (Oliver-Smith 1996: 311). Thus, the ‘people help people’ phenomena, as well as the active survivors engaging in relief activities during the 2010 crisis, are evidence of strong altruism and societal moral order. Unexpectedly, the media prefer to frame helpless, lazy and individualistic images of local people.

12.4.4 Evacuation Center Photographs: Representation of Powerless People and the Government's Inadequate Shelter and Aid Management

There are six photographs representing survivors, in which the figures of children and the elderly become the main signifier and are usually portrayed in sitting and lying positions (Fig. 12.6). It represents certain knowledge that survivors are unable to cope with the eruption, are lazy and helpless and waiting for external aid. No photos depict survivors doing certain activities. This kind of image denies the fact that at the moment of emergency, while staying at the camps, the survivors are involved in various rescue and relief activities. It shows the media's tendency for dramatization and sensational disaster coverage, for the sake of commodification and to fulfill their commercial interest. The images also representative of the failure of government to provide adequate emergency camps, as well as to effectively distribute disaster aid. We can conclude that the representation is rooted in the discursive formation of weak people, as well as weak government.

12.4.4.1 The Powerless Survivor

In these six photos (Fig. 12.6), the figures of children are pictured in all photos, except the photo 29 and 30. Likewise, there is always a grandmother figure in the photographs, except photo 28, 29 and 30. Children are represented as survivors of the eruption, but unlike adults, they can enjoy the evacuation condition. Similarly, old people are portrayed as powerless and resigned, but still smiling. In general, sitting and lying positions represent abandonment, helplessness, or even laziness.

They just sit and lie down, do not do anything, just resigned to wait for aid. No photos depict them doing certain activities. In fact, during the emergency period of the 2010 eruption, hundreds of local people who become survivors, while still grieving, were involved in rescue and relief activities either individually or in groups, such as preparing food, distributing aid etc. (Nazaruddin 2010b; Habibi 2011; Christia 2012). Moreover, some people continued to work while they were staying in the emergency camps (Christia 2012). In the previous 2006 eruption, the local people did many activities during their stay in emergency camps. Donovan (2010) and Lavigne et al. (2008) identified three types of behavior: some people, mainly women, children and the elderly, stayed in the camps; while some others, mainly 20–50 years old males and females, stayed in the camp at night and went back during the day to the villages to feed their cattle; and the others, exclusively male, stayed in the village all day and night to keep the cattle. At the moment of the 2010 eruption, similar phenomena took place (Christia 2012).

The figures of grandmothers, women or children were featured in almost all evacuation or survivor themed photos and were framed as the focus of the photo. Why a grandmother, woman or child? The answer is commodification. Images of children and grandmothers who slept huddled in shelters, grandmothers who ride



27. KR, Tuesday, 26 Oct 2010



28. KR, Wednesday, 10 Nov 2010



29. KR, Thursday, 18 Nov 2010



30. KR, Sunday, 31 Oct 2010



31. Kompas, Tuesday, 26 Oct 2010



32. Kompas, Sunday, 7 Nov 2010

Fig. 12.6 Survivor photographs

the truck during the evacuation process, crying women with dust-covered faces, are a very effective framing to generate compassion, sympathy or empathy from audiences.

Thus, compassion will bring solidarity and will further increase the amount of aid. Media, through their images and stories of victims, survivors or relief efforts, have the best capability to build public compassion that would encourage fund-raising for disasters (Bennett and Kottasz 2000). Olsen et al. (2003) emphasize that the presence of the media along with their dramatic narratives was instrumental for

the smooth disaster relief. Thus, the media play an important role in increasing disaster relief. Admittedly, the role is very important in the post-disaster emergency conditions, when the assistance of various stakeholders is really needed. The media take on that role by creating grief and sadness stories, often with certain dramatization.

However, the dramatization is closely related to the dual role of media during the disasters. Masduki (2007) states that the Indonesian media have a dual role when covering disaster, i.e. the primary journalistic role to broadcast disaster news and the charity role to collect and distribute disaster relief as secondary. Both of these roles are not necessarily congruent, and sometimes even contradict each other. The charity role has raised the common understanding of media quality during the disaster which are measured by the amount of collected and distributed aid. The media who have widely collected and distributed disaster aid would be great media. This secondary role eventually impacts the primary journalistic function. The emergence of dramatization in disaster news could be seen as one of the results of the domination of the charity role. In addition, the charity role has trapped the media to deal with the issue of disaster relief accountability.

The media tendency to dramatization and sensation in disaster coverage has long been criticized. Media images and stories of disaster have focused on the survivors' shock and helplessness (Liebes and Blondheim 2002; Walters and Hornig 1993). Brayne (2007) said that the early emergency period would usually be signified by dramatic rumors, such as the hyperbolic number of victims, social chaos etc. Ardalan et al. (2008) said that media tendency towards dramatic stories of disasters is motivated to "pump up ratings" and to be critical of governments. Such criticism has also come from Indonesian scholars, such as Arif (2010), Yusuf (2006), Masduki (2007), Nazaruddin (2007), Lukmantoro (2007) and Nazaruddin and Habibi (2012).

Philo (2002) stated that such dramatic stories would generate incomplete understanding of the disaster. In the absence of explanation, the audience would fill in the gaps with traditional myths related to disasters, such as the lazy and helpless survivors. Moreover, Matei and Ball-Rokeach (2005) have also put forward those other consequences that media coverage on traumatic events would have a permanent and long-term effect.

12.4.4.2 Inadequate Shelter and Aid Management

These photos in this part represent the limitations and inadequacies displacement camp conditions. They are presented to show the slum conditions in camps inhabited by grandmothers and children. Thus, these pictures represent the failure of governments to provide adequate emergency camps for its citizens.

Representation of support deficiency is somewhat contradictory if we relate it to photo 28 which displays mounting piles of used clothing that were used as children's playground.

This is an indication of excessive used clothing assistance, no longer needed by the survivors, while other photographs feature a discourse of the lack of support to

the camp. At a glance, it shows a contradictory discourse, but all photos actually frame the weakness of disaster relief distribution. Logically, used clothing assistance may accumulate in certain camps, which are usually the central camps widely covered by the media. In the photo 28, excessive used clothing aid accumulated in the Maguwoharjo survivor camp, which is the central and biggest camp in Sleman district having the highest number of survivors, as well as the camp most frequently covered by the media. Sadly, the need for decent clothing in other camps had not been fulfilled. This photo was published on November 10, 2010, just a few days after the big eruption of Mt. Merapi. On this date, the survivors are still scattered at various points, in school, in the village hall, in campus, in the houses and so on, without any assistance. Also, at this time, many survivor shelters had not been handled properly, even for basic needs such as food and drink. Many of those shelters were even helped by the initiative of local residents surrounding the camps. So it is clear that on 10 November 2010, at the time of the photo was published, many other shelters still need clothes (Nazaruddin 2010a).

The images are better understood through comprehensive consideration of the emergency condition during the 2010 eruption, which lasted from late October until November. During the crisis, the hazard-prone area was extended from 10 to 15, and finally to 20 km from the summit (Suroño et al. 2012). The official contingency and evacuation maps and plans were only prepared by the government for 10 km evacuation zone. So, when the evacuation zone expanded to 15 km, then again to 20 km, the government could no longer overcome the emergency conditions; their crisis plans were inadequate to anticipate such a big eruption, since the number of people who had to be evacuated was much higher than the prediction. The emergency camps were not prepared, even their locations were not specified. Actually, some scholars had warned that the official emergency map of Merapi only takes into account small to medium eruptions, and underestimates the potential for a large eruption and its impact (Hadisantono et al. 2002; Thouret and Lavigne 2005).

The huge explosive eruption on 5 November 2010 happened only several hours after the evacuation zone was extended to 20 km. Thousands of people were not ready to evacuate, since they were already in the emergency camps located more than 10 km, but still within 20 km from the summit. The condition was so dramatic since that they fled in panic at night. At that moment, neither residents nor the government knew where they had to go. Some of them ended up at a school building, university campuses, village hall, *Masjid* or church, while some others who had relatives around Yogyakarta province went to their relatives. Feeling comfortable with the family was the main reason for staying in relatives' houses (Christia 2012).

At that moment, the local authorities of Sleman district decided Maguwoharjo football stadium to be the main camp, which could accommodate around 20,000 survivors. However, due to limited space at the stadium, many people remained in smaller camps managed by local communities or local institutions, or relative-based camps. There were others improvised and emergency camps. Then, what happened was that 'people helped people', whereby the residents from non-affected areas and many civil society groups became the saviors through various ways, such as collectively supplying meal packets, providing their houses as emergency camps,

setting up and managing the camps and the aids, opening emergency public kitchens, doing free medical care etc. (Nazaruddin and Habibi 2012).

At a glance, the representation of government failure in providing adequate camps and distributing disaster aids is the break to the discursive formation of the 'great government and weak people'. But, it could be better understood as 'an interpretive repertoire' or mini-discourse that tends to be quite specific to a particular social institution (Potter 1996), of the discursive formation of the great government. This interpretive repertoire likely belongs to the mass media, as it was common for the Indonesian mass media in disaster coverage to criticize the government in term of camp condition and aid distribution. Thus, governments are still great, but have a weakness in providing adequate camps and distributing aid. Rose (2007: 164), has said "Discursive formations have structures but that does not necessarily imply that they are logical or coherent".

12.4.5 Damages Photographs: Representation of Houses as Most Fundamental Assets to the People

As well as the theme of eruption, ruin-themed pictures, which show damage due to ash clouds, appear frequently in the two daily newspapers. *Kedaulatan Rakyat* published six photos, while there were two photos in *Kompas*. Some objects often appeared in this theme, namely houses, cars or motorcycles, uprooted trees, and people looking at the debris or looking for remnants in the ruins (Fig. 12.7). The images represent two types of knowledge: (1) the eruption has claimed the most fundamental assets of thousands of local people, (2) local people exhibiting 'eccentric' attitudes i.e. refusing evacuation. These representations are again rooted in the discursive formation that Merapi is great and powerful, and that people are weak.

These ruin-themed photos predominantly show former residential areas hit by ash clouds. All the objects in the photos, apart from the people searching for goods, are covered by thick volcanic ash.

First, the dust that covered all the objects in the photo is a sign that the damage was caused by ash clouds. The thick dust is also a sign of the proximity of the pictured area to the peak of the volcano, as well as a sign that the photos were taken shortly after the eruption.

Second, the settlements and houses destroyed by the ash cloud represent that the eruption has claimed the most fundamental thing of the local people, their homes. Third, the environment including trees and cattle destroyed and covered by ash, also represent that the fundamental asset for survival after the crisis has been claimed by the eruption. Not just one, two or three houses were destroyed; the eruption had even devastated residential complexes consisting of tens or even hundreds of houses. Thus, the eruption has claimed the essential assets of hundreds, even thousands of families who live on the slopes. Oliver-Smith (1996: 304) said that a disaster "tends to be a totalizing event or process, affecting eventually most aspects of the commu-



33. KR, Thursday, 28 Oct 2010



34. KR, Saturday, 6 Nov 2010



35. KR, Tuesday, 9 Nov 2010



36. KR, Tuesday, 11 Nov 2010



37. KR, Friday, 26 Nov 2010



38. KR, Tuesday, 23 Nov 2010



39. Kompas, Thursday, 28 Oct 2010



40. Kompas, Tuesday, 9 Nov 2010

Fig. 12.7 Damages photographs

nity life". Related to these ruin-themed photos, which are frequently displayed, Wenger and Friedman (1986) a long time ago reminded that images or news of chaotic conditions and the total destruction of disasters may be useful to affect public attention, but the media tends to over-emphasize destruction and devastation.

Photo 33 was published by *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, while photo 39 was published by *Kompas*, but both shoot the same location, with a similar angle. The photographer captured Kinahrejo hamlet, Cangkringan, Sleman, focusing on the ruins in front of the mosque and the house that was still standing. Readers who are familiar with this location will know that the house in front of the mosque is the house of *Mbah Maridjan*, caretaker (*juru kunci*) of Mt. Merapi who died in the first eruption on 26 October 2010. A couple of days during the emergency period of the 2010 eruption, this was a favorite story reported by almost all Indonesian media, of the death of *Mbah Maridjan*. Actually, there were many victims besides *Mbah Maridjan*, but the media only focused on a single story. It confirms Scanlon and Alldred's (1982) opinion, that the media remain focused on a single story event.

Another question arises, what is exactly represented by this photo? The mosque and the house of *Mbah Maridjan* are synecdochal signs of Kinahrejo hamlet, part of Kinahrejo standing in for the whole. Displaying the icon, in its ruined condition, the photo represents that the entire hamlet of Kinahrejo was destroyed by the eruption. This photograph also develops a discourse that *Mbah Maridjan*, previously considered as the most discerning person who understood the activity and the will of Mt. Merapi with supernatural abilities, could not escape from the ash clouds. This photo delegitimizes the attitude of some Kinahrejo residents who shared this 'eccentric' attitude. They refused to be evacuated by the government because they followed *Mbah Maridjan's* decision to stay in his house. This photo implicitly states that such an attitude was a big mistake and resulted in the loss of life, including *Mbah Maridjan's* own and that of other residents.

The third theme is the picture of car or motorcycle debris. During the emergency condition when Mt. Merapi's activity was increasing, cars, motorcycles and trucks became the main vehicles of evacuation. The ruins of a motorcycle or a car boiled by ash clouds can be a sign that the owners were still in their houses when the eruption occurred. They did not have time to save themselves, and finally died as victims. Furthermore, it also serves to underline their 'eccentric' attitude.

12.5 Conclusion

This study has discussed five themes of headline photographs, namely: eruption, evacuation processes, evacuation team, evacuation center, damages from the eruption.

This study concludes that the media discourses on the eruption of Mt. Merapi are rooted in modern scientific discursive formation of Mt. Merapi and its eruptions, which is mainly sponsored by the state. The discursive formation promotes some truth claims which are based on some binary-opposition understandings or dualistic

views. First, binary opposition between the sacred and the profane, in which Mt. Merapi is represented as a signifier of God, as a powerful-sacred subject, while people are represented as the weak-profane object. While the eruption is represented as a horror phenomenon which has claimed the most fundamental assets of local people. During the eruption period, people become merely powerless objects who could not cope with the disaster as acted by the subject. Second, the dualistic view between state and people (citizen) that is the state is powerful and people are powerless. The great state is justified through some discourses, namely take and implement strategies and to be always ready to help the citizens. On the contrary, local people are delegitimized through some ways, namely believing in traditional myths about Mt. Merapi and its eruption, performing 'eccentric' attitudes such as refusing evacuation, showing individualistic attitudes and acting as lazy and helpless survivors, simply waiting for aid.

The media should take the role as the public sphere for the dialogue between policymakers who rely on modern mitigation plans and local people who believe in the spirituality of their environment. Media should practice disaster sensitive journalism and always relate themselves to disaster management in general in each stage. Jurriens (2014) has empirically found that the 'sensitive understanding' was practiced by many alternative media in Indonesia during the disaster crisis and drove them to a positive contribution towards disaster relief and community resilience. Ethical disaster journalism should be more utilised in order to implement sensitive disaster journalism, namely public interest alignment, accuracy, voice of the voiceless, commitment to recovery, control and advocacy.

This study is an important contribution to formulate public policies related to disaster and natural hazard in a holistic form. By revealing the media discourse on disaster, this research would give an important contribution to understand the variety of disaster understandings believed by different groups, how certain perspectives on disaster are more powerful than others, and how Indonesian society in general view and interpret disaster and natural hazard. The understanding is indeed very important in formulating and developing early warning systems, mitigation strategies, emergency plans, as well as post-disaster recovery actions that holistically take into account cultural, social, economic and environmental capitals within the effected societies.

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