Involuntary Resettlement, Resistance and Political Empowerment†

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The nature of resistance to resettlement is examined through a discussion of cognitive aspects as well as factors influencing or evoking resistance movements. Resettlement resistance movements vary according to strategies adopted either to resist resettlement implementation or to gain bargaining advantage for improving resettlement projects. The array of tactics which people have employed to resist resettlement is broad, including legal and illegal and non-violent and violent measures. One important consideration which emerges from this examination is the expansion of resistance to resettlement into more generalized forms of empowerment. Three cases of failed resistance, which nonetheless led to increased local empowerment, are briefly explored.

Introduction

"'On the first day they came, they spoke to us of progress . . .
they measured our lands
and we said nothing . . .
On the second day they came, they invaded our houses . . .
they expelled our children
and we said nothing . . .
On the third day the water covered everything
and because we said nothing
we will never be able to do anything . . .'
Are we going to let this happen again?' †† (CRAB 1988).

The sense of violation and outrage expressed in this passage is eloquent testimony to the injustice felt by the peasants of the Tocantins River dislocated by the Tucurui Dam. Generally, however, people dislocated by political upheaval, disasters and development projects have rarely found the means to articulate their plight, much less a public disposed to sympathetic consideration beyond the borders of their local context. Refugees of disasters and political upheaval have been and continue to be the recipients of a question: Questioning either the unintended outcomes and trauma which involuntarily dislocated by government construction of developmental schemes threaten the powerless and ineffective. In effect, a challenge to survival has been made closely. This article surveys contexts for political empowerment for those marginalized from formal political systems.

Involuntary Migration

In the vast majority of societies, dislocation is a sociocultural/economic process which involves unintended outcomes and trauma which is both profound. Forced migration is a process which involves involuntary displacement, generally speaking, resulting from changes, in environment, interaction, in leaders, and alienation as people and communities suffer a loss of social networks and on sites. The affective and concrete being and community core of both individuals and communities is their most concrete need, marginalization from formal political systems.---

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to be the recipients of assistance from public and private charitable organizations. Questioning either the substance or the motivation behind such assistance has been considered the height of ingratitude. Development refugees, people dislocated by governments through 'rights of eminent domain' for the construction of development infrastructures, have occasionally reached broader audiences for their protests, but such opposition to development until recently has been seen as archaic, futile and somehow both unpatriotic and mean-spirited.

Recently, however, in what may be a reflection both of the expansion of the human rights movement across a broad front as well as the recognition of actual alternatives to resettlement, there are increasing examples of concrete resistance movements against forces which attempt to resettle people against their will. While frequently such resistance movements are not successful, cases can be documented in which even failed resistance movements have led to forms of empowerment for the people afflicted by involuntary resettlement. Indeed, resettlement is potentially such a total threat to sociocultural existence that it may mobilize a population to action as few other threats can. Most resettlement schemes threaten individual and community identity and well-being so directly and immediately, that the 'weapons of the weak', the multiple conspiracies of individual acts of sabotage against elite oppression traditionally employed by the powerless and disenfranchised (Scott 1985) are rendered hopelessly ineffective. In effect, the threat or enactment of resettlement presents so stark a challenge to survival that political mobilization and empowerment may follow closely. This article suggests that resettlement resistance movements are fertile contexts for political socialization for people who have been traditionally marginalized from formal political structures.

Involuntary Migration and Resettlement

In the vast majority of cases, involuntary migration and resettlement are sociocultural/economic processes that are inflicted upon people as the intended or unintended outcomes of particular economic or political policies. The disruption and trauma which involuntary migration and resettlement inflict upon people are profound. Forced migration and resettlement tend to be totalizing phenomena. Generally speaking, resettlement projects may involve or evoke rapid and radical changes, in environment, in productive activities, in social organization and interaction, in leadership and political structure, in world view and ideology. The process is invariably difficult and painful, engendering feelings of powerlessness and alienation as people are uprooted from their familiar circumstances. Whole communities suffer acute degrees of disintegration as community structures, social networks and even kin groups may be dispersed to different resettlement sites. The affective ties between individuals and communities and their material environments are destroyed by uprooting and resettlement. These ties lie at the core of both individual and collective constructions of reality and removal from their most concrete manifestation endangers both individual psychological well-being and community mental health generally.
In many groups threatened with resettlement there seems an implicit understanding of the dire consequences in terms of socio-cultural disintegration and economic privation which are often the lot of relocated peoples (Oliver-Smith 1986; in press). Indeed, a frequent outcome of resettlement projects has been the development of dependency attitudes in settlers, discouraging resumption of normal life patterns and activities and perpetuating the need for outside support (Partridge 1989:375; Cernea 1988a).

Resistance to Resettlement

The array of responses displayed by populations threatened with such transformations characterized by relocation is very diverse. However, certainly a very high percentage of cases of resettlement have evoked a response of active resistance. In recent years instances of resistance to resettlement have been increasingly noted and documented, largely by organizations and individuals, some of them anthropological, intimately involved either in the resettlement or in the resistance to it. However, there has been little attempt at systematic comparative study of resistance to resettlement. Although there is a growing body of documentation, there has been little analysis done in this area which is becoming the forcing ground of important ethical and policy questions for the social and behavioural sciences.

Resistance or hostility to the idea of resettlement is common and has been characterized as 'normal and ... expected' (Cernea 1988a:15). The reasons for such resistance or hostility lie in the material and historical circumstances of the resettlement as well as in certain features of human cognition and adaptation to change. At some fundamental level, all change, even positive change, in human affairs may involve a difficult process of negotiation and transition between the old and the new (Marris 1975). This process often contains the potential for conflict and resistance until the transition is completed and control is reasserted. The potential for conflict and resistance lies in the experiential basis of human cognition which relies on past understandings for the formulation of actions with higher probabilities of predictable results. In effect, the known is preferable at some basic level to the unknown because it is thought to provide greater accuracy in predicting the future. In that sense, then, one of the most significant dimensions of change is the degree of understanding and control which human beings can exert in dealing with the forces of change. Consequently, where understanding and control are diminished, we may expect change to be characterized by conflict, tension and resistance. Over and above this basic cognitive foundation, however, are many layers of cultural and social variables as well as the lived experience of historical events which condition the human response to change. Indeed, one of the more enduring and fascinating problems in the social and behavioural sciences is the set of social, cultural and/or historical conditions which override the predisposition for order and predictability and lead people to seek change as a solution to challenges to continuity.

Factors Eliciting Resistance

The problems of forcing populations to uproot themselves by development or lack thereof, or group's capacity or lack thereof, or race may underlie the challenge of resettlement. The procedures and goals attempted are also important. The loss of control or lack thereof over the community's own affairs . . . (Kushner 1975:75-6). Their record of resettlement can be extremely negative as motivation for change.
Resistance to forced migration and resettlement involves all of these dimensions, the cognitive predisposition for order and predictability as well as the cultural and social forces in the context of historical events. Resistance in general implies a rejection of the imposition of superior forces or power to control either choices of action or control over resources (Mack and Snyder 1973:75-6). The involuntary nature of the migration and resettlement process involves an almost total loss of control over both choices and resources. The record of resettlement strategies and schemes is at best uneven in affording the affected populations with sufficient information to reassert satisfactory control and understanding over the changed circumstances of their lives, much less the restoration of control over equal or similar resources. In a single stroke, resettlement can create a ‘... community which does not effectively control its own affairs ... and in which a feeling of powerlessness is pervasive’, or, as Kushner goes on to characterize it, ‘an administered community’ (1988:29).

This loss of control and understanding is more than compounded by the often extremely negative material impacts of resettlement projects on affected peoples as motivation for resistance.

Factors Eliciting Resistance to Resettlement

The problems of forced migration and resettlement are certainly not particularly recent phenomena. The causes which have uprooted millions of people throughout history are diverse and frequently, a number of causes will combine to uproot people. Not all causes inevitably result in either planned resettlement of populations or resistance, either on an individual or group basis. However, a major focus of this discussion will be on resistance to resettlement caused by development projects. The reason for this focus is that resistance to resettlement associated with development projects is both more frequent and better documented. More important, however, is the fact that resettlement schemes resulting from development projects are the direct result of purposive policies and actions, and consequently are amenable to alteration and improvement through critical evaluation.

Clearly, a major factor in the decision to resist resettlement is the community or group’s capacity to mobilize itself for organized resistance. The existence, or lack thereof, of patterns of internal differentiation based on ethnicity, class or race may undermine or enhance the establishment of the necessary levels of solidarity and cooperation for effective resistance to a resettlement project (Gans 1962; Shkilnyk 1985). Lack of familiarity with the state and its operating procedures and goals and resultant incredulity that resettlement would ever be attempted are also important factors in a community’s ability to confront the challenge of resettlement. A history of internal coherence and solidarity, long term effective leadership and previous successful defense of interests may also affect the community’s ability to mount serious resistance efforts (Waldram 1980).

A second factor which influences the decision to resist is the cause of resettlement. The nature of the force or forces threatening resettlement will
affect resistance in that some forces are clearly resistable, others permit the possibility of resistance and still others preclude resistance entirely. Many natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and avalanches result in circumstances in which dislocation takes place by sheer destruction. People must escape or perish. While societies do adapt to natural threats through impact mitigating techniques such as anti-seismic construction or hurricane shelters, when the disaster hits and wreaks destruction, little resistance is possible. Survivors often must be relocated because their previous locale has become uninhabitable. However, disaster refugees often are among the most contentious and resistant to further subsequent relocation and have been known to ‘invade’ their devastated homesites (Oliver-Smith 1982, 1986). Political violence may be resisted by counter-violence. However, flight and resettlement beyond borders is often the only viable response of unarmed populations to persecution (Manz 1988; Harrell-Bond 1986). As mentioned earlier, the social impacts of development projects which uproot communities in large-scale transformations of the environment commonly provoke serious resistance efforts as well (Goldsmith and Hildyard 1984; Scudder 1973). Consequently, the nature of the agent threatening relocation and resettlement is important in the decision taken by people to resist or to submit. Indeed, a complementary task in understanding resistance to resettlement lies in exploring the reasons why people do not resist resettlement. The nature of the cause or agent of resettlement will not only condition the choice to resist or acquiesce, but will also affect the selection of strategies and tactics to be employed if resistance is ultimately undertaken.

A third major factor influencing resistance to resettlement is the multi-faceted relationship of the target population to its environment, and particularly to the land. This relationship is based on a number of elements. Economic dimensions such as fertility, resource availability, overall productivity and, in urban contexts, access to employment; political factors such as territoriality and intergroup relations; and cultural factors such as the intimate connections between environment and religion, cosmology, world view and individual and cultural identity may all play significant roles in the relationships of a society to its land base and general environment. Ultimately, such ties lie at the core of both individual and collective constructions of reality and the threat of removal from their most basic physical manifestation may elicit deeply rooted resistance efforts.

A fourth factor affecting resistance to resettlement is the target population’s relationship to the resettlement agent, which today is increasingly the nation-state. Indeed, there is much to be explored in the way the state and its bureaucratic apparatus interact with the different organizational and community forms within its jurisdiction. All populations exist in some relationship, direct or indirect, to a state and its administrative and political apparatus. Since the state is playing an increasingly important role either as the agent of resettlement or occasionally as potential ally of targeted populations, the relationship between the state and the diverse peoples under its control is crucial in the decision to resist resettlement. In numerous cases, this relationship is complicated by ethnic differences between those in control of the state apparatus and those being resettled (LaMariella 1982; Wali 1985; Manz 1988). Clearly, the general set a ‘climate’ for resistance efforts to alter their environment and to resist resettlement can be suicidal, as has been the situation in the United States with respect to the Sioux in the United States and the state’s bureaucratic apparatus (LaMariella 1982; Wali 1985; Manz 1988). A complementary task in understanding resistance to resettlement lies in exploring the reasons why people do not resist resettlement. The nature of the cause or agent of resettlement will not only condition the choice to resist or acquiesce, but will also affect the selection of strategies and tactics to be employed if resistance is ultimately undertaken.

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Of the state apparatus and those subjected to its authority. This seems particularly to be the situation in cases involving resettlement (Zaman 1982, 1984; Drucker 1985; Manz 1988).

Clearly, the general democratic or authoritarian character of the state will set a ‘climate’ for resistance or acquiescence. However, even in authoritarian regimes with generally poor human rights records, ‘unconquered’ indigenous populations, such as the Kalinga of the Philippines (Drucker 1985) or the Kayapo of Brazil (Switkes 1988) have shown little reluctance to challenge the state’s efforts to alter their environments and relocate large numbers of their people. However, when, as has happened for example in Guatemala, the state through military force isolates and then forcibly relocates a small, unarmed population, resistance can be suicidal (Manz 1988:134–6). Indigenous populations, such as the Sioux in the United States, who have been controlled by the bureaucratic apparatus of the state for long periods of time often consider resistance futile and bitterly submit (Lawson 1982:46). On the other hand, familiarity with the state’s bureaucratic apparatus may actually enable people to resist (Khera and Mariella 1982; Wali 1987). The past performance of the state in other contexts on behalf of the target population may also affect the reaction of people to proposed resettlement projects. Where the state’s record is non-existent or bad, trust and confidence may be low, conditioning the response to resettlement proposals (Drucker 1985; Lele 1988; Waldram 1988).

Closely associated with the target population’s relationship to the state is the availability of allies for potential resistance to relocation and resettlement. Just as there are no populations today without some form of relationship with a state apparatus, equally there are few groups which have no contacts at all with outside resources of some sort. The availability of local and non-local allies may be an absolutely essential factor in the decision to resist and the success or failure of the struggle against relocation. Local allies in rural areas may include non-affected villages or ethnic groups or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the local context (Cernea 1988b). In urban areas, groups may seek the support of businesses or associations from other non-affected neighbourhoods or ethnic groups. NGOs working in urban contexts may also be called upon for support. Non-local allies may include migrants and migrant associations in other regions who may be called on to support their homelands; so too may foreign national individuals working in local contexts, such as anthropologists, and international NGOs—particularly those concerned with environmental and human rights issues. Other potential allies include opposition political parties, student organizations, labour unions and spontaneous groups which form to combat the development project for a variety of environmental or human rights causes. Allies in the media become particularly valuable in a resistance struggle. In a few cases, such as the Kalinga who joined forces with the New Peoples’ Army in their resistance to the Chico Dam project in the Philippines, allies are found in armed guerrilla insurgents against the state itself (Survival International 1983). In a sense, the existence or non-existence of allies will have as much to do with the choice of strategies or tactics of resistance...
as with the choice to resist or acquiesce. The matter of strategies and tactics will be discussed below.

A final major factor in the choice to resist or accept resettlement will be the quality of the resettlement project itself. As mentioned earlier, a resettlement project which does not enhance control and understanding, or, in other words, provide relocatees with a significant role in design and implementation will not inspire much confidence in a population facing such a challenge to its lifeway. An ill-considered or hastily drawn up resettlement plan which does not attend to such crucial factors as land availability, water resources, soil fertility, plant and animal resources, employment opportunities, local housing and settlement patterns, inter-ethnic relations, physical security, leadership and local authority institutions among other dimensions will be likewise unconvincing. A plan which is vague or obtuse about these or other issues of importance to the target population will engender only doubt. Conversely, a plan which is extravagant in its claims will also engender distrust particularly if such claims can be easily falsified.

One further dimension of resettlement plans which will only be mentioned here is the resistance to the project which may be engendered in host populations. Projects which do not adequately plan for the impact of the resettled group on a host region risk provoking the resistance and hostility of the host population (Cernea 1988a:16). Ultimately, a relocation project not only has to be well-designed and entirely adequate to the task, but it also has to be well presented and communicated in terms which permit comprehension and stimulate discussion among the target population (Cernea 1988a:15). Again, as mentioned earlier, the record of resettlement projects on such questions has been generally poor, and, in all likelihood, responsible, at least in some measure, for the frequency of resistance to planned resettlement.

Strategies of Resistance

At such time that people decide to resist resettlement, they are faced with a major strategic decision, namely whether to resist a project backed by the force of the state and the power of multilateral financial institutions or to accept the infrastructural project and to resist the implementation of a poorly conceived resettlement project.

In the instance that people choose to resist the infrastructural development project itself, confronting the state and international capital, they commit themselves to a course of action which entails challenges not only to the specific project but, in essence, to the development models which advocate such massive projects. In effect, while the people themselves may not conceptualize the struggle in those terms, preferring to limit goals and action to their local context, the allies which they often acquire at the national and international levels, may conceive of the struggle in terms of the appropriateness of dominant models of national development (Nachowitz 1988; International Dams Newsletter 1985; World Rivers Review 1988). The tactics preferred by these allies often reflect the goal of combatting massive alterations of natural and social dynamics are internationalized and its real and potential acceptance of the infrastructural development approach becomes resistance to both the acceptance of the infrastructural project as a fait accompli and the implementation of a poorly conceived resettlement project. Such a struggle for the population threatened with displacement and its real and potential acceptance of the infrastructural development approach represents a stage in which the population makes the choice to resist on principle.

On the other hand, people may take the project as a fait accompli and resist the resettlement project. Such a resistance will occur in those situations where the population threatened is not aware of its importance and its real and potential acceptance of the infrastructural development approach becomes resistance to both the acceptance of the infrastructural project as a fait accompli and the implementation of a poorly conceived resettlement project. Such a struggle for the population threatened with displacement and its real and potential acceptance of the infrastructural development approach represents a stage in which the population makes the choice to resist on principle.

Resettlement Resistance

The array of tactics available to people ranging from passive to
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...the goal of combating models and policies of development that call for major alterations of natural and social environments. It is in this context that local dramas are internationalized and projected onto the world stage. In effect, some resistance movements either through local initiative or external influence challenge the dominant international discourse on development.

On the other hand, people may choose to accept an infrastructural development project as a fait accompli and put their efforts into improving the accompanying resettlement project. Such a decision is often the source of much conflict within the population threatened with resettlement and between the target population and its real and potential allies at both local and international levels. In effect, acceptance of the infrastructural project amounts to tacit legitimation of the whole development approach, a position which may face deep opposition. All that notwithstanding, in such contexts resistance to resettlement in reality becomes resistance to bad resettlement. Such resistance in fact signifies the adoption of a strategy of negotiation in which varying tactics of resistance are used to acquire bargaining chips in the effort to secure better terms and conditions for resettlement. Such terms and conditions might include improved replacement land, compensation for losses, or housing allowances.

Resettlement resistance in general often has the effect of uniting people in defence of territory, community and culture. As the forms and strategies of resistance may be diverse, so also may be the purposes and meanings which resisters assign to their actions. As has been mentioned, the ethnic differences between those who propose resettlement and those to be resettled often complicate the relationship. The threat of resettlement by powerful, ethnically distinct sectors often has the effect of awakening or revitalizing ethnic identities and galvanizing opposition around the defence of ethnicity against a common enemy. This oppositional process has been noted as a key dimension in the maintenance of persistent ethnic identities in a variety of contexts (Spicer 1971). The ties between ancestral lands and all that they signify for ethnic identity in terms of resources, burial grounds, heritage, religious symbols, become more vibrant and meaningful in the face of external threats. Where ethnicity is already the source for conflict in the society, the threat or enactment of resettlement can lead to an escalation of that conflict for goals far beyond the original cause. In addition, in situations characterized by rapid change or extreme uncertainty, such as that emerging from resistance to resettlement, ‘conflict is a powerful organizing principle of behavior, for defining friends and enemies, good and bad, in terms of immediate, transitory purposes’ (Marris 1986:159). As such, conflict becomes a means of mediating change, a way of clarifying the ambiguity of changing conditions and imposing through action a logic on conditions and events, enabling people to reassert a sense of control and meaning into their lives.

Resettlement Resistance Tactics

The array of tactics available to people threatened with resettlement is broad, ranging from passive forms of resistance to extremely active options. Much...
depends on where and when tactics are initiated in the resettlement process. Tactics appropriate to early stages of resettlement, for example, the planning or recruitment stage, may not be appropriate for resistance at the actual implementation stage. The choice of tactics at any stage, however, will be a function of both local culture and the political space created by relations between the resettlement agent and the group facing resettlement.

In the vast majority of cases resisters are operating at a distinct disadvantage in terms of power and resources. However, they may seize a moral advantage based on a sense of violation of their rights which may be difficult for the state to assume or appropriate in the immediate context. In discussing resistance tactics, a primary and obvious distinction which must be drawn is between legal and illegal tactics. A second important distinction in resistance tactics is between non-violent and violent tactics. To order the presentation, the tactics are discussed in a progression from legal, bearing in mind the extremely relative usage of that term, to illegal under which a similar caveat is claimed; and from non-violent to violent. However, no necessary evolution or linkage is intended or implied.

Resistance to resettlement may involve attempts at avoiding government efforts physically to remove people by simply hiding or blending in to ethnically similar populations. Political refugees crossing national borders often avoid government refugee resettlement schemes by simply disappearing among local populations (Hansen 1991). Other initial tactics are more direct such as letters of appeal to the resettlement agent, which, if ignored, may be followed by letters of protest. A further tactic in this vein may be the election of a special commission or delegation of representatives of the group to visit the locale of the resettlement agent, deliver letters of appeal and present the case against resettlement in person. Similar commissions or delegations may be dispatched to other regions or cities to recruit allies for the movement.

Crucial allies include the media, particularly if the resettlement agent is sensitive to its public image in human rights issues. Indeed, information is always a crucial resource for a resistance movement. Often the response of the resettlement agent is to restrict the flow of information about the project and resistance activities to outsiders to inhibit the formation of national and international support (Ryder 1989). Thus, establishing linkages with other causes, most notably environmental and human rights organizations, is an important tactic. Other NGOs concerned with such issues as health care, nutrition, housing and water resources have also proved to be extremely helpful allies, particularly in legal matters (Cernea 1988b:36). These linkages also serve to further another important tactic, that of the internationalization of the struggle. With the right allies, international pressure can be generated to modify policies or projects. Legal allies also assist the movement in the initiation of law suits which may delay resettlement or halt it entirely. Such allies may also assist in raising funds for the cause and in attacking the funding of the infrastructural development project. If sufficient pressure can be mounted, funding agents for projects, most commonly multilateral lending institutions, often respond by exerting their own pressure on projects and questions are raised.

Public non-violent resistance to resettlement agents are also effective by creating and maintaining threats of escalation may be used to force progress by placing even under the extreme confrontations. Information and redesigning of any conflicts, as in some cases, are frequently required, particularly when provocateur which provoke a response to the adoption of aggressive and irresistible purposes. Such tactics, which provoke a response of the resettlement agent, are often the response of the resistance with legal, social, political, or economic rights, curtailments in some cases, and in so many tactics, there is often the establishment of an armed group or an alliance. The pact forming of the latter tactic often requires the adoption of ethnic autonomy.
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pressure on projects in the form of withholding financing payments until such questions are resolved or cancelling loans altogether.

Public non-violent demonstrations at the project site, the offices of the resettlement agent or at the offices of funding agencies in metropolitan capitals are also effective in focusing attention on the cause of resistance. Such demonstrations serve to place the resistance in the public eye and impress upon all the determination of the movement. These events are also important in creating and maintaining movement solidarity in that they constitute ritualized expressions of resistance goals. In addition, these demonstrations may also be the vehicle of expression for a variety of public messages of resistance, including threats of escalation in tactics, which may gain further media attention. Such escalation may include various forms of passive resistance such as halting project progress by placing people in the path of machines or a simple refusal to move, even under the threat of armed troops or inundation. In some cases, such confrontations lead to the development of a structure for arbitrating disputes and redesigning resettlement options, and ultimately diffusing subsequent conflicts, as in Brazil’s Ita and Itaiparica dam projects.

However, such confrontations may also lead to the escalation from passive to aggressive and from legal to illegal forms of resistance, often accomplished by the decision to re-occupy or ‘invade’ land taken over for development project purposes. Such invasions, like non-violent demonstrations, particularly those which provoke a violent response from resettlement agents, move resisters closer to the adoption of violent resistance tactics.

When a resistance movement moves toward the use of violent tactics, it is usually the result of either a total failure of non-violent tactics or the violent response of the resettlement agent. Resettlement agents have responded to resistance with measures such as economic blockades, punitive taxes and other levies, imprisonment of leaders on false charges, rescindment of general civil rights, curtailment of basic services, armed occupation of communities and, in some cases, actually firing by troops on resisters. With the escalation to violent tactics, there may be a shift into an essentially military framework. Most commonly, particularly in the present age, this shift involves either the formation of an armed guerrilla force, such as in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Zaman 1982), or an alliance with an existing guerrilla army associated with another cause. The pact formed between the Kalanga and Bontoc tribes and the rebel New Peoples’ Army in the Philippines in the successful resistance to resettlement to and, at this juncture, the defeat of the Chico Dam project is the best example of the latter tactic (Drucker 1985). In either case, the escalation to violent tactics often requires a major strategic adjustment to include such broader goals as ethnic autonomy, political independence or a change of government.

Resistance to Resettlement and Political Empowerment

As the issue of resistance involves a rejection of another party’s right or power to control resources or to determine courses of action, the question of
empowerment means gaining control over resources and/or choices about goals. In effect, resistance, while directed towards rejecting resettlement schemes, often implicitly addresses more general forms of regional elite or state power and abuse. As such, the nature (and consequences) of empowerment are functions of the reigning political system, even in the act of rejecting the power of that same system. Local empowerment may bring greater participation and improvement in conditions for some, but, according to the larger political system, it may also be extremely dangerous, provoking violent and oppressive responses. In that context, resistance movements may result in temporary empowerment only to end in loss of power and further oppression. There is nothing inevitable about resisting resettlement and political empowerment.

There are some contexts, however, in which resistance to resettlement has resulted in forms of political empowerment. Three cases are now examined in which conflict and resistance to resettlement resulted in some form of political socialization process and ultimately to an expanded empowerment of the people upon whom relocation was carried out. It is in the context of their resistance to and conflict over the threat to their lifeways that people become aware not only of their potential power and the limitations of their opponents, but also of the potential to expand the resistance to a larger agenda of political and economic goals.

Although there are numerous cases of resistance to resettlement, there are relatively few that have been successful. Perhaps the most outstanding example of successful resistance to resettlement is the Kalinga-Bontoc alliance with the New People's Army in the Philippines which resulted in the suspension of the Chico River Dam Project. However, such success is seen only in the minority of cases. Far more common is the failure of resistance movements to halt resettlement schemes. Consequently, three examples of failed resistance are selected which, notwithstanding that failure, have still led to forms of political empowerment and expanded agendas of political and economic goals. The three cases all involve dam construction and resettlement, either through specific projects or through environmental destruction resulting from the closing of dam floodgates.

The Kaptai Dam and the Tribal Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The rebellion in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh provides an excellent example of militant mobilization in response to the dislocating effects of dam construction (Zaman 1982). The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are parallel ridges running from south to northwest and account for approximately one tenth of the national territory. However, although they are relatively sparsely populated, the CHT are rich in natural resources, containing over half the total forest land of Bangladesh. The people of the CHT are ethnically very different from the majority Bengalis. They belong to a series of tribes speaking dialects of the Tibeto-Burman language group and possess a culture markedly different from the national average.

In 1960 the government began creating an artificial reservoir by diverting the杰胡河 to create a large irrigation scheme and the Kaptai Dam and Resettlement Project resulted in the displacement of over 100,000 displaced people. Displaced people were allocated land in four new villages, but 93% of these lands were less than 2 acres and of such quality that they could not support their economic needs. Capitalist relations with the state created a system of production and the dam's disruption of lifeways and the state's forceful displacement of the tribes saw them lose their land and culture. In the tribe's report which described their difficulties of in-migration, the state's exploitation, and the way in which they could no longer an product any longer and had to depend on product extraction, the following passage is worthy of mention (Zaman 1984:80): "The Kaptai Dam and the Tribal Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts"

In effect, the state's national economic policy of industrialization coupled with the industrialization program for the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the state's need to pay for the project itself was a "communist-interventionist" program. This is an example of how the state's "industrialization" projects are linked to the destruction of the tribes' lifeways and culture. In response, the tribes mobilized through the Kaptai Dam Rejection Committee and the Chittagong Hill Tracts district government of the CHT. The rebellion was a response to the state's attempts to displace them and the destruction of their lifeways. The Kaptai Dam and the Tribal Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is a case study of how resistance against resettlement schemes can result in political empowerment for the tribes, and in the expansion of their agendas to include political and economic goals.

In the context of their resistance to and conflict over the threat to their lifeways that people become aware not only of their potential power and the limitations of their opponents, but also of the potential to expand their resistance to a larger agenda of political and economic goals. The Kaptai Dam and the Tribal Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is an excellent example of how resistance can lead to political empowerment for the tribes, and in the expansion of their agendas to include political and economic goals. The rebellion in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh provides an excellent example of how resistance against resettlement schemes can result in political empowerment for the tribes, and in the expansion of their agendas to include political and economic goals. The Kaptai Dam and the Tribal Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is a case study of how resistance against resettlement schemes can result in political empowerment for the tribes, and in the expansion of their agendas to include political and economic goals.
and/or choices about rejecting resettlement as of regional elite or mass) of empowerment in the act of rejecting may bring greater, but, according to dangerous, provoking force movements may of power and further settlement and political resistance to resettlement has are now examined in some form of political empowerment of the people next to their resistance people become aware not their opponents, but also agenda of political and research, there are four outstanding example of alliance with the suspension of the only in the minority movements to halt failed resistance are to forms of political economic goals. The three other through specific from the closing of dam

Long Hill Tracts provides an excellent case of effects of dam (HT) are parallel ridges approximately one tenth of the country sparsely populated, the half the total forest very different from the dialects of the people. Markedly different from the national majority. Because the area is relatively sparsely populated, CHT population density being 100 people per square mile as compared with the national average of 1,286, the CHT is seen as a land source for relieving population pressure in the rest of the nation.

In 1960 the government undertook the construction of the Kaptai dam, creating an artificial lake which inundated 253 square miles, 50,000 acres of settled cultivable land (about 40% of the total for the district) and displaced more than 100,000 people (Zaman 1984). An adequate resettlement programme was never established for these people. Among food, financial, residential, and employment problems occasioned by the dam construction, 93% of those polled in a survey of dislocated tribal peoples felt that their economic condition had been better before the dam. Between the dam’s disruption of tribal life compounded by a faulty resettlement programme and the steady encroachment on tribal lands by Bengali settlers, the hill tribes saw themselves as the target of an assault on their ethnic identity and culture. The situation was compounded by a massive government report which concluded that the hill tribes were themselves to blame for their difficulties because of their inefficient cultivation practices and that in-migration by outsiders to the CHT was economically rational for resource exploitation. The report stated that shifting cultivation could not be tolerated any longer and that the hill tribes should allow their land to be used for forest product extraction since it was ill-suited for large scale commercial cropping (Zaman 1984:314).

In effect, the people were left with no other option but assimilation into the national economy and society. The response of many groups among the hill tribes was armed resistance which the government immediately labelled ‘communist-inspired’. As Zaman has noted, ‘The Kaptai dam and other industrialization policies in the CHT have brought out unanticipated side effects—the politicization and ethnicisation of the residents in the affected areas’ (1982:80). In effect, the construction of the dam and the forced resettlement coupled with other encroachments on territory have forged a total politics of resistance which encompasses far more than resettlement. Dam construction and resettlement have become the forcing ground for a clearer articulation of both identities and interests out of which has emerged a militant expression of political empowerment.

Containment of such insurgency will prove expensive. An organized militia of the tribesmen called Shanti Bahini has maintained a sufficient level of hostilities to necessitate the presence of an entire army division. A military response to this resistance seems hardly less expensive than a positive programme addressing the needs and grievances of the hill tribes. However, such a response on the part of the government will require a policy which places the interests of the displaced hill tribes above non-local agendas as well as some form of protective legislation for both indirect rule and the preservation of tribal cultural autonomy. The elaboration of such a policy and attendant programmes holds the only promise for peacefully ending the conflicts which
have arisen with the militant resistance to resettlement by the hill tribes (Zaman 1984:315).

The Tucurui Dam and Brazilian Riverine Caboclos

While less violent in expression, the movement emerging among Brazilian caboclos in response to the construction of the Tucurui dam on the Tocantins River is no less militant. The Tucurui dam, the largest of the tropics and fourth largest in the world, is part of an overall plan of the Brazilian government to build eighty dams to reduce national dependence on petroleum generated power. Before the flood-gates closed in 1984, between 20,000 and 30,000 people had to be relocated. The Brazilian government and the administrating agency, Eletronorte, had a woefully inadequate resettlement policy which affected only a minority of those relocated upstream from the dam and obligated many to fend for themselves in settlements upriver and along the transamazon highway (Biery-Hamilton 1987). Even those who were included in the resettlement scheme were inadequately compensated for their losses.

In addition, approximately 40,000 caboclos who lived downstream on the hundreds of islands between the dam and the mouth of the river began to suffer serious ecological and economic impacts. In the course of research undertaken by Magee four years after the close of the dam gates, it was found that traditional subsistence strategies of riverine peasants were totally disrupted. As Magee notes, 'if peasants above the dam suffered the loss of their land, peasants below the dam suffered the loss of their water' (1989:6-7). The water below the dam became seriously polluted by decomposing trees in the flooded area which were not cleared before the floodgates closed. In the four years since the dam began operation, the pollution of the water has caused a series of outbreaks of waterborne diseases of various sorts, ranging from serious vaginal infections in women to gastro-intestinal ailments, particularly among children, and skin rashes in the general population. Island crops suffered also from the polluted water. Cacao and acai palm production were crippled. However, the most serious consequence of the dam was the destruction of the river's shrimp and fish populations, the very base of the local subsistence economy and an important source of exchange value as well (Magee 1989).

Faced with the continuing destruction of their resource base by the dam, the riverine caboclos were left with two options: migration and resettlement or resistance to oblige the government both to recognize and compensate their losses and also to diminish the damaging impacts of the dam. In this effort, the Tucurui river peasants began to engage in new forms of political mobilization to defend their way of life. They acquired two extremely important allies; the Catholic Church and the Rural Workers Union. Both the Church and the Union had been active in the struggle to protect the interests of people flooded out by the dam. When the Church became aware of the difficulties and privations suffered by downstream peasants, it began to work with them in organizing and to get their interests represented in negotiations with dam authorities. One result was that the peasants won control by local elites with

The Church and the Rural Workers Union played a crucial role in disseminating information with Eletronorte. At the community level, an important communication which tranformed a series of isolated settlements. And at national levels with a variety of organizations, the Church and the Rural Workers Union were involved in the mobilization which reaches the international community that attracts international attention to the plight of the riverine caboclos and the peasants living on the islands below the dam.

Due to their own and their allies’ efforts, the riverine caboclos have become part of a larger movement and the new political identity of the caboclos has attracted support from other groups such as the rubber tappers in the Central Amazon who have also been deprived of their land. At the national level, the Church and the Rural Workers Union have been instrumental in having the dam authorities develop networks. In the process of developing these alliances, the peasants have become part of a larger movement which will enable them to expand their own capacity to protect their interests and to defend their way of life. The Grand Rapids Dam in Northern Maine...
The peasants won control of the union, which had traditionally been controlled by local elites with strong ties to the state and national governments. At the top of the agenda of the new union leadership was the commencement of negotiations with Eletronorte and its consulting companies to establish responsibilities for the effects of the dam (Magee 1989).

The Church and the Rural Workers Union at the local level have played a crucial role in disseminating information to all riverine peasants on the struggle with Eletronorte. At the regional level they have created a network of communication which transmits information over a large area of dispersed and isolated settlements. And they have functioned to articulate peasant concerns at national levels with a variety of organizations and institutions, such as CRAB (Regional Commission of Dam Victims) which is now organizing resistance to dam construction and operation at a national level (Magee 1989). Any resistance movement which reaches national levels in a country as important as Brazil soon attracts international attention, thus projecting the struggle of the Tocantins river peasants onto the world stage.

Due to their own and the efforts of the Church and the Union, Tocantins island peasants have become part of the larger community of Amazonian peasants and the new political identity they are assuming. They have become aware that other groups such as the rubber tappers and Indian groups have suffered and have successfully organized to defend their interests. The Church is also encouraging some island communities to search for outside funding from the Canadian government and the Dutch Catholic Church to address their problems of health care and nutrition (Magee 1989). This strategy is important in two ways: one, the peasants are seeking solutions on their own, and two, they are appealing to entities beyond their national borders, not only internationalizing their struggle, but expanding their own capacities and skills for communication and negotiation.

Undoubtedly, the assumption of a political identity and the acquisition of a voice by the Tocantins river peasants have been facilitated by the recent political abertura (opening-democratization) in Brazil. Their political identity and voice have developed because of their losses caused by the Tucurui dam and because of their acquisition of significant allies who have represented them in negotiating with dam authorities and articulated them with broader contexts and information networks. In the process, the peasants have begun to acquire the political skills which will enable them to represent their own interests themselves. However, as Magee (1989:10) notes:

> it remains to be seen whether the Tocantins Islanders can muster the international support they may need to survive on the islands or whether they will join the ranks of the other disenfranchized groups competing for scarce land on the mainland.

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The Grand Rapids Dam and the Swampy River Cree of Manitoba, Canada

The final case to be examined involves the construction of the Grand Rapids Dam in Northern Manitoba, Canada, which required the resettlement of the
Swampy River Cree Reserve and the adjacent Metis community of Chemawawin to a new site (Waldram 1980). Prior to the construction of the dam and the relocation, traditional leadership patterns among the Cree had been undermined by the institution of the ‘free trader’ who resided in the community and acted as a broker between the people and the outside world which included both provincial and national governments as well as the market. The free trader became the de facto leader of the community since he constituted the major focus of economic life in his linkage function between the community and the supply of consumer goods. Although there were elected leaders, in practice they exercised little authority and were subservient and secondary to the free trader.

When negotiations began in 1962 between the community and the national government for the surrender of reserve land, the free trader was legally excluded from participating in the proceedings and the responsibility fell to the elected leaders. Seriously ill-prepared to deal with the negotiating process and not understanding the legality of their position regarding the hydroelectric project, the leaders experienced considerable stress and made a number of serious errors, the most grievous of which involved the choice of a new site for the community.

However, as negotiations proceeded over the ensuing six years, a process of political socialization took place. Frustrated by their failure to achieve remotely satisfactory results in their negotiations with the committee representing the hydroelectric project, the leaders retained a lawyer to act on their behalf. Although in the particular instance, the negotiations proved fruitless, the Indians were able to see ‘first hand the extent to which they could rattle the government bureaucracy by merely, and unexpectedly, standing up for their legal rights’ (Waldram 1980:175). The startled reaction of the committee to the Indians’ seeking legal counsel, convinced the leaders of the vulnerability of their opponents and of their own potential as a force to be reckoned with in their efforts to secure better post-resettlement conditions for their people. In effect, as Waldram (1980:177) indicates:

the long and complex interaction between the various government officials and the local leaders has made the latter ‘politically competent’ to utilize modern-day interest group tactics to achieve their goals. Clearly, they have learned to cope with the national political system, but through practical experience and not through programs sponsored by the very political body responsible for the relocation in the first place.

The leaders, and by extension the people, have become politically astute, sophisticated and skilled in their dealings with the federal government. They acknowledge that many mistakes were made, but they learned a great deal in their experience of negotiating with the relocation authorities. As one former band leader said, ‘We won’t make those mistakes again’ (Waldram 1989:177).

Conclusion

The three cases examined reveal three different sets of responses and strategies of resistance to relocation, all of which, even in failure, resulted in varying degrees and kinds of armed insurgen
degrees and kinds of empowerment. In the first case, resistance took the form of armed insurgency in defence of both territory and identity, acquiring allies among various national sectors and obligating a national government to address issues of cultural autonomy and indirect rule within national integration. In the second case, protest against the destructive environmental effects of dam construction which threatened people with resettlement, became a form of political mobilization essentially along class lines which was facilitated by outside allies acquired in the struggle. In the third case, the negotiation of the resettlement process resulted in a political socialization and empowerment which will enable the relocated people to defend their interests more capably in the future.

In each of the cases, active resistance to relocation became the forge or forcing ground for the formulation of a clearer sense of identity, the creation of valuable alliances, more concise agendas of community needs, and the elaboration of strategies and tactics to achieve specific goals. While these people and many others like them around the world are facing threats to their existence as never before, they are also gaining skills and allies which may enable them successfully to defend their interests now and in the future. While the danger exists that these skills and allies may ultimately spell the assimilation and disappearance of many ethnic groups, it must be recalled that because resettlement so directly threatens a group's life way and identity, these efforts are being joined in many cases in the effort to preserve identity and to defend ethnic group interests. Such empowerment as may emerge from struggles against resettlement will enable people to choose the terms on which they wish to confront the state, whether those terms be autonomy or assimilation. Ultimately, the issue is empowerment and infrastructural projects requiring the relocation and resettlement of large numbers of people may truly become development projects only if they factor into their design an evolution from inevitable resistance to political empowerment among resettled peoples.

1. The newsletters and other publications of such organizations as Cultural Survival, Survival International, the Anthropology Resource Center, the International Rescue Committee, the Environmental Defense Fund, the International Dams Newsletter, later to become the World Rivers Review, the Earth Island Institute, the Environmental Policy Institute, Friends of the River, the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, Energy Probe and many other national and international groups provide much of the information available today on resistance to resettlement.


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Involuntary Resettlement and Political Empowerment

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