

Adaptation Initiative Reading Seminar #4
Retreat Resettlement Issues
Thursday, November 30, 2017
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SUMMARY OF PAPERS

Hino, Field and Mach., 2017, Managed retreat as a response to natural hazard risk, *Nature Climate Change*

This paper evaluates cases of managed retreat that have resettled around 1.3 million people over the past three decades. The conceptual model developed establishes a foundation for understanding and anticipating case-specific complexities. The model identifies key sociopolitical attributes likely to promote or impede adoption of managed retreat. The model categorizes the cases into four groups: mutual agreement; greater good; hunkered down; and self reliance. For example, the 'mutual agreement' group is where residents initiative the move, and there are broader society benefits. In this group, place attachment and community networks strongly affect the final outcome, and has largely been limited to post-disaster settings. The goal is for this model to help evaluate if and how to implement managed retreat.

Maldonado et al., 2013, The impact of climate change on tribal communities in the U.S., *Climate Change*

Communities that face greater likelihood of relocation are also often those that have experienced systemic poverty and injustice. This paper looks at communities' advocacy efforts and strategies in dealing with climate change, displacement and relocation, looking specifically at tribal communities in Coastal Alaska and Louisiana. The cases point to a number of legal and policy implications. There is no government agency tasked with managing community relocation. Federal programs that do exist to help communities prepare for disasters are unavailable to many tribal communities because of their small size and remote location.

The precedent set by the Resettlement Administration in the U.S. could help inform the framework needed. In that case, there were dedicated resources towards successful community relocations and the resettlements were most successful when community input and participation was integrated and supported. The authors make recommendations on steps for community-led and government-supported resettlement programs. They call for management and planning through participatory processes and according to communities' needs and priorities. Protocols that guide this framework should be rooted in a human rights approach.

Oliver-Smith and de Sherbinin, 2014, Resettlement in the twenty-first century, *Crisis*

Resettlement/planned relocation has a poor track record, due to lack of inputs such as legal frameworks, policies, funding and care. Resettlement also requires a complex interaction of cultural, social, environmental, economic, institutional and political factors that are not conducive to rational planning. When it comes to preventive resettlement, it is difficult to muster political will and resources in absence of a major disaster, even in areas with a high probability of disaster. The authors conclude by

stating that: “a key element to improvement in resettlement practice will be the recognition that the displaced must be seen as active social agents of their own views and rights on entitlements.”

DISCUSSION

Planned relocation is not just about moving people from A to B. It is a complicated problem that involves a lot of different factors. It involves reconstituting the social fabric of a community, if that is even possible. Development forced displacement and resettlement has a checkered history, but the experience of disaster-related resettlement has produced marginally better results. Stressed migration is to be avoided, where people have to move suddenly with very few possessions. We try to anticipate, but that is difficult. Human rights need to be considered. Participatory approaches lead to better results. There also needs to be clear lines of governmental authority and responsibility, and adequate funding.

There may be many cases that could theoretically be deemed relocation that are never recorded as such. Examples could include where people move voluntarily or don't move to a place because of some piece of information about the risk of being there (that's not necessarily recorded as climate driven). There are others who would leave if they could, but the buyout money is gone and asset values have dropped, leaving them stranded—especially if their mortgage debt is greater than the home's price.

With resettlement, you need economic incentives, and enough social upheaval that people welcome government intervention. But those economic incentives will be different in each context, different for each economic group, different for receiving communities, etc. Each situation is unique. It would be difficult to find an economic incentive big enough to move someone elsewhere, especially pre-disaster.

The risks that people care about are much more immediate – for example, people who live in high-crime neighborhoods. Are they not eligible for relocation? They are also facing risk. From public policy perspective, how do you allocate resources and determine eligibility? Could a program be criticized for focusing on climate and climate change risk at the exclusion of other risks?

The Role of Intermediaries

One aspect of successful resettlement may be working with intermediaries, in whatever form (NGO, CBO, etc.). There is not much research on their role or impact, but there are a couple of examples.

In Istanbul, some resettlement occurred after a 1999 earthquake that killed 17,000 people. The government used intermediaries – agencies of engineering consulting firms – to assess risk at people's property. Community members received a report of the risk, which could then lead to resettlement or rebuilding. People felt empowered because they felt they had a choice.

In Ghana in the 1960s, there was resettlement of an area led by an architect. This movement was framed as a positive thing for the poor people of the valley.

Examples of Resettlement

- Hohai University has a resettlement research center; China has lots of investment in training.
- There's an example where the community took control of the process, associated with the Parana Dam between Brazil and Paraguay.
- Correa wrote a volume that looks at a lot of cases of disaster displacement, mostly in Latin America

- 1930s, Roosevelt created a number of communities in the South.
- Many examples of tribes in Alaska, but that ultimately did not happen.
- Malcolm Gladwell piece about the people who left New Orleans and who were essentially doing better.
- Dustbowl migration – many people who left ended up gainfully employed in west coast industries. Government also encouraged land management practices.

Retreat to Where?

We need more research on this aspect of resettlement. Could this be tied to driving economic growth? With public and private sector participation, could we frame this as an economic positive? There is lots of potential in repopulating depopulated cities, like Detroit. People would need to be employed, but you could create jobs building solar panels, improving the energy efficiency of homes and buildings, greening public transportation, etc. Rather than build a new city, repopulate an existing one.

Matt Hauer at the University of Georgia (?) leads the Institute of Government's Applied Demography Program, which provides state and local leaders with current demographic data and detailed population projections. He has done some work using tax records to see where people have moved in the past and using this as a predictor of where they may move in the future. This data set, though contains flaws, is one of the few of its kind.

In Europe, there were some ideas about repopulating villages with conflict refugees. But the refugees didn't want to go to those areas because of lack of economic opportunities. Climate relocation would depend on economic opportunities, and how much the economic activity is dependent on climate. For example, in the case of desertification of the Sahel, people lose their livelihoods. Coastal areas in Sierra Leone are under pressure from erosion, but people are not leaving because they are dependent on fishing to make a living – this is the area where their economic livelihood is.

Is Pre-Disaster Resettlement Possible?

Pre disaster and post disaster resettlement involve very different exercises. All of the 'mutual agreement' cases in the Hino paper are post disaster. Are there any examples in the world of resettlement happening pre-disaster? Can policies be changed in such a way that government agencies can put aside funds to do something pre-disaster?

You could have anticipatory settlement, but if governments are corrupt it could become a pretext for land grabs. What could be seen as a legitimate humanitarian exercise could be co-opted. Further, if people are forced to move pre-disaster and predictions are wrong, the credibility of this exercise is diminished. It's difficult to get people to do anything in advance of a disaster – some might say a waste of time. We are not a rational species. There are not many examples where society does something in advance/ in anticipation. One thing that *can* be done in advance is designating receiving areas and policy mechanisms for such transfers, since we know there will be disasters, even if we are not sure exactly where.

What can the Earth Institute do?

1. There is a lot of interest in Puerto Rico, and there may be a project or activity that involves building back in a less fragile way. This is somewhat connected to relocation. Will people want to go back after living on the mainland, especially if recovery is slow?

2. Lead communication efforts to articulate some of the challenges and the importance of having these conversations. The information and communication needs to be in a time scale within which we can do something about it.
3. Analysis or scenario building of future climate impacts, to anticipate where retreat may be required.

Conclusion

People move back to places after disasters. People in California move back to homes after earthquakes, even to houses built on the fault lines. In Houston it is very likely that rebuilding will happen in exactly the same place. Even in NYC, where there is a tremendous amount of climate risk awareness, there is still development in these high risk areas. We're not leading the way on this. There is probably some arrogance – we have the money to build the barriers, etc. Everyone underestimates how much they will be impacted by climate change.

The idea of resettlement is not that we are forcing people to move. But it is important to have a response policy in place for when resettlement is necessary. Part of this includes having a strategy to engage communications and media outlets, when the disaster happens. Locally, people are amenable to discussing risk and vulnerability around the time that disasters happen. We shouldn't shy away from having sophisticated media campaigns after disasters. Even though some people view it as profiteering, we should try and reach people when their eyes are open.

APPENDIX – HANDOUT

Economic and Social Risks of Displacement and Resettlement

1. Loss of land
2. Loss of employment
3. Loss of shelter
4. Marginalization (reduced economic mobility)
5. Increased morbidity and mortality
6. Greater food insecurity
7. Loss of access to common property/services
8. Social disarticulation (break-up of community organizations and other groups)

Source: Cernea, M., 2000. Risks, Safeguards, and Reconstruction: A Model for Population Displacement and Resettlement. The World Bank.

Four Stage Process (lessons from resettlement associated with large dams)

1. Planning for resettlement prior to physical removal
2. Coping with the initial drop in living standards that tends to follow removal
3. Initiation of economic development and community formation activities that are necessary to improve living standards of first generation resettlers
4. Handing over a sustainable resettlement process to the second generation of resettlers and to non-project authority institutions

Source: Scudder T (1985) A Sociological Framework for the Analysis of New Lands Settlements. In: Cernea MM (ed) *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*. Oxford University Press for the World Bank, New York, pp 145–185

Recommendations for Climate-Related Resettlement

1. Establish legal frameworks for climate change resettlement to protect welfare and human rights of affected populations
2. Involvement of affected communities, in both source and destination areas, in assessments and decisions regarding resettlement locations, compensation, and development programs
3. The process needs to be fair and equitable for the community, with every effort made to improve livelihoods
4. Interdisciplinary training for resettlement professionals that includes economics, anthropology, public health, and case studies
5. Baseline environmental, health, and social impact assessments to establish benchmarks for evaluating resettlement performance through monitoring and evaluation programs
6. Research to adapt existing knowledge on resettlement to the special case of climate related resettlement, with particular reference to disaster-related resettlement and learning from incipient climate-related resettlement
7. Establishment of financial mechanisms for capacity building and anticipatory planning in developing countries exposed most to climate risks, with joint funding by donors and the exposed countries themselves, since many M&A projects will not generate revenues that could offset costs.

Source: de Sherbinin, A., M. Castro, F. Gemenne, M.M. Cernea, S. Adamo, P. M. Fearnside, G. Krieger, S. Lahmani, A. Oliver-Smith, A. Pankhurst, T. Scudder, B. Singer, Y. Tan, G. Wannier, P. Boncour, C. Ehrhart, G. Hugo, B. Pandey, G. Shi. 2011. Preparing for Resettlement Associated with Climate Change. *Science*, 28 October 2011, 334: 456-457.