

Governance, policy and planning around the world

Planned Retreat Approaches to Support Resilience to Climate Change in Canada: Good Practices and Considerations for Proactive Retreat

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Climate change adaptation in Canada has traditionally focused on “holding the line” approaches and the use of hard infrastructure measures to protect communities from the impacts of flooding or coastal erosion. Planned retreat is an essential adaptation approach and long-term solution for minimizing the adverse consequences of climate change. As a result, retreat has become an emerging priority area for Canada’s Climate Change Adaptation Platform, a national forum that brings together key groups in Canada to collaborate on adaptation issues. However, relatively little is known about how retreat can best be implemented to protect, preserve, and promote individual and community well-being, and enhance climate change resilience in the Canadian context. This presentation will share key findings from a report titled “Planned Retreat Approaches to Support Resilience to Climate Change in Canada”, prepared for Natural Resources Canada by Gevity Consulting Inc. The report benefited from key informant interviews and an advisory team made up of government officials, subject matter experts, and practitioners from across Canada. The report reviews six mini-case studies of planned retreat, highlights the current state of planned retreat approaches and policies in Canada and internationally, and includes a series of good practices and considerations. The report was developed to support practitioners, decision makers, and community stakeholders engaged in or exploring proactive planned retreat as an adaptation option.

Slow Abandonment as Managed Retreat

Author: Liam Grealy (University of Sydney)

In 2020, Power and Water Corporation, the state-owned utility provider of the Northern Territory of Australia, assessed seven remote Indigenous communities as very high risk of severe water insecurity. Public housing programs have stalled, with the state unwilling to construct new assets where drinking water cannot be guaranteed. This situation displaces residents, not by relocating them, but by ‘[leaving] communities in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable’ (Nixon 2011, 19). This is slow abandonment as managed retreat. It is not abandonment as total state withdrawal, but the reprioritization of geographies and the rearrangement of state resources. In Australia, a precedent for such policies is the reform of governance arrangements for outstations and homelands under the Northern Territory Intervention in 2007. There, too, the withdrawal of homelands funding and services and the creation of shire councils indicated policy intent to incentivize First Nations people to relocate to regional and urban centres. Debates on managed retreat have tended to focus on coastal contexts where land is disappearing and on planning processes to deliberately move people and communities elsewhere. This paper attempts, first, to assess the applicability of this framework to arid contexts in central Australia that will continue to exist and be inhabited, even as the state redefines its commitment to them on economic and natural resource grounds. Second, it aims to broaden the attention of managed

retreat scholarship to consider policies that are variously explicit in their goals for retreat but which nonetheless affect that outcome. Reframing such policies – de facto, by stealth, or negligent – through the framework of managed retreat, offers potential to reassess those trajectories according to criteria for effective and just planning.

Just retreat – how different countries deal with it: examples from Austria and England

Author: Thomas Thaler

Flood risk management has developed a large inventory of potential actions to climate related hazards. Within this wide array of measures, managed retreat of communities at risk is usually only taken into account if other strategies are ineffective or unavailable. Communities who are affected by managed retreat are confronted with radical changes in their livelihood. However, managed retreat is highly contested. The use of managed retreat includes not only the relocation of house owners, but also has the challenge that it discriminates between landowners as some gain and others lose. Therefore, managed retreat raises issues of social justice. To mitigate the impact on land, compensation plays a crucial role in flood risk management. The level and kind of compensation varies between countries across the globe. In this paper, we compare two different policy compensation frameworks in two European countries: Austria and England. The comparative study shows how different compensation schemes affect social justice, both in terms of substantive distributions but also in terms of procedural justice.

Moving Toward Resilience: Attitudes and perceptions of ‘pros and cons’ of migration and in-place adaptation, in rural communities facing climate impacts

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As a globally focused, faith-based humanitarian organization, Church World Service (CWS) has spent 75 years helping communities to transform themselves through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. We believe that creation is sacred, and that we are all called to responsibly steward its gifts to us. Because of this call, and because the expanding and accelerating climate crisis requires a global response, we join like-minded and like-hearted people, worldwide, to respond. CWS believes that all people deserve the opportunity to lead lives of dignity. In the context of global climate change, we help families and communities to access information, technology, skills, and financial resources needed to adapt livelihoods and become more climate resilient. We believe that most people desire to remain safe, secure, and thriving in their own community. Migration, though, is a reality in many places where CWS supports climate adaptation and resilience activities. We have heard informally from community partners, that climate change is a factor in people’s decisions to migrate; and that sometimes migration is the only option available for people to support themselves and their families.

In late 2020, CWS began an effort to learn more systematically about how climate change and migration are related, in places where we are already supporting in-place climate adaptation. This has two main purposes: (1) Improve planning for climate change adaptation and risk reduction, so that activities reflect

diverse needs and emerging demand; and (2) Identify new ways to increase the dignity, safety and human rights of people who are on the move because of climate change impacts. Qualitative research will take place between January and April 2021, in five countries: Cambodia, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia and Kenya. In each country, we will interview 40 people in one or more rural communities where CWS and our local partners are already working. This aims to document and assess how people feel climate change in their daily lives; and what are perceptions of the “pros and cons” of adapting in place to climate change, compared to the costs and benefits of migrating. We will interview people of all genders and aim to reflect a mix of age groups (i.e., youth, adults, older adults), migration history (i.e., previously migrated, migrant/non-migrant household), and livelihood basis. We have developed a common interview tool for use in all five countries, drawing on feedback from CWS country office staff and local partners. One-on-one interviews are planned for late January and February, followed by small group discussions during March and April. Our project team will analyze the interview and discussion responses, and between April and June will prepare a report based on what we learn, drawing on country literature reviews for additional context. Before finalizing this analysis, we will circle back to participating communities to share preliminary findings and discuss potential recommendations. We hope that community partners will use the information in their own resilience planning, and in advocacy related to climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and safe and dignified migration.

At Columbia University’s 2021 conference on Managed Retreat, CWS will share reflections and lessons from this research project, as part of the Migration as Adaptation track. We anticipate that these will include:

- Overview of site-specific findings, including diversity of perceptions toward migration and in-place adaptation across age, gender, and other characteristics.
- Comparative analysis across project locations, and common trends that emerge.
- Lessons for designing in-place adaptation support, in ways that reflect local perceptions about relative returns-on-investment of migration and in-place adaptation.
- Potential application of the analysis by community partners, in their own resilience planning and advocacy efforts.
- Reflections on our learning process, including ways that community partners could take up a greater role in framing research questions or driving knowledge production.
- Follow-on questions that arise from this pilot effort, and opportunities for collaboration with researchers or academic institutions.

Exploring the potential of a community co-design framework to address equitable community relocation – an assessment of three relocation cases after large-scale environmental change in Asia

Co-Authors: Kanako Iuchi (Tohoku University- IRIDeS), John Mutter (Columbia University)

Community relocation has received increasing attention as a solution to managed retreat (Birkmann et al., 2013; Iuchi & Mutter, 2020; Oliver-Smith, 2018). Relocation can happen before (as a precaution), during (out of necessity), or after (as adaptation) an instant phenomenon – such as earthquakes, storms, and volcanic eruptions – or a slow-onset phenomena – such as sea-level rise and drought. Regardless of the speed of the event, studies have shown that the potential for significant community and personal disruption as a result of relocation remains high. An overarching question to planners is to what extent

does community co-design in the post-disaster recovery phase result in increased satisfaction with outcomes and how can it be leveraged to address environmental justice concerns. We propose an equity lens to examine the potential for community co-design to "respect, protect and fulfill rights" (Carmalt & Dale, 2012, p.70) of the disaster-affected population in the relocation sites. In fact, do people have the right to remain where they chose, regardless of the evident dangers they face. In particular, we explore how outcomes vary between community-led design processes as compared to those that are primarily government-driven inform how rights are respected, and what are the key elements for making the co-design process equitable within a community relocation framework. While guidelines are continually developing to secure individual "rights to life" during the emergency response period (for instance, see Sphere Handbook refined over the last two decades (Sphere Association, 2018)), respecting these rights over the long-term is another important perspective post-disaster. We focus on three community relocation cases in Asia for comparison, all of which were implemented after large-scale disasters. Case locations include: Tohoku, Japan, swept away by the tsunamis during the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake; Leyte, the Philippines, devastated by the storm surge generated during the 2013 typhoon Haiyan; and Yogyakarta, Indonesia, affected by the volcanic pyroclastic flows during the 2010 Mt. Merapi eruption. Iuchi has spent considerable time in each location after the respective disasters, studying the community relocation processes. This paper utilizes data and information collected in the field in each area. Data analysis focused on the interrelationship of the following three themes and their contribution to environmental justice: i) "codesign settings" by examining the program design and the project ownership; ii) "co-design processes" by exploring participation, information flow, and monetary control toward decisions for actions; and iii) "outcomes" of community relocation measured by the sense of ownership and satisfaction levels. In particular, this study draws upon in-depth hands-on information gained from fieldwork in Kesentruma City (Tohoku), Tacloban City (Leyte), and Slemen Regency (Yogyakarta). Among the three cases, Tohoku's process was the most reliant on the government. The local government, as a mediator between the national government and residents, was the major actor in information sharing, decisions toward planning and implementation, and managing financing. As a result, residents did not play a large role and had little sense of ownership. Relocated communities have aged and many residents left their former jobs; many were faced with an increasing feeling of isolation post-relocation. Leyte's process was also government-led, though notably the relocation sites initially included a unique form of nationally-supported "sweat equity" construction efforts. While participation was voluntary and predominantly male, residents who joined had access to more information throughout the process, resulting in development of a greater sense of ownership. These relocation sites also show unique physical character as an outcome. Yogyakarta showcases the most community-led design process. The REKOMPAK program, owned by the national government, put residents in the center of decision-making regarding site design and construction. While critical information and professional support was provided by various experts, community groups were ultimately responsible for carrying out the actual relocation. They also were collectively responsible for determining how to spend the money, provided by the central government, designated for relocation construction. In this setting, community co-design resulted in residents being included in every step of the process, a greater sense of ownership, and negligible social disruption. Physically, housing design turned out to be unique, and was the most representative of neighborhood character among all three cases. From the three cases examined, we conclude that community co-design processes minimize exclusion of residents in the decision-making process and generally led to more satisfied, more inclusive, and less socially-disruptive results post-relocation. The analysis also highlighted that the way in which the co-design is initially arranged – provided by the government through several programs in this study – is critical as it sets a trajectory for the community relocation processes. Finally, we conclude that i) transparent information sharing, ii) balanced decision-making power, iii) diverse stakeholder involvement, iv) even access to money, and v)

shared responsibility/ownership are key components in supporting a community relocation process that also contributes to equitable outcomes, respecting and preserving individual and community rights.

Resistance, acceptance and misalignment of goals in climate-related resettlement in Malawi

Author: Hebe Nicholson

There has been debate in the literature as to whether planned relocation is adaptation to climate change or a component of loss and damage. Scholars suggest that if a participatory approach to the planned relocation is carried out, it is more likely to be adaptive. This presentation presents the story of three communities from the Lower Shire Region of Malawi that have three different views on planned relocation from flood prone areas. The presentation highlights how misalignment in goals, priorities and cultivation land for livelihood shape acceptance and resistance to planned relocation. The presentation also shows how community members can re-appropriate planned relocation to recenter action to their needs. The main way this occurs is through community members refusing to move or participate in relocation plans. This has led the government to partly rethink their position, thus approaching relocation with caution and compromise to include what may be favorable to communities in the short-term, but also beneficial to the government's long-term coercive developmental plans.