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# Involuntary Resettlement in Hydroelectric Projects: A Comparison of Chinese and Canadian Case Studies and Implications for Best Practice

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**Involuntary Resettlement in Hydroelectric Projects:  
A Comparison of Chinese and Canadian case studies  
and implications for best practice**

**MPA Research Report**

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The Local Government Program  
Department of Political Science  
The University of Western Ontario

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July 2012

**Involuntary Resettlement in Hydroelectric Projects:  
A Comparison of Chinese and Canadian case studies  
and implications for best practice**

Abstract

This paper attempts to compare different political systems with respect to similar issues, in this case, the involuntary resettlement induced by the construction of large dams. It aims to examine real world cases from both China and Canada, namely the Three Georges Dam, and a series of dams being built in James Bay in Quebec regarding the involuntary resettlement issue. By looking at the practices of both hydroelectric projects in this regard, the role of government in this process and their impact on the affected communities and the society as a whole, this paper seeks to explore the characteristics of both cases from the perspective of political science in an attempt to analyze those practices and the problems that occurred under each system. By comparing the differences of both China's case and Canada's case, the rationales will be presented as to why there are differences or similarities found in quite different political and social contexts. Based on previous studies and analysis, several political factors stand out as the main contributing factors in shaping the resettlement process in China, namely the land ownership system, center-local governmental relationships; accountability structures and preference for urban-industrial development over rural-agricultural development. Aside from that, it's fascinating to find that even in different political systems, some similarities can still be found when dealing with similar issues. In this case, due to the nature of the issue and the similar characteristics of targeted population, similar effects are found as a result of the involuntary resettlements. At the end of the paper, some insights and recommendations will be provided and conclusions will be made as to what can be learned from each other in dealing with similar issues in the future through a political lens.

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## ***Literature Review***

Resettlement has never failed to gain great attention as well as to provoke worldwide debate both in the academic field and in real world practice in the issue of development due to its highly controversial nature and the adverse long-term social and environmental costs of large development projects (Asthana, 1996; Cernea & Guggenheim, 1993; Cernea, 1988, etc.). The nature of development projects is economic-driven. The problem resulting from this kind of projects lies in its social impact, such as involuntary resettlement. People who are affected by development projects must move to places regardless of their willingness. In most cases, they are reluctant or even resistant to such relocation. From an ethical perspective, involuntary resettlement is the most debatable, or even unacceptable issue involved in launching this kind of project. Those who oppose those projects always consider it to be inhumane and against human rights. People displaced by dams and reservoirs are considered a consequence of development (Cernea, 1990; Scudder & Colson, 1982). Each year, 10 million people worldwide are resettled to make way for infrastructure projects such as dams, airports, highways<sup>1</sup> (Cernea, 1997; World Bank on Dams, 1996). Development projects causing resettlement, however, are seen to fit into the nation's ideology and the larger social good (Cernea & Guggenheim, 1993).

### ***Development Projects and Resettlement***

Consequently, there has been a huge pool of academic studies in the field of resettlement or relocation as a result of development projects since the 1980s (Asthana, 1996; Barnett & Webber, 2010; Cernea & Guggenheim, 1993; Croll, 1999; Escobar, 2003; Feldman, Geisler, & Silberling, 2003; Forsyth, 2003; Hirsch & Warren, 1998;

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<sup>1</sup> Of these 10 million, large dams account for 4 million displaced people. (Dwivedic, 1999)

Oliver-Smith, 2006; Scudder & Colson, 1982, etc.). In particular, resettlement caused by the building of dams draws the most attention. Quite a few of them have focused on the adverse social and environmental impact relocation has imposed upon the affected communities and the society as a whole. Aside from academics, NGOs (World Bank, International Finance Corporation, World Mission on Dams, local interest groups, etc.) are also playing a big part in contributing to research in this field. The World Bank in 2004 has already published a guidance book on the planning and implementation of involuntary resettlement (World Bank, 2004). The release of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) Report (2000) more than a decade ago has also provoked much esteem, controversy, and discussion. The WCD Report provided a comprehensive overview of the impacts of large dams around the world. It recommended a new approach to decision-making based on universally agreed values and strategic priorities (equity, sustainability, efficiency, participatory decision-making, and accountability). Besides, it also presented a framework for decision-making process which includes seven strategic priorities and 26 guidelines for governments, donors, policymakers, planners, and dam builders that would involve in the dam building process. This separates relocation from other political issues that mainly draws attention within the political domain. Yet, development can be voluntary and involuntary. It's important to distinguish the two. Anthropologists use 'push' and 'pull' factors to describe involuntary and voluntary migration. Voluntary resettlement refers to attracting people to new places, whereas involuntary resettlement means forcing people out of their traditional localities. The difference between involuntary and voluntary population movements is that the former are caused by 'push' factors only. 'Pull' factors, if any, are the exception rather than the rule (Asthana, 1996; Guggenheim & Cernea, 1993). Distinguishing involuntary resettlement and voluntary resettlement helps enhancing the understanding of the

essence of involuntary resettlement. Besides, depending on geographical context, there can be resettlement that is from urban to urban, from rural to rural, and from rural to urban. In addition, resettlement can take place in democratic societies and non-democracies, although a lot of the researchers are looking at resettlement in developing countries. All these different forms and circumstances have added dynamics and complexities to this issue. This paper attempts to compare different political systems with respect to similar issues, in this case, the involuntary resettlement induced by the construction of large dams. It aims to examine real world cases from both China and Canada, namely the Three Georges Dam, and a series of dams being built in James Bay in Quebec regarding the involuntary resettlement issue. By looking at the practices of both hydroelectric projects in this regard, the role of government in this process and their impact on the affected communities and the society as a whole, this paper seeks to explore the characteristics of both cases from the perspective of political science in an attempt to analyze those practices and the problems that occurred under each system. By comparing the differences of both China's case and Canada's case, the rationales will be presented as to why there are differences or similarities found in quite different political and social contexts. Based on previous studies and analysis, several political factors stand out as the main contributing factors in shaping the resettlement process in China, namely the land ownership system, center-local governmental relationships; accountability structures and preference for urban-industrial development over rural-agricultural development. Aside from that, it's fascinating to find that even in different political systems, some similarities can still be found when dealing with similar issues. In this case, due to the nature of the issue and the similar characteristics of targeted population, similar effects are found as a result of the involuntary resettlements. At the end of the paper, some insights and recommendations will be provided and conclusions will be made as to what can be learned from each other in dealing with similar issues in

the future through a political lens.

### ***Pros and Cons of the construction of large dams***

Having said that, this paper will only focus on involuntary resettlement that takes place in different political and social contexts, particularly dam-induced involuntary resettlement. Most of the existing literature about hydropower projects, especially large ones, has focused on issues around their impacts upon social, cultural and economic aspects. The justifications of building dams are usually around its economic benefits the affected communities will gain. However, the pros and cons of building development projects are both quite obvious. Over the past decades, there has been on-going debate around the issues of large-dam construction regarding the nature and magnitude of environmental and socioeconomic damage of hydro development. There is both criticism as well as support. Advocates, mostly developers and politicians of hydro development always argue that hydro power is environmentally positive compared to other sources of energy to justify their deeds. They claim that unlike coal, or other natural resources, dams don't produce greenhouse emissions, acid rain, or urban smog, or other waste that could harm our offspring, which is renewable and sustainable in the long run. They produce way fewer GHG and no other air pollutants, much lower than those generated by fossil fuel electricity- "approximately 60 times less than coal-fired power plants and 20 times less than the least carbon intensive of the thermal generation options" (Canadian Hydropower Association Report, 2002; Martin & Hoffman, 2008).

However, that's only half the story. Those (mainly NGOs and affected groups, environmentalists and anthropologists) who strongly object to the development of hydroelectricity argue that actually reservoirs do emit greenhouse gases due to the rotting of organic matter, including submerged vegetation and soils and the detritus that



flows into the reservoir from upstream (Martin & Hoffman, 2008). Not only does hydro electricity cause a different type of global climate change crisis by changing the existing ecology but what's worse, it has put our environment in danger by contaminating water and killing trees and animals. Lost forest land and serious harm to the aquatic environment (Martin & Hoffman, 2008). According to Martin and Hoffman (2008), hydro construction throughout Manitoba has resulted in the flooding of some 600,000 acres.

Aside from that, advocates fail to recognize the devastating social and environmental consequences felt by affected population brought in by hydro projects, as addressed by people who are against hydro projects. These projects are ecologically, socially and morally catastrophic for affected population and the whole society, one of which is involuntary resettlement and its interaction with its social effects.

For countries lacking electricity and power, hydropower projects are absolutely lifesavers. That's one of the reasons for most developing countries, like China to build Three Georges Dam since it generates huge amounts of electricity to relieve the pressure caused by shortages. Groundbreaking achievements have also been made in related areas like electronics, metallurgy, engineering, and myriad other scientific fields, as well as the development of complex organizational and managerial systems, which revolutionized the electrical system, required by the generation, transmission and distribution of electrical system. As a result, hydro companies made great strides in expanding their markets (Martin & Hoffman, 2008). Their incentive for the construction of dams is to export their product. In this revolution, there are benefits as well as costs. The winners are the consumers of some of the cheapest power. For example, In Canada, the case of Manitoba, as the North America, namely the residents of southern Manitoba and the American upper Midwest. The losers or the victims have been Manitoba's Aboriginal communities (Martin & Hoffman, 2008). However, to fully assess hydro development,

both its economic and social effects should be taken into account.

### ***Involuntary Resettlement caused by Large Dams***

Large dams have been an important component of infrastructure development in both developing and developed countries alike. Consequently, it is estimated that the construction of large dams has displaced 40 to 80 million of the world's people, mostly in developing countries like China, India and Brazil (World Commission on Dams, 2000). In particular, since 1949, between 18.5 and 20 million people were displaced by development projects in India and about 45.1 million in China (Brook, Michael & Duan, 2008; Fruggle, Smith, Hydrosult, & Agrodev, 2000). The 1980s has been called by some as the "decade of displacement" (Asthana, 1996). "Involuntary resettlement—

Resettlement is involuntary when it occurs without the informed consent of the displaced persons or if they give their consent without having the power to refuse resettlement." (International Finance Corporation, 2012). It refers to the permanent forced relocation of entire households (Croll, 1999; Feldman, Geisler, & Silberling, 2003). Barnett and Webber (2010) argue that it's a special form of migration yet it bears the same characteristic that like many migrations, it is both cause and consequence of socially engineered environmental change. The involuntary nature of the migration and resettlement process involves an almost total loss of control over both choices and resources (Oliver-Smith, 1991). Involuntary resettlement consists of two closely related yet distinct processes: displacing people and rebuilding their livelihoods (Asthana, 1996), which are both significant in minimizing and avoiding the adverse impact the process would impose on relocatees. The characteristics of involuntary relocations are (Li, Waley & Rees, 2001): they are forced to move against their wills. Since they have no other realistic choice but to move; they are usually planned and carried out by governments; and they will be leaving their original living places permanently since their home will be

inundated. Thus, involuntary resettlement has devastating effects upon affected population. At first, one might have a little doubt as to the existence of involuntary resettlement in democracies. By this definition, involuntary resettlement can take place anywhere regardless of political systems and social contexts. In democratic societies most issues are dealt through negotiation. However, due to specific contexts and information asymmetry between two sides, some of the negotiation process is somewhat symbolic, which can hardly make the process just and fair.

Existing literature mainly focused on the relocation policies and measures, effects of involuntary resettlement and ways to ameliorate the negative consequences of forcible relocation (Asthana, 1996; Cernea, 1988, 1997; Cernea & Kanbur, 2002; Croll, 1999; Oliver-Smith, 1991; Wilmsen, Webber, & Duan, 2011; etc). Cernea (1988) has concluded that involuntary resettlement would lead to the impoverishment of affected communities. He (1997) also argued that the documented relocation outcomes have been overwhelmingly negative. Main Theories on involuntary resettlement include Scudder-Colson relocation theory (1982) and “risk model” developed by Cernea (1990), which has great influence on the theories and practices in this field. According to Scudder and Colson (1982), there are four stages involved in the process of involuntary resettlement from the perspective of affected people. It begins with relocation, which means the physical replacement. The second stage involves adjustment to new environment, during which relocated people suffer from both emotional and economic stress of readjustment. A lot of them end up with lower incomes and worse standards of living due to replacement. Besides, because most people usually stop making investment once they know they have to move somewhere else, by the time of relocation, their income and the value of their assets get lower than before. Resettlement enters the third stage if economic development and community formation occur, which

Scudder notes that most cases do not reach the third stage. The fourth stage consolidates.

Cernea (1990) developed a “risk model”, where he points out that when displacement and relocation leave people worse off, the empirical evidence reveals a set of eight recurrent characteristics that need to be monitored closely. They all contribute to a process of impoverishment. Thus, the "risks to be avoided" in displacement are:(i) landlessness;(ii) joblessness; (iii) homelessness; (iv) marginalisation; (v)morbidity;(vi)food insecurity;(vii)loss of access to common property assets; and (viii) social disarticulation. Those eight aspects together contribute to the impoverishment of affected population in general. Both the Scudder-Colson theory and Cernea’s “risk model” have demonstrated the negative impact of relocation on the affected population.

In general, this literature showed that displacement not only resulted in asset and job loss but also in the breakdown of social and food security, credit and labor exchange networks, social capital and kinship ties. Other effects of involuntary resettlement include the social-political disempowerment of the affected people, loss of cultural identity and heritage as well as impoverishment (Baviskar, 1995).

### ***Past Experiences***

Based on past experiences, we know that relocation is just one item of the whole package in the resettlement process. Job training, employment and business opportunities are also important aspects that should be taken into account to make the resettlement process more sustainable for relocatees. Besides, the complexity and difficulty of involuntary resettlement results not from the number of people affected alone, but from the severity of the consequences to the affected people. Since it requires systematic planning and sophisticated political skills to ensure the resettlement process

is as harmless as possible, planning is significant in ensuring a successful resettlement. Oliver-Smith (1991) addressed the importance of planning in resettlement. He further argued that “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”. This statement literally covers all the important factors that the policy decision-makers should take into account when planning and implementing resettlement policies. It also reflects the complexities of the resettlement issue. Public acceptance of key decisions is another essential factor for equitable and sustainable water and energy resources development. Acceptance emerges from recognising rights, addressing risks, and safeguarding the entitlements of all groups of affected people, particularly indigenous and tribal peoples, women, peasants and other vulnerable groups (World Commission on Dams, 2000). This means a high level of public participation should be involved in the decision making process. Besides, communication and education play a significant role in negotiating with and informing the affected population from past experiences (Oliver-Smith, 1991). Even if the process is more of an informing one, sufficient information is also necessary and facilitates the implementation process. People are most afraid of the unknown, to educate them on dams so as to lessen their anxiety and reluctance to hydroelectric projects. It would be helpful for the implementation and operation of the projects on condition that their voice, perspectives, concerns and expectations to be heard by the government. Ideally, one would advocate relocating residents into a permanent settlement and more fully integrating them into modernity as well as maintaining their traditional lifestyle and culture, creating a win-win situation in which nobody has to compromise any part of their interests. But realistically, that’s usually not the case.

## ***Dam-induced Involuntary Resettlement in China***

### ***History of Dam building and resettlement issue in China***

China has a long history of construction of hydroelectric projects. The earliest recorded dam, known as Dujiangyan, can be dated back as long as two thousand years ago. It is located in the southwest part of China and was originally built to fight against flood and later as an irrigation system. It is still in use today, serving as an irrigation system and a popular tourist spot attracting people from all over the world. Recent history saw few hydrostations being constructed until 1949. Since the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949, dam building in China has accelerated (Wilmsen, 2011). The period between 1949-1985 is a heyday of dam construction, which saw a number of over 70,000 hydrostations and as many as 80,000 reservoirs on behalf of hydroelectricity, irrigation and flood control (Jing, 1999; Wilmsen, 2011). During this period, dam construction was mainly controlled and financed by the central government. Currently, China is the largest producer of hydroelectricity in the world. It is estimated that over 10.2 million people in China have been uprooted as a result dam building (Jing, 1999). Such large scale of construction caused a dramatic increase in involuntary resettlement, the scale of which has been unmatched by any country in the last 50 years (World Commission on Dams, 2000).

Past practices and approaches of Chinese government toward resettlement have not been highly praised but rather strongly criticized by both domestic and foreign scholars and media. Those activities were considered inhumane and against the international norms. Under the Great Leap Forward, the central government dislocated more than 1 million people (Jing, 1999). Due to a lack of comprehensive framework of resettlement policies and mismanagement, the process of resettlement has been painful

and exceptionally hard for both government and the relocatees. Yet the outcomes were devastating and controversial. The characteristics of those resettlement program launched by governments prior to 1980s were coercion, suppression and neglect (Jing, 1999). Activist Dai Qing claimed that there are no cases of successful implementation of involuntary resettlement in China (Dai, 1994). Woodman states that the practice of resettlement in China is more a model of control over information than of good practice (Woodman, 2000). Indeed, Stein (1998) “observes that involuntary resettlement in China all too frequently implies the abandonment of those displaced to conditions of chronic impoverishment”. Chau (1995) estimates that 30 per cent of China’s involuntary resettlements have failed. According to previous research, since 1949 displacees in China have faced adversities similar to those faced by displacees of other developing nations (Wilmsen, 2011). They were considered as the victims of economic development and modernization. Needless to say, resettlement programs were mostly considered to have failed, or at least considered to be highly controversial during this period.

However, over the last 50 years there has also been continuous improvement in the policies and procedures that address dam-induced displacement and resettlement in China. Among those efforts, continued improvement of policy at national level, especially compensation standards, is a significant one (World Commission on Dams, 2000). Besides recognizing the human and financial costs of substandard resettlement planning and practice, the Chinese government has endeavored to improve its approaches with respect to the resettlement issue (Nui, 2004). It gradually recognized that resettlements could be seen as a chance of developing the affected areas. The concept of resettlement with development has fundamentally changed the traditional approach of addressing resettlement, which is compensation-based resettlement (Brook, et al, 2008).

## ***A Case Study of Involuntary Resettlement of Three Gorges Dam Project***

### **Introduction of Three Gorges Dam project**

Three Gorges Dam is a reservoir as long as 632 km, situated at Sandouping, Yichang, Hubei Province. The construction of the dam began in 1994. It was expected to be completed in 2009. The project is composed of the dam, two power plants and navigation facilities (Wang, 2002). It's estimated that some 20 counties or municipal districts, 227 townships and 1680 villages have been inundated (Duan & Steil, 2003) as well as 23 800 ha of farmland (Chi, 1997). However, according to the government (Jing, 1999), the project has the capacity of producing 84.7 billion kWh of hydroelectricity annually, which helps alleviate the problem of electricity shortage due to increasing demand in middle and eastern China. Aside from that, it improves the navigation capacity of Yangtze River and the ecological environment by providing clean energy and thus reducing the Co2 intensity of GDP at the same time.

The Three Gorges dam has received great attention ever since. Proposed by Sun Yat-sen in 1919, it became one of the most hotly debated political issues within the Chinese government due to its unprecedented scale and social and environmental impacts. Scholars criticize its profound adverse social and environmental impacts and strongly oppose this project. Some claim it's the demonstration the Chinese government has showed to the world what they can achieve. More importantly, they argue that institutional desires for political and economic gain have always played a special role in the project (Jing, 1999). The political aspect has always been a significant characteristic of this project. Prior to its approval by the National People's Congress in 1992, scholars also questioned the feasibility of this mega-project and the management skill of Chinese government in handling this kind of issue since past experiences have been painful and unsuccessful. As a result, it remains one of the most controversial water conservancy



projects ever constructed (Down to Earth, 1994; Human Rights in China, 1998; International Rivers Network, 2003). Among all the criticism and controversies, the resettlement program is a frequently debated topic.

### **Resettlement Program**

The resettlement of the Three Gorges dam project is not an overnight process. Instead, it has lasted for nearly two decades and is still in process up to day. The first phase of population resettlement started in 1993. Between 1993 and 1995, some thousands of people were displaced (Jing, 1999; Wilmsen, et al, 2011). Another 20,000-plus people were relocated in 1996, and more than 30,000 are being resettled before the damming of the river in November (Jing, 1999). As time goes by, more and more people were displaced. In 2003, most of the large-scale resettlement began, after the completion of the first group of electric generating units. By 2009, 13 cities, 140 towns and 1,352 villages will be flooded, and at least 1.2 million people will be relocated (Jing, 1999). Never before in China, or anywhere else for that matter, has a single hydroelectric dam project displaced so many people (Jing, 1999). The majority of the displaced people were from small rural communities. Heggelund (2004) claimed that more than 87% were classified as rural residents. In other words, most of them are peasants who rely heavily or even solely on their lands and communities as a way of living. They are considered the vulnerable group in Chinese society. The official data of people resettled is 1.13 million (Jing, 1999). But the actual number of population being resettled is between 1.3 million to 1.6 million. The displacement cost approximately 40% of the officially estimated project investment of RMB 180 billion (\$28 billion) in 2008 prices (Wang, 2002; Wilmsen, et al, 2011). The scale of relocation for Three Gorges Dam project is unprecedented.

Findings of current literature overwhelmingly suggest that involuntary

resettlement is associated with the impoverishment of the affected population and the destruction of the social fabric (Cernea, 1990, 1997, 1998; Scudder, 1997; Scudder, & Colson, 1982; etc.). Similar to the impacts of most other resettlement programs, the overall adverse impact of the resettlement imposed upon affected population in Three Gorges Dam resettlement is that they were considerably poorer afterwards and worse off than their neighbours who were not moved (Jing, 1999) since they suffered from asset, income and land loss (Brook, et al, 2008; Wilmsen, et al, 2011) as well as psychological stress (Xi & Hwang, 2011).

### **Political principles, Major Policies and Approaches of Resettlement**

Resettlement for the Three Gorges Dam Project is the most difficult task of all the projects involved for Chinese government. Unlike most developing countries, the People's Republic of China established a fairly comprehensive legal framework and a variety of regulations to support involuntary resettlement some decades ago and made modifications over time (Brook, et al, 2008; World Bank, 2000), from pre-feasibility planning, developing the Feasibility Resettlement Program, implementing the plan and monitoring the entire process.

Since the mid-1980s, the Chinese government has carried out a 'development-oriented resettlement' policy, linking resettlement to development in order to prevent the impoverishment that has been typical of past large hydro projects. As Croll (1999) pointed out that the with the introduction of "resettlement with development" or "development-oriented resettlement," the process of resettlement not only relocates people, but also helps them by providing the means of production to generate improved incomes. In China, it puts forth the generic objective of resettlement in the slogan 'moving out, being stable and becoming wealthy gradually' (Bryan, Hugo & Tan, 2005). It is said to have been designed to guarantee a package of economic benefits to the

targeted rural resettlers, including establishment of housing projects, production bases and an infrastructure of community facilities (Jing, 1997). Under this principle, the relative policies cover areas of support, including employment and production development, funding development, preferential treatment for resettlers, and post-resettlement activities (Wilmsen, 2011). The principle is to take resettlement as a chance for development and improvement, or at least to restore the pre-relocation living standard of resettled people. This policy of “near resettlement” is another approach that the Chinese government has taken at the initial stage of the project, meaning to displace people to a higher level or further from the reservoir. However, in 1998, the central government realized that the deteriorating environment in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River was a significant factor causing disastrous floods and that clearing of the reservoir areas for displaced people must be restrained (Bryan, et al, 2005).

Specifically, resettlement planning for each county includes the following main elements: ‘planning for rural displaced people; relocation planning of cities and towns; inundation treatment and relocation for enterprises; special item reconstruction planning; environmental protection planning and cost-estimation. In resettlement planning, the relationship between resettlement and economic development has been fully reconciled and environmental protection is also given special consideration’ (Wang, 2002).

Among all the policies, those around compensation are an important aspect in the resettlement issue that needs to be addressed since adequate compensation is crucial to rural relocated population who rely on agricultural production to make a living. The Land Administration Law, first formulated in 1953, outlined the principles and procedures for land acquisition (Wilmsen, 2011). It also set the standards for payment of compensation for acquired land, which set the foundation for compensation standard for resettlement and land acquisition. It has been updated and improved five times with additional regulations added to enhance the land law including the Land Acquisition and

Resettlement Regulation for the Construction of Large and Medium-Sized Water Conservancy Projects (1991 and 2006) (Shi, 2008; Wilmsen, 2011). Under the most recent Land Administration Law (2004) (Article 51) (Wilmsen, 2011), when land or housing is acquired to make way for a large or medium-sized dam, the standards for land compensation and the method of resettlement shall be determined separately by the State Council. In this case, the affected population fall under the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Regulation for Construction of Large and Medium-sized Water Conservancy Projects (Wilmsen, 2011). The regulation was first issued in 1991 and modified in 2006. According to the 1991 Regulations, compensation was calculated by determining the average annual output value (AAOV) for three years prior to the land acquisition and multiplying it by a factor of three or four. Land compensation and resettlement subsidies are equal to 16 times the average annual output value under the 2006 regulation (Wilmsen, 2011). Besides, the 2006 Regulations added subsidies for relocation and training for livelihoods, annual post-relocation fund support of RMB 600 per year per capita for 20 years, and community infrastructure rehabilitation and improvement based on the needs of resettlers (Asian Development Bank, 2007).

Other preferential policies have also been formulated by the State Council in order to facilitate the resettlement program. The investment needed for resettlement is ensured. There are abundant natural resources, such as minerals, hydraulic resources, forests, agricultural products and tourist resources in the region offering favourable conditions for development (Wang, 2002).

Other policies include: approving preferential policies such as those given to special economic (zones) for the reservoir region's area and cities; providing low interest loans for technical reforms to the relocation enterprises; and resolving that the whole country should support the resettlement of (those displaced by) TGP (Wang, 2002).

### **Political Factors that influence the Resettlement Process**

China's resettlement process has its particular characteristics due to its unique political system and historical legacy. The first factor that separates the resettlement process from other cases is the land ownership. China has a dual land ownership system. In urban areas, land is owned by the state. Urban dwellers can trade their land-use rights under a leasehold system through selling in the market, subleasing, or mortgaging the land (Po, 2008; Deng & Huang, 2004). However, in rural China, land is owned collectively, meaning that it's not owned individually but communally (usually at the village level). Rural residents are entitled to use the lands but they are not allowed to sell their land in the market (Bryan, et al, 2005; Wilmsen, 2011). In rural areas, when land acquisition occurs, it is a transfer of land ownership from the rural collective to the state or under the institutional power of the local government. However, this enables local government to expropriate land from peasants at low cost and sell it to developers at much higher prices (Ding, 2007; Yang & Wang, 2008). Besides, when households are dispossessed of their land, they are compensated not for the value of land but for the loss of use value of their land. Therefore, compensation can hardly reflect their price of land in its developed use (Wilmsen, et al, 2011; Ding, 2007; Edin, 2003). That's one of the reasons the compensation standards are still considered too low to resettlers (Asian Development Bank, 2007) even after 2006, when the updated regulations have taken the compensation standards to a historically new level.

Central-local governmental relations are another factor that influences the practice of resettlement. China is a unitary state and its bureaucracy is hierarchical but devolved. Laws, decrees, regulations and decisions flow down from the central government in Beijing to officials in provinces, prefectures, counties, and townships. But local officials are embedded in a local bureaucracy: they have dual responsibilities (and,

often, dual funding too)—to their superiors within a ministry as well as to the local government in which they are embedded (Wilmsen, et al, 2011). In some sense, government is localized because local governments are responsible for the implementation of all the policies that come down from the central government. This can give local governments a great deal of autonomy if the local economy is successful and strong, resulting in loose execution of policies at the local government. Thus, in this case, the central regulations can be loosely implemented at local government level as well. Under the resettlement policies, resettlement is managed by local governments and is supported by the whole nation. The hierarchy of resettlement administration for large dam project is illustrated in figure 1 (Wilmsen, 2011). In general, the administration and implementation of resettlement policies can be very decentralized. Local government can tailor resettlement plans and policies to specific local environment and situations, thus having a great deal of autonomy. However, the devolution of power to local government is not accompanied by the introduction of systems to monitor and detect the implementation of the resettlement policies (Andrews-Speed & Ma, 2008).

A preference for urban and industrial forms of development over rural and agricultural forms of development is another contributing factor that makes the practice of China's resettlement experience unique (Peet & Hartwick, 1999; Wilmsen, et al, 2011). Since 1978, China's national objective is economic development while maintaining social stability and retaining existing power structures (Edin, 2003). China's modernization is characterized by an absolute preference for urban and industrial development. There is huge difference between the rural and urban systems. One example is the different citizenship systems. In rural area, people hold rural hukou (household registration system), whereas urban residents hold non-rural hukou. People holding different kinds of hukou enjoy different levels of social services, such as health

and education. For a long time, this system has been a big obstacle for rural residents to become better off.

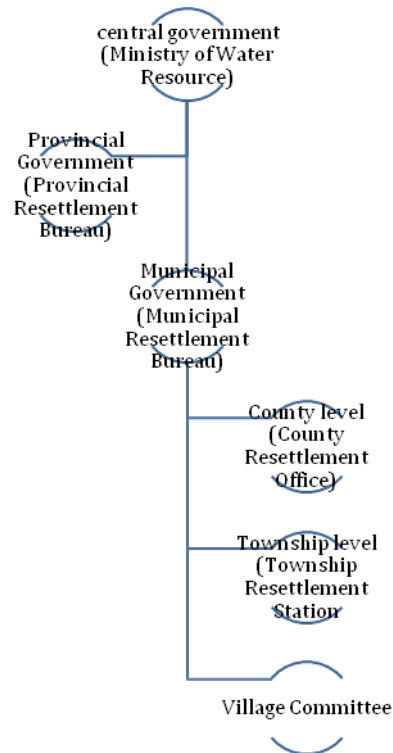


Fig. 1 Hierarchical Structure of Resettlement Administration for Dam Projects

Rural residents suffer from generational poverty. Besides, city development and modernization have always been national priorities, leaving rural areas extremely backward and poor. Although great efforts have been made to improve rural people's life and to develop rural areas, when government realized that the gap between urban and rural has been getting increasingly huge, little progress has been made. These political attitudes and social contexts indicate that peasants should give way to the needs of development and modernization. They should do what they have been told and informed.

Accountability structures also stands out as an important aspect of Chinese

policies and practices. As discussed earlier, the governance of projects in China is hierarchical. At each administrative level, regardless of whether a project is nationally funded or whether it involves international donors, the lowest level of the hierarchy is always held accountable to the next highest level of administration. In other words, they are accountable to the higher level of the administration. In the Three Gorges Dam resettlement case, those who are responsible for implementing the national resettlement policy and associated regulations view themselves as accountable to the next level of government rather than the affected population. Undoubtedly, this has profound influence on the outcomes of resettlement project.

### **Achievements and major problems**

The resettlement project of Three Gorges Dam is a mega-project itself. By the time of writing, it has been going for almost twenty years and has involved a number of over 1.3 million population resettled. Although there has been criticism and controversies towards the approaches, policies and practices of resettlement, one has to admit that there are achievements as well. Unlike many developing countries, China has a well-developed framework of legislation supporting dam-forced displacement and resettlement (Wilmsen, 2011). During the resettlement period, there has been no big social disturbance. Relocation work has been fairly smoothly implemented under the resettlement planning. The infrastructure for relocated cities and towns also has progressed (Wang, 2002). The mission of resettlement is also roughly achieved. However, these achievements can not overshadow the problems of resettlement program that have been broadly addressed.

To begin with, the compensation issue in resettlement has always been highly controversial. Generally speaking, compensation lacks consistency across provinces and counties, which leads to injustice and anger among resettlers. Specifically, there are



mainly three problems in the compensation issue alone. First is the overall low level of compensation the government has provided to resettled people. As discussed before, the land is owned collectively in rural China. The compensation system reflected the land ownership system in China. Compensation was paid for the use value of land rather than the value of land. Therefore, peasants do not receive compensation for the loss of land, because the land was not theirs in the first place. Local governments have substantial power in deciding the use value of the land and the value can be variable. Secondly, as abovementioned, the majority of resettled population have been rural residents. But a few of them are urban residents. Under the government's current resettlement policy, the rural people are to be compensated less than these urbanites. The disparity in compensation payments between rural and urban residents fueled great conflicts. Besides, within rural areas, there can be huge gaps with respect to compensation packages. Compensation was determined by county governments, who are entitled to assess the value of old houses and there's no standard compensation that's being used across all the affected communities, which led to the big gap between communities in terms of compensation. This reflects China's political system. Since power is devolved from center to locality within China's system of governance, county governments have a lot of autonomy with respect to compensation within their own jurisdictions when the policies and regulations come down from central government. As a result, different jurisdictions can have fairly different levels of compensation given the specific situations they face (Brook, et al, 2008; Wilmsen, 2011). This is a contributing factor that caused households to lose assets and become worse off post relocation.

Lack of participation of affected people is another problem that has been frequently criticized among critics and media (World Bank, 2000). The Chinese government has been "accused" of using an inhumane approach of persuading people

to get out of their houses and move to somewhere they don't know, mostly in a way of coercion and informing instead of consultation (Heggelund, 2004; Jing, 1999; Tan, 2008; etc.). Peasants don't really have a say in the resettlement process regarding resettlement locations and livelihood options. Mostly, they are informed about what they have to do. Legally speaking, public participation is not the mandate of Chinese government since it's not stipulated in the 2006 Regulations. Peasants are prevented from negotiating (Cao, Feng & Tao, 2008). This is also rooted back to China's unique political atmosphere and historical legacy addressed above. China's preference for urban and industrial forms of development over rural and agricultural forms of development indicate that peasants should give way to the needs of national priorities for development and modernization. The fundamental nature of this kind of program is that the few give rights away for the benefit of the many (Wilmsen, 2011). They should do what they have been told and informed. Besides, since peasants are historically not a well-educated group in China, their input was not taken seriously and it's considered to be a waste of time to get them involved in an already demanding task. For example, at one village in Kaixian County, Chongqing Municipality, displacees were invited to 'participate in propaganda' organized by the township resettlement office (Deng & Huang, 2004). At the meeting they were 'lectured on the significance of the Three Gorges Project', compensation standards, and the opportunities for livelihood development (Deng & Huang, 2004). This kind of consultation mainly takes the form of providing information. Another contributing factor that leads to poor implementation and outcomes of the resettlement policies is the accountability structures discussed earlier. One of the most common results of the earlier mentioned accountability structures is the asymmetrical relationships of power between the government officials and the affected population. In this case, what's even worse is that the affected population are mostly vulnerable groups that usually acquire limited social resources. Vulnerable groups were

not paid as much attention as they should have been paid. Since administrations responsible for implementing the resettlement policies and regulations are held accountable to the next level of government rather than the resettled people, local governments lack the incentive to consult the needs and demands of affected people.

Other problems cited by scholars include: the underestimation of the number of relocated population; poor selection of designated resettlement in the early stage of resettlement that lead to “secondary resettlement”; lack of detailed planning of resettlement, including analysis of land availability and carrying capacity (Bryan, et al, 2005; World Bank, 2000); corruption problems of local government (Ting, 1997; Wu, 1998); insufficient attention to vulnerable groups, including women, ethnic minorities (Bryan, et al, 2005; World Bank, 2000); mismanagement of resettlement budget and time lag (Jing, 1999; World Bank, 2000); and the lack of a monitoring mechanism for the resettlement process<sup>2</sup>. Those problems are all micro-problems that resulted from the political characteristics of the Chinese government. “Micro” doesn’t mean they aren’t worth addressing, but rather those problems are of great significance that should be dealt with in order to improve the outcome of resettlement program. For example, the problem of corruption has caused public anger and is always worth our close attention. However, what I’m trying to address here is that those problems are of managerial nature and some of them are the result of the Chinese political system. In order to address the latter problems, radical reform should be made.

Above all, China’s experience reflected the national objective during this time. The resettlement is a mirror that tells us the national priorities. Specifically, it indicated

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<sup>2</sup> In 1995, the Communist Party officially introduced Xinfang, a creative complaint system compared to traditional formal legal institutions. It has served as a channel for citizens to seek assistance, to appeal government decisions, and to engage in a limited level of political participation (Minzner, 2009).

that during those periods the country has been focusing on economic growth in the context of the subordination of individuals to the collective and the few to the most; preference of urban-industrial development over rural development; disparities between urban and rural; the local implementation of national plans and directives; and the structure of land ownership, which have all shaped its story and made it unique.

## **Dam-induced Resettlement in Canada**

### **History of Dam building and resettlement issue in Canada**

Similar to China, Canada also has an intensive history of dam construction. It is now the second largest hydroelectricity producer in the world. It is home to some of the largest and most powerful hydro power facilities in the world (International Water Power & Dam Construction, 2012). The dams are mainly used to for hydroelectric power generation, irrigation and flood control. The first large-scale dam building began during Second World War, when governments initiated a broad hydroelectric program (Evenden, 2009). Today there are approximately 450 hydroelectric power plants operating in Canada and more than 200 small hydro plants (<10 MW). Canada also has more than 800 dams that are used for hydroelectric power generation, irrigation and flood control (International Water Power & Dam Construction, 2012). However, quite different from China, the relocation issue in Canada has frequently involved First Nations mainly due to historical and environmental factors. Historically, the geographical displacement of aboriginal group resulted from the invasion of incoming Europeans since the 1600s and 1700s. Aboriginal people had to abandon their traditional hunting, fishing and residential lands. Their homelands were restricted through land purchase agreements, the treaty-making process and the establishment of reserves (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996).

In more recent times, the displacement of Aboriginal people has often taken the form of deliberate initiatives by governments to move particular Aboriginal communities for administrative or development purposes (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). Administrative resettlement means the resettlement of aboriginals for the purpose of government administration, usually to facilitate the operation of government in order to provide the growing number of social services and program or to reduce cost of administration.

Aside from administrative resettlement, aboriginals have also made way for other national development policies, including hydroelectric projects. Resettlement induced by hydro dams began during Second World War, when demand for hydro electricity had largely increased. Those dams flooded aboriginal lands and fundamentally changed or destroyed the people's economy in the affected area. The scale of resettlement in terms of affected population in Canada, however, can't be remotely comparable to those in China. Normally, the number of resettled population in China for a single project would at least involve tens of thousands of people. However, as one of the least densely populated countries, in Canada, a number of around a thousand people would be considered to be a large-scale resettlement project. Thus, in Canada, it's hard or even impossible to find a project that would relocate as many people as that in China. One has to admit that the scale of resettlement program does place some weight on the practices and outcomes of the resettlement program. But the point of this paper is not so much around the number of people affected in hydroelectric projects, but around the series of political practices and approaches of the resettlement process. For example, in 1950s, Alcan's Kemano hydroproject led to the relocation of approximately 200 people who had been living in the flooded area for centuries (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). In Manitoba, the Churchill-Nelson project led to the

relocation of 450 persons and the Grand Rapids project displaced about 1250 people (Martin, 1998; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). This resettlement has nevertheless been discussed and served as past experience for future practices. However, the small number of people affected doesn't make the issue any less significant.

Past practices concerning the resettlement of aboriginals were considered to lack consultation, although there were certain levels of negotiation before relocation plans were implemented. The decision making was dominated by the government. Abuses of authority and power are other problems that have been broadly criticized. Besides, coercion was also a characteristic in early population transfer activities. They were considered inhumane and were against the international human rights norms, especially those before 1978, when Canadian Human Rights Commission updated specific terms with respect to relocation (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). Unsurprisingly, findings of impacts of past resettlement suggested that affected communities became less self-sufficient economically and their social fabric was severely destructed (Coffee 1992; Foley & Hamm, 1992; Martin & Hoffman, 2008; Wertman, 1983). Before resettlement, aboriginals seldom needed financial assistance from the government. However, after resettlement most of them need assistance from government, which caused them to live on welfare. The overall impacts of resettlement on aboriginals include declining health, reduced economic opportunities, increased dependence on government and cultural disintegration (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996).

## **A Case study of Hydroelectric Projects-induced Resettlement among James Bay Cree**

### **Introduction of James Bay Hydroelectric projects and Cree Bands**

In 1972, the Province of Quebec and Hydro Quebec first announced their intention to initiate the James Bay Hydroelectric development project (Wertman, 1983). Since then, the indigenous people of the area, the James Bay Cree and the northern Quebec Inuit, began an involvement in a complex negotiating process. The James Bay hydro project is large and multi-faceted. Located in northern Quebec about 1,000 km north of Montreal, the southern end of Hudson Bay in eastern Canada, bordering the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, the first part of the hydro development (called La Grande Complex, Phase I) consists of five large and shallow reservoirs (LG2, LG3, LG4, Opinaca, Caniapiscau) and three power generating stations (Ma, Hipel, & De, 2005). Two of the reservoirs serve the purpose of diverting waters from two additional watersheds into the La Grande River. In 1985, Phase I of the project was completed. The first phase of the La Grande project resulted in three power stations being constructed that are capable of generating 10 282 MW of power at a cost of CAN\$13.8 billion (Coffee, 1992; Foley & Hamm, 1992). Phase II of La Grande Complex, which serves to tap some of the remaining potential along the La Grande, has been under construction since about 1987 by Hydro- Québec. In total, eight generating stations were constructed in the two phases which produced more than half of Québec's hydroelectric power. The plan also included the construction of five more power plants with an installed capacity of 3516 MW (Ma, et al, 2005). The entire James Bay project includes the La Grande project (James Bay I), the Great Whale project (James Bay II) and the NBR project (project on the Nottaway, Broadback, and Rupert rivers). For the Québec government, constructing such massive scale of hydroelectric project is economic-driven. Specifically, the hydroelectric project would create tens of thousands of jobs and

create a new trade base for Québec in having surplus power for export. However, more and more groups and individuals are against further development in this area due to its adverse environmental impacts and devastating destruction to the Cree communities it would bring. And the massive government-sponsored hydroelectric development led to great and intense conflict between the Cree Bands (Cree and Inuit Indian tribes) and Canadian Government, Hydro-Qubec and other NGO groups, which will be discussed in detail later in this section.

The James Bay Cree region lies to the east and southeast of James Bay. [The Eastern] Cree have lived there since the glaciers left about 9,000 years ago (Foggin & Foggin, 2008). It is the home to Cree and Inuit. At the time of announcing the initiative of constructing number of dams and power stations, there were eight different communities within the James Bay Crees, who have lived on their lands and formed their unique way of living for generations. The construction of the massive hydroelectric project was likely to flood as much as 8800 square kilometers of land, which was a part of the territory upon which they engaged in their traditional pursuits of hunting, fishing, and trapping-in short, their subsistence base (Wertman, 1983). The projects have or will cause either flooding or serious erosion of the land on which several communities are situated requiring the relocation of these communities. Since the Crees and Inuit are dependent on fish for living and employment, the exploiting of their communities would bring radical negative impact on their traditional way of life. Consequently, the controversies around the construction of series of hydroelectric projects include the effect on the Aboriginal population and the environment. This paper will specifically focus on the effect on the Aboriginal population with respect to the resettlement issue.

### **Resettlement Program**

The resettlement issue of James Bay Crees induced by the construction of



massive hydroelectric projects is one of the issues among all of the negotiation issues between James Bay Crees and the Canadian government over the last three decades when the construction of hydro dams took place. The James Bay Cree have been struggling to cope with major dislocations of their traditional hunting and trapping areas over the past 30 years (Foggin & Foggin, 2008). The number of Aboriginals affected is estimated to be a few thousands of people. But there's no exact figure as to the exact number of people being resettled. Among all the relocation programs, the most typical one is the Fort George Relocation (Cree Nation of Chisasibi, 2006). It is one of the village, called Fort George, with a population of 2373, at the mouth of La Grande Rivière was uprooted and relocated upstream during the first phase of construction, with over 200 houses being physically moved. Since the purpose of this paper is to compare the practices and approaches that China and Canada each pursue with respect to similar issues from a political lens and there's no exact number of affected population recorded to my best knowledge (even if they do, as aforementioned, the scale of affected population in Canada can't be comparable to those in China), thus, the main emphasis will be around how they reached the resettlement decision and how this issue was dealt with on the Canadian part of this paper.

### **Political Principles, Standards and Approaches of Resettlement**

In Canada, issues relating to Aboriginals are usually handled by signing treaties and agreements between Aboriginal communities and the provincial and federal governments after negotiation. Concerning involuntary resettlement issues, through agreement, aboriginal people gained monetary compensation as well as land, although some groups gained more money and land than others. Usually those parties sign agreements that list all the aspects and provisions such as: compensation packages, mechanism for internalization of the socio-economic and environmental costs associated

with large-scale projects, comprehensive community planning and etc. of the planned hydroelectric projects (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). Therefore, the resettlement issue in Canada is closely related to the negotiation process and outcomes between the Crees and the federal and provincial government. The resettlement program is more of a result from the debate and negotiation between Crees and the Canadian government. Consequently, the outcomes of negotiations result partly from the negotiation skills the involved parties possess. Obviously, the approach of handling this issue is quite different from those in China. During the construction of hydroelectric projects in James Bay, the Fort George Relocation Corporation was formed to handle the relocation and the construction of the present town site through negotiations between the Crees and the Quebec Government over the James Bay Power Project (Cree Nation of Chisasibi, 2006). Early in the negotiations the Cree formed their own political association, the Grand Council of the Cree (of Quebec) (GCCQ), with the chief and another leader from each community on its Board of Directors, and an executive group of four regional leaders. The Grand Council took over organization of the negotiations. However, the Cree people remained the final decision-makers as to whether to accept the results of the negotiation (Feit, 1995). One of the most significant agreements that has been signed between the Crees and Canadian government during this period is doubtless the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). This agreement was signed on November 11, 1975 by the Cree and Inuit peoples of Quebec, the James Bay Development Corporation, the James Bay Energy Corporation and Hydro Quebec (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2002). JBNQA was the first comprehensive land claim agreement signed in modern times by Canada and Aboriginal people. In terms of compensation, the Cree and the Inuit received a total amount of \$225 million under the JBNQA (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2002).

Furthermore, according to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996), the principles and criteria to relocate in Canada include:

1. the requirement for government to obtain appropriate authority before proceeding with relocation;
2. the need for the relocatees to give their informed consent to the relocation;
3. the care and skill with which the relocation is planned, carried out and supervised;
4. the promises made and whether they are kept; and
5. the humaneness of the relocation.

Those principles reflect respect and democracy towards the relocatees rather than strong political flavor in an effort to reduce the arbitrary exercise of power by governments. At the same time, Canada has made great efforts to match the international standards for involuntary resettlement based on human rights of all persons. The minimum standards, which are consistent with the criteria aforementioned, for involuntary resettlement are (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012):

1. Governments must obtain and follow appropriate authority before proceeding with relocation.
2. The people who are to be moved must give their free and informed consent to the move and should be participants in decision making concerning the relocation.
3. The relocation must be well planned and implemented and should include

consultation and planning with the host community.

4. Promises made concerning the relocation should be kept and supported by adequate resources. In this regard, compensation should be adequate and persons relocated should have ample opportunity to maintain or improve their standard of living in the new location.

5. The relocation must be carried out in a humane manner, respecting the rights of persons in keeping with Canada's international commitments and obligations. In this regard, persons who are to be relocated should have the opportunity to settle as a group in one receiving community.

6. Government actions must conform with the government's fiduciary obligations to Aboriginal peoples.

### **Political Factors that influence the Resettlement Process**

As one of the issues aboriginals fight against the Canadian Government in the construction of hydroelectric project, Canada's resettlement process has its special characteristics due to its unique political system and historical legacy. In order to make it more comparable so that China can learn some experience from Canada's side, the political factors concluded here mainly include the central-local governmental relationship, the land ownership system and the autonomy of Aboriginals.

First of all, in Canada, the scope of different levels of government responsible for different issues is very clear. The issues of Aboriginals fall under the jurisdiction of federal government. Some element of local government may also be involved but is only limited to provide local services after the agreement is reached between Aboriginals and the government. Therefore, to deal with involuntary resettlement of Aboriginals is

actually about the relationship between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.

Second, the land, in other words, the property, is usually privately owned in Canada. However, when it comes to Aboriginal reserves, the land ownership is actually quite similar to that in China because the land is owned by the community as a whole. However, this kind of ownership is the reason that when the government expropriates the land from the Crees, the compensation is extremely large, compared to those in developing countries because compensation usually covers a wide range of social services as well as the compensation for land loss. They also have the option to negotiate the unsettled land rights with the government of Canada. By the time the James Bay Hydroelectric project was proposed, the Government of Quebec retained the ownership of the land and had the right to reclaim any part of it. The Government of Quebec could develop it with the permission of the federal government (Richardson, 1976). As the continuous fighting against the development projects on their lands went on, Crees gradually made progress and Canada first established policies on Aboriginal claims in 1973, along with processes and funding for resolving these claims through negotiation. It is important to note that these are optional processes that provide Aboriginal groups with an alternative to going to court to resolve their claims (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012).

Thirdly, a high level of autonomy was seen during the fighting with Canadian government in an attempt to resist undesirable development within their communities. The negotiation process is considered a history of fighting for the level of self-governance. Aboriginals have the right or choice to go to a court to fight against the notion of development within their communities. In the fall of 1972, the native people (Quebec Association of Indians) applied to the Quebec Superior Court for an injunction to stop all construction in the James. A series of negotiations went on since. Those

negotiations minimize the resettlement scale in some sense.

### **Achievements and major problems**

The relocation in James Bay Hydroelectric project is usually considered to be a well organized one that set a good example for other countries in this matter. However, two major problems need to be addressed here. The first is the imbalance of power between relocatees and the Canadian government. During the construction of the hydroelectric projects, officials of federal and provincial governments, often proceeding in collaboration with non-governmental interests such as the Hudson's Bay Company, decided that people should move and pressured them to do so, especially in the early stage. Mostly governments and developers see themselves as having interests contrary to those of the Aboriginal peoples. The tension between Crees and the governments cannot be mitigated as long as the context of power imbalances, hostility and contention doesn't change.

Another controversy is the cultural dimension. Although the Cree Indians agreed to a multimillion-dollar compensation settlement, some people inside and outside the Indian community claim that the agreement led to a loss of the Indian cultural identity. People's bonds with each other and their lives in general have been affected such that they have been forced to change their way of living that they have been leading for generations. In the name of civilization, modernization and development, Aboriginals were assimilated by explorers from Europe. The community and social ties loosened. And they found it hard to keep their traditions, values and culture ever since the dam was built in their territory. The younger generation no longer has as strong emotional attachment to their lands as their grandparents do. They don't know the language well. They have not acquired good trapping skills. They gradually lost their identity. Their traditional ways of life were compromised or forever removed as seen by aboriginals

(Martin & Hoffman, 2008; Waldram, 1987). The relocation of Aboriginal people is as an on-going, necessary, and functional step in the continuing process of colonialism that had begun over a century ago. The Van Ginkel Association report asserted that “the ultimate solution for every Indian in North America will be to become a member of our technocratic society and whether this society is perfect or not is irrelevant. There is simply no choice but to take part in that society, if the individual is to achieve full status.” As for those displaced by James Bay project (Gutman, 1994), they either ended up acknowledging the economic and social benefits stemming from a closer integration into national societies or living on government welfare.

The implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was also criticized. Many provisions in the agreement are vague, ambiguous and open to differing interpretations. Besides, the Crees and Inuit both claimed that after the Agreement was signed, governments began to eliminate or reduce services that they were entitled to in housing, infrastructure, health and education (Richardson, 1976). The economic development in the communities was also considered to be a failure although the objective of the Agreement was to develop these areas.

However, from the standpoint of resettlement practices and approaches, the achievements outweigh the drawbacks in the experience of James Bay Hydroelectric project. The most significant achievement is the establishment of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, which covers lands claims, environmental and social protection, economic development, education, hunting, fishing and trapping. The Cree did benefit from this Agreement. It serves as an important framework for the Canadian government to deal with issues related to the Natives and for other countries dealing with similar issues. 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. It sets a good example for other countries in addressing this issue.

## **Conclusion**

As one of the main reasons that caused population transfers, hydroelectric projects-induced resettlement have always drawn the attention of academics. Like other development resettlements, hydro dams were considered to serve the public interest in exchange for sacrificing the rights and interests of certain groups of people to make way for infrastructure construction under the name of development, modernization and industrialization. Large dams, such as the Three Georges Dam in China and the James Bay Hydroelectric projects are both such examples. The impact of those dam-induced resettlement can be profound and long-lasting, usually criticized by anthropologists and environmentalists. Most of the controversies are around the inhuman element, the adverse social and environmental impact, economic loss and psychological stress to relocatees. This paper examines two different cases in China and Canada and attempts to compare the approaches and practices in two different systems and explore what China can learn from Canada.

Although China and Canada have totally different legal systems, political systems and cultural legacies, we still found some similarities with respect to involuntary resettlement.

Both the peasants and Aboriginals uprooted by the construction of dams are land-based groups who rely heavily on their land as a way of living. Their ties to their lands are tight both in economic and emotional terms. The issues relating peasants and Aboriginals in each country are long and ingrained problems for each country. For a long time, they were both considered to be poor and incapable of making their own decisions.



Thus, each group has been marginalized in the process. Both groups had suffered from economic loss and were worse off after resettlement. The Cree Nation, one of the First Nations, wanted to escape the cycle of dependency and poverty just like their counterparts in China do.

The organized resettlement practices in both countries are relatively short, although the history of dam construction is relatively long. In China, its comprehensive resettlement practice started in the 1990s. In Canada, the history of Aboriginal resettlement has also been severely criticized by academics (Hoffman & Martin, 2008; Richardson, 1976). Richardson (1976) claimed that “strangers” devour the Aboriginal land with the purpose of economic development in the affected areas. The Cree culture has been destroyed because “white people” weren’t showing respect to their culture. Prior to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, Aboriginal reserves had been constantly invaded by outsiders because the government had only focused on capital-intensive, resource-extractive industries as a way of development.

Clearly, the general democratic or authoritarian character of the state would set a 'climate' for such a controversial issue. The differences between the two countries are worth more attention. Firstly, although both groups are tied to their lands, issues of cultural identity are more connected to the land for the Aboriginals of northern Quebec than for the peasants of the Three Gorges Dam in China. Thus the historical and cultural legacy has been given more attention in Canada. When I get further into the literature around issues of relationship between First Nations and Canadian government, I somehow found that their problem is even tougher than the issue of China’s peasants. The identity as being Aboriginals and their “society” in Canada certainly has a larger impact on their lives especially when they have even tighter ties to their communities and less connections to the “outside” world. They are truly those who have lived where

they live generation after generation. Peasants in remote and backward regions of China, however, have always been referred to as one of the “inferior groups”. They have less social resources that they can take advantage of in order to protect their own interest. They are normally less educated. What separates them from aboriginals is that they fight to change their social and economic status. Nobody wants to be poor and belittled peasants who suffer from generational poverty. Another point is the conflict of interest between pro-development party and the against-development party. In China, the interests of peasants are compromised for the sake of development. In Canada, the governments and developers also tried to persuade Aboriginals to exploit their reserves. More often than not, the conflicts occur between Aboriginals and the governments and developers.

Another significant difference is that Aboriginals absolutely have more power and rights in Canada than peasants do in China. In China, the government tells the peasants what to do, although they claim peasants will benefit from their actions and it's for their good to do what they have been told to do. Whereas in Canada, Aboriginals can use legal tools to fight against the undesirable developments sponsored by Canadian government. They can negotiate or just go to court in an attempt to halt the development projects. In the James Bay Hydroelectric project, the Cree people called for federal intervention to stop Hydro-Quebec from exploiting their lands (Richardson, 1976). One way or the other, they acquire more power and rights to protect their interests. More often than not, they did succeed to some extent to protect their own communities. What's more, aboriginals have their own group that represents their interests in negotiating with the federal government, which is more experienced and sophisticated at the negotiation table. The form of negotiation is no doubt more just and fair. Through negotiations, both parties can reach agreement on specific terms, such as compensation

package, future development, etc. Negotiations can be considered as a form of participation in the decision making process of such issues and a way of expressing its needs and wants. Whereas in China, no such thing exists. The only participation they have been involved in the resettlement process is some meetings held by local government informing them the benefits they would gain from the project.

Both countries have taken totally different approaches in addressing this problem. In Canada, groups can file claim in courts if they oppose the proposal of dam construction on their lands. And they have their own organization, such as Grand Council of the Cree to fight against the government. In China, people don't really have such choice until the "Xinfang", a complaint system, was being used to monitor the practices of government mentioned earlier. As addressed earlier, economic development and modernization are the priorities of the state. Some people have to make way for those development projects for public good. Above all, for Chinese peasants, it's almost impossible to pursue such an approach to protect their own interests. They don't have an group to represent their interests and negotiate with government. They have to accept what would come to them. They are less vocal. They mostly fight individually. They are on their own. And they are powerless.

The land ownership system also plays a role to the outcomes of the compensation package. In China, land is collectively owned in rural areas and peasants only have the right to use the land not own it. In Canada, Aboriginal lands are also owned by the communities instead of owned by individual people. However, most Chinese peasants ended up receiving thousands of dollars while the Crees received tens of millions dollars as a result of resettlement. A major reason is because the compensation that Crees received is a whole package that covers not only the compensation for the loss of land, but also the overall development of the area, such as education, economic development, etc.

The authority of government in China is less questioned than that in Canada. The approval of dam construction and resettlement decision takes much longer time than it does in China. Besides, the sources of funding are also different. In China, the main funding source for dams is from the central government; while in Canada, there are several sources for dam construction, including federal, provincial, in early days, local government all grant money for damming.

The central-local governmental relationship also plays a role. In Canada, the relationship tends to be less hierarchical. In China, as discussed earlier, government is hierarchical but the power is devolved. Regulations come down from the central government and local governments are responsible for the implementation. This may lead to the loose implementation and great autonomy of local government, which is one of reasons of corruption and lack of accountability. However, in Canada, there is a much more clear boundary as to what issues fall under the jurisdiction of federal/ provincial government or local government. This makes a big difference in the accountability structure and the outcomes of implementation. Clear accountability structures facilitate the responsible and strict implementation of regulations and agreements.

From Canada's experience, we can learn that the balance of power and the allocation of social and economic resources are important for a just society and in any issues that involve conflicts of interest. The Chinese government, especially the central government, should learn to empower its citizens rather than control them and centralize resources and power, especially if it wants to build a harmonious society. Transparency and accountability and efficiency quality of service delivery can never be stressed enough in governmental practice. Defining priorities of the served communities is also crucial. Citizen participation and efficient mechanisms for communication, instead of just providing information, should be required for the Chinese government. The peasants, on

the hand, should learn to acquire some kind of political skills which will enable them to represent their own interests themselves in the future.

Involuntary resettlement remains a tough issue for human being. But some suggestions that help make the process less inhumane and more justifiable include equality, adequate compensation, respect, and implementation of the terms of the agreement. No matter what measures or approaches have been taken or will be taken, the goal should be to assist peasants and first nations for a more just and promising future. Both the outcomes should reflect some aspect of protecting and respecting human rights, their traditions and the land where they used to live as well as to improve their quality of life and build harmonious relationship among the different parties. One ideal situation is to maintain their traditions as much as possible and develop new approaches for development, although it seems impossible to both maintain their old ways of living and develop those projects that would be beneficial for the society economically. But one thing for sure is that, if neither side is to compromise, the less powerful side is going to lose and the whole society is also going to pay for it.

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