The Contentious Politics of Resettlement Programs: Evidence from Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

Isabelle Côté *Memorial University of Newfoundland*
Yolande Pottie-Sherman *Memorial University of Newfoundland*

Abstract. Labelling resettlement programs as voluntary suggests that they cause little contention and are devoid of coercion. But is this representation accurate? Drawing on unpublished government documents and media reports, we provide a detailed case study of the Community Relocation Policy (CRP) of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) from 2009 to the present. We show that CRP has been fraught with contention due to the nature of the voting process and the slow and uncertain nature of the community-oriented consultative process. This article highlights the way in which coercion has emerged from the very communities considering resettlement, in addition to any coercion that might come from government officials.

Résumé

Le fait que les programmes de réinstallation soient étiquetés comme volontaires laisse entendre qu'ils suscitent peu d'opposition et qu'ils n'impliquent aucune contrainte. Mais cette représentation est-elle exacte ? S'appuyant sur des documents gouvernementaux inédits et de comptes rendus médiatiques, nous fournissons une étude de cas détaillée de la *Community Relocation Policy (CRP)* instaurée dans la province de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (T.-N.-L.), de 2009 à aujourd'hui. Nous montrons que la CRP a été très controversée en raison de la nature du processus de vote, conjuguée à la lenteur et au caractère incertain du processus consultatif axé sur la communauté. Cette étude souligne que la coercition a émergé des communautés mêmes

qui envisagent de se réinstaller, en plus d'émerger de leurs interactions avec les représentants du gouvernement.

Keywords: contentious politics, resettlement, coercion, Canada, Newfoundland, Labrador

Isabelle Côté, Department of Political Science, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B 3X9, email: icote@mun.ca

Yolande Pottie-Sherman, Department of Geography, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B 3X9, email: ypottiesherm@mun.ca

Introduction: Uprooting People

The practice of resettling people, uprooting them from their homes and homelands, has deep-seated social, economic and political implications. A large body of literature has examined the contentious politics surrounding the coerced resettlement schemes operating in many nondemocratic and democratizing states of the Global South (Wilmsen and Webber, 2017; Martin, 2001). Bringing together three familiar features of social life—contention, collective action and politics—contentious politics encompass wide-ranging strategies of both lethal and nonlethal group resistance, including less sustained forms of contention, such as strikes and riots, and more extensive ones, such as civil wars and episodes of democratization (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007: 4). But authoritarian states are not the only regime type that engages in demographic engineering. Canada (Withers, 2016) and the United States (Maldonado et al., 2013) have also

implemented resettlement schemes, and studies suggest that they will continue to do so in the foreseeable future due to economic and ecological pressures (see, for example, Hamilton et al., 2016). Notwithstanding the upsurge of media and government attention to large migration flows, there have been few efforts to theorize the contentious politics of population resettlement programs involving the so-called voluntary relocation of internal or domestic migrants.[1] Are "voluntary" community resettlement programs contention-free? What sources of coercion are present and how do they operate in situations where resettlement is community-driven?

This article contributes to the literature on population resettlement, contentious politics and coercion by providing an in-depth analysis of the Community Relocation Policy (CRP) of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) from 2009 to present.[2] The CRP represents a crucial case for the study of coercion in resettlement since in an effort to avoid critiques of heavy-handedness that plagued previous resettlement schemes,[3] the government now requires all communities interested in obtaining relocation assistance to pass through a four-stage process ending with a community vote, and it also provides generous financial assistance to cover the costs of relocation. If a resettlement program were to be genuinely contention- and coercion-free, the CRP should be it.

We first review the literature on resettlement and contentious politics before summarizing our methodological approach. We then provide an in-depth assessment of the latest resettlement program in NL, identifying the conditions fostering contention between the three primary stakeholders involved: the individuals/families resettled, the host communities where people resettled and the government officials participating in the process. Our media analysis shows that the CRP has been fraught with (nonlethal) contention, despite being community-initiated and community-driven. Delving into this puzzle, we show that a growing source of contention within

the CRP is the indirect coercive pressure emerging from within the very communities seeking resettlement. We pinpoint two new sources of coercion: the small group of people "holding hostage" the rest of the population wishing to relocate (that is, coercion by the minority) and those exercising pressure on the few undecided voters (that is, coercion by the majority). We conclude with a discussion of the policy implications of resettlement programs for NL and rural communities in the Western world.

Resettlement Programs and Contentious Politics

The broad field of resettlement studies focuses on planned population movements and takes stock of the causes and consequences of resettlement, as well as the structure, actors and policies involved. According to Vanclay's (2017: 6) definition, resettlement involves "the comprehensive process of planning for and implementing the relocation of people, households, and communities from one place to another for some specific reason, together with all associated activities." In other words, resettlement is a process that begins before and continues long after communities or individuals move. It is distinct from other forms of ad hoc relocation because it involves relatively permanent, organized movement by an entire community (King, 2017).

Resettlement schemes are common practices in several nondemocratic or democratizing states of the Global South (Kassymbekova, 2011; Xue et al., 2013; Tirtosudarmo, 2001; Martin, 2001; Baird and Shoemaker, 2007). Authoritarian states—with their extensive reliance on coercion (that is, on the compelling of individuals to obey by threatening their lives or livelihoods), limited room for debate, control over the media and access to extensive financial and material resources—are particularly well positioned to organize population movements (Côté, 2014). This is not to say that other political regimes have shied away from relying on population resettlement to promote their respective agendas. In India, over 60 million people

have been involuntary displaced for various development projects since the country's

independence (CSD, 2008). Established Western democracies have likewise adopted

resettlement schemes—for example, Canada's controversial Inuit Resettlement Project relocated

Inuit families to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord in the 1950s so that Canada could claim

sovereignty in the High Artic (Grant, 2016).

While a country's political regime and institutions affect the parameters of resettlement

(such as the organization of resettlement or the rapidity of implementation), they also affect its

political impacts, shaping how groups respond to resettlement and making resettlement more or

less contentious (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007; Ramos and Rodgers, 2015). In particular, a major

debate within the scholarship on resettlement concerns the role that coercion plays in fostering

contentious politics (see, for example, Wilmsen and Wang, 2015). What constitutes coercion is

not always clear, however, and dissatisfaction has grown in recent years over the conventional

categorization of migration and resettlement as either voluntary or forced. Even when

resettlement is voluntary, Lyall (2017) cautions that observers must not lose sight of the

potentially coercive practices by the state, nor should they ignore the legacies of oppression and

disenfranchisement that may have led to certain kinds of decision making. Along similar lines,

Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington's (2007: 2184) investigation of development-induced

resettlement in Cameroon revealed how prevalent coercive pressures are, even in cases where

people formally consented to, and were compensated for, relocation. As the authors conclude,

the current understanding of voluntary resettlement is missing the needed emphasis on informed,

prior and free consent, along with the option *not* to relocate (2007: 2194). Gebre's (2002: 270)

framework further expands on the voluntary/involuntary dichotomy by introducing two

additional categories of resettlement: compulsory-voluntary, where resettlement is deliberately

induced by outside agencies or government; and induced-voluntary, where people embrace relocation out of desperation. The latter draws parallels with Wilmsen and Wang's (2015: 617) "coercion by deprivation," where people may initially choose to stay behind and not participate in resettlement programs but are ultimately forced to relocate due to the long-term consequences of state-organized resettlement.

Together, these studies highlight the multiple forms that coerced resettlement may take, contributing to a more refined understanding of the full spectrum of resettlement practices. However, nearly all of them adopt a narrow understanding of coercion, focusing on state-exercised coercion to the exclusion of other sources of coercion. This is not entirely surprising since a majority of resettlement schemes are initiated, organized and funded by state actors, be they national government officials, as in Indonesia (Tirtosudarmo, 2001), or subnational government workers, as in NL or Quebec (see Loo, 2019). For this reason, the most common form of resettlement-induced contentious politics involves community members and state actors, where those carrying out resettlement policies and applying coercion—that is, government officials—are targeted by the population (to be) resettled. But state representatives are not all equally at risk of being targeted by contention. Oliver-Smith (1991) points out that ethnic differences between the ruling elites and the population to be relocated make resistance more likely. Conversely, ethnic differences between agents of resettlement and the host communities may turn migration into a contentious process if the receiving community sees mass resettlement as a tool to reduce their demographic and political power (Bookman, 2002). In this context, host communities may express their opposition to resettlement by clashing with incoming migrants, a dynamic best examined by Weiner (1978) in his work on "Sons of the Soil" conflicts.

Absent from this academic literature is a focus on the tensions and coercion emerging

within the communities considering resettlement. Despite their small size, such communities are far from homogenous, consisting of people of different socio-economic backgrounds, with access to varying levels of social and financial capital. Focusing solely on state coercive practices glosses over the fact that within-community power differentials and inequalities exist and that these may affect group relations and resettlement dynamics.

Approaching Resettlement in Newfoundland and Labrador

European populations first started settling in the territory currently encompassed by the province of NL in the sixteenth century; their reliance on fishing resources ultimately lead to the creation of 1,200 sparsely populated communities scattered over 29,000 kilometres of coastline. When NL joined Canadian Confederation in 1949, the highly dispersed population and economic dependence on small-scale fishing was blamed for the province's high unemployment, low levels of production, lack of technical advancement and difficulties in ensuring access to government services and health care facilities (Matthews, 1978). Resettling poor, isolated communities in NL was one tool in a broader set of postwar strategies that sought to modernize the fishery, centralize populations around "growth poles" and spread "social and material rights" to all Canadian citizens (Blake, 2015: 104; Loo, 2019).

There have been three distinct economic resettlement programs in NL's history (see Table 1). The province's Centralization Plan (1954–1965) saw the relocation of 115 communities as part of a broader set of socio-economic reforms introduced by Premier Joseph R. Smallwood (Matthews 1978: 89). The second program, the Newfoundland Fisheries Household Resettlement Program (FHRP) was a federal-provincial program, later called the Resettlement Scheme (1970–1977). In total, these two programs moved 20,614 people (or 4,094 households) (FHRP, n.d.) to 77 "growth centres" (Matthews, 1978: 98). In 2009, after three decades of

7

dormancy, the province introduced a third program: the Community Relocation Policy (CRP). While a substantial body of literature has focused on the first two programs—linking them to fisheries modernization (Wright, 2001), the evolution of Canadian federalism (Blake, 2015) and the political culture of postwar Canada (Loo, 2019)—the current wave of resettlement is still unexplored.

{Typesetter: Table 1 about here}

Recent research on the pre-1977 resettlement programs underscores that the state held far from complete control over the resettlement process. Some communities, such as Fogo Island and Harbour Deep (Withers, 2016), successfully resisted pressure to resettle, while others, such as Pushthrough, fought for their own resettlement (Blake, 2015). People and households used resettlement for their own advantage and often in ways that undermined the government's goals (Loo, 2019). Previous research has also documented the anger and contentious politics surrounding the first two resettlement periods, including in letters of correspondence to government agencies and local officials (Matthews, 1970). Withers (2016) illustrates the considerable tension between existing and new residents within communities such as Arnold's Cove that were designated as growth centres. Local and national media coverage played a role in magnifying these tensions (Withers, 2016).

Resettlement in NL was—and still is—closely intertwined with the fisheries. The collapse of northern cod stocks in the early 1990s shook NL's economy to its core, prompting a moratorium that put 35,000 fishers and plant workers out of work, inducing out-migration and decline across NL's coastal communities (Mather, 2013). Although resettlement was no longer actively pursued from 1978 to 2009, the economic downturn propelled some small and isolated

communities to quietly request—and obtain—government assistance to relocate, including Great Harbour Deep in 2002, Petites in 2003 and Big Brook in 2004. In 2009, the CRP formalized the process by which communities could potentially receive financial compensation for resettlement. Like the pre-1977 resettlement programs, the CRP has been the subject of substantial controversy. This article focuses on the community and community–state dynamics of this process, asking what the CRP reveals about the relationship between coercion and contentious politics in democratic resettlement decision and exploring what sources of coercion are present and how these source of coercion operate in situations such as the CRP, where resettlement is community-driven.

Methodology

To address these questions, we adopted a qualitative multisource approach, including analysis of media, publicly available policy documents and unpublished government documents. Mixed data collection has the benefit of minimizing selection bias (*what* is covered) and description bias (*how* information is covered) (Mügge, 2016).

Newspapers are important data sources because they provide an information record of human activity, from protests to rebellion, and enable historical and comparative analysis (Earl et al., 2004). We used news stories as a record of public debate on resettlement, which allowed us to make inferences about attitudes toward resettlement and about the political impact of resettlement programs. We analyzed 88 news articles covering population resettlement in NL from four news sources available on Factiva and/or LexisNexis (two electronic news databases) that best represent the regional and national information landscapes: the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Canada's national public broadcaster; the *Globe and Mail*, one of Canada's leading daily newspapers; the *Western Star*, a local newspaper based on NL's west coast; and the

Telegram, NL's major daily newspaper based in St. John's, the provincial capital. The media

analysis covered the period from 2009, when the CRP was first introduced, to December 2016.

Table 2 summarizes the frequency of relevant articles in the sample by newspaper.

{Typesetter: Table 2 about here}

After compiling the news stories, we manually applied a three-part coding scheme that

categorized excerpts according to three research objective–driven frames: government, economic

development and contentious politics. In the last, we included all excerpts associating

resettlement with violent and nonviolent resistance, such as coalition formation, boycotts,

building occupations, demonstrations, press statements, petitioning, letter writing to government

officials, and arguments among community members or between resettled populations and the

host communities (among others). Table 3 shows the code occurrence of contentious politics and

the populations involved, while Table 4 shows the main factors contributing to contentious

events.[4]

{Typesetter: Table 3 and Table 4 about here}

In an effort to triangulate and supplement the information obtained via our media

analysis, we examined unreleased and/or unpublished documents, which we gained access to

through three formal requests made under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy

Act (also known as ATIPP requests) to the NL government. The requests cover the period from

2009, when the CRP was first introduced, to December 2016. The final sample totals nearly 1100

pages: approximately half of this material consists of correspondence involving members of NL

communities who submitted expressions of interest in resettling to the provincial government,

who requested information on the cost/benefit analysis or who contacted government staff to express their opinion on resettlement; the other half consists of internal memos between government officials on issues related to resettlement.

A relatively new method for gathering qualitative data, ATIPP requests allow researchers to move beyond what is publicly available and access materials that government institutions may consider to be internal or even secret in nature (Turnbull, 2015). By getting at what Walby and Larsen (2011) call the "live archive"—the multitude of texts produced within governments on a daily basis—these documents provide detailed, dynamic insights into the tensions existing within and between communities and government officials, which otherwise are often beyond the reach of outsider researchers (Given, 2008).

Case Study: Resettlement and Contentious Politics in NL, 2009–

NL's Community Relocation Policy (CRP)

After a lull of nearly 30 years, the latest wave of policies actively supporting resettlement began in NL with the introduction of the 2009 CRP, resulting in the relocation of Grand Bruit in 2010. Socio-economic concerns motivated this new wave of government-assisted relocation: chronic unemployment in the fishery and an aging demographic, combined with the strain of providing government services to a far-flung population, made the government more receptive to community demands (CBC News, 2013). A civil servant working in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs noted that requests for relocation started coming "fast and furious" (ATIPP, 2013: 263) after the introduction of the second CRP in 2013, which nearly tripled the buyout package offered to families, from $100,000 to $270,000 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013).[5] The savings generated by the withdrawal of infrastructure, including power generation, regular ferry services and other essential utilities over a 20-year period, were expected to

compensate for the high immediate costs of the program.

The various CRP instalments (2009, 2013 and 2016) went to great lengths to emphasize the CRP's voluntary nature, stipulating that the Department of Municipal Affairs could only distribute information about relocation "provided it receives clear indication that it is responding to a community-initiated, community-driven request for relocation assistance" via a petition from community residents or a written request from a municipality (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013). To qualify for resettlement, communities need to go through four distinct stages: 1) an initial expression of interest demonstrating that at least 90 per cent of the permanent population supports relocation, 2) a residency status determination conducted by the Department of Municipal Affairs confirming voter eligibility, 3) a cost/benefit analysis indicating clear savings for the government over a 20-year period, and 4) a community vote confirming support from at least 90 per cent of the permanent population of the community considering resettlement.

These steps have proven so stringent that only the tiny community of William's Harbour has relocated since the implementation of the 2013 CRP (CBC News, 2017), making it difficult to claim that the NL government is today actively and forcefully promoting out-migration from small outport communities. Of the other six communities that formally applied for resettlement, three have been rejected at various stages of this process (Nipper's Harbour, McCallum and Gaultois), two are still waiting to find out their fate (Round Harbour and Snook's Arm) while Little Bay Islands will relocate as of December 31, 2019 (CBC News, 2019b) (see Table 5 for a full list of communities initiating resettlement process).

[Insert Table 5 about here]

The CRP and contentious politics

Unlike forced resettlement schemes in nondemocratic states that often result in violent clashes

between the main stakeholders, resettlement never took a bloody turn under the CRP. Our media

analysis reveals, however, that nonlethal contentious politics was prevalent, with 79 instances of

resettlement-associated contentious politics from 2009–2016 (see Table 3). Coercive pressures to

relocate (or not) were the main source of contention, followed by a lack of information and

concerns over the decision process (see Table 4). Thanks to the increases to the buyout package

over the years, the amount of financial compensation has rarely been the object of contention.

One exception, however, occurred during a brief period after the introduction of the 2013 CRP,

when communities resettled under older, less generous programs tried to retroactively obtain

financial compensation along the lines of the 2013 CRP.

Table 3 also highlights that most instances of contentious politics reported in our media

analysis (48 out of 79) pit communities against government officials or state actors, a finding in

line with the existing literature on resettlement and contention. It did not, however, reveal a

single instance of contentious politics pitting resettled communities against their potential host

communities. The comparatively modest scale of contemporary resettlement schemes in NL,

typically affecting communities of 100 permanent residents or less, may have played a role in

reducing the alleged demographic threat resettled families posed to the host communities (Pottie-

Sherman and Wilkes, 2017). Prior to their move, many of the soon-to-be-resettled people had

already established connections with their future host communities, visiting them for medical

appointments or shopping, for instance. These regular interactions meant that the migrants were

not unknown to the host community, as was often the case in earlier resettlement programs.[6]

Together with the fact that resettled individuals can now relocate wherever they wish—in NL or

elsewhere—these measures have dispersed migrants and made it easier for host communities to

absorb a more gradual population intake.

The 31 instances of contentious politics occurring within the communities considering resettlement were the most surprising result revealed by our analysis, especially given the silence of the literature on this dynamic. Digging deeper into the contentious politics in NL's voluntary resettlement programs, we examine three aspects of the CRP—the negotiation of voting rights, the challenges of community voting and the slow and uncertain nature of the consultation process—that capture how coercion operates between communities and government officials, as well as within the communities seeking resettlement. In doing so, we uncover an important paradox: that the very measures initially designed to ensure the voluntary nature of resettlement in democratic settings such as NL often generate, rather than deter, coercive pressure and contentious politics.

1) Negotiating voting rights

The 2009 CRP restricted voting to permanent residents only, defined as those residing in the community for at least 183 days in each of the two 12-month periods immediately preceding the town's relocation request (ATIPP, 2016a: 28). If the vote was positive, permanent residents would receive the full compensation package for the commercial and residential properties they were leaving behind. In contrast, seasonal residents were barred from voting on this issue and did not qualify for the full government buyout.

With such high stakes, deciding who had the right to vote became litigious. Since 2013, residents have filed 39 appeals in four separate relocation cases (ATIPP, 2016a: 1, 62). Given the size of most NL communities and the high threshold required for resettlement to proceed, a small adjustment to the number of eligible voters could have a major impact on the outcome. In the case of Little Bay Islands, a small fishing community off the northern coast that had seen the closing of its fish plant, the successful appeals of voting-aged permanent residents resulted in

eight additional people able to cast their vote in the first resettlement vote in 2015 (ATIPP, 2013: 10). Considering its close results, with 85 ballots in favour of resettlement and 10 against, the inclusion of a handful of votes may have been sufficient to sway the outcome.

Several residents from Little Bay Islands expressed concerns that the vote was an "unfair process" because it included nonpermanent residents who were absent from the community for nearly half a year (Barry, 2016). Seasonal, nonpermanent residents were equally irate about not having their voice heard and being barred from financial compensation from the government for their seasonal residence, should resettlement proceed. As one letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs from the Coalition to Save Little Bay Islands stated:

> We feel that if all homeowners/taxpayers do not have a say, they are being treated unfairly, as we are all taxpayers paying the same amount whether we live in the town full time or not as taxes are not adjusted for part time residents. (ATIPP, 2013: 183–84)

Another resident from Little Bay Islands addressed the Minister in a postcard, pleading: "This is my home. Please do not attempt to destroy it" (ATIPP, 2013: 176–77). Seasonal residents of other communities considering resettlement shared similar concerns. A letter sent to the same Minister by seasonal residents in the South Coast community of McCallum noted:

> We have invested a great deal of money into our home and my question to you and your department Mr. O'Brien is why? Why should we have to lose everything that we have worked so hard over the years because the majority rules and we have no other choice but to leave? (ATIPP, 2013: 318–20)

In response to these concerns, a 2016 review of the CRP changed the definition of permanent residents to require year-round residency, with appropriate exemptions for work, schooling and medical reasons. It is unclear if this amendment will resolve the eligibility problems raised earlier by both permanent and temporary residents. Indeed, when asked about

these changes, one part-time resident from Little Bay Islands stated: "I'm not impressed. They [government officials] are just trying to separate one taxpayer from another" (Cook, 2016).

2) Community voting: coercive pressures from the minority and the majority

In most instances of voluntary economic migration, the decision to relocate is an individual or household one. Even then, the decision to relocate is the result of a long and intricate reflection about the respective pros and cons. In contrast, when relocation takes place at the community level—for example, when nearly every inhabitant of a community must agree to relocate for the resettlement scheme to go ahead—household decisions are compounded by many additional circumstances, notably the need to decide the minimum threshold necessary for community relocation to take place.

The threshold for resettlement under the CRP has fluctuated between 90 and 95 per cent, which is significantly higher than the 50 per cent +1 vote usually required for a majority in democracies. Although meant to foster community-based decision making, the high threshold for resettlement ultimately gave tremendous power to a handful of people (sometimes as few as one or two individuals) who steadfastly refused to relocate, thereby "holding hostage" the rest of the community who may have preferred to move. A resident of George's Cove, a small community that failed to meet the threshold for resettlement, explained: "Quebec would have separated from Canada if they got 50-plus one per cent. If you have 70 or 80 per cent, they [the government] should let the people move who wants to move" (Hurley, 2013). This criticism raises the question whether government-assisted resettlement may, in fact, be counterproductive, to the degree that it encourages holdouts among households with the means to relocate but who prefer to wait for the government buyout package to do so. Were the financial incentives to disappear, such individuals would leave their community, thus allowing the government to stop ensuring

services. While this question is valid, a newspaper interview with the town clerk from Little Bay

Islands suggests that most people who had the means to relocate have already done so:

> I cannot believe that 10 people out of 95 are able to hold the other 85 of us
> hostage in this community, with the majority being seniors and the majority of
> them who worked in the fishery all their life and being seasonal workers, they
> don't have the income to back them up to move on their own. (*Telegram*, 2016)

The results of the 2015 relocation vote in Little Bay Islands, with 89.47 per cent of the

population in favour of resettlement, tested the strictness of government adherence to the

threshold and highlighted the highly controversial nature of a few decimal points. A former

mayor of Little Bay Islands cautioned: "It's not going to be a pleasant time in this community if

the number is not there" (that is, if the government did not round up the figure to the required 90

per cent) (CBC News, 2015). After a lengthy review of the rules, the province reaffirmed that

community relocation would only proceed if at least 90 per cent of all permanent residents in a

town agreed (Barry, 2016).

As expected, this decision was not well received in Little Bay Islands. When one resident

found out that the process of relocation would not proceed, he indicated his "unbelief and utter

disgust," claiming that residents of Little Bay Islands, after being part of this process for several

years, felt as if they had been "kicked in the gut while [they] were down" (ATIPP, 2016a: 57–

58). Another resident said: "My disappointment is not in the people of Little Bay Islands, my

disappointment is in the government" (Cook, 2016). The residents of Little Bay Islands

eventually mended their wounds and voted unanimously in favour of resettlement in February of

2019 (CBC News, 2019a), while the NL government recently approved 10 million dollars to

relocate the remaining 54 permanent residents(Power, 2019).This high threshold was adopted to

ensure that no one would be forced to move against their will. But requiring such a high degree

of consensus, where a handful of votes may suffice to prevent resettlement, damaged the unity of

small communities. Asked about the effect of resettlement talks in his town, a resident of

McCallum said: "There's a lot of animosity within the community and it's really hard to

communicate with people . . . they've created a lot of broken families, friends and divided the

community" (Howells, 2015). Part of the problem is that it is nearly impossible for people to

vote truly anonymously in small communities, where everyone knows one another:

> No one knows who voted for or who voted against because that was never
> released by government, but of course you live in the town and it's a small place
> and you hear people say "Well I hope this don't go through" or "I hope it do go
> through", so you do have ideas of which way they voted. . . . Everyone has their
> suspicions. (*Telegram*, 2016)

Alternatively, individuals who wanted to stay often experienced coercive group pressures

from the majority of the population. In these cases, employed permanent residents, often a small

segment of the population in aging communities dependent on fishing, resented being driven

from their homes by the unemployed or underemployed majority. As one employed resident of

Little Bay Islands explained in his personal communication to the Minister of Municipal Affairs,

not-so-subtle threats were made toward him and his family:

> We are being told by those wanting to leave, if we do not vote for the latest offer,
> this will not be a friendly neighbourhood. This program [resettlement] is already
> destroying our community and it will certainly destroy my life if I have to give up
> my job and move, but irreparable damage has already been done and for the
> safety and well-being of my family, I will have to go. (ATIPP, 2013: 174)

In an effort to accommodate those wishing to stay put, the 2009 CRP initially ensured

that the government would provide residual services (electricity, water, snow-clearing) to

residents choosing to remain in a relocated community. This provision was, however, cut in the

2016 revisions of the CRP.[7] Residents must now weigh their desire to stay in a community

without access to drinking water or electricity against saying goodbye to a place that has been their home for generations. The 31 permanent residents of Grand Bruit faced such a dilemma as they saw their school close, followed by the post office, and the end of ferry and power services in the summer of 2010 (Thomas, 2010). When communities have fewer and fewer services at their disposal, one can wonder about the way in which the subtle pressure on people to either move or do without amenities undermines the claim that these individuals are truly "choosing" to relocate.

3) Slow nature of consultation process

The above discussion also highlights another disputed dimension of resettlement in NL: the slow and uncertain nature of the current community-oriented consultative process. The four distinct steps of the process can easily drag on over several years, creating substantial uncertainty for those directly involved. In Little Bay Islands, over six years elapsed from the time the community initially expressed interest in participating in the CRP in April 2013 to their relocation on December 31st, 2019 (CBC News, 2019b). During these waiting times, communities considering resettlement are frozen. Months—and in some cases, years—of uncertainty drain small outport communities of their social vitality. Towns that are already struggling to prevent youth out-migration now face the seemingly insurmountable task of filling vacancies on a town council or maintaining a functioning fire department in the context of an aging population. Once these vital community services are lost, total abandonment is almost inevitable. Residents, fearing they will have to leave sooner or later, refuse to invest in the upkeep of either communal or private property, making it harder for them to sell their properties in the future were resettlement not to go ahead. A series of letters written by residents of Little Bay Islands to various government officials captured increasing frustration at the length of the

process and the negative impact it had on community morale and relations (ATIPP, 2016a: 65, 67). Little Bay Islands was not the only community in limbo. After a decisive 97 per cent vote in favour of resettlement in the spring of 2009, the community of Grand Bruit spent the summer wondering if the government would agree with its wishes. As the chair of the local service district explained:

> We've been on hold and everyone in the community has been worried about this all summer long. Some people have things they would want to do with their homes if they are going to be staying here for the next five years or more, but which can probably wait if they will only be using their homes as summer cottages. (Kean, 2009)

Conclusion

As this case study demonstrates, community-initiated and community-driven resettlement programs like CRP are also fraught with contention due to the nature of the voting process and the slow and uncertain nature of the community-oriented consultative process. Measures that were meant to democratize resettlement and give agency to those most affected by it—that is, voting rights for permanent residents only, a community vote, the high minimum threshold needed, the numerous occasions where public opinion is sought after and the generous financial compensation offered—have, in fact, generated insidious and indirect coercive pressures affecting people's decision to relocate or not to relocate.

The literature on large-scale resettlement had so far emphasized the coercive pressures government officials exert on individuals, stripping them of agency. While direct government pressures are largely absent from contemporary NL resettlement programs, indirect government coercion remains, in the form of delays and service disruption. Our examination of the CRP

showed, however, that state officials are not the only actors applying coercive pressures. Coercion may emerge from within the very communities considering resettlement, either from a small minority of the population wanting to stay (coercion by the minority) or from a larger number of people keen to reach the necessary threshold required for relocation (coercion by the majority)—two sources of coercion that were largely absent from previous studies on resettlement and contentious politics.

All communities, big and small, have their own power dynamics. Talks of resettlement can bring to the surface within-community power differentials, and these inequalities may manifest themselves in the form of coercive pressures. In this context, some people may be presented with the option to relocate and earn a living elsewhere or to stay put, but the most vulnerable or marginalized people (that is, elderly or unemployed) rarely are. Even in a democratic context such as NL, where households vote on and receive financial compensation for relocating, it is difficult to remove indirect coercion from the resettlement equation. While this case study does not necessarily delegitimize such policies, nor label them authoritarian or even illiberal practices (Glasius, 2018),[8] it does force scholars and policy makers to acknowledge the internal power dynamics at play even in so-called community-oriented programs like the CRP and to try to even out the playing field. It also provides a more nuanced understanding of the various sources of coercive pressures in democratic contexts and forces us to scrutinize the labelling of "voluntary" and "coerced" resettlement.

While acknowledging the particular historical, social and economic circumstances of NL, much can be gained by placing the CRP in conversation with other contemporary resettlement projects. Studies on resettlement politics would do well to investigate the many forms resettlement may take and the various roles played by state and nonstate actors. In Ireland, for

instance, urban underemployed households wishing to relocate to rural areas—and rural

communities wishing to make housing available to resettled families—may call on a grassroots

organization called Rural Resettlement Ireland to facilitate the process (Rosegrant, 2002). The

creation of a global resettlement typology that categorizes resettlement projects according to

their agendas (rural development, mitigating community isolation, coastal retreat), main actors

(government, NGO) and procedures (voting thresholds, individual or community-level

compensation) is a worthwhile project for future scholars, as it would help to shed further light

on the factors that mitigate the contentious politics surrounding resettlement. Given how many

rural communities throughout the Western world are faced with uneven economic growth,

declining demographics and climate change–induced hazards (Hamilton et al., 2016), the

ongoing resettlement processes in NL and Ireland offer contrasting policy templates worth closer

examination.

Notes

1 Although the term resettlement is often applied to the relocation of international migrants or refugee populations (for example, by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] program), we focus on the resettlement of internal migrants, while acknowledging that these movements often overlap (see Lyons and Ford, 2007).

2 While the latest NL program officially uses the name *relocation*, the scholarly literature on the topic tends to use *resettlement*. For this reason, we use the terms interchangeably.

3 NL has a long history of resettlement projects since it joined the Canadian Confederation, some of which involve Indigenous communities (Macdonald, 2002). The contentious aspects of earlier resettlement programs, briefly covered in this article, are elaborated at length elsewhere (see, for example, CBC, 2012; Withers, 2016; Loo, 2019).

4 One instance of contentious politics may be coded as having multiple contributing factors.

5 See Table 5 for a summary of NL communities that have applied for CRPs since 2009, including estimated permanent population, motives for relocation and latest status.

6 We thank one of our reviewers for pointing this out.

7 This may be explained by the fact that former resettled homes remain somewhat accessible. A clause in the CRP allows property owners who have received relocation assistance to retain title to their properties and access them as desired. However, people first need to obtain a permit to occupy properties in "vacated communities" as per the Evacuated Communities Act, 2016, and accessing and occupying properties in relocated communities is done so at the cost of/ risk of property owners (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2019).

8 According to Glasius (2018: 517), *authoritarian practices* are "patterns of action that sabotage accountability to people over whom a political actors exerts control, or their representatives, by means of secrecy, disinformation and disabling voice." In contrast, *illiberal practices* refer to "patterned and organized infringements of individual autonomy and dignity." They are primarily a human rights problem.

References

ATIPP (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act). 2013. Request addressed to

     Department of Municipal Affairs, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, May 30.

     "Any and all communications to and from the office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs

     relating to the closure or resettlement of any community within Newfoundland and

     Labrador for the period January 1, 2010 to April 10, 2013."

ATIPP (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act). 2016a. Request addressed to

     Department of Municipal Affairs, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador,

     December 12. "All documentation and calculations related to the Cost Benefit Analysis

     for the community relocation of Snooks Arm, McCallum, Round Harbour, Williams

     Harbour, Nippers Harbour, AND Grand Bruit."

ATIPP (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act). 2016b. Request addressed to

     Department of Municipal Affairs, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, February

     29. "All documentation and calculations related to the Cost Benefit Analysis for the

     community relocation of Little Bay Islands and the final report."

Baird, Ian G. and Bruce Shoemaker. 2007. "Unsettling Experiences: Internal Resettlement and

     International Aid Agencies in Laos." *Development and Change* **38** (5): 865–88.

Barry, Garrett. 2016. "NL Government Holds Line on 90% Threshold for Resettlement: Changes

     Coming to Relocation Policy in Newfoundland and Labrador." *CBC Newfoundland and*

     Labrador, November 29.

Blake, Raymond B. 2015. *Lions or Jellyfish: Newfoundland-Ottawa Relations since 1957*.

     Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bookman, Milica Z. 2002. *Ethnic Groups in Motion: Economic Competition and Migration in Multiethnic States*. Portland: Frank Cass.

CBC News. 2012. "Ceremony to Mark Forced Relocation of Inuit Village." *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, August 15. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/ceremony-to-mark-forced-relocation-of-inuit-village-1.1163442 [Last accessed November 7, 2019]

CBC News. 2013. "Resettlement Fund Given Huge Boost in Budget." *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, March 26. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/resettlement-fund-given-huge-boost-in-budget-1.1320188 [Last accessed November 7, 2019]

CBC News. 2015. "Fate of Little Bay Islands Unknown after Close Resettlement Vote." *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, November 12. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/little-bay-islands-close-resettlement-1.3315524 [Last accessed November 7, 2019]

CBC News. 2017. "William's Harbour Residents Agree to Relocate, Says Province." *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, August 15. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/williams-harbour-labrador-1.4248007 [Last accessed November 7, 2019]

CBC News. 2019a. "Little Bay Islands Votes Unanimously to Resettle." *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, February 14. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/little-bay-islands-unanimous-resettlement-vote-1.5019053 [Last accessed November 7, 2019]

CBC News. 2019b. "Little Bay Islands Residents to Relocate by Dec. 31st" *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, September 12. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-

labrador/little-bay-islands-relocation-agreement-1.5281048 [Last accessed November 7, 2019]

Cook, Julia. 2016. "Resident of Little Bay Islands 'Not Impressed' by Changes to Relocation Policy." *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, December 1.

Côté, Isabelle. 2014. "Internal Migration and the Politics of Place: A Comparative Analysis of China and Indonesia." *Asian Ethnicity* **15** (1): 111–29.

CSD (Council for Social Development). 2008. *Indian Social Development Report, 2008: Development and Displacement.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Earl, Jennifer, Andrew, Martin, John D. McCarthy and Sarah A. Soule. 2004. "The Use of Newspaper Data in the Study of Collective Action." *Annual Review of Sociology* **30**: 65–80.

Federal-Provincial Resettlement Program: Community Consolidation Program, First Resettlement Agreement (1965–1970) and Second Resettlement Agreement (1970–1975). n.d.

Gebre, Yntiso D. 2002. "Contextual Dimension of Migration Behaviors: The Ethiopian Resettlement in Light of Conceptual Constructs." *Journal of Refugee Studies* **15** (3): 265–82.

Given, Lisa M., ed. 2008. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Vols. 1 & 2). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Glasius, Marlies. 2018. "What Authoritarianism Is . . . and Is Not: A Practice Perspective." *International Affairs* **94** (3): 515–33.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. 2013. *Community Relocation Policy*. Department of Municipal Affairs.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. 2016. *Evacuated Communities Act*.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. 2019. *Community Relocation Policy, FAQ.* Department of Municipal Affairs.Grant, Shelagh D. 2016. *"Errors Exposed": Inuit Relocations to the High Arctic, 1953–1960.* Documents on Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security No. 8.

Hamilton, Lawrence C., Kei Saito, Phillip A. Loring, Richard B. Lammers and Henry P. Huntington. 2016. "Climigration? Population and Climate Change in Arctic Alaska." *Population and Environment* **38** (2): 115–33.

Howells, Laura. 2015. "Resettlement Policy Needs Reform: McCallum Resident." *CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, June 8.

Hurley, Cory. 2013. "Everybody in George's Cove Wants to Resettle: A Survey." *Western Star,* May 24.

Kassymbekova, Botakoz. 2011. "Humans as Territory: Forced Resettlement and the Making of Soviet Tajikistan, 1920–38." *Central Asian Survey* **30** (3-4): 349–70.

Kean, Gary. 2009. "Decision Time: Residents Offered up to $100,000 to Relocate." *Western Star*, September 24.

King, Madaline. 2017. "A Tribe Faces Rising Tides: The Resettlement of Isle de Jean Charles." 6 *LSU J. Energy L. & Resources* 295.

Loo, Tina. 2019. *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Lyall, Angus. 2017. "Voluntary Resettlement in Land Grab Contexts: Examining Consent on the Ecuadorian Oil Frontier." *Urban Geography* **38** (7): 958–73.

Lyons, Lenore T. and Michelle Ford. 2007. "Where Internal and International Migration

    Intersect: Mobility and the Formation of Multi-Ethnic Communities in the Riau Islands

    Transit Zone." *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* **9** (2): 236–63.

MacDonald, Michael. 2002. "Davis Inlet Exodus to Begin." *Globe and Mail*, December 9.

Maldonado, Julie K., Christine Shearer, Robin Bronen, Kristina Peterson and Heather Lazrus.

    2013. "The Impact of Climate Change on Tribal Communities in the US: Displacement,

    Relocation, and Human Rights." *Climatic Change* **120** (3): 601–14.

Martin, Terry. 2001. "Stalinist Forced Relocation Policies: Patterns, Causes, Consequences." In

    Demography and National Security, ed. Myron Weiner and Sharon S. Russell. New

    York: Berghahn Books.

Mather, Charlie. 2013. "From Cod to Shellfish and Back Again? The New Resource Geography

    and Newfoundland's Fish Economy." *Applied Geography* **45**: 402–9.

Matthews, Ralph D. 1970. "Communities in Transition: An Examination of Government

    Initiated Community Migration in Rural Newfoundland." Unpublished PhD thesis,

    University of Minnesota.

Matthews, Ralph D. 1978. "The Smallwood Legacy: The Development of Underdevelopment in

    Newfoundland 1949–1972." *Journal of Canadian Studies* **13** (4): 89–108.

Mügge, Liza M. 2016. "Bridging the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide in Comparative Migration

    Studies: Newspaper Data and Political Ethnography in Mixed Method Research."

    Comparative Migration Studies **4** (1): 1-17.

Oliver-Smith, Anthony. 1991. "Involuntary Resettlement, Resistance and Political

    Empowerment." *Journal of Refugee Studies* **4** (2): 132–49.

Pottie-Sherman, Yolande and Rima Wilkes. 2017. "Does Size Really Matter? On the

    Relationship between Immigrant Group Size and Anti-immigrant Prejudice."

    International Migration Review **51** (1): 218–50.

Power, Leigh Anne. 2019. "Little Bay Islands Gets $10M to Cover Resettlement Tab." *CBC*

    Newfoundland and Labrador, April 19.

Ramos, Howard and Kathleen Rodgers. 2015. *Protest and Politics: The Promise of Social*

    Movement Societies. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Rosegrant, Jane K. 2002. "Rural Resettlement Ireland: An Example of Assisted Counterstream

    Migration, Its Impact on Participants and Communities." PhD dissertation. University of

    Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Schmidt-Soltau, Kai and Dan Brockington. 2007. "Protected Areas and Resettlement: What

    Scope for Voluntary Relocation?" *World Development* **35** (12): 2182–202.

Telegram. 2016. "Q&A: One Resident's Thoughts on a Failed Bid to Resettle Newfoundland

    Community." January 27.

Thomas, Brodie. 2010. "Resettlement: Last Residents Leave Grand Bruit." *Telegram*, July 15.

Tilly, Charles and Sidney G. Tarrow. 2007. *Contentious Politics*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Tirtosudarmo, Riwanto. 2001. "Demography and Security: Transmigration Policy in Indonesia."

    In *Demography and National Security*, ed. Myron Weiner and Sharon S. Russell. New

    York: Berghahn Books.

Turnbull, Sarah. 2015. "Using Access to Information Requests to Gather Qualitative Data."

    University of Oxford, Faculty of Law, April 6. https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/centres–

    institutes/centre-criminology/blog/2015/04/using-access-information-requests-gather.

Vanclay, Frank. 2017. "Project-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: From Impoverishment Risks to an Opportunity for Development?" *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* **35** (1): 3-21.

Walby, Kevin and Mike Larsen. 2011. "Getting at the Live Archive: On Access to Information Research in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* **26** (3): 623–33

Weiner, Myron. 1978. *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wilmsen, Brooke and Michael Webber. 2017. "Mega Dams and Resistance: The Case of the Three Gorges Dam, China." In *Demanding Justice in the Global South: Claiming Rights*, ed. Jean Grugel, Jewellord Nem Singh, Lorenza Fontana and Anders Uhlin. Springer International.

Wilmsen, Brooke and Mark Wang. 2015. "Voluntary and Involuntary Resettlement in China: A False Dichotomy?" *Development in Practice* **25** (5): 612–27.

Withers, George. 2016. "Reconstituting Rural Communities and Economies: The Newfoundland Household Resettlement Program, 1965–1970." PhD dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Wright, Miriam C. 2001. *A Fishery for Modern Times: The State and the Industrialization of the Newfoundland Fishery, 1934–1968*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Xue, Longyi, Mark Y. Wang and Tao Xue. 2013. "'Voluntary' Poverty Alleviation Resettlement in China." *Development and Change* **44** (5): 1159–80.

Table 1
Phases of Population Resettlement in Newfoundland and Labrador and Key Characteristics

	Name	Years	Government unit involved	Average/ maximum amount per household	Conditions for relocation
Program 1 (1954–1965)	Provincial Centralization Plan	1953–1965	Provincial Ministry of Public Welfare	$300 (average), $600 (maximum)	100% adult-age members community sign petition
Program 2 (1965–1977)	Fisheries Household Resettlement Program	1965–1970	Provincial Department of Fisheries and Federal Department of Fisheries	$1,000 + $200 / adult member	90%, then 80% (after 1967) of householders sign petition
	Resettlement Scheme	1970–1977	Provincial Department of Community and Social Development and Federal Department of Regional Economic Expansion	$7,000	80% of householders sign petition
Program 3 (2009–)	Community Relocation Policy	2009–2013	Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs	$100,000 (maximum)	Costs and benefits analysis indicating savings over 20 years + 90% of permanent residents vote in favour
	Revised Community Relocation Policy	2013–2016	Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs	$270,000 (maximum)	(same as above)
	Revised Community Relocation Policy	2016–	Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs	$270,000 (maximum)	Cost/benefit analysis indicating savings over 10, 15 and 20 years + 90% of year-round residents voting in favour

Table 2

Number of Articles Covering NL Resettlement and News Source

News source	Number of relevant articles
Globe and Mail	5
Western Star	18
Telegram	37
CBC	28
Total *N*	88

Table 3

Code Occurrence of Contentious Politics during CRPs and Populations Involved

Resettlement period	Community vs. government	Within communities	Resettled vs. host communities	Total N
2009–2016	48	31	0	79

Table 4

Underlying Factors behind Contentious Events by Resettlement Periods

Resettlement periods	Lack info and resources	Inadequate financial compensation	Decision process	Coercive pressures	Total N
2009–2016	29	8	27	45	109

Table 5

Summary of NL Communities That Have Applied for CRP since 2009

	Year process initiated	Reasons for relocation request	Population	Status
Gaultois	2015	Isolation, declining population, general store closed	Approximately 130 (as of Oct. 2016)	Not relocated (insufficient interest)
Grand Bruit	2007	Declining population, unemployment, school closure due to lack of young people, closure of general store, post office, church	31 residents (as of 2009)	Relocated July 2010
Little Bay Islands	2011	Declining and aging population, fish plant closure	61 residents (as of 2016)	Waiting (approved since 2019, waiting for government approval)
McCallum	2014	Isolation (only accessible by air/ferry)	79 residents	Not relocated (insufficient interest)
Nipper's Harbour	2013	Isolation, aging population, aging infrastructure	46 residents	Not relocated (did not pass cost/benefit analysis)
Round Harbour	2010	Unidentified	2 permanent residents, 4	Waiting (approved since 2010, waiting

			commercial property owners	for government approval)
Snook's Arm	2013	Isolation, safety, difficulties in sustaining residents' lifestyle	10 residents (as of 2016)	Waiting (approved since 2015, waiting for government approval)
William's Harbour	2013	Declining population, no medical clinic, problems with water system	26 residents (as of 2015)	Relocated 2017