

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL IN INVOLUNTARY DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Social capital is often seen as a substitute for lack of other types of capital among poor people. Because of the recognized applicability of the social capital concept and its correlation with the different dimensions of poverty, it has been used in evaluating the adaptation and integration of involuntarily displaced individuals into their new environment. This paper presents insights based on a review of the findings of studies that looked into the role of social capital in conflict- and development-induced displacement contexts. Although both types of displacements are involuntary or forced in nature, they differ in terms of the role of social capital regarding its main sources, the formation pattern and its determinants. Social capital studies in forced resettlement appear to be relatively small in number and are heavily concentrated on first world countries and conflict- and development-induced displacements. The conduct of similar studies in developing countries and in a disaster-induced resettlement context, the third type of involuntary displacement, should generate new and relevant findings regarding the role of social capital in resettlement communities.

**Keywords:** Social capital, involuntary resettlement, forced resettlement

**JEL Classification:** Z13, R23

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The book of Putnam et al. (1993) entitled “Making Democracy Work” has undeniably popularized the investigation of communities under the social capital lens. In the study about Northern and Southern Italy, the authors succinctly illustrate with statistical analyses and a review of Italian historiography, how the density and scope of local civic associations, which could be historically explained and reflect existing social capital, were instrumental in the dissemination of information and building of social trust. The remarkable findings in “Making Democracy Work” have led to the conclusion that social capital is the ‘missing link’ that can explain the disparities found in development experiences from national down to community and household level. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) pointed to the potential of ties and networks and the resources attached to them in development processes.

Studies have linked social capital to poverty indicators such as income, livelihood, health, education, employment, and food security. Social capital is often seen as a substitute for lack of other types of capital among poor people. Because of the recognized applicability of the concept of social capital and its correlation with the different dimensions of poverty, it has been used in evaluating the adaptation and integration of involuntary displaced individuals into their new social worlds. Findings on involuntary displacement or forced migration have highlighted how its victims, called ‘refugees’, ‘asylum seekers’, ‘resettlers’, or ‘internally displaced people’, are being socially uprooted from their home (Xenos, 1993), how their social world has been disturbed (Marx, 1990), and how their stocks of social capital were disrupted ( Quetulio-Navarra, Niehof et al., 2014; Quetulio-Navarra, Niehof et al., 2012; Thompson, Bucerius et al., 2013)

The terms involuntary displacement, forced resettlement, involuntary resettlement, and forced migration, which tend to be used interchangeably, refer to forced population movement that takes places without the affected people’s consent and choice, often under conditions of impoverishment. The World Bank (2010) asserts that involuntary displacement occurs when the decision of moving is made and imposed by an external agent and when there is no possibility to stay. According to the circumstances leading to displacement three types of involuntary dis-

placement can be distinguished: development-induced displacement and resettlement, disaster-induced displacement and conflict-induced displacement (FMO, 2010; WB, 2010).

The aim of this article is to review studies that investigated the role of social capital studies in a context of involuntary resettlement and to reflect on the theoretical implications of their findings. Existing studies, however, have been heavily dichotomized into conflict-induced and development-induced displacements. Studies on disaster-induced relocation are difficult to find, which is why we did not include them in this review.

## **2. SOCIAL CAPITAL IN INVOLUNTARY DISPLACEMENT**

Authors of studies on social capital in forced migration, undertook their scientific investigations with the definitions set forth by Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam as their explicit guide. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 119) defined social capital as the “sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. Coleman (1994, p. 302) gives the following description of the concept: “social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure.” Putnam (1995) saw social capital as features of social organization such as networks, norms, trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation towards mutual benefit. Resources within the ambit of social capital are social resources that are derived from social connections and yield tangible benefits (Lin, 2001). Putnam (1995) asserts that social capital come in two forms: ‘bonding’ social capital or strong ties between socially proximate people, often related through friendship or kinship, and ‘bridging’ social capital or weak ties between people who belong to different social groups. Briggs (1998) views social capital as having two dimensions: the supportive social ties that aid people in ‘getting by’ or ‘survive’ and the leveraging ties that help individuals to ‘get ahead’ or ‘prosper’ in life.

Since social capital is a construct, it is measured by using proxy indicators, such as number of ties, known neighbours, friends, relatives, and so on, in order to determine the network size; quality and content of the ties, whether they are

'bonds' or 'bridges' and whether they help you to 'get by' or 'get ahead'; level of trust, shared norms, values; and social resources that an individual can draw from his or her ties and networks.

### **3. SOURCES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL**

#### **3.1 Ethnicity as default social capital for refugees and asylum seekers**

Common in conflict-related relocation communities is the presence of pre-existing networks that can be tapped by newcomers. In the resettlement process of Kurdish refugees in London, Wahlbeck (1998) considered the strong ethnicity-based formal organizations and informal networks within the community as crucial. The ethnicity-based cohesion among the Middle-Eastern refugees in Finland was responsible for the forging of 'ethnic entrepreneurship' in the new community, generating employment opportunities for the migrants and, at the same time, responding to their special needs, tastes and preferences that the mainstream business sector could not provide (Bun & Christie, 1995). The Vietnamese refugees in the United Kingdom also benefitted from ethnic associations in terms of access to health care and social services (Bertrand, 2000). Similarly, East-African Asian refugees turned to the pre-existing ethnic community for emotional, material and financial support (Robinson, 1993) and established Bosnian ethnic communities in New Zealand provided a source of support for newly-arrived Bosnian refugees (Madjar et al., 2000).

Secondary to ethnicity are the kinship ties of refugees and asylum seekers that are part of the ethnic network. The social networks of Laotian refugees in New Zealand functioned as a protection against their vulnerability derived from their low English-speaking ability (Smith, 1997). In the same vein, friends and relatives were a source of support that freshly-arrived Kurdish refugees could draw upon when confronting resettlement issues in London (Wahlbeck, 1998). Elliott (1997) documented the value of such social relationships for helping refugees in employment, business, and language interpretation.

In a study by Lamba and Krahn (2003), following the resettlement experience of 525 refugees in Canada, it was uncovered how their already settled relatives (both immediate and extended family members) were able to see them through a

situation pervaded with the traumas and uncertainties of displacement. For financial and personal issues they drew on their familial ties and networks. However, for job security and health issues, they tapped their extra-familial networks or facilities in their community. This pattern has been consistent and clearly illustrates the functional value of social capital among such migrants. The wide range and depth of the ethnic and kinship ties involved encompassed the dimensions of 'bonding', 'bridging', as well as 'supportive and leveraging ties'.

### **3.2 Homophilous social relationships in development-induced displacement**

It has been observed that families or individuals who have been relocated due to development projects seamlessly connect with 'homophilous' people, individuals with whom they share certain lifestyles and socioeconomic or demographic characteristics (Lin, 2001). Low-income women who were evicted and resettled back to the renovated site in a housing redevelopment project in the United States (the Hope VI Program), relied on homophilous social networks for social support (Wellman & Frank, 2001). The social support varied from personal favours, like asking somebody to look after their home while they are out of town, to assistance during times of emergency (Kleit, 2010). In a similar project in Massachusetts (Curley, 2009), a longitudinal study involving 28 women from three relocation groups revealed that their homophilous ties (i.e. regarding gender and socio-economic situation) were the bedrock of their social networks, from which both emotional and instrumental support (food, loans, child care, etc.) were derived. This particular type of social connection can be considered as partly bonding and partly bridging social capital, because the relationships cut across ethnicity.

It was also revealed that ties can dissolve when mutual trust and reciprocity are no longer present and the once functional source of social capital becomes burdensome, draining one's household resources because requests for assistance have become repetitive and are not reciprocated. Worse, it can also wreak emotional havoc when one gets involved in somebody else's problems. This kind of tie has been referred to as 'draining ties', which are "relationships to people that drain one's household of resources through frequent requests for assistance with food, money, or other assistance that is not reciprocated, as well as ties to people that bring one down emotionally with constant complaining or involvement in their problems" (Curley, 2009, p. 237). Zontini (2002) saw the same thing among Filipino and Moroccan migrant women in Southern Europe who experienced maintaining and creating social capital as a burden.

#### **4. THE PATTERN OF SOCIAL CAPITAL FORMATION**

##### **4.1 Control in creating and re-creating their new social capital**

Victims of conflict-induced displacement have some room to do social scanning prior to relocation. The nature of their case often enables them to choose among countries where they can resettle. Hence, apart from a resettlement country that has a good relocation program, they also will opt for one with a community that has a pre-existing network of ethnic groups, relatives and friends, or simply just compatriots, and that will allow them to bring their families with them.

The mobile nature of social capital has been evident among adult refugees in Alberta, Canada, who try to maintain their familial ties by actually bringing some of their family members with them (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). These stocks of social capital somehow compensate for their lack of financial capital and the problems with using their human capital. Interactions with their sponsor family or with a Canadian host volunteer start at the time of their arrival in Alberta.

Refugees who come to the United States usually do not bring family members with them but have a large pre-existing social network primarily comprising people from the same country of origin. Half of the respondents in the study of Potocky-Tripodi (2004) had six or more relatives living in the same county and about 70 per cent of the refugees had forged friendships with six or more people within the same county. Moreover, half of the respondents had some contact with US government agencies during their first year in the country. In a Norwegian refugee settlement context, Iraqis and former Yugoslavians have friends of different ethnicities and more compatriots than Norwegian friends (Valenta, 2008).

##### **4.2 Refugees' reluctance to 'cross over' to the mainstream**

Crossing over or establishing ties with the indigenous locals comes with a price, which ranges from learning the indigenous language and cultural norms to being subjected to social sanctions within their own ethnic group. Iraqis and former Yugoslavians resettlers who did forge friendship with the Norwegians claimed that the relationships gave them a positive image in their own eyes and in those of others, and inspired positive feelings of social inclusion and recognition by the host community and a sense of belonging to the mainstream society. However, among those who tried to bridge connections but were unsuccessful, feelings of social exclusion and being a minority were reinforced (Valenta, 2008). Similarly,

Somali parents in Australia had to establish bridging capital with their children's teachers to ensure better educational outcomes for them (Ramsden & Taket, 2013).

Establishing ties with other refugee-ethnicities is also very difficult, since it requires the formation of social bridges. Burmese for example, who are considered a minority among the refugees in Canada, have been deemed unable to integrate in Canadian society. This situation changed after Suzuki (2004) convinced Burmese refugees to establish a Burmese organization among refugees in Winnipeg and Toronto. Half a year later, the members reported a decline of ethnic tensions since the formation of the multi-ethnic community association.

#### **4.3 Sticking to 'tried and tested' ties and sloughing off 'useless' ties**

While pre-existing ties constitute the refugees' social capital, development displaced persons are stuck with strangers as their potential source of social capital. Establishing ties with these strangers rarely takes place and, instead, they just maintain their ties from their previous community and sever their connections with individuals who do not reciprocate. After two years of having been relocated, low-income women beneficiaries of a housing project in Massachusetts US still relied on their pre-resettlement leveraging ties. Most of them did not forge new ties in the new location and, at the same time, sloughed off their useless or 'draining ties' during the course of resettlement (Curley, 2009). In the same vein, half English speakers and half mono-lingual Vietnamese speakers who were relocated in the before mentioned Hope VI project (Kleit, 2010) and the public tenants who were involuntarily relocated to a better community as part of urban regeneration project in Australia (Baker & Arthurson, 2012) still relied on the same ties in their social network even after the transfer to the new community.

#### **4.4 Facilitation of trust and establishment of ties**

The study in an economically mixed neighbourhood (Hope VI) shows that the community's socioeconomic make-up as well as other individual and household characteristics are not of great importance in creating generalized trust and shared norms and values among neighbours. But the institutions and facilities in the neighbourhood do play a significant role in the process of social capital building, and are positively related to the level of social capital in the community (Curley, 2010).

These findings are corroborated by a study done by Thangaraj (1996) on World Bank-assisted water projects in India. The displaced population suffered from social disarticulation as a result of lost social connections, coupled with a deteriorated socio-economic status. The resettlement process dissolved the emotional bond that held the families together as everyone tried to survive. Together with the lack of quality housing and common resources, and the feelings of insecurity and inferiority, this prevented them to establish good relations with their host community.

## **5. THE DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL**

### **5.1 Oiling the social capital gears of the conflict-induced displaced persons**

The studies have shown distinctive determinants or variables that accelerate or impede the building of social capital between the refugees, asylum seekers and families or households affected by development projects. Age has featured as an element that shaped the size of the social networks among the refugees in Canada who came from different regions (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). Most refugees who are older than 50 already have a family in Canada, usually their children who settled in Canada first. Willems (2003) also found age to be an important factor in the social networks of Congolese, Rwandese, and Burundese refugees in Dar es Salaam. The youngest age group (below 26 years old) had more ties with older people than with individuals belonging to the same age group, reflecting their dependency on older people. The age group 26-35 had twice as many ties with their age mates as with younger peers due to their high level of mobility within and outside Dar es Salaam.

Ethnicity is a major factor in the density and size of social networks among migrants in Norway. Valenta (2008) found the migrants to be clustered ethnically, having compatriots as workmates, relatives, friends, neighbours, refugee-guides, teachers, etcetera. The shared cultural practices within an ethnic group catalyse face-to-face interaction, as shown by the Somalian refugees in Australia. Interestingly, in Norway there are also immigrants who opt to live away from their ethnic neighbourhood because they view the community as a breeding place for stigma and as a potential ghetto (Valenta, 2008).

Gender makes a difference as well. Compared to before resettlement, Dar es Salaam male refugees forged more ties with women. The opposite was the case

with women, who had more connections with men during pre-relocation, but gained more ties with women after resettlement. These changes can be due to the change in lifestyle after resettlement. The majority of the women refugees are married and have children. They have become stay-at-home wives, a social situation where they likely meet each other. This is in contrast to the men, who are more mobile in the resettlement context, which provides them with opportunities to socialize with the opposite sex (Willems, 2003).

The Dar es Salaam study (Willems, 2003) also shows length of residency in the resettlement site as a determinant of the size of networks or number of ties that forced migrants can create. Congolese, Rwandese, and Burundese who arrived in Dar es Salaam five years earlier reported significantly more ties than resettlers who came to the area one to two years before.

The study by Valenta (2008) in Norway found that a low status position of refugees and a greater cultural distance between the refugees and the natives can obstruct the development and maintenance of social capital. Between the Iraqis and the former Yugoslavians (Croats and Bosnians) the former suffer from a wider cultural distance to the locals, while the latter benefit from greater cultural similarity. The Croats and Bosnians are European and have a secular or non-Muslim orientation, hence acculturation for them took less effort than for the Iraqis. The Iraqis, due to their own dense network and different culture and religion, remained bonders who struggle to integrate and are subjected to xenophobia among their hosts. Immigrants who occupy a high position in the workplace are confident and motivated to build bridges with the mainstream circle. For resettlers who deem themselves inferior to the receiving society, the chances of cultivating friendship with the locals are bleak. Similarly, the lack of suitable cultural capital prevented Somali refugees in US to reach out to the mainstream, which resulted into occupation and social services deprivation (Smith, 2013)

## **5.2 Encouraging the social capital formation**

Also with respect to development displaced people some key determinants for social capital formation can be derived from the literature. To begin with, social and cultural events like engagement and wedding parties, joint food preparation, and sharing meals are important. They played a huge role in encouraging or compelling participation and interaction among Somalian women whose social

relations were predominantly confined to their households (McMichael & Manderson, 2004).

Furthermore, language can make the difference for an individual's amount of social capital, as shown by a comparison between English and Vietnamese speakers during pre- and post-redevelopment of their neighbourhood in a housing project in the United States (Kleit, 2010). While the percentage of English speakers' social support ties in the neighbourhood after displacement slightly increased, Vietnamese speakers' social support ties drastically decreased and dependence on social ties for social support increased. The resettlement process did not only relocate the families but also the location of social support ties of the families, with only a minor change for the English speakers but a dramatic one for the Vietnamese speakers.

In addition, the quality of institutions and social services available in the resettlement community directly correlates with the growth of social capital among its residents, as shown in research on a relocation project site in United States (Curley, 2010). However, there is also a case wherein the dismal quality of social service in a relocation project site, particularly the provision of peace and order, spurred the forging of working relations among the resettled residents. This happened in the case of a new government resettlement site in Philadelphia, where unbridled violence prevailed. The adults and teenagers considered their local ties and the information flowing through them indispensable in creating protection strategies to feel safe in their new residence (Clampet-Lundquist, 2010). In the project, shared common spaces such as benches in front of the buildings and a community centre that offered various activities for both kids and adults, positively facilitated the establishment of connections among the resettlers. New strangers (including the criminals) became neighbours and even friends. However, better services and facilities in a mixed neighbourhood were not enough to create ties between the low-income displacees and the high-income residents in Chicago housing projects. Residing in the new communities together with high-income families bred stigma towards the impoverished new residents (McCormick, Joseph et al., 2012)

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Concluding from the small number of social capital studies in forced resettlement situations, the application of social capital theory to this context is still in its nascent stage. Moreover, involuntary resettlement research has been heavily concentrated on first world countries. The application of social capital theory to an involuntary resettlement program in a developing country could produce interesting and new insights, as the setting differs in culture, relocation program, institutional dynamics, and, most importantly, issues of vulnerability of the persons involved.

Both types of displacement (conflict and development-induced) recognize the psychological, economic, and social drawbacks of forced migration to the people concerned. However, the focus of analysis for refugees or asylum seekers on the one hand and development-induced displaced persons on the other tends to be different. Conflict-related displacement studies tend to lean on the socio-psychological acculturation dynamics of the families in the new countries, while internal forced migration research focus more on the social adaptability of the resettlers in their new homes.

The review reveals that the social integration pattern of the displaced persons is context specific and somehow blurs the boundaries between the different dimensions of social capital. Refugees and asylum seekers primarily connect with their ethnic group, and, as already pointed out, ethnicity brings along 'bonds and bridges' and 'supportive and leveraging ties'. Development resettlers on the other hand, display a strong propensity to maintain and establish homophilous ties, in other words 'bonding' and 'supportive ties'. They are lacking in 'leveraging' ties that can be instrumental in 'getting ahead'.

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) introduced 'linking social capital' as the third type of social capital in addition to 'bonds' and 'bridges'. Linking social capital is the vertical dimension that 'reaches out' or 'scales up' people's ties to resources, ideas, and information offered by the formal institutions beyond their community or to persons higher in the socio-political hierarchy. Woolcock (2001) argues that different combinations of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital can generate a different range of outcomes to poor people. According to Cernea (2000), the main objective of any involuntary resettlement activity should be to prevent impoverishment and to reconstruct and improve the livelihood of resettlers. Hence, in the light of this principle, it is worthwhile to examine the

resettlers' linkages to the authorities who manage the project and are supposed to assist them in improving their welfare.

Apart from this, the role of the dimensions of mutual trust, norms and reciprocity of social capital in refugee and asylum seekers' resettlement episodes is an issue that has not yet been sufficiently explored. More studies in development resettlement that integrate these dimensions are needed in order to arrive at relevant insights.

Similar to the refugees and asylum seekers who do social calculations when they contemplate 'crossing over' to mainstream society (Valenta, 2008), victims of internal displacement are aware of the social costs and gains of their existing and potential ties and networks as manifested when they slough off their draining ties (Curley, 2009; Kleit, 2010). Nonetheless, they are still enmeshed in bonding social capital. There is still no satisfactory answer to the question which factors and in what circumstances facilitate or prevent these people from establishing bridging or linking social capital.

Among the determinants of social capital formation in the foregoing studies, ethnicity is a 'double-edged sword' in the formation of ties and networks for refugees. While it assures new migrants with readily available social support, it can also prevent them from making contacts outside the ethnic group that can be a potential source of functional social capital. In development-induced resettlement, religion and community associations may have a similar role as ethnicity, like an 'instant glue' to members and at the same time excluding non-members, but this is yet to be examined.

Another important insight from the literature review is that social capital determinants in forced displacement are context idiosyncratic. The factors that shape the formation of social capital among refugees and asylums differ from those that are important for the development-induced displaced persons. However, only few articles pay attention to this. Future studies on the role of these determinants should be more sensitive to and distinguish between the type of resettlement context.

Coleman (1988) stressed the importance of time in social capital building. Kleit (2010, p. 584) stated that "over time, people will get the social support they need". However, among the literature included in this review only Curley (2009) studied

the changes in the residents' social networks over time, using a longitudinal approach. The other researchers analysed the networks of displaced persons at one point in time. This particular deficiency in social capital studies was already noted by Field (2003), who emphasized the importance of looking into the individual's changing bonds over time by systematically drawing on life histories. A major reason why cross-sectional studies have been favoured over longitudinal ones is the amount of resources required for conducting longitudinal studies. A good substitute for a longitudinal study is the application of the calendar method. It has been found to be an effective way to collect retrospective data from life histories (Belli, 1998; Freedman, Thornton et al., 1988; Glasner & Van der Vaart, 2009). The calendar provides respondents with a graphical time frame in which life history information can be represented that enables them to derive timing and content cues from autobiographical memory (Belli, 1998). Compared to conventional interviews, studies demonstrated that the calendar method yields greater data quality as regards the number of reported events, dates and characteristics of events (Belli et al., 2007; 2004; Van der Vaart & Glasner, 2007; Yoshihama et al., 2005).

In the light of the foregoing, we are proposing for future research to conduct studies on the role of social capital in disaster-induced resettlement in developing countries. Relevant topics of future research include the significance of linking social capital of displaced persons in their attempt to 'get ahead', the role of religion and community associations in building social capital in the resettlement context, and the determinants of social capital in forced resettlement. Furthermore, research could benefit from developing tailor made calendar methods to trace the social capital trajectory of displaced persons through time.

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