

Forced Migration and the Anthropological Response

ELIZABETH COLSON

Department of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley

The study of refugees and other forced migrants is now a major area within anthropology, which has been able to draw on earlier sociological studies of immigrant communities and anthropological studies of labour migration and settlement in urban areas. Displacement is now seen as an endemic phenomenon that affects those uprooted, the communities that feel the impact of their arrival, governments, and the international agencies which increasingly play a major role in dealing with displacement. Uprooting and movement into new communities involve processes such as labelling, identity management, boundary creation and maintenance, management of reciprocity, manipulation of myth, and forms of social control. Uprooting also provokes loss of trust in governments and existing political leaders. It creates new diasporas with their own political interests. What happens after uprooting depends largely on whether people resettle on their own using their existing social and economic resources, are processed through agencies, or are kept in holding camps administered by outsiders. International and non-governmental charitable organizations are major actors, whose roles are being transformed through their dealings with the displaced while at the same time they have a major impact on the ability of governments to govern. Anthropologists have both studied and tried to do something about the situation through the creation of agencies that give a voice to the displaced, such as the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford, Cultural Survival, and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

The Salience of Forced Migration

The twentieth century has been called the 'century of the refugee'. This is reflected in the increasing salience of research on those forcibly uprooted. Over the past three decades, anthropologists have become increasingly engaged in ethnographic studies of forced uprooting, as well as studies of violence and warfare. The American Anthropological Association now houses a sub-group composed of those whose research interests focus upon refugees, the internally displaced, and other involuntary migrants. Anthropologists based elsewhere are equally concerned. Their interest reflects the current state of the world. A

2 Elizabeth Colson

field that depends upon participant observation as a primary research tool, perforce must deal with such phenomena.

Beginning with Loizos' *The Heart Grown Bitter* (1981) and Harrell-Bond's *Imposing Aid* (1986), ethnographies have described the experience of refugees and internally displaced people in camps, spontaneous settlement, and countries of asylum. Some studies now cover several decades and are able to examine processes set in motion by uprooting over time (e.g. Gilad 1990; Habarad 1987b; Hirshon 1989; Peteet 1995). More recently anthropologists and other social scientists have documented the experience of those repatriated (e.g. Allen 1996; Black and Koser 1999). Other ethnographies focus upon the institutions created to deal with massive population displacements, or on the emergence of new international diasporas through which the displaced keep in touch with one another and with people in the homeland (e.g. Bousquet 1991; Fuglerud 1999; Loizos 1999; Tambiah 2000; Wahlbeck 1999).

Ethnographic work has also been carried out on uprooting and resettlement due to the building of large dams or other large-scale projects designed to forward regional or national economic development (e.g. Colson 1971; Scudder and Colson 1979; Dreze, Samson and Singh 1996; Fahim 1981, 1983; Jing 1996; Kiste 1968, 1974; Mahapatra 1999; Salem-Murdock 1989; Salisbury 1986; Villa Rojas 1955; Wali 1989). Some ethnographic studies of displacement now have time depths that allow us to examine resettlement as a continuing process (Colson 1999; Jing 1996). They cover a spectrum of dispossession and allow for a comparison of the experience of those officially resettled as communities with what happens when people are left to find their own way.

More recently anthropologists have begun to explore how host populations are affected by the arrival of a large number of refugees or other displaced people (e.g., Salem-Murdock 1989). Others have found new ethnographic communities in the world of international agencies that structure much of the experience of the uprooted. Malkki (1997: 225) sees ethnographic study of these 'familiar forms of humanitarianism' as essential for the discovery of 'better ways of conceptualizing, designing and challenging them'.

Malkki goes on to cast doubts on the validity of research focused on refugees *per se* and, by extension, the more general category of the involuntarily uprooted, who, she says, 'do not constitute a naturally self-delimiting domain of anthropological knowledge' since their uprooting is due to 'extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes and involve people who while all displaced, find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments' (1995b: 496). Dealing with them as victims, as persons knowable only through their need, she claims, dehumanizes and dehistoricizes the refugee (1997: 224).

Most anthropologists and other social scientists would take as given that uprooting has many causes, occurs in different contexts, acts upon different peoples, lands them in different predicaments, and brings into being new social and physical environments, including new institutional orders and labels. It is

illuminating to examine the historical circumstances which produced the refugee category in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, labels have consequences in real life, as Zetter (1991) has demonstrated effectively in his Cyprus research. Moreover, uprooting and its aftermaths are structuring events (Bascom 1998: 10) that happen to human beings who have much in common whatever their histories and who can be expected to respond in very human fashion when under attack. Only the most determined relativist would exclude the possibility of looking for commonalities across experiences and responses.

Anthropology as a discipline relies upon a back and forth process. We move from careful ethnography that deals with the particular in all its uniqueness to a comparison that provides a deeper understanding of the human condition. In the last several decades we have acquired an ethnographic base sufficiently large so that we ought to be able to generalize about likely consequences of forced uprooting and resettlement, while holding fast to the recognition that human beings are creative and can come up with surprising, never before imagined, solutions.

Ethnographic research and other instances of anthropological involvement with forced migration could be analysed as one facet of that growth industry composed of agencies—multilateral, unilateral, non-governmental—which find their justification in the plight of the uprooted (Barrow and Jennings 2001). But knowledge of the immensity of the problem of uprooting has shaken anthropological thought as well as provided it with a subject for contemplation. Fuglerud (1999: 7) indeed suggests that future anthropology is going to be about ‘the more general questions contained in the study of refugees and displacement’.

He is right. If anthropology continues to be based in ethnography it will have to focus on people in transition, who are uneasy about themselves in a world that ignores their desire and need for continuity. It will have to deal with responses to processes of displacement and arrival. Ethnographic time horizons will change: the one-shot time exposure will have to be supplemented by longitudinal research. And ethnographic accounts will reflect the violence and suffering, the precariousness of life, and the evil humans do to one another, in a way foreign to earlier ethnographic traditions (Harrell-Bond 1992).

There seems little reason to expect the twenty-first century to be any kinder than the twentieth, or that it will be more able to overcome the human propensity to indulge in atrocities or to pursue self-interest at whatever cost to others. In 2002, violence, counter-violence, and displacement are all too apparent. They may well worsen over the twenty-first century given massive population increases (even if the rate of growth is declining), greater competition over diminishing resources, and the probability that rising seas triggered by global warming will flood low-lying lands everywhere.

Those who suffer the insults of forced migration, caused by war or other forms of violence or because they stand in the way of economic interests, may legitimately ask what right social scientists have to study them. One answer

4 *Elizabeth Colson*

rests on the old liberal assumption that good research should inform policy to its betterment. Another answer, perhaps more realistic, might be, 'Since any one, including social scientists, may be uprooted, we want to know what to expect and how one learns to live with the uncertainties, the loss of trust, and the indignities that you are experiencing and surviving.' This includes understanding how countries of asylum and international agencies will relate to us when we too are in need.

Resources for an Ethnography of Uprootedness

Available Concepts

When anthropologists belatedly started research among refugees, contemporary mainstream anthropological theory offered them such organizing concepts as role, hierarchy, social networks, conflict mechanisms, reciprocity, situational responses, boundary creation and maintenance, rites of passage as mediating devices, liminality, the role of myth as validation. If you strip away current rhetoric, such concepts continue to be basic to descriptions of the experience of the uprooted, despite their initial embeddedness in premises about stable societies, on-going systems and feed-back mechanisms capable of controlling destructive conflict.

It mattered little that most peoples studied by anthropologists were products of fairly recent upheavals. In the United States anthropology developed through research on Native Americans, subject throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to massive ethnic cleansings in which survivors found their settlements destroyed, their lands occupied, and themselves forced into non-economically viable reservations, where they subsisted initially on inadequate rations doled out by an alien and hostile administration that denied them legal rights granted to other Americans. Elsewhere too, anthropologists largely ignored the impacts of displacement. Much of Africa was in turmoil for a century and more before anthropologists arrived. Few populations had escaped some kind of displacement. This was ignored while we tried to reconstruct memory culture of what 'life was like in the old days' or dealt with partial systems of people living under colonial regimes.

Migrants and Labour Migrants

If most ethnographic studies offered little specifically to those pioneering work on refugees and others recently displaced, they had some resource in early studies of immigrants, largely carried out by sociologists in the United States, and of labour migrants, carried out by anthropologists in Africa. Before restrictions on immigration after World War I led to the creation of the refugee category for those fleeing persecution, little attention was paid to why people left. Research focused rather upon life in the new country and the means through which immigrants integrated themselves into societies dominated by

hosts who frequently felt threatened by the influx of a large number of perceived aliens. The present backlash against refugees and other migrants is no new phenomenon and the earlier immigration studies are illuminating on when a backlash occurs and the forms it takes (Morgan 1987).

Marx (1990: 198–200) has shown the utility of the early work on immigrants for understanding refugee experiences. He drew on Thomas and Znaniecki's classic work on Polish immigrants to Chicago (1918) to chart the stages through which people find their way in a new environment. As he notes, they first used personal networks to obtain housing and access to jobs. Only after these needs were met and their numbers grew did they establish ethnic communities with formal associations to provide them with companionship, insure them against uncertainties, reinforce links with their homelands, and make it possible to pass on something of their own heritage to their children. If possible they avoided contact with the formal institutions provided by the host community, where they felt powerless to control outcomes. All this is common enough among migrants today, whether resettled refugees or those uprooted through large-scale development projects (e.g. Fuglerud 1999: 84).

Labour migration began to interest anthropologists in the 1930s when they recognized the impact of industrialization and market economies upon communities whose men were being forced into the labour market by the demands of colonial systems. Some went as recruited labour. Others chose where and when to go. Like Polish peasants in Chicago, labour migrants to the cities of Africa and Asia used personal networks wherever possible to gain access to housing and jobs and find familiar others with whom to associate (see, e.g. Eades 1987). And like migrants everywhere, if possible they founded ethnic neighbourhoods which sheltered them through a first generation of urban life.

The migrant labour studies highlight the importance migrants give to issues of trust and reciprocity, issues now beginning to be pushed to the forefront in refugee research (Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Fuglerud 1999: 124–125; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995). Trust rests on reciprocity, which is a process in time because it requires action and response and some possibility of sanctioning breaches of expectations. The last is premised on an expectation of some kind of shared future. The dynamics of rotating savings and credit associations, so common among migrants in urban Africa and elsewhere, illuminate the nature of this trust (Ardener and Burman 1995). In Kampala, Uganda, men involved in circular migration between village and employment formed credit associations with home people, for defaulters could be sanctioned through home ties. Civil servants in permanent employment preferred to form associations with fellow civil servants whose reputation depended upon the interlinked network of elite that operated throughout Uganda (Jacobson 1978). In Nigeria, Cohen found Hausa traders in Ibadan using membership in the Tijaniyya Order to underwrite their economic transactions, for their mutual involvement in the order ensured fulfillment of obligations (Cohen 1969).

Trust depends upon continuing links with a home place, a profession, or membership in some other grouping that spans localities and time. Association

in the immediate present gives no assurance that trust will be honoured in the absence of a means of exerting sanctions in the future. Given what we have learned from labour migrant studies, the lack of trust that operates in refugee camps and among others uprooted should be no surprise, for those who encounter one another (whether they be refugees or staff), lack the reciprocal relationships and expectations of a common future that guarantee good faith (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995). Good intentions, even if perceived, do not earn trust.

Trust is especially problematic for the forced migrant given the loss of familiar social cues. Oliver-Smith (1991: 2) calls forced migration and resettlement ‘totalizing phenomena’ that

involve or evoke rapid and radical changes . . . The process is invariably difficult and painful, engendering feelings of powerlessness and alienation as people are uprooted from their familiar circumstances. Whole communities suffer acute degrees of disintegration as community structures, social networks and even kin groups may be dispersed to different resettlement sites. The affective ties between individuals and communities and their material environments are destroyed by uprooting and resettlement.

This is echoed by Krulfeld and Baxter who see those forcibly displaced experiencing the destruction of old boundaries that put in question taken-for-granted definitions and assumptions on which daily life and political life depend (1997: 2). Add to this that some of those displaced have been through experiences of torture and other violence that make them doubt themselves as well as others.

The theme of trust brings together work on immigration, labour migration, and forced migration. Studies of labour migrants who lived in ‘company towns’ that approximate what sociologists have termed ‘total institutions’ provide further insights into the dynamics at work in camps of forced resettlement. In the 1950s when Epstein (1958) studied mining towns on the Copperbelt of what is now Zambia, he found mine employees living in residential quarters administered by the mining companies that also controlled their work environment.

Whenever an enterprise or programme involves substantial funds and massive planning and implementation, funders typically question whether existing local agencies will be efficient administrators. They are especially loathe to hand over financial responsibility. Like the mining companies of the Zambian Copperbelt, agencies administering assistance to refugees or other displaced people prefer to bypass the local channels of governance and establish new administrative structures answerable, if at all, to authorities in the capital or at some level of the international order. The consequences are a weakening of local government and a disrespect for its personnel (Scudder 1982: 93; Harrell-Bond 1986; Leopold 2001). Hegemonic monopoly of power by humanitarian agencies has further implications. As Epstein found, when people organize they usually do so in opposition to the institutions and persons that exist in their immediate environment. On the Copperbelt,

African mine-workers came to define themselves through opposition to the mine management responsible for housing and other welfare as well as work conditions. This made it easier for them to organize into a single multi-purpose association. Non-mine workers, living under a variety of arrangements, differentiated among the institutions that affected them and tended to organize in terms of particular interests rather than in one umbrella organization. By monopolizing power, resettlement regimes become the perceived enemy whom settlers must manipulate and subvert to achieve their own ends or even to survive.

The Forcibly Uprooted

By the 1970s studies of immigrants and labour migrants were supplemented by ethnographic work on those forcibly uprooted to make their homelands available for one scheme or another sponsored by government.

To highlight contributions from this research, I draw upon a comparative study of a number of Pacific Island communities carried out in the 1960s by Homer Barnett and his students. The majority had been officially relocated while the rest were formed by self-settled economic migrants. The case studies and their analysis appeared in *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania*, edited by Lieber (1977) who did the summing up. The officially relocated communities were displaced for many reasons including overpopulation, damage due to volcanic explosions, and clearance for an atomic-bomb testing site (Kiste 1974). None were composed of refugees in either the strictly legal or the more relaxed sense of the term. The populations were diverse in origin, moved under a variety of pressures, and settled in different environments. They came from small islands, and the problems caused by their migration could be said to be minimal in comparison with those caused by the massive population movements brought about by wars, ethnic cleansing, and large-scale clearances for dams and other projects.

Some of the Pacific findings, however, hold true when larger populations are involved. Those resettled as a direct result of administrative action were in a special relationship to an administrative hierarchy that usually bypassed the previously existing government of the area into which they were moved (Lieber 1977: 351). This gave the officially resettled entitlements which neither their hosts nor spontaneous settlers enjoyed, and encouraged them to maintain or develop an identity apart from the people near whom they settled. Each resettled population eventually created a new community infrastructure but this was a gradual process, not something that came easily or immediately. Initially they relied upon personal networks wherever possible (pp. 353–354). Those in the official settlements were less likely to develop reciprocal ties, and so trust relationships, with neighbouring hosts than were voluntary migrants who relied upon such ties to secure access to resources and to safeguard themselves. The voluntary migrants adjusted faster, and their adjustment to their physical and social environments was more stable and less conflict-ridden than those of the officially relocated (p. 380). Comparable findings hold for the camp and self-settled refugees of the Sudan studied by Harrell-Bond (1986) and

for the camp and self-settled Hutu refugees in Tanzania studied by Malkki (1995a, 1997).

Lieber suggests that the spontaneous migrants of the Pacific, in many ways comparable to self-settled refugees, adjusted more easily because they met problems one by one and were able to solve them sequentially whereas the resettled, comparable to refugees who arrive en masse and are placed in camps, encountered a multitude of problems simultaneously. Moreover, the officially resettled had to take into consideration their relationship with administrative structures set up to cope with the resettlement. This meant negotiating through another layer of decision making.

A further finding of the Pacific studies is more controversial and probably reflects the fact that fieldwork was carried out some years after people had recovered from the first impact of uprooting and resettlement. In line with Barnett's earlier work on innovation (1953), it was found that 'in every case, the problems of the initial resettlement release a tremendous amount of innovative activity in both subsistence and organizational spheres' (Lieber 1997: 385). This involved both adaptation of old practices to the new environment and the introduction of entirely new practices. Research elsewhere points to an initial period in which those forcibly resettled first deal with the shock of being torn out of their familiar environments (Scudder 1993). In the case of the Kariba resettlement, most Gwembe Tonga were unwilling to take risks during the first several years after resettlement (Scudder and Colson 1982). Jonathan Habarad similarly found Iu Mien refugees from Laos averse to experimentation for the first several years of their settlement in the United States (Habarad 1987a, 1987b). Innovation came later. Much the same responses have been reported elsewhere.

Theoretically we would expect a period of hiatus after the shock of uprooting. Since people define themselves in terms of the roles they play and it is thus that they are evaluated and valued, the loss of role structures means that they cannot know who they are or who anyone else is until new roles are constructed and people assigned to them. It takes time to assess the loss of old roles or their transformation. It takes time to renegotiate relationships. All this involves processes of adaptation. These include what Rappoport has called changes of state and changes of structure. The first are short-term reversible changes, the latter are long-term and irreversible. Rappoport, drawing on the literature on adaptive responses, argues that under stress people try to make minimal short-term reversible changes, choosing those which give them a chance to remain most themselves. The fundamental question to ask of any change, he then says, is 'What does this change maintain unchanged?' (Rappoport 1999: 6–7). Apparent change may indicate a hardcore determination to hold fast to an old identity.

Forced Uprooting as a Long-term Process

As the ethnographic record of particular instances of forced migration lengthened, we have been better able to see that people live through a

succession of responses as they reassess their experience and consider what can be done. From an initial state of shock, they may reach a point where they can calculate chances with some expectations of being right about results and be prepared to take risks as individuals. Thereafter they may have enough familiarity with tested others to be willing to mobilize for other ends.

For those whose new hopes are thwarted, or who find themselves still confined in camps where they have little control over what happens, hope and experimentation lapse into further despair and apathy. This happened in camps in Lebanon where Palestinian refugees have now lived for fifty years. The 1950s and 1960s were a time of ruptured identities and disorganization, solved only partially by a mapping of the terrain with familiar names that oriented residents to both present and past. Then came mobilization through the resistance movement buttressed by the creation of a shared history. Then the failures of the movement led to new apathy (Peteet 1995).

This creation of a shared history, a founding myth, is such a common phenomenon among both refugees and others forced from home that it needs probing (Loizos 1999: 258ff). It has powerful creative functions, but is no sign that the uprooted have put their experience behind them and moved on to other things. Peteet (1995: 181) found Palestinian refugee camps and communities 'hierarchically interconnected with the space/place of both origin and exile', while Hirschon (1989) found Greek refugees from Asia Minor seventy years after exile still grounding their identity in their old locale.

The development uprooted show this same 'grief for the lost home' reported by Gans (1962) of those displaced when Boston, Massachusetts planned a massive redevelopment. Thirty-five years after that displacement, on visiting the old North End I found bitterness and anger still rankling. Thirty years after Dachuan Village was inundated with the damming of China's Yellow River in 1960, the Kongs still mourned their flooded village and those born after the flooding could point to sites, now deep under the waters of the reservoir, where their parents had lived and worked (Jing 1996: 78). Gwembe Tonga still speak of themselves as 'People of the River' some forty years after their river disappeared into Kariba Lake, and they make claims for special treatment based on their knowledge that *they* were moved even though the majority now were born in the new areas. They too can be precise about what lies below the water, and as dry land re-emerged when Kariba Lake fell during the droughts of the 1980s they reclaimed fields which, they said, had been cultivated by dead kin. Resettlement does not wipe out memory, but rather provides a medium through which it is reworked, and the memory of shared experience of uprooting helps to create new forms of identity (Loizos 1999). This has consequences, as witness the investment of diasporas in independence movements and civil warfare in their homelands.

The ethnographic record points to camps and resettlement communities as seed beds most conducive to the growth of memory and the pursuit of the myth of return (Malkki 1995a). They also affect other adjustments. Camps from Hong Kong (Bousquet 1987; Hitchcox 1990, 1993) to the Thai Border (Reynell 1989) to Hungary (Huseby-Darvas 1994: 69) have evoked descriptions

emphasizing ‘liminality’ and ‘limbo’ as characteristic of experience within the camps. Observers find fragmentation taking place along gender, ethnic and group lines, and discover little to foster forms of social solidarity among those within the camps except perhaps an opposition to the camp authorities.

That long-term dependence upon camps as a way of warehousing those who cannot go home and cannot move on has hard consequences emerges from Peteet’s on-going research on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Malkki’s work on Hutu camps in Tanzania. The Palestinians, after 50 years of dispossession, base their identity on a continued relationship to a place, ‘Palestine’ (Peteet 1995: 168–170), and it was in the camps that the resistance organizations emerged. It is the Hutu ‘spatially isolated and insulated’ in Tanzanian camps, not the self-settled Hutu who are merging with their hosts, who have constructed a new nationalism complete with a mythical past that demonizes the Tutsi and looks forward to a future in a Burundi cleansed of Tutsi (Malkki 1995a: 253).

Knowing what we now know about the impact of camp life upon refugees and the internally displaced, where, as Hitchcox (1990: 173) puts it,

individuals are constrained to behave as if they were dependent and helpless, which assists the perpetuation of an institution largely composed of workers whose role is to respond to people who have problems and are in need,

it would be instructive to re-examine the reservation system created by the United States for those it dispossessed. Native Americans have over a century of experience of reservation existence and show the long-term consequences of policies that segregate and encourage the creation of powerful myths of dispossession, opposition and entitlement. They have high rates of alcohol and drug abuse, high suicide rates, high morbidity and mortality, and demonstrate a high level of factionalism. They also increasingly identify themselves as an ethnic constituency of First Americans whose rights they press against national and state governments and against other ethnic constituencies.

Studies of the displaced increasingly emphasize that experience differs with age, gender and other status characteristics as well as with the nature of resettlement (Indra 1999). Various studies report that men appear to be more adversely affected than women. Often enough they are perceived as failures by themselves and others. Politically they have failed or they and their families would not be in their present plight. Self-definitions derived from work are at risk when professional skills are ignored in a resettlement area or camp or they are denied the right to practise or work in old occupations as immigrants. Lack of political and economic resources put familial roles in question (e.g. Hopkins 1994). Vietnamese men in the Hong Kong camps, according to Hitchcox (1993: 158)

suffered from the total loss of their role as decision maker and provider for the family. They were worse off than the women . . . because the latter at least could rely on the familiar occupations of childcare, cleaning the living space and washing, making and mending clothes.

But women's roles are more vulnerable than Hitchcox suggests, for many women, certainly in Africa, have defined themselves more as producers or traders or professionals than as housewives, and they may be no more able than their men to ease themselves with familiar work patterns. Even those women who had not defined themselves in terms of jobs or other forms of economic and ritual activity are subject to redefinition when their men are redefined. In Hungarian camps housing refugees from former Yugoslavia, Huseby-Darvas (1994: 69) found that 'Gender and familial conflicts grew . . . as the roles of women changed. Women were given and readily took on several roles that were considered men's "domains" and men who had little to do became listless, depressed, and in some cases violent.' In the humiliation of the devalued lies the roots of much of the violence, especially against women and children, reported from camps and resettlement areas. A similar upsurge of violence against women and children occurred among Gwembe Tonga in the years immediately following resettlement, and again during the years of guerilla warfare associated with the struggle for Zimbabwe's independence, when men used violence to assert a status threatened by a lack of political and economic power (Colson 1995).

Neglected Aspects of Displacement

Initially research on the impact of big dams and other comparable projects was confined to those who would be displaced, just as most research on displacement caused by violence concentrated upon refugees and the internally displaced. Uprooting, however, has massive impacts across a whole spectrum of populations. Arrival as well as departure poses threats to communities and established definitions of self. A great deal more research needs to be carried out on what happens to those who willingly or unwillingly become hosts, whose lives are changed by the arrival of the uprooted.

We also now know that major engineering projects, like wars, have impacts far outside the immediate area targeted by a project. If dams are built, people downstream find their lives disrupted when the familiar river regime fails, as Horowitz (1991) and Scudder (1993, 1996) have demonstrated. They are also at risk if the scheme attracts those with capital and the power to expropriate smallholders. Dam building along the Senegal River displaced those whose areas were flooded by reservoirs, but it also sparked a war between Mauritania and Senegal and turned many who had cultivated and otherwise used lands in the lower river basin into refugees who had to find shelter across borders (Horowitz 1991).

Recently John Davis (1992) called for the creation of an 'anthropology of suffering' focusing upon violence, dispossession, and their consequences. This is already coming into being. Ethnographers now look at war and other violence because, as Nordstrom and Martin (1992: 15) say, 'social scientists, no matter what their field of study, will in all likelihood confront some instance of sociopolitical violence in the field' and they need 'viable field methodologies

and theoretical frameworks' if they are to understand the processes that involve them as possible victims as well as observers. Ethnographies of violence began to appear during this last decade. These examine the circumstances under which violence takes place, how it is engendered and legitimized, who are its recruits and who its victims, and when are they the one and the same, as well as how it proliferates or is contained (e.g. Ben-Ari 1998; Danforth 1995; Hutchinson 1996; Karakasidou 1997; Nordstrom and Martin 1992; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Reyna and Downs 1999; Richards 1996; Turton 1999). Like Wendy James (1997), who has seen a refugee camp for Sudanese in Ethiopia explode into violence, anthropologists who study violence are trying to fathom not only what fuels it but how those subject to it or who perpetrate it create meanings that allow them to survive and rebuild their lives.

Ethnographic studies of suffering directly traceable to human action are supplemented by an increasing body of anthropological work on the impact of natural disasters which often lead to displacement (e.g. Benthall 1993; Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 2002).

What is perhaps most needed is a synthesis of what is being learned about the impact of radical transformations in human expectations as they are subject to warfare, civil unrest, economic upheavals, natural catastrophes, and resettlement among strangers. In other words, an anthropology able to deal with the twenty-first century.

The Use of Knowledge

When anthropologists in the 1980s began to try to bring together findings from work on forced migration of various kinds, including refugees, those uprooted because others wanted to use their land or resources, disaster victims, they did so thinking research could affect policy and make uprooting and readjustment less traumatic (Hansen and Oliver-Smith 1982; Cernea 1985; Cernea and Guggenheim 1993; Morgan and Colson 1987).

Ethnographic studies of displacement caused by the building of massive dams had already aroused sufficient concern at the World Bank where Cernea and others developed guidelines for evaluating economic and social impacts on those at risk of displacement. The guidelines, first published in 1980 (World Bank 1980; Cernea 1985), have been revised a number of times, being weakened in the process. The guidelines' utility has also been questioned, given that they are frequently ignored or set at naught by those determined to press through a project regardless of the costs to those uprooted or other affected populations (Downing 1996; Scudder 1993). Moreover, so far the guidelines cover only those who will be uprooted from the target area without reference to potential hosts or those living in peripheral areas, and they apply only to the World Bank's funding and do not affect schemes financed by governments or other sponsors. The guidelines provide no institutional means through which those potentially affected can inform or appeal to an international constituency.

Over the last several decades anthropologists have tried to provide forums through which their own research findings reach both the public and policy makers, and which give voice to refugees and others at risk. It is no accident that the Refugee Studies Programme (RSP) was founded at Oxford University at much the same time that anthropologists elsewhere helped to create *Cultural Survival* and its journal (*Cultural Survival*) and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). The RSP developed an academic programme emphasizing research and its findings and drew in policy makers and administrators as well as refugees, while *Cultural Survival* and IWGIA have emphasized service to local populations at risk through providing them with a means of access to international public opinion.

At the RSP, Barbara Harrell-Bond, its founder and first director, developed a broad-based teaching programme drawing upon anthropological theories of the interconnectedness of aspects of life that other disciplines deal with separately. She recognized the crucial importance of the need for food and protection when she incorporated modules on nutrition and law, for people must eat and they need legal remedies if they are to protect themselves. Because one becomes and remains a refugee due to political action, she argued for examining the political contexts in which uprooting, protection and resettlement take place. Because vulnerable people who are unprotected or abused by their own governments must depend upon the international system to provide nourishment and protection, she included a module on international law and international organizations. Then she recentred the programme upon the immediate experience of uprooting and its aftermath and included a component on the psychological impacts of being uprooted, subject to violence, stripped of old social roles, frustrated by new and often intractable rules and limitations and by new causes for familial conflict.

One could ask what all this has to do with anthropology. It took an anthropologist to see what was needed even if much of the teaching and needed research would have to be carried out by those trained in law, political science, international relations, psychology and other subjects. By incorporating representatives of other disciplines into its core programme, the RSP followed good anthropological practice. Anthropologists have always explored across interdisciplinary boundaries, and the good ones, as Devons and Gluckman (1964: 14–16) pointed out, are aware of the limits of their own competence.

The RSP also built upon another concern of many within anthropology: the belief that anthropology is not simply an academic subject to be valued because it trains the intellect. For many of us, it ought also to be meaningful to those outside academia. Academic research, however important it may be, remains irrelevant if it is relegated to the classroom, the library shelf, the internet and professional meetings. Association with refugees and other uprooted people makes this transparent. If anything is learned from looking at the turmoil, the attempts at rescue and readjustment, the impact upon both those uprooted and those who receive them, this has immediate relevance to decisions that affect the lives of those already in jeopardy. The RSP met the obligation to a larger

constituency by providing a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among academics, refugees, and practitioners, i.e. workers with hands-on experience of what is happening and well aware that the system often fails. Out of this vision grew the RSP training programmes and a newsletter for practitioners through which their wealth of experience feeds back into academic discussions. And academic discussions found a voice and responsive critiques in the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, so ably edited initially by Roger Zetter (a political scientist), and in the International Research and Advisory Panel on Forced Migration founded in 1989 under RSP auspices to bring together scholars from many disciplines. With the formation of the Panel, the RSP began to move towards a broader mission to include research on all categories of the displaced.

Whereas the RSP (now the Refugee Studies Centre) served a multi-faceted public, including academics, refugees, and international agencies working with refugees, Cultural Survival and the IWGIA defined themselves as advocacy organizations, for those threatened by external interests, enabling them to organize themselves to combat displacement and despoilment. They have been instrumental in forwarding new international organizations that link Australian Aborigines, Canadian Inuit and Cree, Native Americans of the United States, the peoples of Amazonia, and the Sami of northern Norway and Finland, who are pooling experience and finding ways to present their own cases in international forums. Inevitably they also become places where refugees from Central America and the Zapotec of Oaxaca discuss their grievances and their needs.

Oliver-Smith has suggested that we need to study when and how those threatened with uprooting resist and find means to oppose dispossession. He suggests that they will consider mobilization desirable if they are sufficiently familiar with the state and its working to be convinced that they are threatened by its plans or actions, but they also need effective leadership and external allies. How they then deploy themselves depends on circumstances. In northeastern India, irrigation schemes and immigration have led to guerrilla warfare as local people fight back against dispossession; in Brazil, those endangered by the poisoning of their waters have recruited the Catholic Church and non-governmental organizations to help fight their battles; and in Canada the Cree have learned to use the courts in fighting against further displacement and have also linked their interests with those of environmentalists who perceive the Cree's campaign as part of their own attempt to prevent predatory development (Oliver-Smith 1991). The James Bay Cree won out against power companies and provincial government, at least temporarily, by enlisting the State of New York in an agreement to boycott power generated by the proposed expansion of the James Bay hydroelectric project (Scudder 1993).

Anthropology's most impressive contribution so far to issues of displacement may well be the founding of the RSP, Cultural Survival, the IWGIA, and perhaps its contribution to the World Bank guidelines, and the assistance

anthropologists have given to the emergence and empowerment of globalizing networks of indigenous and other peoples who demand to be consulted and are prepared to oppose plans that affect and may displace them.

But these networks primarily serve those at risk from uprooting for economic reasons. What is there to offer those at risk from uprooting because of wars and political upheavals? How does one mobilize coalitions to prevent or confine them?

Despite Barnett's and Lieber's conclusion that forced migration releases human energy and inventiveness and can lead to new and better lives for those uprooted—and there is evidence that this can happen—whatever the outcome people resent uprooting, find it traumatic, and in the long run look back in grief and with an anger that lasts longer than the wars or the dams that forced them out. Somehow the cycle needs to be broken.

Acknowledgements

In the autumn of 1999, at the request of David Turton (then director of the Refugee Studies Centre) I presented the original version of this article in a seminar series on the role of different disciplines in the study of involuntary migration. I was to speak to the role of anthropology. David Turton also provided astute editorial suggestions on the revised manuscript.

- ALLEN, T.** (ed.) (1996) *In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in Northeast Africa*. London: James Currey.
- ARDENER, S.** and **BURMAN, S.** (eds.) (1995) *Money-Go-Rounds: The Importance of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations for Women*. Oxford: Berg.
- BARNETT, H.** (1953) *Innovation: The Basis of Culture Change*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- BARROWS, O.** and **JENNINGS, M.** (2001) *The Charitable Impulse: NGOs and Development in East and North-East Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.
- BASCOM, J.** (1998) *Losing Place: Refugee Populations and Rural Transformations in East Africa*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- BEN-ARI, E.** (1998) *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- BENTHAL, J.** (1993) *Disasters, Relief, and the Media*. London: Taurus.
- BLACK, R.** and **KOSER, K.** (eds.) (1999) *The End of the Refugee Cycle? Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- BOUSQUET, G.** (1987) 'Living in a State of Limbo: A Case Study of Vietnamese Refugees in Hongkong Camps' in Morgan, S. and Colson, E. (eds.) *People in Upheaval*. Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies.
- (1991) *Behind the Bamboo Hedge: The Impact of Homeland Politics in the Parisian Vietnamese Community*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- CERNEA, M.** (ed.) (1985) *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- CERNEA, M.** and **GUGGENHEIM, S.** (eds.) (1993) *Anthropological Approaches to Resettlement: Policy, Practice and Theory*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- COHEN, A.** (1969) *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- COLSON, E.** (1971) *The Social Consequences of Resettlement*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press.
- (1995) 'War and Domestic Violence', *Cultural Survival* 19(1): 35–38.
- (1999) 'Gendering Those Uprooted by "Development"' in Indra, D. (ed.) *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice*. New York: Berghahn.

- DANFORTH, L.** (1995) *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Trans-National World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- DANIEL, E. V.** and **KNUDSEN, J. C.** (eds.) (1995) *Mistrusting Refugees*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- DAVIS, J.** (1992) 'The Anthropology of Suffering', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 5(2): 149–161.
- DEVONS, E.** and **GLUCKMAN, M.** (1964) 'Introduction' in Gluckman, M. (ed.) *Closed Systems and Open Minds: The Limits of Naivety in Social Anthropology*. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd.
- DOWNING, T.** (1997) 'Mitigating Social Impoverishment when People are Involuntarily Displaced', in McDowell, C. (ed.) *Understanding Impoverishment: The Consequences of Development-Induced Displacement*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- DREZE, J., SAMSON, M.** and **SINGH, S.** (eds.) (1996) *The Dam and the Nation: Displacement and Resettlement in the Narmada Valley*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- EADES, J.** (ed.) (1987) *Migrants, Workers, and the Social Order*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- EPSTEIN, A. L.** (1958) *Politics in an Urban African Community*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- FAHIM, H.** (1981) *Dams, People, and Development: The Aswan High Dam Case*. New York: Pergamon.
- (1983) *Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and Years of Coping*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- FUGLERUD, Ø.** (1999) *Life on the Outside: The Tamil Diaspora and Long Distance Nationalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- GANS, H.** (1962) *The Urban Villagers*. New York: Free Press.
- GILAD, L.** (1990) *The Northern Route*. St Johns: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Institute of Economic and Social Research.
- HABARAD, J.** (1987a) 'Refugees and the Structure of Opportunity: Transitional Adjustments to Aid among U.S. Resettled Iu Mien, 1980–1985' in Morgan, S. and Colson, E. (eds.) *People in Upheaval*. Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies.
- (1987b) *Spirit and the Social Order: The Responsiveness of Lao Iu Mien History, Religion and Organization*. Ann Arbor: UMI.
- HANSEN, A.** and **OLIVER-SMITH, A.** (eds.) (1982) *Involuntary Migration and Resettlement: The Problems and Responses of Dislocated People*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- HARRELL-BOND, B.** (1986) *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1992) 'Counting the Refugees: Gifts, Givers, Patrons and Clients', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 5(3): 205–225.
- HIRSCHON, R.** (1989) *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- HITCHCOX, L.** (1990) *Vietnamese Refugees in Southeast Asian Camps*. London: Macmillan.
- (1993) 'Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong: Behaviour and Control', in Buijs, G. (ed.) *Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities*. Oxford: Berg.
- HOFFMAN, S.** and **OLIVER-SMITH, A.** (eds.) (2002) *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster*. Oxford: James Currey.
- HOPKINS, M. C.** (1994) 'Thwarting Family Values: American Culture in Cambodian Refugee Families in the United States' in Zaharlick, A. and MacDonald, J. (eds.) *Selected Papers on Refugee Issues: III*. Arlington: American Anthropological Association.
- HOROWITZ, M.** (1991) 'Victims Upstream and Down', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4(2): 164–181.
- HUSEBY-DARVAS, E. V.** (1994) "'But Where Can We Go?'" Refugee Women in Hungary from the Former Yugoslavia' in Zaharlick, A. and MacDonald, J. (eds.) *Selected Papers on Refugee Issues: III*. Arlington American Anthropological Association.
- HUTCHINSON, S.** (1996) *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- INDRA, D.** (ed.) (1999) *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice*. New York: Berghahn.
- JACOBSON, D.** (1978) 'Scale and Social Control', in Barth, F. (ed.) *Scale and Social Organization*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- JAMES, W.** (1997) 'The Names of Fear: Memory, History, and The Ethnography of Feeling among Uduk Refugees', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 3: 115–131.
- JING, J.** (1996) *The Temple of Memories: History, Power and Morality in a Chinese Village*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- KARAKASIDOU, A.** (1997) *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passage to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870–1990*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- KISTE, R.** (1968) *Kili Island: A Study of the Relocation of the Ex-Bikini Marshallese*. Eugene: University of Oregon, Department of Anthropology.
- (1974) *The Bikinians: A Study of Forced Migration*. Menlo Park: Cummings.
- KRULFELD, R.** and **BAXTER, D.** (1997) 'Introduction', in Krulfeld, R. and Baxter, D. (eds.) *Beyond Boundaries*. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association.
- LEOPOLD, M.** (2001) "'Trying to Hold Things Together?": International NGOs Caught up in an Emergency in North-Western Uganda, 1996–1997', in Barrow, O. and Jennings, M. (eds.) *The Charitable Impulse*. Oxford: James Currey.
- LIEBER, M.** (1977) 'Conclusion: The Resettled Community and Its Context', in Lieber, M. (ed.) *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- (ed.) (1977) *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.
- LOIZOS, P.** (1981) *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1999) 'Ottoman Half-lives: Long-term Perspectives on Particular Forced Migrations', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12(3): 237–263.
- MAHAPATRA, L. K.** (1999) *Resettlement, Impoverishment and Reconstruction in India, Development for the Deprived*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- MALKKI, L.** (1995a) *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (1995b) 'Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things' in Durham, W. H. et al., *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol 24. Palo Alto: Annual Reviews Inc., pp. 495–523.
- (1997) 'Speechless emissaries: refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization' in Olwig, K. F. and Hastrup, K. (eds.) *Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Perspective*, London: Routledge.
- MARX, E.** (1990) 'The Social World of Refugees', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 3(3): 189–203.
- MORGAN, S.** (1987) 'Regression in the Progressive Era: Immigrants, Eugenists, and Ethnic Displacement' in Morgan, S. and Colson, E. (eds.) *People in Upheaval*. Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies.
- MORGAN, S.** and **COLSON, E.** (eds.) (1987) *People in Upheaval*. New York: Center for Migration Studies.
- NORDSTROM, C.** (1995) 'War on the Front Lines', in Nordstrom, C. and Robben, A. (ed.) *Fieldwork Under Fire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- NORDSTROM, C.** and **MARTIN, J.** (1992) 'The Culture of Conflict: Field Reality and Theory', in Nordstrom, C. and Martin, J. *The Paths to Domination, Resistance and Terror*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- (eds.) (1992) *The Paths to Domination, Resistance and Terror*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- NORDSTROM, C.** and **ROBBEN, A.** (eds.) (1995) *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- OLIVER-SMITH, A.** (1991) 'Involuntary Resettlement: Resistance and Political Empowerment', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4(2): 132–149.
- PETEET, J. M.** (1995) 'Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment among Palestinian Refugees' in Daniel, E. V. and Knudsen, J. (eds.) *Mistrusting Refugees*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- RAPPOPORT, R.** (1999) *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- REYNA, S. P.** and **DOWNS, R. E.** (eds.) (1999) *Deadly Developments: Capitalism, States, and War*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- REYNELL, J.** (1989) *Political Pawns: Refugees on the Thai–Kampuchean Border*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- RICHARDS, P.** (1996) *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey.
- ROBBEN, A.** and **NORDSTROM, C.** (1995) 'The Anthropology and Ethnography of Violence and Sociopolitical Conflict' in Nordstrom, C. and Robben, A. (eds.) *Fieldwork Under Fire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- SALEM-MURDOCK, M.** (1989) *Arabs and Nubians in New Halfa: A Study of Settlement and Irrigation*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

- SALISBURY, R.** (1986) *A Homeland for the Cree: Regional Development in James Bay 1971–1981*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- SCUDDER, T.** (1982) *No Place to Go: Effects of Compulsory Relocation on Navajos*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- (1993) 'Development-Induced Relocation and Refugee Studies: 37 Years of Change and Continuity among Zambia's Gwembe Tonga', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 6(2): 123–152.
- (1996) 'Development-Induced Impoverishment, Resistance and River-Basin Development', in McDowell, C. (ed.) *Understanding Impoverishment: The Consequences of Development-Induced Displacement*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- SCUDDER, T.** and **COLSON, E.** (1979) 'Long-Term Research in Gwembe Valley, Zambia', in Foster, G. et al. (eds.) *Long-Term Field Research in Social Anthropology*. New York, Academic Press.
- (1982) 'From Welfare to Development: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Dislocated People', in Hansen, A. and Oliver-Smith, A. (eds.) *Involuntary Migration and Resettlement: The Problems and Responses of Dislocated People*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- TAMBIAH, S. J.** (2000) 'Transnational Movements, Diaspora, and Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus* 129(1): 163–194.
- THOMAS, W. I.** and **ZNANIECKI, F.** (1918) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- TURTON, D.** (1999) 'Warfare in the Lower Omo Valley, Southwestern Ethiopia: Reconciling Materialist and Political Explanations', in Reyna, S. P. and Downs, R. E. (eds.) *Deadly Developments: Capitalism, States and War*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach.
- VILLA ROJAS, A.** (1955) *Los Mazatecos y el Problema Indígena de la Cuenca del Papaloapan*. Mexico City: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.
- VOUITIRA, E.** and **HARRELL-BOND, B.** (1995) 'In Search of the Locus of Trust: The Social World of the Refugee Camp', in Daniel, E. V. and Knudsen, J. C. (eds.) *Mistrusting Refugees*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 207–224.
- WAHLBECK, Ö.** (1999) *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities*. London: Macmillan Press.
- WALL, A.** (1989) *Kilowatts and Crisis: Hydroelectric Power and Social Dislocation in Eastern Panama*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- WORLD BANK** (1980) *Operational Manual Statement No. 2.33: Social Issues Associated with Involuntary Resettlement in Bank-Financed Projects*. Washington: World Bank.
- ZETTER, R.** (1991) 'Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming an Identity', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4(1): 39–62.

Copyright of *Journal of Refugee Studies* is the property of Oxford University Press / UK and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.