

# Displacement and Migration

## Comparing China and India

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The edited volume under review tasks itself to “a comparative analysis of development-induced migration in India and China, with a particular focus on displacement [including planned resettlement] caused by urbanisation and dam construction.” In *Development-Induced Displacement in India and China: A Comparative Look at the Burdens of Growth*, Florence Padovani argues for the importance of the book, inasmuch as, although “much has been written about China’s and India’s specific handling of problems arising from involuntary migration in their respective territories, so far there has been no academic work done from a comparative perspective” (p lviii).

Both countries, since the declaration of India’s independence in 1947, and the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, have seen the movement of tens of millions of people in relation to what may be termed “development-induced migration.” This has been of two principal kinds, that is, arising out of actual development projects such as dams, urban housing, etc, and out of urban-oriented migration. In both cases, there has been a significantly different dynamic in each country.

In the foreword to this volume, Michael M Cernea compares the history of development-induced displacement and resettlement in China and India. Since 1950, some 80 million people have been removed because of development projects in China, and at least 70 million people in India. After a disastrous start under Maoism, with much suffering for the displaced, after 1980, China has developed pioneering resettlement legislation, which embodies resettlement with development. Importantly, China has not only financial, but also organisational capacity to go a significant way towards delivering increasingly positive outcomes, with resettlement very much being a part of the Chinese future. Displacement arising out of the

**Development-Induced Displacement in India and China: A Comparative Look at the Burdens of Growth** edited by Florence Padovani, with a Foreword by Michael M Cernea, Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2016; pp 282, \$95 (hardcover).

implementation of development projects has happened in a far less planned and policy regulated manner in India. “Only a minority fraction ... has also been relocated [and planned for] by the projects that displaced them,” with the majority having to fend for themselves, and being “left even poorer than they were before” (p xiv). While some Indian states and some corporations developed their own resettlement policies, India as a country has only developed national-level resettlement regulations and legislation in the last decade.

This movement has not only resulted from infrastructure-related development projects, but also from economic migration—again with differing dynamics in the two countries. “Few countries in the world ... have played such a direct role in regulating and limiting internal migration over such a long period of time” as China. “It has always been an integral part of the state development and strategies” (p 3). While the percentage of the population living in urban areas has increased significantly from 10% in 1949 to 51.25% in 2011 (Berg 2012), as is clarified later on in this review, urban migration has always been tightly controlled, albeit in differing ways over time. India has similarly seen a significant rise in its urban population. “Between 1951 and 2001, the proportion of the population living in urban areas rose from 17.3 percent to 32.8 percent” (p 68). Indian cities are characterised by a high prevalence of informal/shack settlements, which has not been the case in the more tightly policy-controlled processes of urbanisation in China.

The editor, Padovani, sets out the scope of the book in the introduction,

entitled: “Why Compare India and China?” The book is addressed to “a focus on development-induced migrations, and [specifically] migrations caused by urban development or dam construction.” She sets out how the book is structured into four parts, each of which raises a specific migration–development–displacement issue. The book compares the two countries, first, in terms of state policies with regard to migration relating to development and to urbanisation. This is illustrated in terms of case studies of major cities and of large dams in each country.

### Projects and Migration

The section of the book titled “Development Project-induced Migration as a State Mission,” considers how the controlling and planning of population movement by the state has been central to the approach to development in both China and India. The Chinese leg of the comparison sets out the history of the state control of migration in China from 1949 to the present day. It seeks to show “the distinctive features of Chinese migration, including its central institution of the *hukou system*, [that is, household registration as rural or urban, with differential benefits], by linking them with state development projects” (p 3). The nature of the interaction between the state-led migration and development strategies is seen as falling into two broad time periods. The first is the “Soviet-type Industrialization Era,” of 1950 to 1978, in which migration was very tightly controlled, and the second is the post-Maoist period, from 1979 to the present, which may be referred to as the “China as World Factory Era,” in which migration has become more flexible, but not uncontrolled.

The partner chapter on India for this part of the book uses a range of case studies to present a compelling and critical account of the “developmentality gaze” of the state, and it makes the point that this perspective has remained essentially unchanged over the decades since independence. However, the author’s important claim about both the essential lack of progress in terms of vision, as well as policy and law, does raise important questions for further

consideration, particularly in relation to the comparison between China and India, which is central to this book. If there has not been significant change over the years, as there has been in China, in national-level approaches to development or to resettlement, it seems important to ask why. Why has there not been such change in a democratic India across various shifts between different groupings in power since independence? Why has China been able to make “progress,” whereas India has not?

The chapter, “An Analysis of Policies on the Migration of Rural Labour” in China, seeks to analyse policies and their impact on the migration of rural labour, from 1979 to the present. It reviews the development of state policies over this period. First, it looks at labour inflow regions, such as large urban conglomerations, in terms of policy development, and barriers experienced in terms of the effective administration of these policies, as well as the range of ways in which migrants experience discrimination in this regard (for example, residence registration, employment, social security). It then considers what appear to be a range of positive policy and administrative developments in the labour outflow regions. This chapter provides an excellent overview of the issues relevant to address the central questions around rural–urban migration in China. It is, however, striking that the chapters in this book that consider this concern do not directly address the issue of the provision of housing for rural migrants coming to the major cities.

The partner perspective on India argues that

migration in India is largely fuelled by increasing regional disparities, rural–urban disparities, and urban bias in economic planning, (and that) ... Internal migration is now seen as a major mechanism for the redistribution of resources ... and a vital means for raising the incomes of the poor. (p 66)

The chapter gives a brief history of rural–urban migration in India, as well as considering its male/female dynamics, and legal measures taken, particularly over the last 40 years, to protect migrants. Various kinds of migration are discussed, and some of their complexities

are outlined, relating to urban-oriented internal migration in India. However, the chapter seeks to do two rather different kinds of things; that is, on the one hand, to provide an historical as well as typology-based overview of internal migration in India, and on the other, to provide two cases of resistance to migration, so as to develop an argument for protection of migrants’ rights. While it raises important matters, the chapter thus remains at a rather general, overview level, rather than providing a more policy-focused analysis (as this part of the book is seemingly intended to do).

### Urbanisation and Large Dams

The Chinese leg of the focus on this theme argues that an explanation of “[t]he speed of urban development in China, especially in Shanghai,” needs to be related to the fact that “China has continued with the same model of urban development dominated by centralized power and authoritarian policies” (p 91). However, it becomes clear that there clearly is a complexity to such centralisation and authoritarianism, inasmuch as “the urban government may draft regulations to maximize the interests of the city or its own interests, without violating central policies” (p 93).

Kam Wing Chan clearly brings out the paradoxical way in which providing greater local autonomy to cities such as Shanghai can create problems, for particularly the less well-placed urban dwellers, as both authorities and urban dwellers become caught in the crosswinds of the pressures, from both the government and international capital, to pursue the “urban miracle.”

The Indian chapter on the same issues, “focuses on the process in Mumbai which has, since the 1980s, led to evictions, and explains why forced resettlements have been increasing recently” (p 110). This is related to the “ambition for Mumbai to become the first city of India and of emergent Asia, on the model of Shanghai” (p 113). This broad project “aims at disencumbering Mumbai of its shantytowns ... and means relocating 1,959 slum settlements” (p 113). The chapter brings out the major local slum and development displacement projects in

the Mumbai area, as well as the gains and losses experienced by relocatees, together with their reactions.

The study of both countries brings out the complexities involved in urban displacement and resettlement, including the political and economic issues faced by those at the bottom.

Various social aspects relevant to the construction of large dams are considered via an examination of the Gosikhurd Dam in India and the Three Gorges Dam in China. Joel Cabalion sees the Gosikhurd Dam as characterised by a “state-centric” and “techno-managerial” approach (p 136). He illuminatingly brings out the issues and dilemmas of social movements interacting with the government, in relation to such a controversial matter as the development-induced resettlement. He convincingly argues for

the importance of studying the structure of relations between social movements and the state, so as to grasp the evolution of ‘regimes of dispossession’ in India ... such an ethnographic analysis of the relations of negotiation and dissent between institutions, social movements and rural groups is long overdue. (p 154)

If we do not come to understand these dynamics and do not come to incorporate them into the way that development projects are conceptualised, planned and implemented, we seem condemned to keep recreating the same kinds of problems we have generated previously—from whichever sets of interest groups, and for whichever purposes they may initially have originated.

Padovani addresses two resettlement sites in the Three Gorges context—one in Shanghai, and the other in Guangdong—seeking to “shed some light on some of the difficulties encountered by those resettled, and how they have found solutions to their predicaments” (p 170). While this chapter raises important contextual points and policy relevant issues, one would have liked more ethnographic detail in this regard.

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The last chapter in this section on large dams considers ways in which people on the ground may express their interests “when a conflict of interest arises between officials and ordinary people” (p 191). It examines in some detail the situation, over more than 20 years, of the Three Gorges resettlers of Gaoyang Township, who, under the initiative and leadership of a certain individual, undertake a process of collective petitioning and contentious gatherings, resulting, inter alia, in the imprisonment of their leader (pp 195–200).

Xing Ying challenges us to (re)think about how we consider the ways in which local people who respond to development projects and resettlement might see issues relating to justice, law, and human rights, and how we might accordingly understand local-level responses in terms of petitions and resistance.

### Inadequately Comparative

This book potentially places itself in the forefront of displacement studies, by initiating a comparative study of displacement

at two levels at which comparison has not taken place before, that is, between the two countries in which the most displacement and resettlement has taken place in the world, namely China and India; and across two significantly different types of movements, which both relate to national-level development concerns, namely control of rural–urban migration, and development-induced displacement and resettlement.

The content and chapters of the book vary, moving between excellent material and argument in terms of the history and ethnography of the development of migration policy, as well as insightful accounts of actual cases, and a more general, less detailed accounts in this regard.

What one does miss in the book as a whole, is a sufficiently clear focus on its explicitly stated comparative goals. Although each part of the book is structured as a comparison between China and India in terms of a specific migration/displacement issue, the country-specific contributions in each part do not necessarily come across as consciously organised

and composed in such comparative terms. It would have enhanced the development of a comparative set of insights developing throughout the book as a whole if, at the end of each part, the editor had provided a brief concluding section, bringing out the comparison between the two countries in relation to the particular issue being discussed. This could have laid the empirical and analytical foundations for a concluding chapter, in which the comparative initiative on which the book claims to be grounded could have been most valuably realised. The editor could have brought together and synthesised the findings and insights coming out of the various parts of the book to relate them to “the burdens of growth.”

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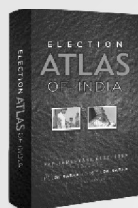
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