

Resistances for water transfer projects as double movement

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INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Environmental movements are one of the important sources of resistance against economic or developed projects in natural resources and the marketization of the environment. Since the 1970s, environmental protests have become more and more influential with regard to environmental policy.
- ▶ This study focuses on two water transfer projects to uncover the nature of environmental movements and resistance to these projects in two different political and economic structures: Iran and the US.
- ▶ This project will reveal the nature of resistance on the part of local communities, specifically water transfer projects in Beheshtabad in Chaharmahal province, Iran and the Northern Integrated Supply project (NISP) in Colorado
- ▶ (Wolford & Keene, 2015; Robbins, 2012; and 2004; McAfee & Shapiro, 2010; Spronk, 2007; Escobar, 2004)

Problem Statement

- ▶ The United States and Iran have two different political and economic systems in relation to water issues and environmental movements. However, there are historical challenges in both the Western United States and Iran for using and accessing water.
- ▶ **The research objective:** my proposed research will help clarify the nature of the local resistances around water issues in two different societies, and will reveal the opportunities, successes, and failures that both communities have experienced with regard to these proposed projects. In addition, this research will illuminate the public's concerns regarding the impacts of these projects on local communities and the environment.

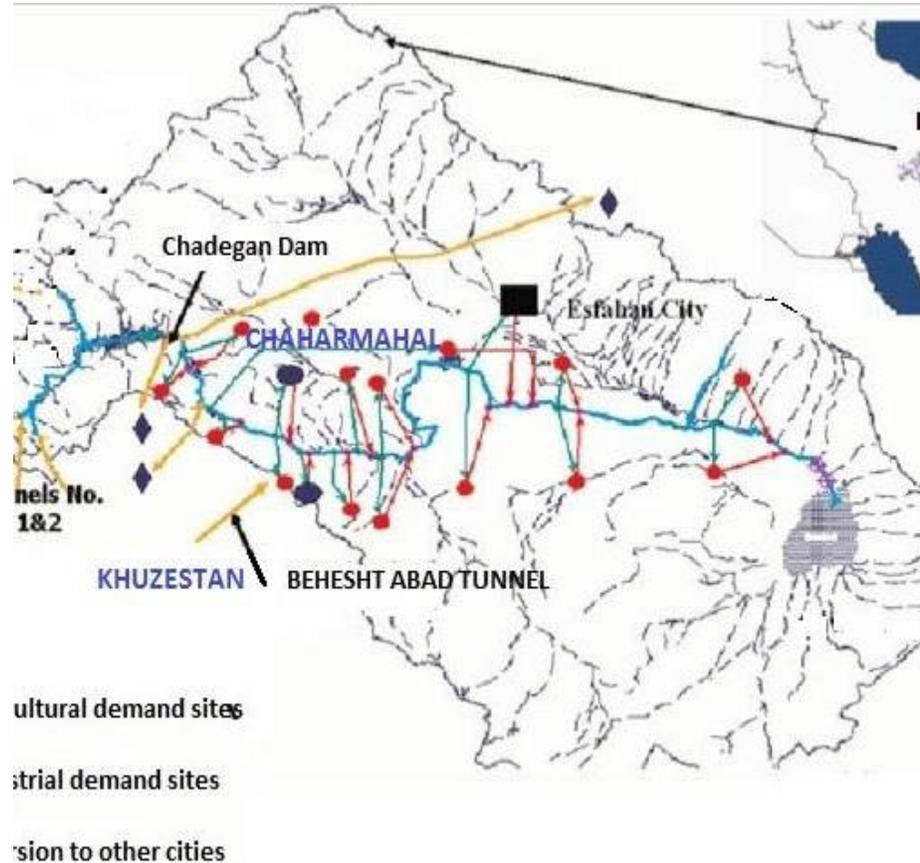
The overall research question

The research applies Polanyi's "double movements" theory and Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" (both detailed shortly).

- ▶ The overall research question is "How do the two principles of double movements and accumulation by dispossession (ABD) play out in two distinct environmental movements centered upon water projects?"

RESEARCH SITES AND BACKGROUND

- ▶ Beheshtabad Tunnel Project (BATP), which would be one of the biggest water transfer projects in Iran.
- ▶ BATP is designed to transfer water from Beheshtabad River to the center of Iran.
- ▶ The proposed project will transfer about 580 million cubic meters of water to the central plateau of Iran for human consumption, agricultural development, and industrial use.
- ▶ This project includes a dam, water reservoirs, and tunnels for transferring water.



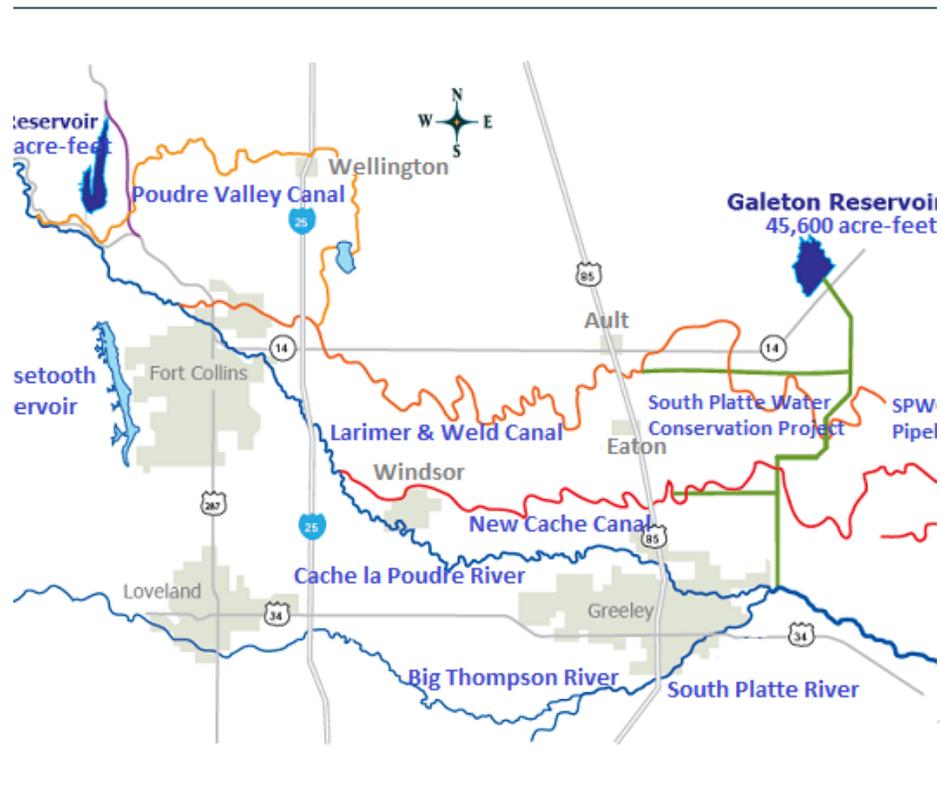
RESEARCH SITES AND BACKGROUND

- ▶ The project has generated a great deal of protest and resistance, specifically in the Khuzestan and Chaharmahal provinces in Iran. Opponents of the plan believe the project would bring many environmental, social, and economic threats.
- ▶ They argue that the project will cause environmental hazards, drying local springs, and reducing and lowering recharge of the groundwater source. They also believe this project will have negative effects on the water quality of local people, their water rights, and the tourism industry. Environmentalists argue that this project will worsen drought conditions in the area

(Halabian and Shabankari 2010; Farsnews Agency 2017; Tasnim News Agency 2017).

RESEARCH SITES AND BACKGROUND

- ▶ Colorado's Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP), is a water project which would funnel Poudre River and South Platte River water into two reservoirs.
- ▶ This project would yield 40,000 acre-feet (about 326,000 gallons) of water for agricultural and community usage of participants annually.
- ▶ NISP includes eleven fast-growing cities and towns and four water districts within the expanding Northern Front Range.
- ▶ The Poudre River is the main resource for this project (NISP website 2017)



RESEARCH SITES AND BACKGROUND

- ▶ Environmental groups such as “Save the Poudre” have been fighting NISP for some years because they believe that the project is a threat to the environment and also to water quality and quantity.
- ▶ The plan's opponents contend that the project's goal of diverting 60% of the Poudre River's water for agricultural, municipal, and industrial uses has taken a toll on the quality and quantity of water in the area. In addition, the NISP project would divert another 35% of the remaining water from the Poudre, thus endangering the "June Rise" phenomenon, during which the stream of the Poudre River increases and replenishes the surrounding ecosystem (SaveThePoudre 2016).

<http://www.savethepoudre.org/>

LITERATURE REVIEWS

- ▶ There is little sociological literature discussing both Polanyi's "Double movement" and Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" theories in relation to water transfer projects. However, there is extensive research around the various components of these theories and perspectives about the environment in general and water issues in particular.
- ▶ The key literature reviews included here discuss the research on neoliberalism of Nature, dislocation as the byproduct of neoliberalism, the neoliberal state and environmental government, environmental movements, and finally neoliberalism and resistance.

Neoliberalization of nature

- ▶ After the 1970s, neoliberal policies were dispersed on a global level in many environmental fields, with privatization and marketization of nature in the hopes of deregulating environmental management occurring (Harvey, 2007).
- ▶ Neoliberal environmentalism began with “the conceptual separation of nature and society and then reconnects them by reductively constructing ‘nature’ so that it can be encompassed within economy” (McAfee & Shapiro, 2010, p. 581). The increased privatization of public goods in the environmental area has dramatically increased the commodification of nature (Castree, 2008).
- ▶ The Commodification of nature is “a leading environmental policy trend. A new generation of programs under the rubric of payment for ecosystem services is based on the premise that the natural environment can best be safeguarded by valuing and managing “nature’s services” as tradable commodities” (McAfee & Shapiro, 2010, p.580).

Dislocation as the byproduct of neoliberalism

- ▶ The studies in different areas show as Harvey (2005) argues that “the general balance sheet on the environmental consequences of neoliberalization is almost certainly negative” (P.172). From the political-economic perspective, sociologists, geographers, and political ecologists have focused on the market impacts of neoliberalism upon dislocation both socially and environmentally, including impacts such as poverty, privation, and environmental problems (Rabbins, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Haley 2011).
- ▶ In fact, neoliberalism eliminated any kind of protection from society, while people became poorer every day, the price of goods, services, health care, and education were increasing and had a negative effect on the standard of living.

The neoliberal state and environmental governance

- ▶ Neoliberalism claims to oppose state interference in the economy and the free market. However, from an ecological perspective, the state plays a key role in the creation, development, and protection of neoliberalism. In practice, the neoliberal state paradoxically promotes the transfer of nature from public to private control, making this state different from the traditional liberal state. In fact, this shift of control from the state to the market is facilitated through neoliberal practices.
- ▶ Re-regulation or deregulation has been applied by neoliberal states to have privatization and commercialization, but advocates of market environmentalism use the term “governance” (Bakker, 2003).

Environmental Movements

- ▶ Modern environmental movements have been emerging since the 1970s (Lee, Afiff and Rachman, 2008) and have become a highly politicized objective (Robins,2004). It was at the time that neoliberalism began to develop (Harvey, 2005), and governments began implementing policies which they called environmental reforms which indeed are the neoliberal policies for environment.
- ▶ To be precise, many modern environmental movements offer direct resistance against neoliberalism, particularly because they oppose the commodification of nature and privatization of common natural resources.

Neoliberalism and Resistance

- ▶ Since the 1970s, neoliberal policies have dispersed globally the practices of privatization and marketization of (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberal environmentalism “begins from the conceptual separation of nature and society and then reconnects them by reductively constructing ‘nature’ so that it can be encompassed within economy” (McAfee & Shapiro, 2010, p. 581).
- ▶ Neoliberalism in nature is a threat for livelihoods and has increased poverty in many societies, consequently many different groups are involved in different social resistance to protect society (Escobar, 2004; Perreault and Valdivi, 2010).

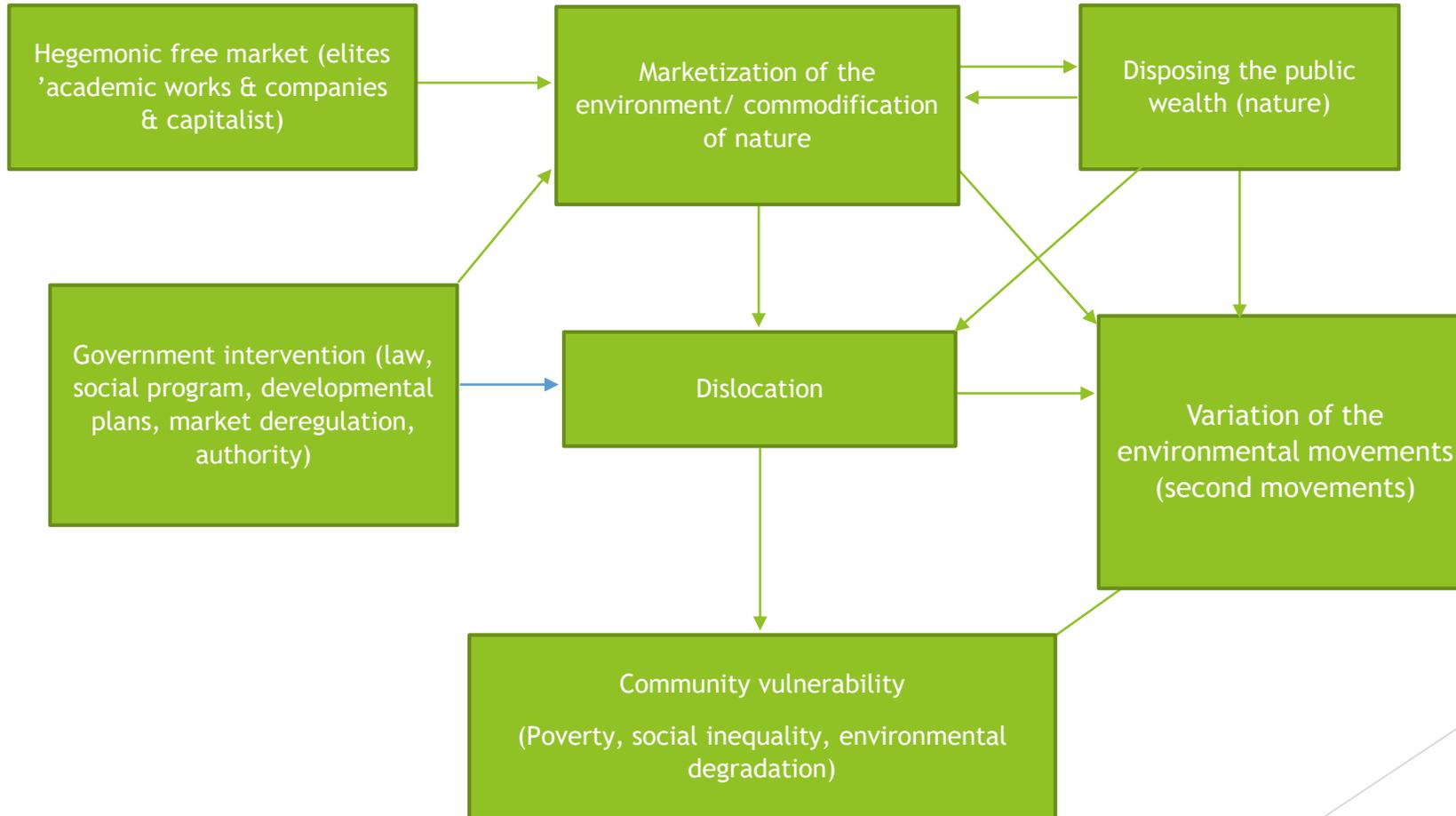
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ This study applies Polanyi's theory ([1942] 2001) of “double movements” and Harvey’s theory (2003-2005) of “accumulation by dispossession” to understanding and analyzing two water-focused environmental movements in Iran and the US.
- ▶ According to Polanyi’s theory, assignment of human life and environment to a market as commodities is tantamount to their destruction. He argues that society is responding to this destruction and this process is called the double movement. This theory can help this research project in analyzing environmental movements around the water projects in a double movement framework.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ In Harvey's perspective, neoliberalism seeks institutional reforms in social and economic systems and creates new regulations for capital accumulation.
- ▶ In this view, the reforms of neoliberalism led to environmental degradation, social inequality, and the reconstitution of class power. In Harvey's perspective, neoliberalism deliberately causes crises to facilitate accumulation by dispossession. Accumulation by dispossession is the main mechanism for the redistribution of capital that mainly includes the commodification and privatization of land. However, Harvey points out that the methods of neoliberalism vary in different systems.
- ▶ Moreover, Harvey believes that neoliberalism with its accompanying marketization of the environment and imposed costs of environmental degradation and dislocation constitute one reason for the emergence of environmental movements

The proposed Model of the study



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is intended to address the following specific research questions:

- ▶ How do the two different communities perceive the water projects with regard to environmental, social, and economic aspects of their lives?

What are similarities and differences in the two cases (environmentally, socially, and economically)?

What kinds of dislocation have occurred in the two cases (environmentally, socially, and economically)?

- ▶ How have the communities responded to the water projects in terms of (1) how they accept these projects and (2) how they have resisted these projects?

What are the similarities and differences in the two communities regarding response to the water projects?

What are the similarities and differences in the two communities in response to social dislocation and environmental issues resulting from the water projects?

- ▶ To what degree do the environmental movements, acting as double movements, protect society (environmentally, socially, economically in the two cases) and what factors explain the similarities and differences seen?

RESEARCH METHODS

- ▶ This will be a comparative case study, gaining an in-depth understanding in two different communities in order to describe how and why resistance for water projects has emerged within two different real-life contexts (Yin 2009).
- ▶ I will conduct both interview and documentary study. This comparative case study will illustrate the nature of movements in two different communities in relation to water development projects. All material, interviews, and documents will focus on this issue.

RESEARCH METHODS

- ▶ Participant Selection: deliberate purposeful snowball sampling (interviews: environmentalists, stakeholders, experts)
- ▶ Document Study
- ▶ Analysis Procedures: (open coding)
- ▶ Validity and reliability (trustworthiness and dependability): triangulation, pervious researches

RESULTS

- ▶ New distribution of water rights because of water projects (if collective right to water and land [water as a public good]) transfer to a private property, or wealth from lower social class transfer to upper or specific companies or groups.
- ▶ Any struggles over land and water because of quantity and quality of water, affecting environmental problems and livelihood.
- ▶ Collective actions of local people and environmentalists as anti-privatization and anti-commodification
- ▶ New water governance through water projects, (any kind of social control / which firm, part or company is responsible for new social control); who has access to water for which use
- ▶ The role of local community
- ▶ Competition for benefits and any signs that imply paying or selling for water

(I am in the process of collecting my data, and this is the anticipated results)

DISCUSSION

In two different cases:

- ▶ Hegemonic free market; Government intervention; Marketization of the environment/ commodification of nature
- ▶ Dislocation and Community vulnerability (Poverty, social inequality, environmental degradation)
- ▶ Variation of the environmental movements (second movements)

CONCLUSION

- ▶ As one of the main centers of neoliberalism, the US has a democratic reputation in comparison with the Iranian state. Iran has an ideologically Islamic, “un-democratic” government that maintains a high degree of control in all aspects of society, including natural resources
- ▶ This comparative study with the US, one of the important centers of neoliberalism, will help reveal how two different political and economic systems experience the commodification of water issues and the marketization of nature along with the ensuing local resistance to these projects. In addition, this is a good opportunity to understand how two societies show their own reactions to these projects while they have two different social and economic structures and in general, how double movements can be similar and different in two disparate political and economic structures.

Some references

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