



CHAPTER 2

Interdisciplinary Approach to Long-Term Welfare Effects of Displacement

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INTRODUCTION

Economics and anthropology have shared a history of little interdisciplinary interaction. This lack of cordiality has accounted for limited cross-disciplinary publications between them. It is surprising that although these disciplines have forged harmonious relationships with other sister disciplines such as psychology and law, communication between economists and anthropologists remains strained (Cosgel 2005). It is therefore the subject of this chapter to explore what each individual discipline offers and attempt to identify whether their broken communication can be resolved in particular to the field of studies on the long-term effects of forced displacement. The reason we chose the topic on long-term effects of displacement is because we have been conducting an empirical inquiry of the effect of displacement since 2004; our first-hand experiences and observations can therefore provide invaluable contribution to current displace-

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ment studies and development studies that particularly looks at the long-term effects of displacement in both theoretical and policy levels.

Although economics and anthropology have been two major disciplines for studying displacement, their coordination was surprisingly rare. This problem was addressed by Michael Cernea, a well-known displacement study scholar who established the ‘Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction’ (IRR) model for assessing the impacts of displacement. Cernea (2003) argues that *anthronomics* is not just required to add vigour but is tantamount to the field of displacement and resettlement. He points out several vital issues in *The Economics of Involuntary Resettlement: Questions and Challenges* and *Risks and Reconstruction: Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees*. Primarily, he notes that the economics of displacement has been largely ignored and is thus an immature subject. He further states that anthropology has progressed far ahead of economics in this respect. Thus, meaningful insights can be obtained if displacement and resettlement issues were analysed with an anthro-economic eye.

Moreover, the economic methodology employed to analyse costs, compensation and other displacement issues is based on cost-benefits analysis which neglects and underestimates the full impact of this phenomenon. Indeed, the “compensation principle” has been widely challenged as it fails to truly compensate those displaced (Cernea 2003, p. 10; Kanbur 2003; Schmidt-Soltau 2002; Guha 2001; Nayak 2000). This is because it does not adequately reflect the social and economic losses incurred by displaced communities. This includes not just economic risks but also a breakdown of social networks and relationships (Sapkota 2001; Cernea 1997). Hence, economics alone leads to weak policy recommendations and remedies. An interdisciplinary approach, however, could yield sounder policy and methodological recommendations as well as a truer assessment of the impact of displacement (Cernea 2003). Indeed, it could lead to “double sustainability” to “protect both the biodiversity and people’s livelihoods at the same time” (Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau 2006, p. 1808).

The chapter is organized into three parts. In the first part, a review of economics and anthropology is provided. Through the review, we take a closer look at the similarities and differences between these two disciplines. Afterward, in the second part, we question whether methodological differences make them impossible to work together. Indeed, on the contrary, we argue the differences of these two disciplines offer one of the most holistic perspectives to study the complex effects of displacement. Our analysis demonstrates that economics (outcome-focused research) and

anthropology (process-focused research) allow us have a better understanding of displacement. In the last part, we use our Nepal displacement study to illustrate the above observations and arguments.

ECONOMICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY: A HISTORY OF LITTLE INTERACTION

Several studies reveal that economics and anthropology have not been the greatest allies. Pieters and Baumgartner (2002) employ citation analysis to examine whether these disciplines communicate with each other. Their findings suggest limited conversations between the aforementioned disciplines. Rigney and Barnes (1980) who use a random sample of articles from one journal for each discipline find results consistent with this. Economics and anthropology, both of which belong to the umbrella of social sciences, share certain distinct commonalities. The most fundamental point where these disciplines meet is their concern for human behaviour and institutions (Cosgel 2005). Despite this, considerable differences between them have precluded cross-fertilization. Extant literature has attributed this to methodological differences. However, Cosgel (2005) contends that behavioural assumptions and modes of enquiry account for this. Thus, while economists assume that rationality is a basic tenet of human behaviour, anthropologists adopt a more holistic approach (Cosgel 2005). It ventures beyond treating man as a utility-maximizing being, taking into consideration a range of motives including social, cultural and moral determinants of behaviour (Cosgel 2005). Furthermore, with respect to modes of enquiry, economists use models, theories and secondary sources to collect quantitative data quite unlike anthropologists who study actual people and events using field research to gather qualitative data (Wilk 1996). The disciplines have been further differentiated based on their purpose—while the former deals with the problem of interest, the latter preoccupies itself with the problem of knowledge (Cosgel 2005).

Much of the differences between anthropology and economics in their approach results from the historical paths they have taken (Buckley and Chapman 1996). Social anthropology has traversed the path of postmodernism wherein it has gone through the positivist phase and abandoned it (Buckley and Chapman 1996). On the other hand, economics has been characterized by modernism, remaining steadfast to its modernistic agenda (Buckley and Chapman 1996). These differing evolutionary paths have

resulted in considerable divergences between these disciplines. However, these dissonances do not necessarily prevent economics and anthropologists wholly from talking with one another as cross-disciplinary work abounds among other fields which share similar divergences. Indeed, we argue that significant synergies between economics and anthropology appear promising. Moreover, the flexibility of academic boundaries and the constant state of flux between such boundaries suggest that such differences are not completely irreconcilable and certainly warrant further study.

BENEFITS FROM CROSS-DISCIPLINARY INTERACTION

There is a growing body of literature that points towards the great rewards that cross-disciplinary study can yield. Economics and anthropology are no exceptions to this. Economics has traditionally studied the more quantifiable dimensions of society with the aid of theories and empirical analysis (Grossbard 1978). On the other hand, anthropologists have flirted with the extensive margin of social science studying entire cultures and communities to gain in-depth insights (Grossbard 1978). The very differences between these disciplines suggest that there is scope for them to work hand in hand to achieve a more informed picture of their subject of study. Indeed, by extending the intensive and intensifying the extensive, the robustness of empirical studies and theories can be combined with wide cultural findings (Grossbard 1978). According to Grossbard (1978), three key benefits can be exploited from such interdisciplinary work: (1) tackling the most pertinent questions more effectively by making use of their respective skills; (2) collecting improved data; and (3) providing new meaning and significance to previous ethnographic findings. Yet, this has seen little application perhaps to “discourage turbulence at the boundaries of a subject out of fear of losing autonomy” (Douglas 1973, p. 781).

Hackenberg (1999) promotes the rather underutilized interdisciplinary hybrid between economics and anthropology. His argument rests largely on Stern’s (1960) findings: “Hybridization between different species... often results in increased size, productiveness, and resistance to...unfavorable conditions of the environment.” By extension then, if these disciplines cross-breed, significant hybrid vigour could be achieved (Hackenberg 1999). It is thought to occupy particular importance in the field of development planning wherein the resettlement of displaced populations is of major concern (Hackenberg 1999). In this context, economists can form

an alliance with anthropologists to ensure that such displaced populations are economically as sound as they were in their previous environs (Cernea 1999). Furthermore, observations by anthropologists are also deemed necessary to come up with more effective solutions. This is one instance of the ‘hybrid vigour’ that can be achieved through cross-disciplinary interaction. Epstein (1975) purports that the domain of economic development is a perfect ground to marry economists and anthropologists. Indeed, deductive reasoning rooted in the economic man model fails to completely resolve issues such as unequal income distribution (Epstein 1975). This has heightened practitioners’ consciousness of the lacunae in the discipline. In what is called a “marriage of convenience”, such issues can be addressed and greater explanatory power achieved (Epstein 1975, p. 33). The blend of anthropologists’ micro-approach analysing micro-cosms with the economists’ macro-approach acknowledges the importance of both qualitative and quantitative inquiry.

The above arguments are reinforced by Seers (1969, p. 5) who states that “The fulfillment of human potential requires much that cannot be specified in purely economic terms.” The following example exemplifies this. Epstein (1968) examined the kinship system of the people of Repitok, the system of inheritance as well as the sale of cocoa. According to the traditional patterns of inheritance, a man’s sister’s son had a primary claim on the money earned from cocoa rather than his own son (Epstein 1975). Thus, to circumvent this situation, they sold the cocoa seeds to independent Chinese traders so that it did not go on record (Epstein 1975). Thus, their sons could benefit from the money earned. It was only through the analysis of the conflicting pulls from the system of inheritance on one end and a man’s loyalty to his son on the other that these insights could be gained. Thus, such interdisciplinary work is of increasing importance especially with respect to development problems. It is therefore fitting that Lipton (1968, p. 14) says “It has become commonplace that macro-plans without micro-knowledge just do not get implemented and are therefore bad plans.”

Ray (2006) neatly sums up the benefits that can be reaped by way of cooperative interdisciplinary conversations. Primarily, analytical models are deemed to have better explanatory power if viewed with an anthropological eye. This is because “basic trouble is that nature is so complex that many quite different theories can go some way to explaining the results” (Crick 1988, p. 141). Thus, a particular outcome can be a result of several processes. This is where an anthropologist can add value by examining the

processes and structure that led to such an outcome and thereby suggesting alternative explanations for the same outcomes (Ray 2006). One method employed by anthropologists to carry out “empirical investigations of processes themselves” is through within-case causal process analysis wherein each case is studied individually and used to evaluate competing hypotheses (Lipton 1992; Collier et al. 2004).

Moreover, Herskovits (1941) points to lacunae inherent in both disciplines that can be considerably overcome if they joined hands. Economics, based on models and carefully defined assumptions, are considered to be rooted in “logical unreality” (Herskovits 1941, p. 272). It is claimed that findings from such models should be verified by actual facts. This is predominantly the domain of anthropologists who study the actual happenings and rely less on modelling. At the same time, it is suggested that anthropologists adopt a more quantitative approach to thought and practice alike (Herskovits 1941). Furthermore, economic models rest on what is explicitly said (Ray 2006). However, anthropologists believe that what is not being said and asked is as critical as what is being said and asked (Li 2002). This could have political implications and thus more value can be gained if such factors are considered when interpreting a model’s outcome. In essence, modelling leads to real gains and losses and the latter can often outweigh the former especially when modelling complex systems (Krugman 1995). It is thus of immense importance that when policies are designed, they incorporate explicit findings from models as well as their silences (Ray 2006). In this context, working with anthropologists could potentially refine the outcomes of such models.

Moreover, it is suggested that economic outcomes aid anthropological enquiry. Economic models often yield counterintuitive or unexpected results (Ray 2006). Such results present an opportunity to anthropologists to investigate new or changing social processes (Ray 2006). For example, Bardhan (2000) finds that there is a U-shaped relationship between intravillage inequality and cooperation over water contrary to expectations. Such instances are an opening for anthropologists to explore the processes and dynamics behind these surprising results. As Appadurai (2004, p. 63) puts it, economic models can often act as an “invitation to anthropology to widen its conceptions of how human beings engage their own futures”.

The last two decades have seen a confluence in the interests of anthropologists and economists due to an increase in consciousness of the gains that could be realized (Greenfield 1982). In Gudeman’s (2001) book, ‘The Anthropology of Economy’, he states that recent changes in the

global landscape have forced students of economics to rethink their analytical approaches. Indeed, he demonstrates this with the aid of 50 cross-cultural examples thereby presenting an anthropological approach to economy wherein communal processes play a central role in markets (Gudeman 2001). In essence, the book proposes a new medium to tackle contemporary issues more effectively. Lipton (1992) concludes that for a true conversation—*sacra conversazione*—between economists and anthropologists to occur, they must necessarily come to terms with the difference between process-oriented research in anthropology and outcome-oriented research in economics. Processes are the steps whereby specific outcomes are reached whereas outcomes are the research findings obtained from models (Ray 2006). Thus, while economists test whether the modelled process is consistent with the measured outcomes, anthropologists explore the structure of these relationships (Lipton 1992). This is seen to be the key point of departure between these disciplines. For these disciplines to cooperate then, an implicit recognition of the need for both process- and outcome-oriented research is required.

Hence, a better understanding of social phenomena calls for a combination of outcomes from economic models and process analyses of anthropology (Fig. 2.1). This requires economists to examine the outcomes of their models with more caution and anthropologists to explore the possi-

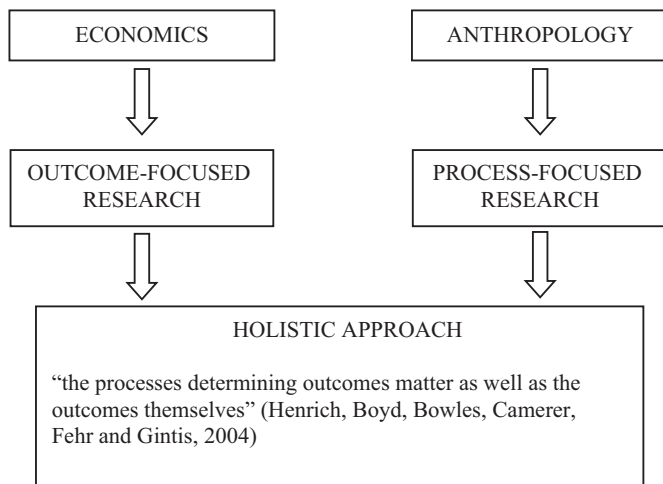


Fig. 2.1 Anthropology and economics

ble usefulness of models (Ray 2006). Perhaps it is fitting to end with Herskovits's (1941) take on the matter—neither can anthropologists ignore the methodological and conceptual tools employed by economists nor can economists ignore the telling contributions anthropology can make to matters such as prestige, gift exchange and specialization of labour. In the ultimate analysis, significant synergies can be gained and thus a more refined body of research attained.

ANTHRO-NOMICS APPROACH TO STUDY THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF DISPLACEMENT IN NEPAL

Many studies show that since the 1950s, Nepal has experienced rapid transformation in landownership from the indigenous economically marginalized groups who had the weakest political standing to the more powerful immigrant groups (Caplan 1970; Guneratne 2002). It also closely corresponds to the local socio-economic context, particularly after the large number of immigrants led to disruptive social conflicts between indigenous and migrant groups. The backdrop of this socio-economic upheaval involved a displaced indigenous group, the Rana Tharus (hereafter referred to as Ranas), in the western-most districts of Kanchanpur. They experienced large-scale displacement due to the expansion of the Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve (hereafter referred to as the Park) in 2001. The Nepalese government carried out a land-based resettlement scheme. It was designed on the principle that all displaced families should be given cultivable land, which they lost previously due to the extension of the wildlife reserve (Bhattarai 2001, p. 270).

Our fieldwork was motivated by the lack of evidence concerning the socio-economic impacts of conservation on marginalized social groups. We adopted a multiple research methodology including household surveys, focus group discussions, participant observations and in-depth participant interviews. While the household survey was designed to capture a broader picture of the socio-economic conditions of the Rana society, the conventional anthropological techniques of participant observations and in-depth participant interviews were conducted to analyse more closely the daily livelihood practices of Ranas and the transformations in the Rana society during the relocation and in the new settlement (Lam 2003). Discussion group participants included local leaders, ex-government officials and local people (both Ranas and hill migrants). Based on repeated

consultations with the Park authorities and some local NGOs, the indigenous Ranas from the Rauteli Bichawa Village were considered to be the most appropriate subject of our study.

The Rauteli Bichawa Ranas had to endure many new challenges and the ways in which they cope with those are central to our analysis. This provides us with the opportunity to probe the influence of forced displacement and transformation in landownership on the livelihood of indigenous Rana communities. Three field trips were conducted over a period of 18 months between 2004 and 2006. The sample was restricted to a group of 72 households due to financial constraints and adverse socio-political conditions. The comparison group, comprising 30 Rana households, was selected from the two hamlets of Rauteli Bichawa village, Iymilia and Jhimila, located near the periphery of the Park. The resettled group selected for our study included 42 displaced Rana households from the two hamlets, Rampur and Beldandi of the Dhokka Block (Table 2.1).

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to evaluate the long-term welfare effects of forced displacement on Rana households. We first discuss the quantitative results. To determine the overall welfare impact we follow a simple regression-based approach. The mean comparison approach is appropriate in our case because the resettled group can be identified based on observables. The dependent variable in Table 2.2 is the welfare indicator measured as food security in the future measured in months. We decided not to use productivity (measured as crop yield) as the dependent variable because it is an estimation based on focus group discussions. Despite the fact that data on food security suffer from self-reporting bias, data directly reflect the availability of food after resettlement and their understanding of what food sufficiency means at the local

Table 2.1 The number of Rana households in the four study settlements

	<i>Rauteli Bichawa Village</i>		<i>Dhokka Block</i>	
	<i>Iymilia</i>	<i>Jhimila</i>	<i>Rampur^a</i>	<i>Beldandi</i>
Total households	100	165	506	460
Rana households	90	20	126	19
Surveyed households	15	15	25	17

Source: Household Survey 2005

^aThe Rampur estimate was based on information provided by the ex-chairperson of Beldandi and Rampur Buffer Zone User Group Committee, Bhim Thapa

Table 2.2 Regression Outcomes on Food Security

	<i>Dependent variable: Food security (months)</i>	
	<i>Base plus household control</i>	<i>Restricted sample</i>
	(2)	(3)
Resettled (yes = 1)	-1.71* (0.73)	-2.00* (0.83)
Log age	0 (0.56)	-0.43 (1.47)
Gender (female = 1)	1.55* (0.74)	1.28 (0.88)
Household members	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.12 (0.07)
Land holding (in katta)	0.03** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
Livestock (numbers)	-0.01 (0.11)	0.32 (0.22)
Constant	8.89*** (2.28)	9.81 (5.43)
Observations	67	53
R-square	0.2	0.24

Note: Restricted sample implies only those households who resettled in 2001

Robust standard errors are given within parenthesis. Coefficients with * mean significant at 10%, ** mean significant at 5% and *** mean significant at 1%

level. In addition, the Rana respondents did not include incomes from non-agricultural activities while answering the food security question. They only considered the family size and the amount of crop yield from their own cultivation. Together with this, the food security indicates the productivity and family size as well.

In Table 2.2, we provide regression outcomes on food security. Displaced households are found to have lower food security irrespective of the way it is measured. The outcome is robust and statistically significant in most cases. The models with the food security variable measured in terms of the number of days they have enough food given the landholding size show better fit. While smaller households are better off, the households with bigger land on average have food security for a longer period of time. For the purpose of robustness, we ran the same model on a restricted sample comprising only those Rana households who resettled in 2001. Overall, the outcome remains unaffected.

While quantitative evidence suggests that by and large the land-based compensation policy has failed to prevent impoverishment in the Rana society, it does not provide much evidence on the social injustice that Ranas faced over a long time. The Ranas, like many traditional societies, failed to perceive the modern concept of landownership as an exercise in land registration documents. For them, the concept of landownership was more about the actual land use practices. Guneratne (1996, 2002) explains that the concept of obtaining the legal land documents to secure ownership does not exist among many tribal or ethnic communities, particularly those from the lowland Tarai region of Kanchanpur. In focus group discussions, many Rana informants mentioned that they had been cultivating their land for generations so they never feared losing it. This, however, put the indigenous Rana population into a weak position to protect their ancestral land, particularly those with small landholdings.

The story of Jekur Rana provides an example. The Jekur Rana family is one of the displaced families from the Andaiya hamlet of the Rauteli Bichawa Village. He had 100 Kattas of ancestral land, which had been used as the main source of livelihood through subsistence agriculture for more than 100 years. However, his land was not registered officially. According to him, the older generations had no idea about the land registration procedure. Moreover, when government officials came to their village on one occasion, they only talked to the rich and educated people, not them. As a result, only the rich and influential families, including some wealthy Ranas, registered their land with the government. In 2001, the family of Jekur Rana was forced to move out from the extension area of the Park. Since he did not possess any legal registration, Jekur Rana's family received only two Kattas in order to build a shelter in the new resettlement area in accordance with his inhabitant status. Jekur Rana pleaded to the Park authority to reassess his case many times but without success. There were at least ten other Rana families in the Dhokka Block in a similar situation like Jekur Rana.

Focus group discussions with both resettled and non-resettled Ranas found that the Ranas, who had close relations with local elites and owned large plots of land obtained official documents and thus suffered less from the relocation. As our data show, a majority of the displaced Ranas receiving almost equivalent size of their registered land were rich, owning more than 200 Kattas of land inside the Park. Thus, the design of the state policy of the land compensation scheme apparently favoured the rich and it only increased social inequality by impoverishing the poor at a higher rate.

Since the 1950s, the state has played a leading role in the transformation of landownership from the hands of indigenous Ranas to migrants from the hills (Pahaaris). This was administered through a series of land reform policies and state-sponsored resettlement programmes in Kanchanpur, particularly in the Rauteli Bichawa Village and in the Tarai region as a whole. The migrants were mainly higher caste people, including Brahmans and Chhetris. They were mostly literate and had closer ties with the state officials, such as sharing the same language (ability to speak and write in Nepali) and culture. This made access to land resources and assistance from the state easier for them and in turn gave them greater control over land.

As found in the focus group discussions, this was apparently another major reason why some Ranas could not register their land properly or even lost most of their land to the migrants. Many Ranas complained that in many instances the disputes over land between them and the migrants were resolved in favor of the migrants. As in matters regarding the registration and transaction of land, it required good communication skills with the state officials verbally and literally. There were also complaints against the migrants that they took advantage of the illiterate Ranas and confiscated their land by providing them with flawed contracts. For example, one displaced Rana stated that without the consent and authorization of his grandfather, his father signed a land transaction document to a migrant state official. However, when his grandfather contested it, the land was already a property of the state official.

As our qualitative evidence suggests, the impact of Nepal's land compensation policy has resulted in a disproportionate distribution of land where the poor have come out the worst. This has serious consequences for the social deprivation of marginalized groups that have less political clout. Overall, both quantitative and qualitative evidences suggest the necessity of a land compensation framework that must consider overcoming the social divisions and political economy of past land settlement policies. Without thoughtfully considering the political, economic and cultural contexts, land-based compensation schemes will only serve as a mechanism to further accelerate social inequality and social strife among different groups. We discuss these issues in further detail in the subsequent chapters.

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