Contradictory Notions of Participation?
The Case of Development-Induced Involuntary Resettlement[1]

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Development-induced involuntary resettlement (DIDR) is the forced displacement of people caused by programs and projects intended to promote national, regional, and local development. These programs include urban initiatives like slum clearance and renovation or the installation of infrastructure for water projects, roads, and rail as well as rural development efforts, including forestry projects, mining, and the creation of biosphere reserves and national parks. The most studied examples of DIDR are dam projects, which displace people from reservoir areas and disrupt populations downstream.

It has been clear for a very long time that those displaced by these development initiatives rarely benefit from them; rather they are more often impoverished, as they lose economic, social, and cultural resources while the new benefits go to others. Some have called into question the very projects that cause this displacement, but because the initiatives often meet important goals of national or regional development, others have looked for ways to decrease the impoverishment of those displaced and improve their livelihoods.

In this light, development agencies have created guidelines for DIDR, meant to mitigate negative impacts. The World Bank's guidelines, first adopted almost 25 years ago, have become the standard used to judge the adequacy of resettlement initiatives (Rew, Fisher, and Pandey 2000; Feeney 1998). Since the policy was put into place in 1980, it has been modified several times; the most recent policy, Operational Policy/Bank Procedure 4.12, went into effect in December 2001 (World Bank 2001). These guidelines embrace the idea that local participation is essential in aiding those relocated by development projects to establish meaningful and productive lives.

This paper compares the meaning of participation expressed in those guidelines with the notions of participation expressed by a single resettled population, those displaced by the reservoir created by the Manantali dam in western Mali in 1986-88. The paper begins with an analysis of the most recent World Bank policy and the notions of participation implicit within them. It then looks at the Manantali experience. Although this resettlement project was implemented well before the adoption of the present World Bank Policy, it was planned with participation in mind and illustrates the relevant issues. Moreover, I have been working intermittently with Malian colleagues at Manantali since the early 1980s, beginning with the plan for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) project, through implementation, and afterward. This provides an unparalleled ethnographic base for understanding ideas about participation here. In conclusion, the paper offers suggestions for bringing some of the insights from people's notions into development practice.

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Participatory Development and the World Bank Guidelines

The World Bank's 2001 Involuntary Resettlement Policy contains three major documents: Operational Policy 4.12, Involuntary Resettlement, the major policy statement (OP 4.12); Annex A to OP 4.12, Involuntary Resettlement Instruments, which discusses resettlement plans and policy frameworks; and Bank Procedures, BP 4.12, which outlines the role of World Bank personnel in these projects. The documents reflect issues of major concern to the World Bank as well as critiques by others concerned about DIDR, primarily international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The policy explicitly discusses the importance of consultation, involvement and participation in several places. OP 4.12 paragraph 2(b) notes that "Displaced persons should be meaningfully consulted and should have opportunities to participate in planning and implementing resettlement programs." A policy or plan should include measures to ensure that the displaced are informed about options and rights and consulted upon choices among resettlement alternatives (OP 4.12, para 6(a)i and ii). In cases where land is taken involuntarily, displaced communities are to be given timely and relevant information, consulted on options, and offered opportunities to participate in planning, implementation, and monitoring (OP 4.12, para 13 (a)); communities should be allowed to choose the way their new communities are organized (OP 4.12, para 13 (c)). The borrower should establish procedures that include provisions for "meaningful consultations with affected persons and communities, local authorities, and ... nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)" (OP 4.12, para 14). The resettlement component should be prepared not only in light of social, technical, and legal experience, but also should draw on relevant community-based organizations and NGOs (OP 4.12, para 19). Overall, OP 4.12 suggests a view of participation that involves the creation of a dialogue between affected populations and implementors and begins at the planning stage and continues throughout.

The policy stresses formal channels of communication and conflict resolution, reflecting changes within the World Bank toward greater transparency and the creation of publicly accessible institutions for conflict resolution. This is due to the pressure put upon the World Bank by international NGOs (e.g., Feeney 1998) as well as evolving internal thinking under more recent leadership. Thus, the potentially displaced should be informed at an early stage (OP 4.12, para 19). The draft resettlement plan should be made available at a "place accessible to displaced persons and local NGOs, in a form, manner, and language that are understandable to them;" the final plan will be made publically available through the World Bank InfoShop as well as locally (OP 4.12, para 22). Annex A, paragraph 15, notes that a Resettlement Plan must have institutionalized arrangements so that the displaced can communicate their concerns to relevant authorities. Finally, there should be grievance mechanisms and structured forums to resolve conflicts (e.g., Annex A, para 17). Since the main uses of grievance mechanisms (including the World Bank inspection panel) have been by local populations and allies against administrative or funding agencies, this is probably the focus here as well, although the documents also mention conflicts between settlers and hosts (OP 4.12, paras 13(a), 14; Annex A, para 16). Notably, there is little suggestion of conflict or grievances among the resettlers themselves.

The kinds and processes of participation are specified in more detail for one subcategory of DIDR: restrictions of access due to legally designated parks and protected areas. Here the policy mandates the creation of a "process framework," which should detail the procedures to be used to prepare and implement further projects. The goal of the framework appears to be a project that will include some of the standard components of resettlement projects (e.g., criteria for eligibility, measures to assist improvement of livelihoods, conflict resolution) (OP 4.12, para 7). Annex A (para 27) has more detail, emphasizing participation in project design, choice among alternative interventions, and monitoring. Notably, paragraph 27(d) notes the need for dispute resolution procedures for disputes "that may arise between or among affected communities" as well as those that may arise from communities "dissatisfied with the eligibility criteria, community planning measures, or actual implementation." The recommendation for a process approach would appear to be a response to the particular circumstances found in national parks and reserves, whose inhabitants are often isolated groups or indigenous peoples. Moreover, the first DIDR policies were not always applied to resettlement out of protected areas, leading to some particularly scandalous displacements (e.g., OXFAM 1996). It is not clear, however, why the process approach has been restricted to this context.

The World Bank's DIDR policy raises several issues about the nature of participation within DIDR projects. The most fundamental issue concerns the contradiction between the forced displacement of people and the belief that further activities can be carried out in a participatory manner. Some have raised the question of whether forced displacement is ever justified; others have criticized large-scale infrastructure, in particular dams, for their inherent inequities (Oliver Smith 2001; Patkar 2000). The World Bank policy approaches this by mandating a search for alternatives that avoid or minimize resettlement and then if DIDR cannot be avoided, executing resettlement as “sustainable development programs” (World Bank, OP 4.12, paras 2(a) and (b)). The World Commission on Dams went further, suggesting that countries carry out national dialogues and debates to consider optimal forms of energy and infrastructure development (WCD 2000). Nonetheless, even if there is strong support for infrastructure development and the benefits will be shared widely, the people required to move virtually never embrace the idea wholeheartedly, and this contradiction will remain at the heart of “participatory” DIDR. Nonetheless, my personal belief is that some DIDR is justifiable and the search for better ways to carry it out can improve outcomes for the displaced. This paper is written that belief in mind.

A second issue is that the policy shows a distinct rural bias, although it seems to refer to situations that may be found in either rural or urban areas. Paragraph 6(c)(iii) does mention both land preparation and job opportunities as possible development assistance options; paragraph 6(a)(iii) notes that compensation should be at full replacement cost, and specifies in a footnote that this might include access to public services, customers, and supplies as well as fishing, grazing, or forest areas. Yet details give more attention to rural resources. Agricultural sites are explicitly specified (para 6 (b)(ii)) as are community resources like fishing and grazing areas (para 13 (b)); in paragraph 11, the policy stresses the importance of (farm) land-for-land replacement and discusses how to carry it out. The same attention is not paid to jobs. This is in contrast to the previous policy, Operational Directive 4.30 (OD 4.30), adopted in 1990, which discussed job provision in some detail (World Bank 1990). For example, OD 4.30 noted the importance of culturally acceptable income-earning strategies (para 16) and incentives for firms to relocate in resettlement areas (para 18). OP 4.12 pays less attention to income-based livelihoods; specific recommendations about job creation have disappeared following structural adjustment and World Bank encouragement to decrease public enterprises and state support for private firms.[2] Urban areas are socially as well as economically different from rural areas. They are usually more culturally and socially heterogeneous, increasing possibilities for internal conflict. The issue of rural bias is not relevant for the case of Manantali since it was indeed a relatively isolated rural area.

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[2] Resettlement policies of some countries also reflect this change. In China, when the state was the universal employer, state-owned enterprises would hire the displaced; as China has moved toward a market economy, jobs for the displaced had to be found in the private employment market (Meikle and Zhu 2000). The Indian state of Orissa created in 1994 a water resources development policy with no provisions for mandatory or preferential employment, which Pandey (1998:20) found “completely out of tune” with its otherwise progressive policies.

Third, the World Bank Resettlement policy, by its very detail, shows a belief in planning, although the plan is no longer to be created in a top-down manner, but with the participation of those affected by DIDR, or, at least, their involvement or consultation. The language in the policy is ambiguous; while the word participation is often used, so too is the term consultation. While "participation" suggests a partnership between the displaced and relevant agencies, "consultation" suggests that the agencies take a lead role in conceptualization and planning (Cf. Feeney 1998). In other places, the term involvement is used, which is even vaguer. Moreover, once the plan is decided upon and implementation has begun, the underlying assumption seems to be that the plan will take its own course. In this sense, the plan itself may come to be used in a top-down manner for implementation. The contents of the plan are specified in detail in Annex A, but there is no suggestion about what to do if and when the plan does not work. There will always be unanticipated consequences of even the best conceived plans; how then will people participate in changing them? For example, Annex A notes that "resettlement packages should be compatible with the cultural preferences of the displaced persons" (para 11), but what will happen as preferences change over time when old possibilities are closed off and new opportunities develop? Paragraph 15 specifies a number of steps to follow for community participation: a) develop a strategy for participation of resettlers and hosts in design and implementation; b) summarize the different views and how they were taken into account in the resettlement plan; c) review the choices made by the displaced in regard to options; and d) describe institutional arrangements for communication between people and project authorities and measures to ensure representation of vulnerable groups. This suggests that participation or even consultation is a clean and linear process rather than muddy, iterative negotiations that will continue throughout the project.

Fourth, the policy by its very specificity suggests a high valuation on expert knowledge. For example, Annex A outlines a long list of studies be undertaken (census, description of the characteristics of displaced households, estimate of the magnitude of expected loss, information on vulnerable groups, land tenure systems, patterns of social interactions, public infrastructure, and social services), which presupposes a high level of expertise. While the policy may indicate the importance of consultation, involvement, and participation of locals, it also draws on the work of experts to make specific recommendations. For example it requires that particular attention be paid to vulnerable groups, specifying "those below the poverty line, the landless, the elderly, women and children, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, or other displaced persons who may not be protected through national land compensation legislation" (OP 4.12, para 8). Paragraph 13(c) says: "To the extent possible, the existing social and cultural institutions of resettlers and any host communities are preserved" but the policy also indicates that new communities should be based on choices by the displaced. What if some of the displaced do not want to preserve all their existing social and cultural institutions? Finally, the policy privileges the use of NGOs and community-based organizations in implementation (e.g., OP 4.12, para 14, 19; Annex A, para 8). The positive valuation on expert knowledge is also present in the recommendation for monitoring by the implementing agency, supplemented by independent monitors (Annex A, para 21). The Bank Procedures, primarily meant for internal teams, note that the involvement of affected groups should be assessed during initial project review (BP 4.12, para 5 (b)), but make little further mention of participation during appraisal or supervision.

This raises the question: by what criteria are decisions to be taken when the wisdom of the experts, as codified in the policy, disagrees with the wishes of the local population? For example, while scholars as well as the policy (OP 4.12, para 11) almost universally favor land-for-land replacement, the people involved do not necessarily do so. In India, a study of 29 projects found that 80% chose cash compensation over resettlement into a resettlement colony when given a choice (Pandey 1998:117). In a Ugandan project, many farmers preferred cash because they owned other plots of land or earned income from other sources (Rew, Fisher, and Pandey 2000). The policy does not address this problem.

Fifth, although the World Bank policy makes some allusion to potential conflict within affected communities in its discussion of those displaced by parks and protected areas (OP 4.12, Annex A, para 27(d)), this concern is lacking in relation to other resettlement projects. This approach leads to the assumption that resettled communities are, first of all, coherent communities, and second, that there will be agreement among them on major issues related to the resettlement. In other words, the divisions caused by class, ethnicity, gender, age, and other lines of social differentiation may make some people "vulnerable," but they do not necessarily cause conflict over what resettlement packages ought to look like or how they ought to be implemented. How conflicting interests and perspectives might play out as locals participate in DIDR planning or implementation does not seem to be an issue of interest.

Overall, the World Bank DIDR policy emphasizes the importance of participation, but it does not directly consider the complexities likely to arise as the many interested parties in the resettlement and development process negotiate for strategies that will benefit them. The level of detail specified for the procedures and content of the resettlement plan suggests little place for local knowledge and instead implicitly privileges the knowledge held by experts. The document also suggests a belief in the value of planning, now questioned by many (Escobar 1995). To be sure, DIDR projects carried out without plans led to disaster, but experience suggests that development plans must be subject to modification, because DIDR presents, even more than other projects, unanticipated consequences, both positive and negative. For a plan to be truly participatory, it needs ways to include locals in the modification process. Finally, by discounting the deep divisions within communities, the policy implicitly suggests that participation is easy,.

Despite the fact that they were required to resettle, people at Manantali were willing to participate, but they did not have the same ideas about participation as those held by the resettlement team. In particular, they constantly tried to renegotiate aspects of the resettlement plan or resettlement outcomes, using a variety of strategies. They acted as if they knew better about local conditions than did the implementation team; they acted in light of local heterogeneity and conflicts of interest. The paper now turns to the experiences of those relocated from the area created by the reservoir for the Manantali dam in the mid-1980s, drawing not only on my earlier work at Manantali, but also upon work done by Malian social scientists (Diarra et al. 1990; Diarra et al. 1995).

Lessons from the Manantali Resettlement Project

The high dam at Manantali was built in the mid-1980s as a part of the infrastructure program of the OMVS (Organisation de Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Sénégal), an international organization whose goal was to develop the Senegal valley river basin for productive purposes in its three member states: Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania. The overall program was oriented to electricity generation, the improvement of irrigated agriculture along the Senegal river, particularly in Senegal and Mauritania, and the opening of navigation from the sea to Kayes in western Mali. The first stage of infrastructure construction included a salt barrage at Diama near the coast and a retention dam at Manantali, on the Bafing river, one of the Senegal's tributaries. Construction created a reservoir in one of the most isolated and sparsely populated areas in southern Mali, flooding the home of the Bafing Malinke. Overall, about 8000 people living in 44 village and hamlets were resettled between 1986 and 1988; most of the affected (85% to 90%) chose to move downstream (north) of the dam site, while the remainder moved to the eastern side of the reservoir.

As already noted, a resettlement project was planned and implemented by USAID. Although the design team did not use World Bank policy,[3] it did use a contemporary synthesis by Thayer Scudder (1981). Many of the goals of the Manantali Resettlement Project were consistent with those in the present World Bank policy. The overall goal of the project was to provide sufficient resources so that the Bafing Malinke could reconstitute their lives. The project emphasized land-for-land replacement and the re-establishment of existing communities. It also emphasized resettler participation and choice. It allowed groups a wide choice about where they would move and created formal resettlement committees in each village as interlocutors. Moreover, the Malian anthropologist who served as head of the Social and Monitoring Unit was ready to negotiate with individuals and groups on many issues.

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[3] At the time that the project was designed in 1983, the first resettlement policy had been created (1980) although it was not yet publicly available.

In other ways, the project did not conform to today's policy guidelines. Most importantly, it served primarily as a humanitarian project rather than a development project, because USAID was unwilling to make a long-term commitment to the zone. Therefore, the resettlement plan was carried out under the assumption that existing government agencies, e.g., an agricultural extension program and relevant ministries, would undertake later development. However, during this time, Malian government agencies and parastatals confronted falling budgets in light of structural adjustment initiatives and did not do what the plan thought they would.[4] Soon, however, new initiatives arrived in the zone, some of which accented participation. The most important was the arrival of democracy in 1992. The new democratic government embarked upon a program of decentralization, in which communes with elected councils and mayors replaced the appointed administrators of *arrondissements*. In 1999, the first commune elections were held.

While the actions of Manantali residents rendered problematic multiple assumptions of the World Bank policy guidelines, two were particularly important. First, people's strategies of participation were not contained by the plan, but drew on a wide variety of avenues. Second, the important groups were not necessarily those foreseen by the project.

Participation is More than Technocratic

The Manantali Resettlement Project created a number of "official" avenues for participation, but locals did not did not restrict themselves to these. They may have joined resettlement committees, for example, but when they found them insufficient to achieve their goals, they pursued other strategies. These included using the political party to pressure resettlement project administration as well as individual patron-client relationships. Moreover, individuals and groups spontaneously initiated activities to use new resources brought in by the resettlement. While the policy stresses the importance of groups as interlocutors, it does not recognize the importance of more individualized initiatives, nor does it suggest ways to encourage locally generated activities.

In the 1980s, Mali was a single party state, with both the administrative bureaucracy and the single national political party under the aegis of Mali's then-president, Moussa Traoré;

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[4] This was a quite complex situation beyond the scope of this paper. For further information, see Koenig and Diarra (1998a) and Koenig and Diarra (n.d.).

nonetheless, the party and the administration competed for power and resources.[5] The resettlement project was carried out by an arm of a the national administrative agency for water and power (Direction Nationale de l'Hydraulique et de l'Energie). One member of the party's Executive Committee came from a small hamlet of a resettlement village; although the hamlet itself did not move, this man was willing to listen to people who were a part of his constituency.

When many locals felt that project administration, although willing to make minor modifications, was not willing to listen to their desire for fundamental changes (for example, speeding up construction by paying locals to do their own building), they turned to this politician. In early 1987, the second year of the project, he held several mass meetings, which inflamed local passions and contributed to strained relationships with the resettlement agency. Eventually locals were allowed to do some of their own building, but they got only a small amount of the payment they had originally foreseen; the remainder went to a new private contractor with alleged connections to important members of the Malian government. It appears that the party official was working in his own political interest as well as that of his local constituency, and, locals later grew somewhat skeptical of their strategy. What is important however is that local perceptions of participation included negotiation with multiple administrative and political organizations.

Residents also tried to use the personalized networks of patron-client relations common to Malian society to advance their interests. Individuals tried to create personal links with members of the resettlement project, in particular, the head of the Social and Monitoring Section, a Malian anthropologist. Personal networks could also extend outside the Bafing. An administrator of Mali's national functional literacy program was originally from the resettlement village of Farabanding, which became the site of the first new project-funded primary school. The Institut des Sciences Humaines research team itself, composed of well-educated urban Malians, became a patron for some Bafing residents; in particular, those hired as their first research assistants often went on to find other jobs that made use of the skills and networks gained through this work.

People also used their own knowledge and resources to take advantage of what they saw as new opportunities. Directly after the resettlement, new youth and women's associations proliferated as locals combined their efforts to profit from new economic possibilities. Although the Malinke had a tradition of village-wide agricultural work groups, post-resettlement conditions saw many new groups of varying size and with new activities. Both large and small groups could use the money they earned for personal ends or to invest; for example one village-wide women's group used their income to buy mills to make peanut-butter. Other associations used their income to build pens for cattle, to buy agricultural equipment, or to buy books and materials for school children. One group of youth decided to organize to sell agricultural produce at a large market some 87 km distant, to get a better price than they might from traders in the village. Another group of youth stocked 2 tons of sorghum to sell to other villagers. Blacksmiths, who had greater access to scrap metal during and after the construction, formed a cooperative to make new agricultural equipment. Some of these groups got assistance from outside, for example, the *Centre d'Action Cooperative* or Peace Corps, but had only self-generated funds.

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[5] This section draws on Koenig (1997).

People also pursued more individualized activities. Those living downstream from the dam had new roads, built by the dam construction company for its own purposes, which rendered more accessible this once isolated zone. The simultaneous implementation of structural adjustment in the 1980s, although problematic in many respects, made these roads more useful as private commerce and transport flourished. Before the resettlement, a few large merchants, who took advantage of the buying campaigns (and truck tracks) of the agricultural extension organization, had dominated commerce. After the resettlement, as public transport increased and new weekly markets were created, the hold of the large merchants was broken and commercial activities democratized. Men and women, younger and older people, undertook much trade. Weekly markets grew, building on existing cultural traditions, but without formal planning by outside agencies. Once they were put into place, some got small sums of money to build infrastructure (e.g., shelters for sellers), but their beginnings were outside the circuits of either administrative or project design.

After the formal end of the resettlement, people continued similar strategies to improve their life by participating in national efforts that they found useful while continuing self-generated efforts to make use of available resources. Most important, the Bafingois participated in ongoing agricultural development efforts. Over time, Manantali was served by different agricultural extension organizations; one accented peanut cultivation in the 1970s and 1980s, another cotton after the mid-1990s, and, in 2004, an irrigated perimeter was planned for just downstream of the dam. Many Bafing Malinke participated in these efforts, using them not only for the cash earning opportunities offered, but also for other advantages. For example, some farmers grew cotton specifically to get credit to buy agricultural equipment and inputs, otherwise difficult to purchase.

They also continued to take advantage of new infrastructure; by 2004, improved roads led from the Manantali dam east all the way to Bamako, Mali's capital. These were part of national initiatives not strictly linked to the OMVS activities, although clearly the existence of Manantali affected road priorities. Private transporters soon took advantage of these new roads, so that it was even easier to enter and leave Manantali than it had been in the 1980s. Telephone communication also increased. Telephones first arrived in Manantali with the OMVS and the dam construction company, but Malian policy has encouraged the establishment of small private telephone kiosks, and several appeared in Manantali. People specifically mentioned that they could now telephone emigrants when necessary.

Upstream inhabitants also took advantage of new possibilities. Here they lacked roads, a constant complaint of the population, but they had access to the lake and drawdown cultivation on the edge of the reservoir. Both men and women increased cultivation of rice and gardens. Rice, previously considered a woman's crop, began to be cultivated by men as well. Both men and women grew more fruit (e.g., mangoes, bananas, papayas, pineapples) and irrigated annuals (e.g., vegetables, tomatoes). Young men also learned how to fish. Scudder (personal communication) had deplored the fact that the resettlement project had no organized training for fishing. Most of the fishing was in fact undertaken by immigrants from specialized ethnic groups (Bozo, Somono), but local young men also learned to fish. The protein intake of upstream populations appears to have increased, and some locals sold fish as well.

The DIDR literature discusses the disruption of "traditional" socio-cultural systems when people lived in social and economic isolation from their larger societies; the problems have been particularly marked among those considered indigenous peoples or of "marginal" ethnic groups. In contrast, the Bafing Malinke may have been physically isolated and somewhat less integrated into state structures because of it, but they were in no sense ethnically marginal or particularly different from the majority of Mali's rural population in wanting integration into the larger society in ways that would benefit them. The infrastructure created by the various interventions in the zone increased people's access to political and economic resources through interaction with the outside world. Outside of the framework of projects or interventions, people individually and collectively made use of possibilities for change that appeared to bring benefits. They had their own notions about how to participate in their larger economy and society, not limited by the forms of participation prescribed by any particular project.

The approach of the Bafing Malinke is illustrated by their response to decentralization. The first elections for communal councils were held in late 1999 with mandates of 5 years; when we were in the field in 2004, elections for the second councils were taking place. People seemed to hold little interest in democratization and decentralization as such. Most locals evaluated decentralization primarily in terms of the concrete realizations brought to the zone and the villages. These were mostly but not exclusively economic. Many villages complained that they paid taxes, but saw no results. A man in one village said, "The commune created problems for us. We pay our taxes and until now we've received no benefits. We want the old mayor out of office." People in several villages noted that they voted consciously to get a village resident on the communal council; although this was no sure guarantee of benefits, it increased the village's chance of having input into the eventual program elaborated by the commune. Evidence suggests that villages of mayors received more infrastructure; in one of the two communes at Manantali, the mayor's natal village had a new school, a health center, the residential quarter for a new development project, and a new market.

People did recognize several benefits of the new communes, most importantly, the ease of getting birth certificates and the increased number of schools and health centers, but many found these insufficient. The mere process of political participation was not of significant interest to people; rather it had to result in some tangible benefits. Some of the Manantali residents were quite clear; it might be nice to have your own people in charge, but communes often lacked sufficient resources to deal with what villages considered their most serious problems, for example creating more employment for young people or allocating more land. Rather, villagers needed to look to national or regional projects or actors for these. Simply having a say (the process of participation) was not of interest; overall their perspective did not separate the political and the technical or economic, but saw the two as integrally part of a single process.

Overall, the Bafing Malinke did not confine themselves to the avenues of participation laid out by any project in their attempts to improve their lives. To their mind, the resettlement project was not the only initiative that brought problems or benefits. Instead, people's notions of participation appeared grounded in a realistic understanding of where resources were and how to get them in contemporary Mali. This meant using multiple lines of resource access and not limiting themselves to any single source. It meant building upon a wide variety of contacts, recognizing who had power and using "traditional" as well as new ways to access social, political, and economic resources. Moreover, they saw the economic and political as intermingled; distribution of economic resources was affected by the distribution of power. At the same time, the power to make decisions was irrelevant unless there were resources to allocate. DIDR policies need to recognize that although a resettlement development project might be essential to help people improve livelihoods, local notions of participation are likely to be broader than project notions.

Participating Populations are not Homogeneous

Much of the DIDR literature as well as World Bank policy suggests the use of existing forms of organization to frame participation. Michael Cernea's (1996) work, for example, stressed the risk of social disarticulation when social networks are broken by displacement; to avoid this problem, he suggested maintaining existing social cohesion and reconstructing existing social networks by the resettlement of village and neighborhood units. This vision of participation stresses the homogeneity of displaced groups, rendering invisible internal conflicts of interest among different segments of the population. The approach is conservative in the literal sense; by stressing the maintenance of existing communities, it conserves intra-community political hierarchies. At the same time, recent development theory also recognizes that important lines of differentiation exist among beneficiary groups. World Bank resettlement policy has identified "vulnerable" groups, those cut off from benefits or negatively impacted by development initiatives. The policy does not recognize the potential contradiction between these two approaches. At Manantali, even though only 8000 people were affected, there were different interests along the classic lines of age, socio-political stratification, and gender, yet only gender was recognized or addressed.[6] This section looks first at gender and then turns to other lines of differentiation.

Despite the fact that many have regretted the lack of attention to the differential consequences of DIDR for women (Indra 1999; Colson 1999; Koenig 1995), this difference appears to have received more recognition than some others. To address gender issues, the Manantali project intended to recruit a female social scientist as a senior member of the Social and Monitoring Section; her major job would be to organize and coordinate committees of women to "assure that their opinions and desires are also represented in decision-making" (USAID 1984 Annex 7.4:13). However, the project was never able to find a woman willing to relocate to Manantali, so eventually two women with less education were recruited. They worked little on decision making and focused instead on post-resettlement economic activities, including gardens, soap making, food demonstrations, and improved wood-stoves.

However, the resettlement project did keep some aspects of women's roles in mind in planning. Unlike some earlier resettlement projects, this project took them into account in determining the number of economically active family members, a figure used to determine land allocation amounts. Fields were given directly to the head of the household, but existing norms obliged a head to give fields to a woman so that she could contribute to the household. Women usually received a part of the resettlement allocation for their individual fields; in 1993-94, women in 108 of 113 sample households (96%) had their own fields. The rare cases where women did not have fields included very small households where women cultivated the main household field and a household with no women.

Women, like men, found ways to take advantage of new circumstances for economic benefits. They supplemented original land allocations by creating associations; one group of women directly borrowed land from a host village. In the mid 1990s, men were very hesitant to do this, because borrowing land was a political statement of subordination, but women, already considered subordinates, had nothing to lose. Women also responded to new market opportunities. They systematically frequented the new weekly markets as well as the daily market at Manantali. In a few villages, they became the active managers of the project-financed water pumps. In the upstream villages, women began to work with and for the wives of the immigrant fisherfolk. Women sold their produce to fishing households, while younger women sometimes worked as domestic servants.

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[6] When DIDR touches multiple ethnic groups, there are usually different responses among them; see e.g., Wali's (1989) work on Panama. Virtually all those resettled by the Manantali dam were Bafing Malinke, so ethnic differences played little role.

Although women pursued economic innovations, they appeared to accept the patriarchy of their society; especially directly after the resettlement, they did not work for systematic changes to either the power structure or their social roles. This was illustrated by their sentiments about schooling for girls, expressed in the mid 1990s, when many women stressed the disadvantages of sending girls to school. Said one, “When you put your girl into school, she doesn’t succeed at school nor can she do other work. When we send our girls to school, they won’t love illiterate men; they will get too old to marry.” Insofar as women did attempt to make changes, they used more indirect means to do so. Said one woman, “we talk about what is not good when walking around the village” if the men had taken a decision not in their interest.

By 2004, some of women’s attitudes had begun to change, presumably in light of national and international efforts for greater gender equality. For example, women’s attitudes toward girls’ education began to change. By 2004, Mali had done much to expand basic education, and the number of elementary and middle schools in the Manantali zone had grown substantially. In most villages, we were told that approximately half the students were girls. Women noted that educated kin looking for wives now married young village women with some schooling, and in one village, a young woman with education was sent for midwifery training. Women had also become more direct in pressing their concerns, and some had begun to complain about their exclusion from decision making. They also saw changing relationships between men and women. Said one women, “Before (decentralization), a woman would not speak in front of a man. Now women and men exchange points of view; women join parties and they vote as well.”

These new ideas were expressed in the formal political structure. The Bafing, relatively traditional in regard to gender roles, nevertheless had some women on electoral lists for the 2004 municipal elections. Mouvement Citoyen even included a woman at the head of its list in one commune; notably, she was not from a village, but had lived in Manantali town since she was a child.[7] She campaigned in many of the villages, often holding separate meetings with women. She specifically told them to vote for her because a woman would pay more attention to their problems. In one village, women said that the men had persuaded them to vote for their present mayor at the last election, but this time they had voted for the woman so that they could see what she could do. Some women believed that a woman mayor would be good because decentralization was about men and women working together. They had come to believe that educated women had something to teach them. The vote in this commune was very divided; six parties won at least one seat. Even though the party of the existing mayor had receiving the most votes, his party only received five of the 17 council seats. Mouvement Citoyen had received four seats, the second highest total, but even after negotiation among the parties, no one expected to see a female mayor in the Bafing. On the other hand, people did expect that she would receive one of the deputy mayor positions.[8]

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[7] Mouvement Citoyen was not technically a political party, but rather an independent movement stimulated by President Ahmadou Toumany Touré, who himself had been elected as an independent candidate.

While both the resettlement project and the World Bank policy recognized that women and men often receive differential benefits from development initiatives, in neither case did they focus on basic conflicts of interest or differential access to power. The World Bank for example, refers to women as a "vulnerable" group. A new development project in the zone had found ways to increase its funding by targeting vulnerable groups, giving them access to World Bank HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, also PPTE, Pays Pauvres Très Endettés) funding. They focused on special projects for women, for example, literacy and credit programs. This approach is not oriented around increasing political power or local knowledge, but around experts' concepts of vulnerability.

Although the women of Manantali were aware of gender differences in their society, they did not see themselves as a "vulnerable" group; moreover, they did not appear to suffer disproportionately from resettlement. Rather, they, like many other groups, were able to initiate incremental changes, individually and collectively, to take advantages of new resources to improve their lives. They also conserved some of the benefits of the "traditional" system that provided them resources and protection. As noted, women were accorded basic resources by the project, and they continued to gain status by bearing and raising children. Extended families remained mostly intact and willing to help daughters when they had problems with affines. Thus, although women were aware of gender differences, they did not necessarily want to change them. If women had had a formal role in a participatory project, they would probably have adopted the approach of conserving the existing patriarchal society that they knew well. They would likely have pushed less for the decision-making roles suggested by the Manantali resettlement project. Only much later, when there had been greater changes to Malian society as a whole, did they begin to talk somewhat differently about gender roles and reconceptualize gender relations.

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[8] The council elects a mayor and three deputy mayors from among its members; this vote had not yet taken place when I left the field, so it is not clear how the mayoral election turned out.

In contrast to the focus on gender, neither the project nor the World Bank policy recognized the intra-household division that preoccupied resettlers at Manantali: that between older and younger men. This difference should have been more explicitly recognized, since both anthropological and historical literature has shown its importance in West African savanna households where youth are both supporters of and rivals to their household heads. This tension between elders and juniors has been negotiated differently over time as new resources become available (Meillassoux 1981; Roberts 1987). The resettlement itself brought substantial new resources to younger men. Although levels of education in the Bafing were quite low, the few Bafingois with education were invariably younger men; they got jobs linked to dam construction and resettlement, where knowledge of French or some literacy was useful. Young men also had the physical strength required for laboring jobs. Although the research team was often told that the Bafing Malinke had little access to dam-related jobs because of their low skill levels, discussions with residents suggested that many families managed to get at least one member on a payroll.[9]

The resettlement project strategy to conserve existing social organization meant conserving the power of household and village heads, and some activities supported their power. For example, the project staff held regular meetings with village leaders, it distributed indemnity and many wage payments through village elders, and land was allocated to household heads, who then distributed it among different family members. Yet other project strategies, usually adopted for "practical" reasons, tended to privilege young men. For example, when the project decided to send a representative from each village to see a previous dam project, these were overwhelmingly young men. Project liaison teams, which moved between old and new village sites, were named by village leaders, but were usually composed of young men because of the need for mobility. Some young men were also hired to supervise work teams carrying out land clearing. Although young men were chosen by elders, participatory project strategies put them in a position where they could gain more knowledge, which allowed them directly or indirectly to advance their interests.

In light of the new resources, the conflicts between younger and older men increased. Older men attempted to continue their control over youth through marriage practices, particularly an increase in the cash component of bridewealth payments (Samaké et al. 1987). The resettlement project facilitated marriages because settlers received a significant amount of cash in project indemnities. After paying taxes and food, the most important use of this cash was to arrange marriages; Grimm (1991) noted seven marriage negotiations in one village the week after the largest compensation payment. While some have emphasized the struggles between fathers and sons over who would get the next wife (Meillassoux 1981), at Manantali, both elders and young appear to have been united in their desire to provide wives for young men. Among the Malinke, many believed that it was appropriate for single men to undertake labor migration, but they ought to return home once married. Many elders believed that using the cash to marry young men would encourage them to stay at home and contribute to extended households. Moreover, to pay bridewealth, young men had to transfer individual wealth into the family patrimony in the control of elders. Young men made several attempts to reduce the cost of bridewealth, but they got support from elders only after the resettlement, when elders themselves began to worry about whether they would be able to reimburse high bridewealth payments should their daughters divorce.

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[9] Although the number of jobs with official construction companies was limited, their very presence stimulated much associated employment, both for subcontractors and in service occupations. When people reported that a family member worked on dam or power plant construction, it could many many different things.

Men, married or single, were expected to contribute their labor to the household's collective fields, managed by the household head and meant to provide for general household needs. Elders also tried to increase their control over younger men by decreasing their access to individual fields, whose labor might conflict with the labor on collective fields. They used their control over the resettlement land allocation to do so. In contrast to women, who virtually always were allocated individual fields, less than half the sample households in 1993-94 (52 of 113 or 46%) had individual men's fields. In almost a third of the households with men's individual fields, the young men had no access to the resettlement parcel, but had to borrow supplementary land from a host village. Notably, the project design paid little attention to the balance of collective and individual fields (USAID 1984); it did not recognize the politics of field distribution inside the family or how conflicts of interest between men might play out. Some young men believed that this was an error; said one, "The (resettlement project) did not foresee the youth. If young people got fields it was thanks to their fathers." More likely, it was a part of the strategy of conserving social organization.

Changes after resettlement kept the tension between elders and juniors high. The increased integration of the zone led to a more mixed economy, although farming remained the primary activity. As during the resettlement, most of the new jobs and income went to young men. They were the ones trained to repair the village pumps, to become village pharmacists or controllers and cashiers in the new village banks. Less educated young men also had options as they began to grow new crops. For example, one man learned about gardening from co-workers on dam construction; later he began to grow fruits for sale. Others invested in artisanal activities or transport, buying donkeys and carts. Young workers continued to be obliged to give their earnings to the household head, but the allocation of those earnings was beginning to change. In the old sites, a youth might give all he earned to the head of his household, but by the early 1990s, young men often kept a part of their earnings under their own control.

Elders found themselves in a difficult situation. Through the 1990s and into 2004, money grew to be considered an essential piece of the family patrimony. Elders needed that money yet the very need for it made them dependent upon junior men; by 2004, their economy included a mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activities. In discussions with us, they emphasized the lack of jobs for youth as much as they discussed land issues. People in one village even said that finding employment was necessary to decrease poverty. In fact, the number of formal jobs had decreased with the end of dam and power plant construction; many youth looking for jobs in 2004 could not find them locally, but had to leave the zone, in contrast to earlier years. As the project to install the irrigated perimeter was gearing up, many villagers emphasized the importance of reserving its laboring jobs for locals.

In 1993-94, both elders and younger men realized that economic changes had led to a changing balance of power. Said one elder, “You cannot educate the children of today; according to them, they know more than we do.” But a youth said, “What we and the elders want cannot go together; they want authority.... For us, the resettlement opened us to many things, some good, some bad, some easier, some more difficult. But the elders cannot see the good because they have lost their old authority.”

By 2004, the economy had changed further. The large-scale employers were virtually gone, but other new initiatives brought new jobs and small scale opportunities for income-earning. One development project in the zone, for example, had trained youth in carpentry and metal work; the expectation was evidently that they could start their own small enterprises, not that they would get jobs from others. Political decentralization also brought jobs that used literate young people, still mostly men. The growth of primary education required hiring more teachers; although some teachers were part of the civil service and paid by the government, others, often locals, were paid collectively by the village. Local health centers also encouraged the training and employment of youth. Peace Corps also facilitated the creation of a radio station in one village. In addition to offering jobs, decentralization changed the political scene by offering power to local residents. In both communes, the mayors for the first mandate were older men, retired civil servants who had served elsewhere and had more sophisticated knowledge of the national bureaucracy. They provided an alternative model to the younger men working for the communes in other posts.

Changes in the terrain begun by DIDR had decreased some of the authority held by elders and enhanced resources controlled by juniors; a colleague and I argued elsewhere (Koenig and Diarra 1998b) that elders and older men were likely the most disadvantaged by the resettlement, in large part because they had gained the most from the previous system and had the most vested in it. Later on, processes began by DIDR were enhanced by democratization and decentralization initiatives begun in the 1990s. Yet neither the participatory processes of the resettlement nor the plans for democratization directly took into account the internal household politics of elders and juniors.

By 2004, elders explicitly attributed the "disrespect" of youth to democracy and decentralization as well as the resettlement. In several villages, elders noted that before the resettlement, the household was run out of a single pocket, that of the head of the household. Today, in contrast, they said, money is held in many different pockets, making it more difficult to meet household expenses, large ones like bridewealth or even daily ones like food purchases. Said a man in one village, "if your son earns money, he will give you a third of what he earns, but the head of the household still needs to pay the family's taxes and other needs." In other villages, elders said they no longer had authority over their children; they could no longer hit them with impunity or arrange marriages without their knowledge or permission. If you tried to do this, someone would report you to one of the local government agencies. Said one, "Girls and boys no longer have respect because there's democracy. Men and boys make girls pregnant because of democracy. Today, all is spoiled."

The clearest example of the changing balance of power occurred in one village meeting. In a more "traditional" context, young men would listen while older men would speak. In this village, older men speaking Malinke had stressed the disadvantages of the resettlement. Then one younger man, the controller of their village bank, began to talk in French, saying that he saw advantages as well; these included the new roads, public transport, the health center in their village, the growth of school attendance, and access to telephones. My assistant had to translate this back into Malinke so that the elders could understand. Then the village chief claimed that indeed, he had forgotten, but when he heard this young man talk, his words came back to him. He then began to talk about the mayor, saying that he had worked hard and brought a school and a dispensary to a nearby village.

If youth had been more directly implicated in participatory decisions about the resettlement, the conflicts of interest between them and their elders would likely have been more evident, yet it is not clear how these conflicts would have worked out. Although the literature on West African savanna households shows the depth of tension in this relationship, it also shows the tenacity of extended family structures (Toulmin 1992; Koenig In Press). Although the redistribution of resources may be renegotiated, the extended household itself seems to be a realistic response to the ecological and economic hazards of the West African savanna. Now, the young men of the 1980s have aged and hold greater weight in village deliberations and their own families. It is not clear that they are any less patriarchal than their fathers, although they do have different knowledge and skills.

Differentiation was present not only within households but also between villages and between households in a single village. Manantali villages ranked themselves according to historical traditions. Some lineages considered themselves founded by direct descendants of Tirimakan Traoré, a lieutenant of Sundiata Keita, a founder of the ancient empire of Mali, which lasted roughly from the mid 13th century to the early 15th century. Those lineages became dominant, holding political power in “mother” villages. At the same time, the pre-colonial period saw the addition of members of occupational castes and slaves, sometimes as subordinate residents of existing villages, sometimes in separate hamlets, politically dependent on mother villages. These distinctions have been legally suppressed since the early 20th century, and in this zone, have made very little difference in household economic achievements; one of the richer traders in the zone, for example, was acknowledged to be descended from former slaves. However, they still played a role in marriage choices and, more importantly, in the political choice of village chiefs and councils.

Some dependent villages and hamlets saw the resettlement as a chance to gain more political equality with mother noble villages. One group used the participatory aspects of the resettlement to create a new, larger village, Diokeli, in a major site on the main road. This village then moved to reinforce its position through particularly modern forms of activity. It first created a new weekly market, which soon became the zone’s predominant market. More importantly, in 1999, it managed to get itself named as the new central village of the second commune. There had been rumors that Diokeli’s desire to be the commune center had been contested by an older, more prominent, but less dynamic, noble village; by 2004, however, everyone said Diokeli had been chosen because of its central location. Diokeli had already begun to benefit from the increased infrastructure available to it as a commune center; it had a new middle school and health center. Those at the bottom of the hierarchical socio-political structure used the resettlement to improve their position, forging new forms of political action to diminish the weight of the traditional hierarchy.

Different historical interests were also present among households within villages. At the time of the resettlement, some residents were concerned that the original plan to allocate large blocks of land to villages as a whole, to be redistributed by chiefs and elders, would lead to favoritism to themselves and their friends and relatives. They therefore requested the resettlement project to distribute land by lot, which it did. Each household was allocated a parcel by a multi-member commission, according to the number of economically active household residents. This was one facet of participation, because it was done on the request of villages to the resettlement project. However, it also led to the loss of a major power of chiefs and elders, the power to give and re-allocate land. When people in resettlement villages had conflicts over land, they were at least as likely to go to the sous-prefet to help solve them; the administration after all had the maps prepared by the resettlement project that showed where one lot ended and another began. The loss of chiefly authority was later exacerbated by decentralization. In the past, the chefs d'arrondissement, representatives of the national government and usually from elsewhere in Mali, had used village elders as privileged interlocutors in their work with local villages. In contrast, elected officials, usually locals, often bypassed the elders to work directly with other local residents.[10]

Age and seniority differences and intra and inter-village political stratification were more important at Manantali than were gender differences in terms of leading to obvious conflicts of interest. Yet these issues, although noted in the literature (e.g., Pandey 1998; Mahapatra 1999; deWet 2001), were not taken into account in the Manantali resettlement project nor have they been recognized by World Bank policy. Moreover, the approach to participation arguably pays less attention to long-term consequences than to the short-term efficiency of particular participatory strategies. The experience at Manantali suggests that participation is not simple and that the changing context of resettlement, by its very injection of new resources, is likely to affect existing lines of differentiation. Strategies of participation need to include plans for negotiation and conflict resolution and the time for communities to address them. These conflicts are not contained within the project, but begin before continue afterward in response to changes in the larger political economic environment.

Conclusions

Despite the major disruption brought by DIDR, people subjected to it come with existing strategies, both individual and collective, to improve their lives. Participation ought to be conceived of as a complement to these ongoing strategies that have begun before resettlement and will continue afterward. Local knowledge, although always not explicitly expressed, is used at every decision point and is not necessary the same as that held by experts.

In particular, the local perspective on participation at Manantali was neither technocratic nor simple. Participation was not confined to the procedures created or facilitated by the project, but included many other individual and group strategies that people had learned to use to affect the impacts of the larger political economy. In the case of Manantali, participation included the use of the political party and individual patron-client networks; affected people worked with potential allies from outside to bring pressure upon resettlement organizations to act more clearly in local interest. At the same time, local people were more aware of internal conflicts of interest among themselves due to socio-economic stratification, age, and gender. Various groups used both existing structures and new opportunities to advantage themselves vis-a-vis other individuals and groups. Hence the local view of participation was simultaneously political and economic; although the goal was often better access to resources and economic advantage, locals were aware that access depended upon political power, not simply bureaucratic procedures. Hence the political was always present. If policies are to encourage real participation, they need to take into account both political and economic aspects.

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[10] This issue was not unique to Manantali. One of the challenges facing decentralization is the relationship between "traditional" authorities and the new communal councils. People in non-resettlement zones often had similar assessments of their councils. For comparative information, see Koné et al. (2002).

To be more effective, approaches to participation need to be broadened. Participation in decision-making needs to continue throughout the project through the adoption of interactive planning and the integration of participatory approaches to project modification as new circumstances arise. Plans need to look for ways to enhance individual and group efforts to use new resources for self-generated activities and built on local dynamism. It needs to recognize that conflicts will not only occur with outside organizations but within resettled groups and develop ways in which different groups can address these conflicts. It needs to recognize that inequality in existing structures means that many may wish to change rather than conserve these structures. Neither consultation nor involvement is sufficient, but people affected by DIDR need to participate as partners in creating conditions that will enhance their life chances.

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