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Moved by the State
Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada
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Introduction

It was good to finally be still, and even better to be inside, sitting around the kitchen table. They’d spent the day with the men of Francois on Newfoundland’s southwest coast, handlining for cod. It was as research for their book, published the next year as *This Rock within the Sea* (1968). Farley Mowat and John de Visser had intended the book as a celebration of a place and people they loved. But its purpose changed because of encounters like the one they had that evening. “It’s been fine you come to visit us,” said their host over tea. “But I’m wondering, could you, maybe, do one thing for we?”

Could you, do you think, say how it was with us? We wouldn’t want it thought, you understand, that we never tried the hardest as was in us to make a go of things. We’d like for everyone to know we never would have left the places we was reared but . . . we . . . was . . . drove!"

The vehicle driving them out was the Fisheries Household Resettlement Program, recently established and jointly funded by the government of Canada and the province of Newfoundland. Aimed at modernizing the fishery by consolidating its workforce, it offered residents of “outports” like Francois incentives to move to larger communities where better social services and economic opportunities were believed to lie.

Despite the fact that it was voluntary, Mowat considered resettlement nothing more than a “coastal clearance scheme.” By the time the program
came to an end, more than twenty thousand people had been displaced and hundreds of communities abandoned – largely for nothing. For many, the promise of a better life went unfulfilled. Instead, resettlement doomed outporters to become “rootless migrants” in “unlovely and unwished for industrial centres, there to lose themselves in the faceless jungles of mass-man.” As the scheme’s effects became clearer, the tone of the book shifted from celebration to defiant lamentation: “We who had come to chronicle human life in its most admirable guise remained to record the passing of a people.” Resettlement had killed rural Newfoundland.

Outside of the context of war, outport resettlement is one of the better-known instances of forced relocation in Canada, thanks, in large part, to the work of writers and photographers such as Mowat and de Visser, as well as the painters, poets, and musicians who have rendered it into a defining moment in the island’s history. Like the Grand Déplacement for the Acadians and internment for the Japanese, it forged a powerful collective identity centred on displacement and rooted in the island’s imagined rural communities, ones peopled by small-scale producers. Poor, proud, and unpretentious, these folk also had little power. Many could only watch as their homes floated across the bay – destined, as they were, for an uncertain and often jarring landing. Embedded in the popular cultural representations of such uprooting was a critique of the urban and industrial, and of the modernization that underpinned the process and served as the rationale for the state-sponsored shifting of people from the places “they was reared.”

A signal event in the history of the province, the Fisheries Household Resettlement Program as well as the censure it inspired weren’t unique. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the Canadian state moved people, often against their wills, for what was believed to be their own good. In the chapters that follow, I examine five relocations that capture the geographic reach of the welfare state and the diversity of the people it moved. In addition to outport resettlement in Newfoundland, I look at the relocation of Inuit in the central Arctic, in what was then called the Keewatin District and is now the Kivalliq region of Nunavut; the closing of “marginal parishes” in the Lower St. Lawrence and Gaspé region of Quebec; the razing of Africville, a black neighbourhood in Halifax, Nova Scotia; and the partial destruction of Vancouver’s East Side, a working-class and culturally diverse area with a sizable Chinese Canadian population (Figure I.1).

These relocations are well known in the regions where they occurred, if not far beyond them. Much of that knowledge comes from popular
historians and, as with Newfoundland, from novelists, poets, painters, playwrights, musicians, and filmmakers. Each of these relocations has also attracted the attention of scholars from different disciplines and to different degrees. Together, this powerful work focuses on the experience of those who were displaced, on their trauma, their resentment, and, occasionally, their resistance.

In 2006, anthropologist Frédéric Laugrand and his colleagues interviewed some of the Keewatin Inuit who had been relocated in the 1950s. The violence of their removal remained with Job Muqyunniq more than fifty years later. He recalled the bulldozer driver telling his family to get out of their tent at Ennadai Lake, after which he drove over it, “back and forth,” pulverizing their possessions. “This man had a stick … He directed us to the plane.” Although the Inuit spoke no English, they understood his words: “He said we were garbage.” Flown to Nueltin Lake in the spring of 1950 and left with no supplies, the group subsisted on fish and slowly began to
make their way back to Ennadai by December. Not everyone survived. For Muqyunniq, it was “the saddest time of my life.”

Even when relocation was officially voluntary – approved by secret ballot rather than conducted at the sharp end of a stick – people often experienced it as coercion: many rural Newfoundlanders would have agreed with the fishermen of Francois who insisted they “was drove!” Confronted with the prospect of having to leave, some residents of Quebec’s Gaspé region were equally clear: “I want to stay,” said one. “Our home is our home,” said another. The residents of the ironically named St-Octave-de-l’Avenir whom filmmaker Marcel Carrière interviewed were equally eloquent about the meaning of relocation. “I remember when I was young in school we learned ‘never destroy a bird’s nest – that will bring misfortune,’” recalled Aurèle Fraser. “It’s not a bird’s nest they’re destroying, it’s our families. I don’t know if that will bring tragedy, but it’s a bad omen.”

The better life that relocation promised – access to jobs and services, improved housing, and modern conveniences like sewers and safe water – looked appealing only if one ignored what really made for social security in places like Africville: a house that you could call your own, with neighbours you knew and trusted, people who were like you. “We all live in our own homes out here, detached homes, where our children can run around,” explained Africville resident Leon Steed in 1963. “We couldn’t go and live in no apartments [i.e., social housing in Halifax] today, segregated or not segregated, discriminated against as we are. Anything that happens, the first thing they’re going to do is blame us: ‘the Negroes is who done it!’” Told that urban redevelopment would improve her life and that of her parents and neighbours on Vancouver’s East Side, Shirley Chan challenged the picture government officials had of the “blighted” area she lived in: “I didn’t know it was a slum until the city told me it was.”

It’s impossible to ignore voices like these, ones that speak with such visceral force to the impacts of relocation. They resonate even as I take another approach, one that differs in three ways. First, I focus much more on the people who did the moving rather than those who were moved. In doing so, my aim is to attach faces and names to “the state,” to render a picture of its agents that is as textured and empathetic as the one we have of the victims of relocation. In that sense, my purpose is broadly similar to E.P. Thompson’s more than fifty years ago when he wrote The Making of the English Working Class – namely, to deliver a group of people from “the enormous condescension of posterity.” Despite the work that has been done
on these relocations and the emphasis given to the power of “the state,” we know little about the politicians, bureaucrats, university-based experts, and other professionals who designed and carried them out.

Their motives, rationales, and actions reveal a different aspect of the political culture of postwar Canada, an era we associate with affluence and anxiety, growth and containment. But as much as that was the case, the postwar period was also a time of hope. It was a time when people believed governments could and, more importantly, should intervene to improve the lives of citizens. It was a time when a belief that there was “a new world coming” inspired the work of those who laboured inside state and university bureaucracies as much as it did those who assailed them from the outside. As an exploration of the power of hope, *Moved by the State* takes seriously the sincerity and optimism that lay behind declarations that the government would “eliminate poverty” and build a “Just Society” with “citizen participation.” It explores how people with some power tried to realize those hopes, all the while navigating a world of imperfect choices, where the boundary between benevolence and oppression was easily crossed. Understanding how they did so is crucial for anyone interested in the dynamics of “state power.”

Second, I look at these instances of forced relocation together, rather than separately. Doing so reveals how pervasive it was as a strategy to make good on the state’s promise of universality. Whether it was the departments of Northern Affairs, Fisheries, or Agriculture, or the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the welfare state saw social security as a question of spatial justice: it moved a diversity of people like the fishermen of Francois, Job Muqyunniq, Aurèle Fraser, Leon Steed, and Shirley Chan to places where more and better services and opportunities were thought to lie. Universality was inherent in the language of what T.H. Marshall called “social citizenship,” the social responsibilities the state had to its citizens. Articulated most explicitly in the postwar period, they included everything from “the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society.”

The idea of social citizenship – that all citizens should share in the benefits of a common set of social welfare programs, have access to the same public services, and enjoy a certain reasonable standard of living – was visible in the creation of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in 1953. According to its first minister, its purpose was “to give the Eskimos the same rights, privileges, opportunities, and responsibilities as all other
Canadians, in short to enable them to share fully in the national life of Canada.”

Joey Smallwood, the man who would be his province’s first premier, used the benefits of Canadian social citizenship to convince Newfoundlanders to say yes to Confederation. For many, however, taking advantage of those benefits meant lifting “the curse of isolation” that bedevilled the island, something both his centralization program and its successor, the Fisheries Household Resettlement Program, aimed to do by consolidating the population.

Similarly, razing Africville and relocating its residents was justified in the name of ending the segregation of this group of African Nova Scotians and giving them access to the basic municipal services like clean water and sewers that other Haligonians enjoyed. As town planner Gordon Stephenson noted in his redevelopment study of Halifax, “Africville stands as an indictment of society and not its inhabitants. They are old Canadians who never had the opportunities enjoyed by their more fortunate fellows.”

The state’s pursuit of social security didn’t end with forced relocation and the delivery of people to services and opportunities. The poor were rarely left to their own devices after being moved. Instead, they and the places they lived were the focus of “development” efforts aimed at extending social citizenship and upholding what Pierre Trudeau called the “right to a good life.” For the Jesuit-educated justice minister, and later prime minister, “a good life” wasn’t defined primarily in material terms. Instead, it was one in which people could achieve their full potential as individuals regardless of their location. As he put it, “Every Canadian has the right to a good life whatever the province or community he lives in.”

Examining forced relocations as part of a larger, more encompassing project of improvement rather than as ends in themselves is the third way my approach differs from existing work. Moved by the State explores how rural and urban poor from coast to coast to coast were relocated and remade into productive, self-sufficient citizens – or that was the goal. State-sponsored development aimed to “help people help themselves” by facilitating their participation in the fundamental decisions that shaped their collective futures. Doing so was the key to making a good life, to realizing their potential fully.

The state’s efforts to improve the lives of Canadians were informed by concerns about regional inequality, the rediscovery of poverty, and international development, as well as by the ideas about universality and social citizenship I’ve noted. Canada is one of the most regionalized countries in
the world and, early on, the federal government realized that its economic policies would have to deal with that challenge. Perhaps the best-known of these saw Ottawa provide subsidies to railway companies to lower their freight rates on goods moving into and out of the west and east. The Crow’s Nest Pass Agreement (1897) facilitated the transportation of goods from the prairies to British Columbia and subsequently lowered the cost of shipping western grain to ports on the Great Lakes. Similarly, the Maritime Freight Rates Act (1927) allowed goods from Atlantic Canada to get to central Canadian markets at competitive rates. Ralph Krueger argues that, in addition to these transportation agreements, government subsidies to Canada’s mining, fishing, forestry, and agricultural sectors to encourage production and modernization can also be considered efforts at reducing regional economic disparities. “Because the primary industries are for the most part located away from the heavily urbanized areas, the subsidies to these industries have helped buoy up the economy of these more peripheral areas, and thus have assisted to some degree in ameliorating the problem of regional disparities.”

While Ottawa’s economic policies reflected the country’s regionalized character fairly early on in Canada’s history, it would not be until the 1930s and especially after the Second World War that its social policies did as well. In 1957, it introduced equalization payments, one of a number of measures that came out of the Great Depression and the Rowell-Sirois Report (1940). The events of the 1930s laid bare the differing abilities of the provinces to deal with mass poverty caused by the economic and environmental crises that defined the Great Depression.

Equalization payments were meant to address these imbalances by ensuring the revenues poorer provinces accrued from personal and corporate income taxes and succession duties matched those of the wealthiest. By equalizing revenue, the federal government made it possible for all provinces to offer an adequate level of social services at comparable levels of taxation. As such, Penny Bryden considers equalization “a policy that enabled universality” as well as “a creature of the mid-century move towards universality” in welfare policy. While there were changes to the equalization formula over time, those details are less important for my purposes than the principle underlying the federal government’s actions – namely, tackling poverty by reducing inequality among regions. Significantly, as Bryden points out, the principle of “regional universality” was entrenched in section 36 of Canada’s Constitution Act (1982) “in a way that is not true for the universal programs in whose service equalization was established in the first place.”
In the 1960s and 1970s, concerns about income inequality led the state to intensify its efforts to reduce regional differences. Unlike Australia and the United States, where regional differences in per capita income decreased to the point of nearly disappearing after the Second World War, in Canada such differences persisted. Moreover, from the 1920s to at least the 1970s, the position of each region relative to the national average stayed the same, with individuals in British Columbia and Ontario earning the most, those in Atlantic Canada the least, and people in the Prairie provinces and Quebec consistently earning incomes in between them.\textsuperscript{19} It was clear that the prosperity of the postwar years was unevenly distributed. Given this, the Economic Council of Canada, a federal Crown corporation that advised government, observed that “it would be hazardous to assume that rapid economic advance at the national level … would be sufficient in itself to reduce income disparity significantly.”\textsuperscript{20} Reducing the economic and social disparities that came with growth would require programs tailored to the challenges of particular regions and locales.

To that end, the federal government introduced a number of national initiatives best known to Canadians through their acronyms: ARDA, FRED, and DREE, to name but three – the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Administration (1961), the Fund for Rural Economic Development (1966), and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion (1969). The government of Quebec took advantage of federal funding from ARDA to fund planning for the redevelopment of eastern Quebec, and DREE took over from the federal Department of Fisheries in funding and helping to administer resettlement in Newfoundland. All of these programs and departments aimed to modernize rural areas, something that usually involved spatial reorganization, including relocation, industrialization, and efforts to develop the human resources of the region.\textsuperscript{21} Cities didn’t escape notice: the federal state’s efforts to tackle urban poverty emerged from a concern about the amount and quality of housing in the postwar years, something that led to the creation of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in 1946. In 1956 the CMHC funded municipalities, including Halifax and Vancouver, to come up with comprehensive plans for their redevelopment. Restructuring city space through something called “urban renewal” would, it was believed, elevate the condition of all residents, particularly the poor, who would be delivered from the “slums” and rehoused in gleaming modern apartment buildings.
These programs, departments, and agencies speak to the growth of the Canadian state, especially during the *trente glorieuses*, the three decades after 1945, a period of economic growth and prosperity. Its interventions and expanding reach were justified in terms of the need to secure the welfare of all Canadians by countering the effects of the market. What one analyst identified as a key assumption underlying ARDA was true of the approach the state took to economic development and social security generally at the time. “The market alone is unable to guarantee the most efficient and desirable employment and the use of natural resources in every instance,” observed James N. McCrorie. “Nor is it able to improve the standard of living of those . . . who are under-employed, live and attempt to survive on marginal land or resources, or who are engaged in production of a commodity for which the demand in the foreseeable future is far less than the supply.” In short, the market alone couldn’t assure a good life for everyone.

Given its shortcomings, bureaucrats and politicians from across the political spectrum believed they were right to use the power of the state to improve the lives of all Canadians, particularly those who were less fortunate. As we’ll see, their interventions were shaped and propelled by a remarkable and widely shared confidence in the power of social scientific expertise to understand and transform the world, and especially its peoples, for the better. Dubbed “high modernism” by anthropologist James C. Scott, this belief was embraced by regimes from left to right and around the world. From the 1930s, and especially after 1945, their leaders turned to centralized, top-down, rational planning and scientifically informed management “to improve the human condition” — often with mixed and sometimes devastating effects.

The efforts by Canada’s politicians and bureaucrats to address spatial inequality were also shaped by the rediscovery of poverty in North America in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Just a little more than a decade after the end of the Second World War, unemployment became a concern for the first time since the 1930s. Like incomes and social services, it was also unevenly distributed. Residents of the Atlantic provinces and Quebec were afflicted by higher unemployment than the Canadian average, and many lived below the poverty line, commonly estimated at a yearly income in urban areas of $3,000 for a family of four and $1,500 for a single person. In rural areas, the rate was 80 percent of those figures. By this measure, estimates were that one in five, and perhaps as many as one in four, Canadians suffered from poverty in the mid-1960s.
In addition to region, poverty levels differed by class, age, gender, and race. Income levels were lower in rural areas, among those with no formal education beyond elementary school, and where the head of the family was over the age of sixty-five or was a woman. By Ottawa’s own admission, the statistics for Indigenous peoples were “brutal”: in 1965, an estimated 78.5 percent of Indigenous families had yearly incomes below $3,000. Indeed, over half had incomes of less than $2,000 per year, and over a quarter earned less than $1,000 per year.

Statistics alone did not account entirely for Canadians’ rediscovery of poverty. Michael Harrington’s influential bestseller, *The Other America* (1962), called attention to the problem and shaped responses to it. The socialist and journalist argued that mass poverty existed amidst the general affluence of the United States. Numbering fifty million, the poor were nevertheless invisible, rendered so by the very growth that fuelled their country’s wealth. Poverty had a rural face in an urban nation; it was, as Harrington put it, “off the beaten track.” If city dwellers didn’t see the immiseration that characterized parts of the countryside, neither did they come in contact with it closer to home. Over the twentieth century, urban space had become differentiated, and it was possible for people who worked, shopped, and otherwise conducted their business or pleasure in town to avoid seeing, much less coming into contact with, the inner-city poor. “The failures, the unskilled, the disabled, the aged, and the minorities are right there, across the tracks, where they have always been. But hardly anyone else is,” Harrington observed. Urbanization had “removed poverty from the living, emotional experience of millions upon millions of middle-class Americans. Living out in the suburbs, it is easy to assume that ours is, indeed, an affluent society.”

Spurred by Harrington’s book, Canadian journalists began to write about poverty above the forty-ninth parallel. *Maclean’s* magazine ran an editorial praising US president Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty” in 1964, calling it “the most hopeful declaration of US policy since the salvage of Europe a generation ago.” It regretted “the cramped spirit that has kept Canada’s public men from initiating such an attempt,” especially as this country was in a stronger economic position than its counterpart to the south. “We have never been better able to afford such a great idea and we have never needed one more,” it concluded. Remarkably, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, Canadian business journals called for government intervention. As David Suderman put it in *Canadian Business*, the continued presence of the poor in Canadian society suggested that “the orthodox techniques
of ‘pump-priming’ and economic management are no longer adequate – if they ever have been – to ensure that prosperity would be enjoyed by all.”

Sociologist John Porter’s systematic, empirical study of class and power published in 1965 also shaped discussions of poverty. Rather than the egalitarian, diverse, middle-class society most in the country considered it to be, Canada, he argued, was best viewed as a “vertical mosaic,” a place divided by ethnicity but more fundamentally by class. While the focus of Porter’s book and the subsequent commentary was on the various elites that controlled Canada and the implications of that control for democracy, his message that the country was not the land of opportunity for all certainly resonated with those concerned with poverty.

By the latter half of the 1960s, there was a sense among Canadian activists as well as its bureaucrats and politicians that things were not as they should be, that this was not the Canada they recognized or wished to live in. In the view of human rights lawyer Alan Borovoy, Canadians were reluctant to recognize the existence of inequality at home and he advocated that they think more and act on Porter’s insights. R.A.J. Phillips was especially offended at the high rates of poverty among Indigenous peoples. As the director of the Special Planning Secretariat of the Privy Council told a Vancouver audience in 1966, “This is not some utterly forgotten, inaccessible, backward country we are talking about. It’s Canada.” The Economic Council of Canada was equally blunt. “Poverty in Canada is real. Its numbers are not in the thousands but the millions. There is more of it than our society can tolerate, more than our economy can afford, and far more than existing measures can cope with,” it noted in 1968. “Its persistence, at a time when the bulk of Canadians enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world, is a disgrace.” For Liberal Justice Minister John Turner, dealing with poverty required structural changes. “We must disabuse ourselves of the myth that poverty is somehow caused by the poor,” he told a gathering of North American judges in 1969. “We must recognize that the law often contributes to poverty. We must understand that, whereas the law for most of us is a source of rights, for the poor the law appears always to be taking something away. That we have to change.”

Following Johnson’s initiatives in the United States and reflecting the optimism of the age, in 1965 the Liberal government of Lester B. Pearson announced it too would act by “developing a programme for the full utilisation of our human resources and the elimination of poverty among our people.” Canada’s “war on poverty” was one conducted from within the
walls of the Privy Council Office, through a Special Planning Secretariat (SPS). Because the provinces administered the majority of anti-poverty programs in Canada, it was impossible for the federal government to emulate the American model exactly and take the lead in forging new policy directions. The Special Planning Secretariat would not, as its director noted, administer new programs or embark on any “dramatic new budgetary excursions of its own.”32 Instead, its job was to coordinate existing initiatives across the country and raise awareness about poverty, to end the invisibility that Harrington argued was the chief obstacle to its elimination.33

Although the SPS was disbanded after just two years, its call for more social science research on poverty and its insistence, through its publications, that the poor be heard from directly and have a say in planning what was good for them continued to be articulated by the Special Senate Committee on Poverty (1968–71) and the Economic Council of Canada.34 As will be discussed, these calls for greater citizen participation were heeded – albeit in different ways – in efforts to address poverty and immiseration in the North, Newfoundland, and eastern Quebec, as well as in Halifax and Vancouver.

If national efforts to deal with regional inequality and domestic poverty provide a context in which to understand the forced relocations examined in this volume, so too does international thinking. These removals reflected a particular moment in postwar history, one in which a “will to improve” informed the exercise of state power and pushed governments around the world to invest in “development” beyond their borders.35 As other scholars have argued, that word naturalized a process that was anything but natural. Development – “growth with change,” as the United Nations put it – was a normative concept. As such, some argue that, instead of asking what it is, it is more fruitful to ask what development was intended to do.36

To governments in the postwar West, development meant modernization, progressing through what the American economist Walt Whitman Rostow identified as universal “stages” of growth. Spurred by external demand for resources and new technologies, traditional societies would commercialize their economies and “take off.” As they progressed to “maturity,” defined as the “age of high mass consumption,” they would acquire liberal democratic values and embrace individualism, private property, industrialization, and the free market. The job of governments and non-governmental organizations engaged in development was to overcome the innate conservatism of traditional societies, cultivating “individual initiative, risk taking, innovation, and freedom
from kinship constraints and customary obligations” – in other words, the practices and values associated with liberal modernity and capitalism.37

As Michael Latham observes, modernization was both a theory and an instrument of global change, “a framework for objective social analysis and a powerful vehicle for social engineering.”38 During the Cold War, the government of the United States channelled money and experts to the “Third World,” hoping to contain and stabilize the unpredictable and dangerous forces of decolonization and facilitate the transition to American modernity.

But even as the top-down Rostovian model of development was imposed around the world by foreign governments and the heads of newly independent states, there was resistance to it, both on the ground from those who were the objects of “improvement” and among intellectuals on the right and the left.39 Modernization was never universally embraced, not even within the ranks of government. As Daniel Immerwahr argues, we shouldn’t conflate development with modernization. During the 1960s, when Rostow’s ideas reached the height of their influence, social scientists and policymakers also pursued “development without modernization.” Community development initiatives aimed “to shore up small-scale solidarities, to encourage democratic deliberation and civic action on a local level, and to embed politics and economics within the life of the community.”40

Regardless of whether Western governments thought big or small when it came to development, modernization was an ideological project that was premised on and generated new kinds of knowledge. Modernization theory linked the ivory tower to the corridors of power, bringing the social sciences to geopolitics. For instance, while he was director of MIT’s Center for International Studies, Rostow advised US president Dwight Eisenhower on foreign and economic policy before being appointed to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, eventually serving as national security adviser.41 Anthropology was also deployed in the service of the state, particularly as the shortcomings of Rostovian modernization became apparent. Indeed, James Ferguson goes so far as to argue that development was anthropology’s “evil twin.” As experts on “traditional” societies and “primitive” peoples, anthropologists were well placed to do development work.42 Ironically, their knowledge was deployed to transform the very societies they studied into ones that looked progressive, modern, and, as US senator Kenneth Wherry revealed, familiar. “We will lift Shanghai up and up, ever up,” boasted the Nebraska politician in 1940, “until it is just like Kansas City.”43
During the United Nations’ “Development Decade” (1960–70), the Canadian state’s energies of improvement were focused inward as well as outward, toward bettering the condition of those who lived in its underdeveloped regions and impoverished inner cities. Indeed, scholars of international development have challenged the distinction between “foreign” and “domestic” spheres, arguing that American perceptions of “others” at home shaped their approach to them abroad.44 Taking up the insights of theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein that development was colonialism in another guise, they have called for work that assesses the connections between the American government’s treatment of Indigenous peoples in the United States and its postwar modernization agendas in the Third World.45

International historian David Meren has begun to do that for Canada, exploring what he calls the “entangled history” of Canadian foreign aid and Aboriginal policy in the decades following the Second World War. Not only did the Canadian government’s views and policies regarding Indigenous peoples influence its understanding of foreign aid, but Canada’s experience in the global South also came to inform its relationship with Indigenous peoples.46

As with international development, making a good life in postwar Canada involved universities and social scientists as well as government departments and bureaucrats. They were all engaged in the task of assessing the material and human potential of Canada’s poor rural regions and urban neighbourhoods. Doing so was just the beginning of their work: those tasked with development also believed that improving people’s social condition was best guaranteed by cultivating community. But the kind of community they sought to build was not the insular, hide-bound, collectivity of an earlier era, the kind of traditional society Rostow and his followers criticized as an obstacle to modernization. Instead, the solidarities development workers aimed to foster were ones that encouraged people to come together in collectivities beyond the family, faith, and race to help themselves. Doing so required seeing community as a locality – a place – made up of people with a variety of views and to seeing strength and purpose in giving public voice to that diversity. Equally importantly, their initiatives were also designed to help people see their community (in all its diversity) in relationship to other scales of affiliation, including the region, province, and nation, and to parse their allegiances accordingly.

Creating the kind of community that could meet the demands of modernity often began with efforts to build the capacity of the poor to make
decisions collectively, to participate in deciding the kind of future they wanted for their community and how they might achieve it. Those efforts reveal the influence of arguments about the “culture of poverty” prevalent at the time. First articulated by anthropologist Oscar Lewis in the late 1950s, this theory explained the persistence of poverty in terms of a set of attitudes and behaviours that had been inculcated in the poor by the material conditions in which they lived. The culture of poverty was characterized by “feelings of marginality, of helplessness, of dependence, and of inferiority.” As well – and significantly, in terms of understanding the approach to development undertaken in the case studies I examine here – Lewis argued that two of its “crucial characteristics” were “a minimum level of organization beyond the level of the nuclear and extended family” and “the lack of effective participation and integration of the poor in the major institutions of the larger society.”47 In other words, the poor were not much part of civil society nor did they possess a civic culture. Echoing Lewis, the Economic Council of Canada argued that “to feel poverty is, among other things, to feel oneself an unwilling outsider – a virtual nonparticipant in the society in which one lives.”48

Lewis’s arguments were also evident in Maurice Sauvé’s remarks about the role of government in addressing poverty. The member of Parliament for Îles-de-la-Madeleine in eastern Quebec and the minister of forestry considered it essential that the poor have a say in the policies undertaken to help them. Without such input, any state intervention was doomed to failure. But there was a problem: in his view, and that of others engaged in development, the poor lacked the ability to articulate their views and participate in such discussions. “Until the low-income groups are assisted in arriving at some consensus, and of more or less formalizing their demands, we can do little,” he argued in 1965.49

The role of government was thus to help people articulate their demands, to introduce the poor to the institutions and practices of deliberative democracy. This was something best achieved through community development.50 It would build the capacity to participate, to help people arrive at a consensus and formalize their demands. In explaining what community development was, Sauvé quoted directly from the United Nations’ definition, underscoring the connection between international and domestic development thinking: “The term ‘community development’ has, in international usage, come to connote “The processes by which efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the
economic, social, and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress.” While these processes were complex, Sauvé contended that the “essential element” was “the participation of the people themselves, and the provision of services in ways which will encourage initiative, self help, and mutual help.”

Indeed, citizen participation was an important goal of development and not just a means to achieve it. Whether they were drawn from the ranks of government or the universities, those who were engaged in the project of improvement in Canada saw participation as a means of what we would now call “empowerment.” Exploring how empowerment was elicited reveals the disciplinary aspects of making a good life, something hinted at by Sauvé’s reference to “integrating communities into the life of the nation.” It has been overshadowed by critics’ narrow focus on relocation rather than the larger project of which it was a part. In postwar Canada, people weren’t just moved by the state: they were also shaped by its subsequent efforts to craft a civic political culture; that is, they were subjected to sovereign as well as disciplinary power, to use Michel Foucault’s terms. As political scientist Timothy Mitchell and anthropologist Tania Murray Li have argued for Egypt and Indonesia, “the rule of experts” and expertise in international development gave rise to different forms of power and domination that Foucault called “governmentality.” The term describes the techniques and rationalities used to produce citizens whose behaviours and ways of thinking made them governable. As we will see, addressing poverty in Canada through participatory community and regional development also involved creating particular kinds of political subjects and ultimately reconfiguring democracy.

I begin my exploration of forced relocation and development in the North, where the disciplinary aspects of improvement were apparent and where we can begin to appreciate the relationship between poverty, democracy, and a good life. In the postwar period, the federal government took a greater interest in the region thanks in large part to the Cold War, which highlighted its strategic importance, and an increasing appreciation of its economic potential. But as diplomat and commissioner of the Northwest Territories Hugh Keenleyside recalled, the country’s postwar engagement with the North also stemmed from Canadians’ expanded sense of community and responsibility. In his view, there was “a growing appreciation of the social responsibility of those living in a more favourable environment for
the welfare of others of our common destiny who had been existing in half-forgotten isolation beyond the horizon of the north.”

Until the 1950s, Canada’s northern affairs were largely left to the Hudson’s Bay Company, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Christian missionaries, all of whom believed the Indigenous population of the region was self-sufficient. The situation began to change when prices for Arctic fox declined and the caribou on which many Indigenous peoples depended became scarce. Inuit began spending more time in the region’s settlements, hoping to find the support they needed. Confronted with the prospect of rising welfare costs, the federal government pushed people such as Job Muqyunniq back onto the land, believing it would provide for them as it always had. Not only would forced relocation prevent welfare dependency, but, in the view of Ottawa’s bureaucrats, it would also preserve Inuit culture and, in the case of the High Arctic relocations, maintain Canadian sovereignty.

When a number of Inuit starved to death in the central Arctic in the late 1950s, the federal government changed what Frances Abele called its “state of nature” policy. Inuit would not be made to live on the land but instead would be encouraged and, indeed, coerced to settle in permanent communities. As “Arctic migrants” became “Arctic villagers,” they were subjected to greater oversight and control, to power that has been described as “totalizing.” Once represented only by the RCMP, the state came to figure more prominently in the daily lives of northerners through its social welfare programs, first in the form of family allowance and old age pensions, then through its provisions for housing, education, and health care.

The extension of social welfare to the North was part of what John David Hamilton has called an “Arctic revolution.” In the postwar years, the federal government greatly expanded its presence in the region, reconfiguring its governance to build a “full-scale colonial administration” in less than a generation. The scope of Ottawa’s power was such that Alvin Hamilton considered that his appointment in 1957 as the federal minister responsible for the region made him “Czar of the North.” More than ten years and a different government later, attitudes had not changed: named minister of Indian and northern affairs by Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1968, Jean Chrétien referred to himself as “the last emperor in North America.”

New and different kinds of knowledge were brought to bear on Ottawa’s northern realm. “We hired social workers, writers, and Inuktitut language teachers,” recalled Bent Sivertz of the early days of the Arctic Division of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. In the central
Arctic, they were joined by people trained in anthropology, wildlife science, and resource economics, who all brought their expertise to bear on the task of giving the North a future, one that included its Indigenous peoples.

The cooperative was one of the development tools of choice for northern administrators. Co-ops would provide an institutional foundation for a local and regional economy and school its members in the workings of the market. Equally, if not more importantly, running a cooperative would teach Arctic villagers, many of whom were strangers to each other, how to make decisions publicly and collectively, something that would prepare them to govern their own affairs. In that way, helping Inuit establish cooperatives across the region would fulfil the mandate of Northern Affairs.

Cooperatives also figured in the Newfoundland story, as did some of the same government bureaucrats. But as Chapter 2 shows, the actors who featured most prominently were not just those drawn from the ranks of government. Instead, they also came from the university. Memorial University of Newfoundland’s Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) and its Extension Department advised the federal and provincial governments about resettlement and were directly involved in the project of rural development.

The rule of experts this was not, however. Nor did the planning and implementation of resettlement bear anything more than the lightest imprint of high modernism. French economist François Perroux did provide the theory that informed it, observing that development was uneven, polarized around an industry or group of industries that drew people to them. His “growth pole” idea was one of development’s “travelling rationalities,” seized upon by modernizers around the world in the 1960s and 1970s, including those behind the Fisheries Household Resettlement Program.61 They inverted Perroux’s observation, reasoning that concentrating Newfoundland’s population would spur economic development by providing industry with a supply of labour. But beyond designating a handful of communities as “growth centres” and setting out a process by which communities could apply to be resettled, there was no further planning or study of any kind, nothing like the area economic surveys undertaken in the North or the extensive, government-funded, multi-volume study of eastern Quebec’s agricultural, fisheries, mining, and forestry sectors that was underway even as resettlement was being planned.

It was thus perhaps predictable that Newfoundland’s Department of Community and Social Development, which oversaw resettlement, was
unprepared for and completely overwhelmed by applications from people who seemed all too ready to sign up for the “shifting money” while it was on offer. In the bureaucratic chaos that ensued, rural Newfoundlanders subverted the purpose of the program to a surprising degree, moving not to designated growth centres but to communities closer to home, where the men could have access to their familiar fishing grounds. The economists and sociologists brought in to assess the program after its first few years of operation interviewed outport residents and identified points of friction and frustration. But far from challenging the necessity of relocation, they offered suggestions about how to improve its effectiveness and, in a sense, criticized it for not being sufficiently high modern.

Even as their ISER-based colleagues advised government about how to make resettlement work better, the staff at Memorial’s Extension Department were collaborating with some of the same officials to strengthen rural Newfoundland. Here, as elsewhere, relocation and development went hand-in-hand. As in the North, development required transforming attitudes and behaviours – in this case, helping outporters shake off the heavy burden of tradition that shaped social relations to create a new kind of community, one with a modern civic political culture.

Working with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the Extension Department produced a series of films featuring individuals from different communities on Fogo Island speaking frankly about the problems and challenges of outport life, and in ways that they would not speak with their neighbours. A medium that is intimate yet distancing, film revealed islanders’ differences as well as their shared interests in a way that allowed for discussion and the creation of new relationships, ones that helped the people of Fogo Island come together enough to forestall resettlement. The NFB called this “communication for social change,” and the technique, which became known as “the Fogo Process,” became a staple tool in community development work in Newfoundland and beyond.62

The story of how the people of Fogo Island managed to take charge of their future is usually presented as a story of resistance. Outporters drew on the very culture that government had denigrated to fight back against the assumption that they and their communities had “no great future,” as Premier Joey Smallwood put it. But as much as Fogo’s survival was a testament to islanders’ strength, it also spoke to the effectiveness of the community development efforts undertaken by the Extension Department and the NFB. They managed to inculcate different scales of affect and affiliation
among islanders, to create new political subjectivities that allowed them to avoid resettlement. In other words, Fogo Island’s persistence can be read as a measure of the success of a particular technique of governmentality as well as of the agency of its residents.

Governmentality and high modernism found their fullest expression in the efforts to develop eastern Quebec, the subject of Chapter 3. Seized with the ambition to make Quebecers maîtres chez nous, the provincial government entered into an agreement with Ottawa to fund development planning for the Lower St. Lawrence, Gaspé, and Îles-de-la-Madeleine region in 1963. As was the case in Newfoundland, fighting poverty and developing eastern Quebec involved relocation – in this case, moving a projected 60,000 people in a population of 325,000, and closing eighty-five villages deemed to be “marginal.” Unlike what happened in Newfoundland, however, relocation and development were the subject of intensive planning carried out by the Bureau d’aménagement de l’Est du Québec (BAEQ; the Eastern Quebec Development Office), a non-governmental body that was funded by the federal and provincial governments through ARDA.

Based in Mont Joli, the BAEQ commanded a small army of researchers, many from Laval University, with expertise in the applied, natural, and social sciences. Conducted over three years, their work culminated in a ten-volume, two-thousand-page plan that called for the modernization of the region’s main economic sectors, agriculture, forestry, mining, and fisheries. The overall objective was “to catch up with the Province of Quebec, and thus virtually to eliminate disparities in employment, productivity and income,” something that would, in part, require improvements to the occupational and geographical mobility of the labour force and creating “regional enthusiasm” among its residents.

But, as in Newfoundland, this was not the usual development-as-the-rule-of-experts story either. As much as the BAEQ relied on academics to draft a plan for eastern Quebec, it also turned to the people of the region for their input. Indeed, “participatory planning” and the citizen engagement it would cultivate were goals themselves, designed to further development by investing the people of eastern Quebec in the future of the region as a whole, and not just the particular community in which they lived.

To do so, the BAEQ’s planners and development workers built an elaborate structure of participation, the foundation of which was something called “animation sociale” (social motivation or facilitation). This was a technique – a pedagogy – used by development workers both to understand the issues
confronting poor communities from the bottom up and also to teach community members to define their interests and goals in relation to those of other communities and the region. By facilitating discussion, the BAEQ’s *animateurs* hoped to forge a new civic political culture, one that consisted of the rules and practices of deliberative democracy and a particular way of seeing local interests in a larger context. In that sense, the planning process itself was a technique of government.

Just as Newfoundlanders engaged with their resettlement program, the people of eastern Quebec embraced the BAEQ’s process – so much so that, when the plan they had played a role in drafting was largely shelved, they rose up in protest. Using the democratic language of *animation sociale*, which encouraged and empowered the poor to become “artisans of their destiny,” they came together as Opérations Dignité. The resulting series of three protests between 1970 and 1972 were among the largest mass demonstrations in the history of rural Quebec. In making their demands, the protesters articulated a different relationship between the region and the province and a different sense of what it meant to be *maîtres chez nous*. Ultimately, the protests revealed the space between governmentality and local politics, a space in which other futures, other possibilities, could be expressed and realized.

Together, these three case studies reveal differences in the kind and degree of state coercion in both relocation and the expertise brought to bear on development. Despite these differences, what happened in the central Arctic, Newfoundland, and eastern Quebec shows the extent to which rural Canada was the object of state-sponsored improvement in the postwar years. In many ways, it is to the rural we must turn to understand the meanings and impacts of modernization. Doing so reveals the urban bias of relocation and development and, by extension, what the shape of “a good life” was, according to the state. In the North, Newfoundland, and eastern Quebec, the Canadian state tried to reduce poverty by centralizing rural populations, moving them to larger settlements that offered a concentration of services and, it was thought, better economic opportunities.

Of course, urban areas were not without their own pockets of poverty. These were also the targets of government-funded efforts that, like the ones already discussed, were informed by expertise and aimed at transforming people as much as places. In the postwar years, the federal government took a more activist role in shaping Canadian cities through housing policy and what was called “urban renewal.” Aimed at overcoming the jumbled land-use
patterns that were the result of the historical development of cities, urban renewal was meant to increase land values and hence tax revenues through clearing slums; separating residential, commercial, and industrial land use through zoning; and making better provision for traffic. Between 1948 and 1968, Ottawa, through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, administered forty-eight major urban redevelopment projects that saw the demolition of thirteen thousand residential units and the construction of eighteen thousand new ones, mainly in the form of social housing.65

But urban renewal was also meant to improve the lives of the poor people who lived in the areas targeted for clearance. To urban reformers and planners, physical decay and moral decay went hand-in-hand. Fixing the former would also repair the latter: building better cities was a way to build better people. That connection was apparent in Leonard Marsh’s 1950 report on slum clearance and urban rehabilitation in Vancouver’s East Side. In it, the University of British Columbia professor and architect of Canada’s welfare state argued that the danger posed by such areas was not limited to their impact on a city’s tax base. Instead, “the biggest cost of the slum to society is apathetic, dreary living, which is a menace to every aspect of healthy citizenship.”66 Like those engaged in rural development, Marsh was also concerned with building a civic culture among the urban poor, in this case by structuring their built environment.67

Given the urban bias of development, one might expect that the state would devote as many, if not more, resources to alleviating urban poverty as it did to addressing it in rural Canada. That was not the case in the 1960s, and some politicians who represented urban ridings, like Phil Givens, resented it. “We seem to spend ninety per cent of our time talking about wet wheat, fish, and the Newfie Bullet,” the member of Parliament for York West noted.68 Ottawa was constitutionally constrained in what it could do, as matters urban fell under provincial jurisdiction. Yet housing policy was one way it could intervene, and throughout the 60s, it continued to try to expand its influence in this area. Those efforts culminated in 1971 with the creation of a short-lived Ministry of State for Urban Affairs.

Not only did the state devote fewer resources to urban development, but its efforts to improve the lives of the urban poor occurred in a much less consultative way. In contrast to the development efforts undertaken in rural Canada, urban renewal remained very much expert-driven, its technocratic character largely unleavened by citizen participation. For most of the decade, the people in areas slated for renewal were not invited to participate in any
aspect of urban planning. That said, municipal authorities in Halifax and Vancouver were sufficiently conscious of the disruptive nature of relocation and redevelopment to think about how to treat those affected fairly. Their efforts are the subject of the next two chapters.

Both Africville, a neighbourhood at the north end of Halifax, and Strathcona, on Vancouver’s East Side, were targets of urban renewal in the 1960s, and each has become emblematic in its own way. The destruction of Africville is a symbol of racism and the power of the state, while the survival of Strathcona has come to signify the reconfiguration and redistribution of that power, thanks to the successful efforts on the part of area residents to stop renewal and convince the government to fund the rehabilitation of their neighbourhood.

There are, however, other ways to see their significance. The way urban renewal unfolded in postwar Halifax reveals the power of race and rights to shape the city’s ideas about how to minimize the disruption of urban renewal for Africville’s residents. While the razing of Africville and the relocation of its residents certainly speaks to the systemic racism prevalent in Halifax, municipal authorities also recognized the role racism had played in creating the poor conditions in the neighbourhood in the first place. As I discuss in Chapter 4, although they weren’t willing to undertake the kinds of improvements that would allow residents to continue to live in their homes, city bureaucrats were sensitive to the need to relocate them in a way that reflected the principles of “natural justice,” as they put it. Doing so meant giving Africville residents more consideration than was extended to other poor Haligonians—both black and white—who lived in other areas of the city that were also slated for demolition and redevelopment.

While the city used the standard expropriation procedures to acquire properties in other areas targeted for urban renewal, it deviated from them in dealing with the residents of Africville. In an effort to avoid perpetuating the racism that characterized the city’s treatment of the neighbourhood in the past, it negotiated with individual property owners, hiring a social worker to do so, and it also compensated those without property—that is, those who were tenants or who boarded or lived with relatives. In addition, to review compensation agreements, city council created a special subcommittee whose members included the community’s advocates. Finally, the city agreed to help relocated residents find housing and jobs as well as get the education they needed to open up opportunities for them. Significant as they were, these efforts were also largely ineffective
and reveal the limits of the prevailing understanding of justice. For the municipal state and for Africville’s advocates, fairness focused on providing opportunities for individuals to help themselves, rather than addressing the structural barriers that prevented people from taking advantage of such opportunities.

Planning in Vancouver began on the same trajectory as Halifax, with a comprehensive, top-down, expert report that identified areas of the city’s East Side for redevelopment and estimated that doing so would necessitate the relocation of approximately 6,000 poor and working-class people, 30 percent of whom were Chinese Canadian. But, as Chapter 5 shows, rather than depart from the usual expropriation process as Halifax did, the city of Vancouver tried to mitigate the disruption of urban renewal by making two different provisions for citizen input. Both the Mayor’s Redevelopment Consultative Committee and the Strathcona Rehabilitation Committee reveal how participation could be a technique of government. The Mayor’s Redevelopment Consultative Committee consisted of individuals who, though they were not residents of redevelopment areas, were deemed to have the standing and networks that would allow them to give advice about the impact of urban renewal. Its actions revealed the city understood citizen participation as a communications strategy and a means of managing risk rather than a way to decentralize decision making and share power.

By the time the most disruptive phase of redevelopment was scheduled to start in the Strathcona neighbourhood in 1969, civic officials found their views of urban renewal and citizen participation out of step with those of their federal counterparts. Enough doubts had been raised about the effectiveness of urban renewal, its costs, and the wisdom of excluding those who would be affected from the planning process, that Ottawa – which provided half the funding – was prepared to call a halt to it. Thus, when activists and grassroots organizations like the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA) demanded to be included in the decisions that affected their neighbourhoods, they found federal officials to be receptive.

The Trudeau government had just been elected on a platform of participatory democracy, and the interventions of its ministers were key in diverting funds earmarked for demolishing Strathcona to rehabilitating it. In addition, both federal and provincial officials supported SPOTA’s demand for citizen participation; specifically, that it be given an equal role along with representatives from all three levels of government in first designing and then implementing a rehabilitation program. But as SPOTA’s experience on the
Strathcona Rehabilitation Committee revealed, the state could share power in ways that reinforced its own. The ways the state elicited citizen participation in Vancouver over the 1960s and 1970s reveals the complicated relationship between participation, empowerment, and democracy.

In making these arguments linking forced relocation, development, and governmentality, *Moved by the State* engages with the provocative and ambitious framework Ian McKay offers for rethinking Canada’s history, and more particularly for getting beyond the two solitudes – of social and cultural history on one hand and national and political history on the other – that have long characterized academic writing in the field. McKay argues that we should understand Canada “simultaneously as an extensive projection of liberal rule across a large territory and an intensive process of subjectification, whereby liberal assumptions are internalized and normalized within the dominion’s subjects.” In other words, the story of Canada’s making is a story of how the state extended its power over ever more peoples and places. An inherently violent process, it was also a matter of formal politics. But governing Canada also depended on people within its borders adopting a set of liberal democratic values about individuals and their relationship to the market and the state, as well as about the role of the state, among others. The internalization and normalization of these values – whether in school, church, the factory, or the playground – meant people regulated themselves. Self-discipline of this kind was the key to the liberal project of rule.

While the instances of forced relocation and development discussed in the following chapters are examples of the increasing scope and intensity of the liberal state’s power in the postwar period, they also nuance McKay’s argument in important ways. The development efforts I discuss certainly disciplined the poor even as they empowered them. But this didn’t mean that state power was such that it determined outcomes. As we will see, the kind of empowerment facilitated by development invited the poor to challenge the very authority that disciplined them.