Transforming Place: The Socio-Environmental Afterlives of Tellico

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TRANSFORMING PLACE: THE SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL AFTERLIVES OF TELLICO

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
The University of Mississippi

By
CHEYENNE AUTUMN BENNETT

May 2022
ABSTRACT

This thesis assesses the socio-environmental afterlives of the Tellico Dam controversy that affected citizens of Loudon, Blount, and Monroe Counties in East Tennessee. The central goal is to understand the impacts that development-induced displacement and resettlement had on communities following dam construction. The people from the aforementioned counties witnessed the landscape transform from one that had an abundance of farmland to an area where the farmland is diminished due to the creation of the dam, the reservoir, and the waterfront properties that surround the reservoir. This project analyzes these post-Tellico Dam impacts in terms of waterfront property development, gentrification, land dispossession, new forms of resource use, and environmental change, as well as political mobilization in the decades since Tellico was built. Using Margaret Rodman’s multivocality approach to understanding place, this study discusses individual feelings of place attachment from various actors who have ascribed meanings to the multiple dimensions of Tellico. David Harvey’s theory of dispossession is then used to understand how the multivocal perspectives of Tellico are continuing to develop alongside ongoing processes of accumulation by dispossession. I argue that the Tellico Valley is a palimpsest of visions of capitalist progress in which the past and contemporary processes of accumulation by dispossession have led Tellico to become a contested place-in-the-making. Qualitative data from participant observation and ethnographic interviews with 34 individuals are used to support the main argument. This study is the first ethnographic study of the post-Tellico landscape and its socio-environmental afterlives.
DEDICATION

This thesis is in memory of the Little “T” and all those who have passed.
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Accumulation by Dispossession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APLTR</td>
<td>Association for the Preservation of the Little Tennessee River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCI</td>
<td>Cooper Communities, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBCI</td>
<td>Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Endangered Species Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTRV</td>
<td>Little Tennessee River Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPA</td>
<td>National Environmental Policy Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRDA</td>
<td>Tennessee Reservoir Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVA</td>
<td>Tennessee Valley Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVHBG</td>
<td>Tellico Village Home Builders Guild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVPOA</td>
<td>Tellico Village Property Owners’ Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USFWS</td>
<td>United States Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was made possible through the assistance and support that was provided to me by Zygmunt Plater and Peter Alliman. Without Zyg and Peter, this research would not have been possible. Their knowledge on Tellico and eagerness to help aided me throughout the process of planning for my summer fieldwork. The people of East Tennessee rarely trust people that are not from Tennessee, and while my southern accent helped me earn a bit of rapport with them, I would have never been able to get the majority of interviewees to answer or even return my phone calls without the help of Peter. I am incredibly thankful for all those who welcomed me into their community, showed me their old homeplaces, and told me about their experiences with the dam, Tellico Village, and the TVA. I am also thankful for everyone at Tellico Village who was eager to meet with me, show me around the Village, and help me connect with other residents.

I am deeply indebted to a number of individuals at the University of Mississippi who helped me develop this project. First and foremost, my advisor, Marcos Mendoza mentored me and aided me in every step of the way. His patience, motivation, and enthusiasm helped me remain focused and excited throughout the writing of this thesis. Many thanks also to Dr. Maureen Meyers who guided me and provided me with the confidence that I needed at various times throughout my time at Ole Miss. I am thankful to Drs. Catarina Passidomo and Simone Delerme who were excited and willing to serve as my committee members and provide me with feedback throughout the editing process. I also thank the Graduate School for providing me with the financial support to conduct this research through the Graduate School Summer Research Assistantship of 2021.
Lastly, I would like to thank my husband for his unwavering support the past two years. He had to endure hours of me talking about Tellico, listen to me cry when I felt like I was never going to make it this far, and provided me with the financial support to be able to solely focus on my master’s work. I am truly thankful to have had his support and encouragement over the years.
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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

On November 29, 1979, the Tennessee Valley Authority closed the gates on the Tellico Dam and impounded the last 33 free-flowing miles of the Little Tennessee River (Plater 2013). This river was a tributary of the Tennessee River that was located in east Tennessee and part of Western North Carolina (Hickman and Fitz 1978). The dam was constructed “0.8 kilometers from the mouth” of the river and the impounded water stretches 53 kilometers to the Chilhowee Dam near Maryville, Tennessee (Hickman and Fitz 1978). The Tennessee Valley Authority chose this location because it was the last remaining stretch of the Little Tennessee River that had not been dammed (Wheeler and McDonald 1986). The dam led to the physical displacement of 300 farming families, the spiritual displacement of the Cherokee peoples, and the affective displacement of a variety of people attached to the river and the land. Altogether, 38,000 acres of land were condemned for the 16,000-acre lake that is now lined with middle- to upper-middle-class lakefront communities (Wheeler and McDonald 1986).

This thesis examines the socio-environmental afterlives of the Tellico Dam controversy that affected the citizens of Loudon, Blount, and Monroe Counties in East Tennessee. Since the completion of the dam, the dominantly agrarian landscape in the Little Tennessee River Valley has all but diminished due to the creation of the Tellico Reservoir and the surrounding waterfront properties. This new landscape has become dominated by a contested class politics of spatial use
tied to land loss and waterfront gentrification. The relationship between the dispossessed and the lakefront residents is one of tension, distrust, and dislike where issues of belonging, land claims, and land entitlement have emerged between the various past and contemporary users of the Tellico landscape.

The history of dispossession for the expansion of capitalism in the Little Tennessee River Valley has contributed to the socio-environmental conflict between the various actors attached to the land. This thesis highlights the multivocality of Tellico and the processes of accumulation by dispossession in the valley. Tellico has become a multidimensional battleground in which the dispossessed, dispossessor, and the new in-migrants are constantly battling to assign meaning and assert symbolic control over the land and its resources. I argue that the Tellico Valley is a palimpsest of visions of capitalist progress in which the past and contemporary processes of accumulation by dispossession have led Tellico to become a contested place-in-the-making.

1.1 Methodology

This research utilizes qualitative data obtained through archival research, participant observation, and ethnographic interviews. Archival data was acquired from the state of Tennessee’s online archive system, the Tennessee Valley Authority’s online library, and through the donation of newspaper clippings from interview participants. I also spent several hours perusing photographs and land acquisition records from the Tellico Dam. These documents were part of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection located at the Knox County Tennessee Public Library. Legal documents from court cases and photographs of the Tellico Dam from Boston College University’s online library catalog were also examined.
An application to conduct ethnographic research for this study was submitted to the University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (Protocol #21-246) on April 6, 2021 and was determined to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) on April 16, 2021. Ethnographic data was conducted over a span of 6 weeks from June to mid-July of 2021 through participant observation and ethnographic interviews. Participant observation included living and participating on a farm in Tennessee, going on historical tours with interviewees, helping participants with their own archival research, and listening to and taking notes on the numerous informal stories and memories of the land that were voiced by the displaced. A considerable amount of my data on the displacees was obtained through interviewees showing me specific places within Tellico Village that used to belong to their family or community. To gain rapport with the residents of Tellico Village, I participated in a community tour that was led by residents, went on boat rides with residents, hiked with the hiking club, and joined several residents at the Yacht Club on several occasions for casual conversations. Observations from these interactions were recorded in a field notebook and converted into more detailed fieldnotes at the end of each day.

Thirty-four people were interviewed for this research. Fifteen of the 34 were those who were either physically, spiritually, or affectively displaced from the Tellico Dam. The other nineteen interviewees included seventeen residents of Tellico Village and two lawyers from the court case. All but two of these interviews were conducted in-person at the Tellico Village Yacht Club and at various locations across Loudon, Blount, and Monroe Counties. The other two interviews were conducted over Zoom and over the telephone due to concerns over Covid. Different questions were asked based on whether the interviewee was a displacee or a resident of Tellico Village. Common questions that I asked the displacees include:
• How long have you or your family lived in Loudon, Blount, or Monroe County?
• When do you remember about the Tellico controversy? What is your first memory of the project?
• Can you describe your experience with the Tennessee Valley Authority and the dam while it was being constructed?
• Can you describe to me how your family used the land before the dam?
• How did your family cope with losing their land?
• Can you tell me how seeing the silos sticking out of the lake makes you feel or if it brings back any memories?
• When you look at the lake of the area around the lake, what do you see or feel?
• What is your opinion of Tellico Village residents and people moving into the area in recent years?

Common questions that I asked throughout my interviews with Tellico Village residents include:

• How long have you lived in Tellico Village?
• When did you move to the area and where did you move from?
• What made you choose to move here? What made this community stand out to you?
• Tell me some of your favorite things about living around the lake or activities that you like to participate in within Tellico Village?
• What can you tell me about the history of the area?
• Can you tell me about how you feel about TVA and the actions they took while the dam was being built?
• How do you feel about the silos sticking out of the lake?
• How do you think Tellico Village is viewed by people living outside the community and by those that were displaced by the dam?

Interview responses were recorded using my phone and were transferred to a Box folder at the end of each day. Handwritten notes were taken during each interview and reflected and elaborated on immediately after interviews. Each participant was given my contact information after the interviews in case they wanted a copy of their recording, transcript document, or final research results. Anonymity is given to the participants quoted in this thesis whereby I assigned each individual a set of fake initials.
Interviews were recorded and later transcribed and coded during the Fall of 2021 using NVIVO transcription software. Charmaz’s (2006) grounded theory approach guided me throughout the process of analyzing my data. Noticeable themes emerged from my interviews while I was conducting my interviews, but I did not fully notice the extent of these themes until my data was coded. Feelings of territorialization and land entitlement, the importance of community for Tellico Village residents, and tensions between the Villager and the displacees were made evident throughout the process. Coding my interviews also helped me discover themes in my interviews that I did not notice while I was conducting my research. These include issues related to the social segregation of class within Tellico Village, the usage of words like “yankee” or “snooty” by the displacees to describe the Villagers, and issues of belonging that seemed to be prevalent in both groups. Excerpts from my interviews are in this paper to support my arguments.

1.2 Significance

This research is significant because it examines a large development project that was imposed by the Tennessee Valley Authority upon the rural populations of Monroe, Blount, and Loudon Counties. The local population in these counties had little to no input during the stages of feasibility studies, planning, and implementation. The lack of involvement between those affected by the dam project and the companies developing the projects was very common during that time period and they appealed to planners and politicians that used dam development to promote economic justifications (Scudder 1973). Displacement has major impacts on the sociocultural worlds of communities that are dispossessed from their lands (Scudder 1973).
The displacement of the local farmers from their agrarian landscape, spiritual displacement of the Cherokee peoples from the spiritual properties of the land and the river, and the affective displacement of those who had built a social and economic relationship with the river has resulted in the emergence of a central theme of place-making surrounding the Tellico Dam controversy. This theme involves issues of belonging, entitlement, and land claims. The issues from displacement and re-emplacement from the Tellico Dam are important themes surrounding the dam’s construction and, in a broader sense, within environmental anthropology scholarship today. Thus, the goal of this research is to contribute to scholarship on the impacts and continuing processes of displacement as a product of capitalist expansion. I situate my study by drawing on existing scholarship within the anthropology of water and dams, the political ecology of land grabs and dispossession, and the history of the Tennessee Valley Authority. This MA thesis will be the first anthropological study to examine the political ecology of the Tellico Dam.

1.3 Outline

This thesis highlights the processes of accumulation by dispossession in the Little Tennessee River Valley to draw attention to the multivocality of places and impacts that dispossession has on communities. To support my argument, Chapter 2 discusses the relevant literature pertaining to the anthropology of place and water, the impacts of dam displacement, and the political ecology of land grabs and dispossession. Chapter 3 examines the history of the Little Tennessee River Valley from early human occupation 10,000 years ago to the completion of the Tellico Dam in 1979. Native American Removal in the 1830s and the forced displacement of farming families from the dam has shaped how the each interact with the newly created landscape.
The imperialist history of violent dispossession in the valley and the multiple meanings each displaced group ascribed to the land shapes how they choose to participate in the post-Tellico Dam landscape. Chapter 4 discusses how individual histories of the land have contributed to the multivocality of Tellico as a place. These multivocal dimensions of place draw attention to a contested arena where feelings of territorialization, land entitlement, and feelings of not belonging shape how displaced individuals choose to participate or not to participate in the new landscape. Chapter 5 examines the various power dynamics within Tellico Village and between Village residents and the displaced. Chapter 6 then argues that the history of dispossession in the Little Tennessee River Valley and the conversion of the agrarian land to the site of multiple middle- to upper-middle-class lakefront retirement communities is part of the ongoing processes of accumulation by dispossession. The multidimensionality of Tellico has contributed to the socio-environmental conflicts that have emerged between the dispossessed and the Tellico Village residents. All of the past and contemporary processes of accumulation by dispossession have resulted in the Little Tennessee River Valley becoming a palimpsest on which visions of capitalist progress are layered.
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the anthropological understanding of the impacts of dam-induced displacement for the expansion of capitalism and contested place-making. This chapter examines the broader literature of the anthropology of place and water, the impact of dam displacement, and the political ecology of land grabs and dispossession. Section one discusses the anthropology of space and place in relation to place attachment, identity, multivocality, and the power dynamics of place. Past and contemporary theories pertaining to the use of water in the anthropological literature is examined in section two. Section three discusses the impacts that dam development, displacement, and land grabs as a result of capitalism have on people. Altogether, these sections provide a broader theoretical framework for understanding the processes of accumulation by dispossession that take place alongside the multiple historical and contemporary perspectives that define places like Tellico.

2.1 The Anthropology of Space and Place

The theoretical study of space and place is multifaceted whereby there are numerous “terminologies, conceptualizations, models, and ontologies” within geography and social science disciplines (Hamzei et. al. 2019:1). Since the 1990s, anthropologists have increasingly become attentive to the conceptualization of space and place as globalization has undermined previous
assumptions about the “fixity of people” in places (Lawrence-Zuniga 2017:1). Different perspectives and a lack of a general overview of “place” as a concept has contributed to the rich literature surrounding the human-nature discourse (Dlamini and Tesfamichael 2021). This discourse includes but is not limited to research on place attachment, identity, and the multivocality of place.

Tuan (1977) and Relph (1976) are leading contributors to the research pertaining to the conceptualization and distinction of space and place. The distinctions between the two concepts that Tuan and Relph make are similar in theory. However, Tuan presents his ideas of “space” and “place” as separate concepts while Relph does not. Tuan describes spaces as locations in which human value or connections have not been established and are abstract in meaning, whereas places are locations that are created and defined by human experiences (Tuan 1977). He separates his ideas into two separate concepts where space “represents freedom” and place “represents security” (Tuan 1977:3). Comparatively, Relph also believes that places are shaped by human experiences and actions, but he does not believe that spaces and places are separate concepts (Seamon and Sowers 2008). According to Relph, space and place are interconnected because they are “dialectically structured in human environmental experience, since our understanding of space is related to the spaces we inhabit, which in turn derive meaning from their spatial context” (Seamon 2008:44; Relph 1976).

Ramkissoon (2015) argues that people ascribe cultural significance and meaning to places as they interact with their environment. The relationship individuals create through their interaction within a place is a reflection of place attachment (Lee and Shen 2013; Ramkissoon 2015). A place becomes culturally meaningful as people further interact and build their relationship with that place (Mosquera and Imada 2013). Dlamini and Tesfamichael (2021:2435)
explains that this bond makes up a “part of one’s whole sense of identity” (Zenker and Rütter 2014). Individuals lose this sense of identity when they lose their sense of place as a result of social disruptions. For example, Marais et al. (2018) conducted a study on the relationship between mining and the people from the town of Posmasburg in South Africa. They found that residents of Posmasburg were attached to their homes within the town, but the mining industry had led to a disruption to the values they assigned to their town (Marais et al. 2018). This disruption then led to a decreased identification with and attachment to Posmasburg as a place (Marais et al. 2018).

Lewicka (2011) explored the literature on place attachment and argues that most of the literature on concepts of place attachment such as place identity, rootedness, and sense of place are not holistic. Her research attempts to unravel the complexity of place attachment by reviewing the works of early human geography and anthropology. In her review, Lewicka identified “four main thematic areas: attachment to specific places and ‘meaningful locations’; predictors vs consequences of place attachment; methodologies of place dimensions, and theoretical approaches to the study” (Dlamini and Tesfamichael 2021:2437). She concluded her assessment stating that dimensions of the study of place attachment are varied based on different foci of interest across disciplines and suggested that researchers attempt to adopt more holistic approaches to theorizing place.

Rodman (1992) argues that the anthropological study of place is flawed because anthropologists fail to examine place through the same lens that they study cultures. Instead, places have often been viewed as the location where people do things and not as anthropological constructions (Rodman 1992). However, places are “politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions” and are not “inert containers” (Rodman 1992:641).
Places are socially and culturally constructed, multidimensional, and multivocal. Rodman explains that Appadurai (1988) best describes the multiplicity of place when he states that places have a diversity of voices that anthropologists should pursue. For example, each person within a place “has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places” (Rodman 1992:643).

To understand an individual’s perspective of place, Appadurai (1988:46) and Said (1989) advocate for anthropologists to contest “topological stereotypes” of places and to transition to understanding places as “momentary localizations or coalescences of ideas from all over”. A grounded theory of place is historically and geographically constituted because places are shaped by and continued to be shaped by their imperial past (Said 1989). Marcus (1989) agrees with the significance of examining places by taking into account its imperial historical and contemporary contexts, but anthropologists must do this in a way that restores agency to the people from the places we study. He states that anthropologists have to acknowledge that “any cultural identity or activity is constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts, or places” and “ethnography must represent this sort of multiplicity” (Marcus 1989:25).

Power, Class, and Places

Because places are socially and geographically constituted, they are also political entities that can produce “systems of power” that can “perpetuate or resist forces of oppression” (Butler and Sinclair 2020:64). They can be used to exclude and oppress people from different races, classes, or genders (Field and Basso 1996; Delaney 2002; Harvey 1973; and Massey 1994). Furthermore, Lefebvre (1974) explains that an individual’s meaning of a place and how they experience a place are shaped by their standing within the power structure of the place and society.
In the Global North, Seawright (2014:555) states that the normalization of “domination through systems of white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and anthropocentrism” contributes to the use of places as zones of exclusion and oppression.

Low (2003) examines gated communities as tools for exclusion and segregation where middle- to upper-middle-class Americans use gates, community policing, deed restrictions, and community governing associations to keep “others” out. Davis (1990) argues that these gated communities are created to structure social relations by separating the urban poor from wealthier white citizens. The exclusionary enclave of suburban communities reinforce segregation and create communities that are homogenously similar in race and wealth (Low 2001).

2.2 Anthropology of Water

Throughout the decades, the theme of water in anthropological literature has focused on assessing a variety of matters related to water, such as shifting consumption patterns, local politics, climate change, environmental degradation, etc. Studies on human-water relationships have been used to document and explain the experience people have with water and how those people understand their engagement with water within specific cultural contexts (Borowitz 2009). Early literature on human-water relationships explored the different roles that water played in ceremonies and rituals. For example, Emerson (1894) attempted to understand the similarities between rain ceremonies conducted in contemporary Native America and ancient Egypt. She utilized images from the Book of the Dead in combination with visual arts to explain how water in both areas of the world were similar because they were both linked to cultural worlds and connected to processes of life and death.
McAllester (1941) and Richardson and Hanks (1942) further attempted to understand the place of water in cultural worlds through their assessment of the role water played in the Blackfoot and Crow cultures. Their research explored the role water played in child development and socialization by looking at the relationship between culture and personality (Richardson & Hanks 1942). They showed how a “particular pattern of discipline involving the use of water coexisting with a strong belief in water-beings as awesome or terrible creatures” (Richardson & Hanks 1942:604).

Parker (1908) added to the literature on water by arguing, through his examination of the relationship of snow in certain cultures, that water can also offer leisure. Parker specifically attempted to understand the Seneca-Iroquois’ snow-snake game that was “well known to ethnologists” of the time (Parker 1909:250). This game involved throwing a long smooth stick, considered to be a snake or gawasa, into a ditch in the snow at a further distance than an opponent. Parker was specifically interested in understanding the material and linguistic properties of this game to explain how snow can emerge as part of the cultural world. Parker argued that “the players must both know how to read the qualities of the snow and prepare their gawasa accordingly, guarding these secret forms of knowledge, and know how to navigate a religious-political field in which missionaries are trying to suppress native forms of leisure” (Parker 1909:250).

Today, Rasmussen and Orlove (2015) argue that, similar to Helmreich’s (2011) argument for seaweed, anthropologists have shifted from theorizing water “from an implicit position as part of the background or context of social and cultural worlds to an explicit position as an active element in these worlds” (Rasmussen & Orlove 2015; Helmreich 2011). For example, water can be a medium for the control and creation of hierarchies (Baviskar 2008; Derman and Ferguson 2003), for ownership and management (Strang 2004; Ennis-McMillian 2006; Baviskar 2008), or
for religious and divine interactions (Tuzin 1977; Lansing 1987; Thomas 1997). Each of these examples, however, share common themes that include considering water as being essential to life, having potent generative and regenerative forces, being a substance of social and spiritual identity, and being symbolic of power and agency (Borowitz 2009).

Ballestero argues that water is defined by a multiplicity that entails the “variation of water’s semiotic, historic, political, and material forms” (2019:406). This concept of multiplicity assumes that water is a site of holistic interconnectivity that is shaped and transformed by natural environmental changes and human interactions within their environment that may alter the flow or production of water (Schmidt 2017). The materiality of water is created by the every-day decisions being made by “labs, government institutions, and congressional bodies” (Ballestero 2019:406). The thematic clusters of (in)sufficiency, bodies and beings, knowledge, and ownership show how water is more than just water, but “is a political field where people elucidate what it means to live life collectively in a world that is always more than human and even inhuman” (Ballestero 2019:406).

2.3 Political Ecology of Land Grabs and Dispossession

Kirchherr and Charles (2016) state that government institutions and private companies have used eminent domain to force river-dependent populations to relocate and to manage the water by altering water flow through dam development. They explain that benefits may include recreational use of reservoirs, flood control, and the production of electricity, while costs of dam development may include increased malaria cases, population displacement, and loss of farmland (Kirchherr & Charles 2016). More negatively, dam development may also result in the degradation of surrounding ecosystems and biodiversity, which increases the potential risks of river-dependent
populations becoming impoverished (McCartney 2009; McDonald-Wilmsen & Webber 2010).

While environmental costs have historically been significant when examining the impacts of large development projects, Sims (2001) explains that the issue of displacement from dams did not become an international issue until the World Commission on Dams released a review on dams in 2000. This report claimed that millions of people had been displaced since the 1950s (Sims 2001). Sims adds to this by stating that a recent estimate found that “the world’s nearly 800,000 dams have uprooted at least 40 million and possibly 80 million people” (Sims 2001:187). Displacement from these dams has not emerged as a salient issue, however, until recent years due to historical circumstances, political leaders’ past ability to mobilize support for concerns of priority, and the lack of public participation in development (Sims 2001).

Today, displacement is an international concern surrounding development projects (Sims 2001). The World Commission on Dams (2000) states that displacement can consist of physical or livelihood displacement, which “deprives people of their means of production and dislocates them from their existing socio-cultural milieu” (World Commission on Dams 2000:102-104). Sims argues that this displacement can have adverse consequences on the displaced that can range from economic issues to health issues (Sims 2001).

**Land Grabs**

Ansoms and Hilhorst (2014) discuss how globalization and liberalization contribute to an increase in competition over land throughout the world. Land transfers most commonly take place between people on the local level and people from the “highest national level” and many of the transfers are “not voluntary or transparent” (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014:1). The people on the local level usually do not understand the terms of the transfer and local farmer’s opinions on the transfer
are not usually taken into account (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014). Land loss not only results in the loss of economic livelihood, but because land is a “social, cultural and political space”, land loss can impact the wellbeing of populations (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014:1). Thus, Ansoms & Hilhorst (2014:1) argue that the loss of land from non-voluntary land transactions, commonly referred to as ‘land grabbing’, “goes beyond the economic realm”, and may also be akin to “soul and identity grabbing”.

Vanclay (2017) examines land loss from large-scale development projects that require a large amount of land for construction, which in return, results in the displacement of communities. He explains that many of these projects result in the displacement of hundreds of people from both their homes and their economic livelihoods (Vanclay 2017). Forcing people to move away from their homes and resettle in another location leads to a variety of problems for displaced people and to the violation of their basic human rights (Vanclay 2017). One of the main issues includes the emotional and mental struggles that displaced people have to endure due to the loss of their home (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014). Vanclay argues that an individual’s loss of their sense of place leads to them struggling with ways to cope in new areas where they resettle (Vanclay 2017). This is because land has a symbolic value that is embedded in the landowner’s way of life and it constitutes a crucial element to their identities (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014).

Scudder (1973) explains that those that are forced to relocate due to dam development projects tend to “behave as if they were part of a closed system” (Scudder 1973:53). This behavior is usually linked to stress, with the stress constantly increasing from other issues that arise from forced relocation. This stress leads to the relocatees trying to “cling to the familiar”, which Scudder calls the process of cultural involution (Scudder 1973:53). Relocatees will attempt to follow an old routine and cling to supportive groups that they will interact with through unusual intensity until
the most stressful situation is passed (Scudder 1973).

Conflicts arise as people are forcibly separated from their land. Oliver-Smith (2002) explains that resistance movements emerge as a result of the dispossessed feeling as though their human rights have been violated. These individuals will often band together in grass-roots organizations and in a group that some people refer to as an evolving transnational civil society (Oliver-Smith 2002). This society is composed of groups that consist of organizations that are not associated with the government and focus on a range of issues including human rights, the environment, and democratization. People within movements usually resist due to the recognition that their basic rights are being violated (Oliver-Smith 2010). Their overarching goal is to argue for more democratization and defense of the rights of local communities to have a say in the decision-making process for developmental projects that could affect them (Oliver-Smith 2002).

In order to understand the environmental and social conflict surrounding development-induced displacement and resettlement, Oliver-Smith (2005) argues that political ecology ethnography should be used to understand environmental conflict and to “generate a social scientific approach that incorporates multiple perspectives to explore not only the political dimensions of these conflicts, but also to bring new participants into the political frame of action and initiate new approaches” (Oliver-Smith 2002:18). For this approach to work, the ethnographer must focus on identifying the different participants in the conflicts being studied. They should create concepts that question “established public policy and generate new alternatives for action” (Oliver-Smith 2002:18). This form of ethnography is important for the methodology used for explaining the political ecology of development-induced displacement and resettlement because it helps to contextualize resistance in a broader sense to help promote conversations about development on the global scale (Oliver-Smith 2002:18).
Accumulation by Dispossession

Magdoff (2013:1) argues that the phenomena of land grabbing “must be placed in the historical context of the continuous development of capitalism”. Marx (1976) argued that the commodification of the land and its resources were crucial for the development and expansion of capital. Primitive accumulation was the process in which landowners engaged in the forcible expropriation of the commons via processes referred to as enclosures (Marx 1976; Araghi 2009). Capitalism emerged from these enclosures and the creation of private property, which was used to kickstart the industrial revolution and international trade (Marx 1976; Perelman 2000; Wolf 1982). Harvey (2003) argues that this process of primitive accumulation is an ongoing and continuous process that is evident in the continuous creation and restructuring of capitalist markets across the globe.

Frederiksen (2019) states that there has been a renewed interest across the social sciences in Marx’s (1976) concepts of capital and primitive accumulation. Research from Glassman (2006), Hall (2012), Perelman (2001), and Harvey (2003) focuses on attempting to understand the contemporary “drivers and effects of capitalist expansion” (Frederiksen 2019:52). Specifically, Harvey (2003) has expanded upon Marx’s (1976) theory of primitive accumulation to create his concept of accumulation by dispossession, which is the “processes by which the means of production for the purpose of capital accumulation are obtained via extra-economic coercion or non-market means” (Gellert 2015:67). Harvey (2003) argues that the dispossession that results from land grabs and resource appropriation is integral to accumulation by dispossession. For Harvey (2003), the violent processes of dispossession have occurred on multiple occasions throughout the history of capitalism and the salience of accumulation by dispossession has increased as neoliberal politics continue to spread and advance.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review examined the broad literature surrounding place, displacement, and the political ecology of land grabs and dispossession. Places are historically, socially, and geographically constituted. They are shaped by their imperialist past and present and can be used as tools to oppress and exclude people based on race, class, or gender. Individuals ascribe their own meanings to places based on how they experience that place, which is shaped by their standing within the power structure of the place and society. The expansion of capitalism through dispossession displaces people from their land and aids in the oppression of others. However, the historical and contemporary perspectives that define a place does not simply go away when dispossession happens. These perspectives continue to develop alongside the processes of accumulation by dispossession. The next chapter will discuss the historical context of imperialism and dispossession in the Little Tennessee River Valley in order to understand how history has shaped contemporary understandings of place.
CHAPTER III HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter examines the history of the Little Tennessee River Valley in relation to the afterlives of the Tellico Dam. The valley and the Little Tennessee River have both played a central role in the lives of humans for over 10,000 years and continue to shape the experiences of peoples’ lives today. This valley, originally belonging to the Cherokee peoples, has been at the center of two separately forced removals of two different groups of peoples over the past 200 years. Both Native American Removal in the 1830s and the forced displacement of farming families from the Tellico Dam in the 1970s not only shaped how each group reacted to the construction of the dam, but also continues to shape how each interact with the newly created landscape. This history further impacts how people migrating into the region understand the history of the land and the Tellico Dam while also creating their own meanings for the land and their new homes. Thus, this chapter will attempt to explain the history of the Little Tennessee River valley from the earliest recorded evidence of human occupation to the transformation of the Little Tennessee River into Tellico Lake.
3.1 History of the Cherokee Peoples in the Valley

The Cherokee Beginning

Archaeologists estimate that people have been living near the Little Tennessee River valley for over ten thousand years (Chapman 2001). Most of the evidence of human occupation before the Archaic period was washed away from elevated river levels after the last ice age (Gilmer 2011). The archaeological record suggests that the valley was continuously occupied from that point on by peoples from the Archaic (8000-3000 BCE), Woodland (3000-1000 AD), and Mississippian (1000-1520 AD) time periods (Nelsius and Giles 2014). Early Archaic and Woodland peoples in this region lived in small, decentralized villages that participated in farming, fishing, and hunting for subsistence until the Mississippian period in which profound changes in civilizations drastically altered life in the lower Little Tennessee River valley (Chapman 2001). These transformations were the result of both technological improvements and the development of new political and religious systems that created networks of chiefdoms throughout eastern North America (Etheridge 2009).

Archaeologists believe that the lower Tennessee River valley during the Mississippian era was a Muscogean region, and that the Cherokee peoples were newly migrated to the area (Chapman 2001). However, the stories and histories of the Cherokee, who refer to themselves as “Aniyvwaya, or Principle People”, believe the Tellico plains near the Little Tennessee River were the location of their origin (Gilmer 2011:33). They believe that this area is the place where the earth and the Cherokees were created. It is explained as digatalenvhy, in which Suli Egwas, or the Great Buzzard, made the valleys and the mountains with the flap of his wings and the Cherokee were born (Chapman 2001).
The Emergence of and Downfall of Chota

While there is little archaeological evidence to support the notion of mass Cherokee occupation in Tennessee during the Mississippian period, the collapsing of the Mississippian civilizations led to the coalescence of various new Indian nations, such as the Cherokee Nation in the southeast (Ethridge 2010). The lower Little Tennessee River valley became the political center of the Cherokee Nation by the early 18th century in which the town of Chota was chosen as their capital (Calloway 1995). Chota was built sometime between 1730-1750 in the lower Little Tennessee River valley and enabled the Cherokee to rise to political and spiritual power due to its strategic location in relation to the mountains (Chapman 2001). This location allowed the Cherokee Nation protection against encroaching Atlantic colonies and gave them access to the river to participate in the French and English trade market (Chapman 2001; Gilmer 2011). The Cherokee leaders conducted political matters such as peace negotiations at Chota because Chota was the place that brought peace among the Cherokees (King 2007). By reuniting them into a path of peace, Chota was representative of Cherokee life, and they believed that “as long as the land of Chota survived, so would the Cherokee people” (Calloway 1995:184; King 2007).

The Cherokees lost control of the Little Tennessee River valley during the Revolutionary War. The Sycamore Shoals Treaty in 1775 was signed by Attakullakulla, the headman for the Mialoquo and Tuskegee, and Oconostota, the “Great Warrior” of Chota (Gilmer 2011). Both Attakullakulla and Oconostota argued the treaty was fraudulent when they realized the terms of the treaty would result in the loss of a substantial amount of Cherokee land to the British. This led the Cherokees and other indigenous nations to fight alongside Britain during the Revolutionary War because they believed fighting alongside Britain would allow them the chance to regain the lands they lost (Callaway 1995). Due to their choice to side with Britain, the Cherokee Nation
experienced a series of invasions by the colonists throughout the war. These attacks eventually led to the destruction of the Cherokee towns of Tellico, Chillhowee, Citico, Toqua, Tuskegee, and Chota (King 2007).

*Cherokee Removal*

After the Revolutionary War, the Cherokees that still remained on their land in Tennessee were known as the Overhill Cherokees. They struggled to find peace with the United States government and amongst each other. Many from the towns of Toqua, Tellico, Mialoquo, and Chillhowee refused to surrender to the United States, so they left the Little Tennessee River valley to form a new Cherokee nation, known as the Chickamaugas (Corkran 2016). Those that remained along the Little Tennessee River struggled to maintain their lands as the United States drew boundaries between the lands and “proceeded to sell off lands along the river” (Gilmer 2011:46).

The 19th century proved to be a difficult time for those that remained in the valley due to Thomas Jefferson forcing the Cherokees and other Native peoples to sell their lands. From 1785-1819, the Cherokee peoples were tricked or forced into signing thirteen treaties with the United States that required them to either “concentrate on the reduced land base of the Cherokee Nation, leave the nation as a whole”, or migrate west in order to “live beyond the control of the United States” (Gilmer 2011:48). Cherokee leaders struggled to decide whether to keep their people on their traditional homeland or convince them to migrate West, which led to the passage of the Treaty of New Echota in 1835 (Palmer 2019). The treaty, illegally signed by John Ridge, Elias Boudinot, and Major Ridge, ceded traditional Cherokee homelands in the east in exchange for new land in present-day Oklahoma (Palmer 2019).
After the signing of the Treaty of New Echota, the signers, known as the Treaty Party, quickly migrated west and chose the best lands for their farms and homes (Gilmer 2011). The Cherokees that remained in the east, however, protested the treaty and their removal because it had been signed by individuals who were not elected Cherokee leaders, but were leaders of a minority group of Cherokees that believed it was “their duty to alleviate problems by moving west” (Palmer 2019:3). The majority of the Cherokee Nation in the east did not support the Treaty of New Echota and felt betrayed by the Treaty Party and the United States government for passing the treaty (Vipperman 1989). Many Cherokee peoples continued to fight and protest their removal from their homeland until the United States federal troops forced them into internment camps before driving them to migrate west on the Trail of Tears (Vipperman 1989). The involuntary displacement of the last remaining Cherokees from the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina to present-day Oklahoma resulted in an estimated population loss of 8,000 Cherokees from disease, exhaustion, and violence (Thornton 1991).

Present-Day Issues from Removal

Because of European colonization and the forced displacement of the Cherokee peoples, the Cherokee Nation underwent “great cultural, economic, and societal change” from internal conflict over “the direction the Cherokee should take as a people” (Palmer 2019:iii). This resulted in the division of the Cherokee peoples into three nations with separate identities and competing ideas for the future of the Cherokee (Palmer 2019). Gilmer (2011) argues that this division has led each nation to adopt and promote different images of Cherokee identity. Each nation has differing opinions on whether they should live traditional Cherokee lifestyles or conform to westernization in which historical memories and disputes between the factions have affected how the nations have
structured their governments. The division between the Old Settlers, Treaty Party, and the Ross Party further complicate Cherokee relations by calling into question what it means to be Cherokee and what the future of the Cherokee peoples should look like (Gilmer 2011). Removal further complicated Cherokee identity by creating separate national identities through the creation of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the United Keetoowah Band, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee in which each of these nations have a shared historical narrative but have differing ideas on what makes an individual Cherokee (Gilmer 2011). Their differences, however, would play a crucial role in the response each nation had to the construction of the Tellico Dam by impacting their decisions to participate in the contestation of the dam.

3.2 Fort Loudoun

In 1756, white British colonialists settled in the Little Tennessee River valley where they constructed Fort Loudoun. People from the Colony of South Carolina and the Board of Trade in England consulted with the Cherokee peoples and “by their request”, built the fort five miles from the Cherokee village of Chota (Kelley 1961). The fort was built to provide defense against the “encircling threat of the French” and as a “symbol of strength and British friendship for Indian allies” (Kelley 1961:303). The Overhill Cherokee hoped that the fort would be able to provide refuge for their children and women when warriors were away for war (Kuttruff 2013).

The relationship between the British people stationed at Fort Loudoun and the Cherokee people is described as being “friendly” and “mutually beneficial” in the historical record (Jameson 2004:168). However, in the fall of 1759, their relationship began to deteriorate, and the Cherokee began minor attacks on the fort which caused the fort to experience a lack of food supply. Staring down the possibility of starvation, the fort’s garrison commander surrendered and abandoned the
fort to the Cherokee on August 9, 1760 (Kuttruff 1988). The troops retreated to a location 15 miles from the fort and the Cherokee ambushed, killed, and captured the men from the garrison. Ten of the captives were used as ransom by the Cherokee and were all returned over a period of nine months to Fort Prince George in South Carolina (Alden 1944; Brown 1965). The Cherokee then occupied the fort until the abandoned supplies were used up or removed to their nearby towns. The fort remained abandoned and fell to disarray until the state of Tennessee acquired and reconstructed the site in the 1930s (Jameson 2004).

3.3 TVA History

The New Deal and TVA

In 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law a series of programs, public work projects, and financial reforms that were a part of his New Deal (Ekbladh 2002). The goal of the New Deal was to provide relief, reform, and recovery to the American people so that the American economic system could attempt to recover from the Great Depression (Lowitt 1983). One of the programs that derived from this New Deal included the development of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which was created to provide flood control, electricity, water navigation, and economic development to the Tennessee Valley Region (Aksamit 2009). This region was commonly thought of as “being economically backward and stagnant” and included all of Tennessee and parts of Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia (Aksamit 2009:23; Ekbladh 2002).

Though primarily a regional agency based in Knoxville, Tennessee, Lowitt (1983) states that TVA “received congressional appropriations” to help the agency better address the issues within the seven-state region it was tasked to improve (Lowitt 1983:35). The act in itself was
considered to be a “unique piece of legislation” because Congress had not created any other
government corporation with such a broad purpose that could operate autonomously (Lowitt
1983:35). The agency’s specific mission required them to develop regional rivers for physical,
social, and economic improvements (Lowitt 1983). However, the agency was given free rein to
execute its own programs without Congressional approval (Lowitt 1983).

Multi-purpose Projects

From 1933 to 1944, the TVA devoted a significant amount of time and energy to creating
policies and projects that would help the agency achieve its mission of improving the region
(Aksamit 2009). Lowitt (1983) explains that the agency believed the best way to achieve their
mission was through the development of a series of multi-purpose projects. These projects
included dam development, which Lowitt states were designed to help “assist in navigation, flood
control, the generation of hydroelectric power, land use, and recreation promotion” (1983:36).

However, these multi-purpose dam projects required TVA to acquire land, which proved
to be a difficult task for the agency (Lowitt 1983). The first dam project, alone, necessitated the
removal of thousands of people to build a dam along the Clinch and Powell rivers in Tennessee
(Lowitt 1983). This dam, the Norris Dam, would be the first of many dams that TVA would utilize
powers of eminent domain to forcefully require community members to leave their homes and
move to another area that would not be in the way of construction (Lowitt 1983).

TVA from 1945-1970

After World War II, Wheeler and McDonald (1983) explain that the TVA had entered a
new period of “uncertainty, indecision, and drift” (Wheeler and McDonald 1983:167). The agency
realized that a new mission was needed because the availability of cheap power was not enough to help further ‘modernize’ the Tennessee Valley region (Wheeler & McDonald 1983). The search for this mission, from 1945 to 1970, resulted in the agency experiencing internal conflict that had the agency narrowly focusing on power, navigation, and flood control (Murchison 2007).

Then in 1962, Aubrey Joseph “Red” Wagner was appointed the director of TVA (Wheeler & McDonald 1983). The agency had not proposed a single multi-purpose project since 1951 and Wagner believed that only a series of multipurpose projects would bring the desired results of industrialization, recreation, tourism, and jobs to the Valley (Murchison 2007). Wagner thought that reviving dam development projects that the agency focused on in its early years would help to stimulate the economy and revive the agency (Wheeler & McDonald 1983). Thus, TVA chose the Tellico Dam project to help the agency achieve its new mission.

**Tellico Project**

To rekindle the agency’s good name, the Tellico Dam project was proposed by Wagner as a multipurpose project that would help improve the economic conditions of the Little Tennessee Valley (Murchison 2007). The agency chose the last free flowing thirty-three miles of the Little Tennessee River as the location for the project because this location could undergo “significant beneficial shifts in land use… to industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational development use” (Plater 2013:2). However, to seek congressional appropriations for their endeavors, TVA had to justify the significance of the dam by explaining how it could benefit the region. The agency not only claimed the project would provide recreational use for the community, but they also argued that the dam could allow for the agency to acquire land through the powers of eminent domain (Murchison 2007). This land enhancement goal required that TVA return to the “large
take” policy that TVA followed when the agency was first created (Murchison 2007). This would allow TVA to take more property than was needed for the reservoir, and to sell that property for a profit after the dam was completed.

In order to promote the project to the public, TVA claimed the dam would provide economic development to the area (Sims 2001). The TVA promised the dam would create numerous water-based and industrial employment opportunities that would offer 6,000 new jobs and stimulate the development of 9,000 new jobs in service industries around the area (Murchison 2007). TVA also claimed that the new jobs would stimulate population growth and provide homes for 25,000 people (Plater 2013). Plater (2013) explains that TVA proposed to develop a model city along with the dam that would be called Timberlake. This city would supposedly raise the projection of the population size to 50,000 people and the total number of jobs would increase to 25,000 (Murchison 2007). However, despite these benefits that TVA boasted, the agency was immediately met with public opposition.

3.4 Contestation of the Dam

Initial Contestation

From 1963 to 1979 the TVA was confronted with a series of obstacles that delayed the construction of the Tellico Dam on the Little Tennessee River in east Tennessee. These obstacles emerged as the result of the contestation over the dam from environmentalists, local landowners, and fishing and history enthusiasts who believed the dam would harm the agricultural, historical, and archaeological value of the area (Murchison 2007). Their shared desire to protect the Tellico Plains and the Little Tennessee River eventually led to them banding together to create the Association for the Preservation of the Little Tennessee River (APLTR).
The APLTR originally consisted of local farmers, environmental activists, and history and fishing enthusiasts and, later, the Eastern Band of Cherokee (Plater 2013). Everyone within the Association shared the desire to protect the Tellico Plains and the Little Tennessee River, but they each had different reasons as to why they contested the dam development. For example, the farmers feared their removal from and loss of their farms, the environmentalists sought to protect the river and its “natural” state, the history enthusiasts involved with the Fort Loudon Association sought to protect Fort Loudoun, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee sought to protect their ancestral lands and the Cherokee way of life from destruction.

Before the Eastern Band of Cherokee joined the Association, both the APLTR and the TVA attempted to seek the “support of the three federally recognized Cherokee nations” in their efforts to oppose or support the dam project (Gilmer 2011:v). Many of the political leaders in the Cherokee nations were reluctant to offer their support due to their complicated history with the environmentalists and the fear of tarnishing their cordial relationship with the TVA. This reluctance was further complicated by internal conflict among the Cherokee where each of the three nations could not agree on the importance of their involvement in supporting or opposing the Tellico project. The history of French colonialism, Cherokee Removal, and the division of the Cherokee Nations led to their inability to agree on how the Cherokee peoples should participate in the contestation of the dam (Gilmer 2011). This resulted in the emergence of internal conflict within the APLTR once the Eastern Band of Cherokee joined the association due to the different values and meanings associated with the landscape between non-Native and Native peoples involved with the contestation of the dam.
The Environmentalists and the Cherokee

While the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) fought alongside environmentalists as part of the Association for the Preservation of the Little Tennessee River, the Cherokee did not trust the motives of the environmentalists. This distrust came from arguments between the three Cherokee nations as to whether they should play into the trope of the “ecological Indian” that was promoted by environmentalists during the 1970s. The idea of the “ecological Indian” was a stereotype that environmental groups often used in the 1970s to paint indigenous peoples as conservationists and argue that they have a better relationship with the natural world than American society did (Ranco 2007). The most popular image utilized by American environmentalists to support the “ecological Indian” stereotype was the image of the “Crying Indian” which was a picture of a Cherokee actor named Iron Eyes Cody crying over pollution (Krech 1999). This image and the stereotype of the “ecological Indian” helped to promote colonialist perceptions of Native peoples as being more environmentally friendly by playing into the notion that there were “fundamental differences between the way Euro-Americans and indigenous peoples think about and relate to the land and resources” (Krech 1999:16). The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma did not agree with the use of the “Crying Indian” by environmentalists to gain support from the public to oppose the dam and earn money for their own causes, but the EBCI saw the use of this imagery as a negative means to a greater good that could help save their homeland.

Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma vs. the Eastern Band of Cherokee

This difference in opinions led the EBCI to join the Association without the support of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma was afraid of participating in
the contestation of the dam because they feared tarnishing their cordial relationship with the TVA would make the Cherokee Nation appear rebellious to the federal government (Denson 2004). The 1970s was a difficult time for both the Cherokee Nation and the United Keetoowah Band of Oklahoma because they were still struggling from the effects of land loss in 1907 when Oklahoma achieved statehood (Denson 2004). The loss of their land had resulted in decades of power struggle among the Cherokee Nation, and the leader of the nation in the 1970s feared that opposing the Tellico Project would ruin his attempt to gain federal support to become the Cherokee Nation’s principal chief (Denson 2004). Federal support during this time was crucial to the Cherokee Nation’s struggle for sovereignty and many members feared that opposing the project could have detrimental effects on their attempt to rebuild the nation (Cobb 2007).

In order to oppose the dam in a way that did not appear too radical, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma argued that the destruction of the Cherokee village sites was not only a loss of Cherokee history but, because Cherokee history “was a part of American history”, the destruction of that history would be a “loss to all of American history” (Gilmer 2011:107). Their ability to argue for the preservation of Cherokee history in order to preserve American history enabled the Cherokee Nation to oppose the project in a way that positioned the protection of the Cherokee village sites within the larger narrative of American history. This allowed for the Cherokee Nation to continue to represent the anti-radical values of the nation by framing Cherokee history in a way that cast the Cherokee Nation as a partner to America through their shared history.

In opposition to the methods utilized by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians contested the Tellico Project in a more radical way. Leaders would dress in traditional clothing and feathered headdresses to appear more “authentic” to gain public attention and support by “appealing to non-Indian conceptions of Indianness” (Gilmer 2011:97).
This strategy of resistance was the result of the history of Removal in which the Eastern Band of Cherokee had struggled with poverty until the creation of the Great Smokey Mountain National Park in the 1930s enabled them to acquire money from the tourism industry (Finger 1991). Much of the revenue they obtained came from their use of the “authentic Indian” image that Euro-American individuals had towards Natives (Finger 1991). Members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee would use this image by dressing up in traditional warrior attire with feathered headdresses so that tourists would be tempted to pay to “have their pictures taken with a ‘real’ Indian” (Gilmer 2011:98). This practice of “chiefing up” allowed for the EBCI to appeal to the American public during their contestation of the Tellico Dam as “real Indians” whose culture and the future of that culture rested on the preservation of the valley and the sacred sites within.

*Fort Loudon Association*

The history of the Fort Loudoun Association and the Cherokee peoples also caused the emergence of internal conflict based on the history between the Cherokee peoples and European settlement. History enthusiasts joined the APLTR to prevent the destruction of Fort Loudoun, which was a fort built along the Little Tennessee River by the British during the French and Indian War. The construction of the fort resulted in the immediate outbreak of tension between the Cherokee peoples and the European invaders (Mooney 1995). Fort Loudoun eventually came to “symbolize the genesis of European settlement” in the lower Little Tennessee River valley and “everywhere west of the Appalachians” (Gilmer 2011:43). This history not only contributed to the delayed participation of the EBCI in the fight against the dam but was also one of the reasons in which the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and the United Keetoowah band refused to join the Association (Gilmer 2011). Cherokee involvement with the Fort Loudoun Association to protect
their traditional homelands would require the Cherokee peoples to aid in the preservation of a colonialist fort whose construction was the first of many events that displaced and changed the lives of the Cherokee peoples throughout history.

Farmers vs. Cherokee Removal

Furthermore, the relationship between the farmers and the EBCI was also complicated due to the history of Removal and Cherokee identity. The farmers utilized the memory of Native American Removal to compare their removal from their farmland to that of the Cherokees from their traditional homeland (Gilmer 2011). The comparison of their displacement to Cherokee displacement often revolved around their claim to Cherokee ancestry in which the farmers believed that they were descended from the Cherokees and would use this claim to gain public sympathy. They argued that the TVA was “treating them just as Cherokees were treated a century and a half before” (Gilmer 2011:3).

The Cherokees also used the history of Removal to protest the dam’s construction, but they did not agree with the comparison of their displacement to that of the displacement of the dam. Instead, they used the destruction of the Cherokee sacred sites and the desecration of Cherokee remains as a way to compare the dam’s construction and the flooding of the valley to Removal (Gilmer 2011). They argued that the loss of their traditional homeland was a form of present-day Removal in which the dam would wash away the history of the Cherokee peoples from the Little Tennessee River valley. The destruction of their ancestral lands and the loss of their history meant that they would lose their connection to the place that they believed to be the origin of their peoples. This loss of sacred land from both Removal and from the Tellico Dam challenged the traditional Cherokee notion of place and homeland in which the abandonment or loss of their physical place
in the world was considered to be a betrayal of what it meant to be Cherokee (Gilmer 2011).

### 3.5 Legal Battles Over the Dam

*Initial Lawsuits*

Despite their different reasons for protesting the dam, members of the APLTR and the EBCI worked together to attempt to stop the construction of the Tellico Dam. They each filed lawsuits to prevent the destruction of their homes, preserve the historic sites along the river, and protect the Cherokee burial mounds (Murchison 2007). To achieve this, the members of the association filed a lawsuit under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1972 due to the TVA’s refusal to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (Plater 2013). TVA then responded to the NEPA injunction and filed an EIS in 1973 in which the district judge found the EIS to be sufficient enough to lift the injunction (Plater 2013).

*TVA v. Hill*

As the dam opponents continued to fight the TVA, Murchison (2007) explains that it became clear that they would have to find a viable theory for legally challenging the dam if they wanted to defeat the TVA and halt the Tellico Dam project. There was no considerable foundation for a legal challenge until the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was passed in December of 1973 (Davis 1979; Murchison 2007). Wheeler and McDonald (1986) explain that an ichthyologist for the University of Tennessee, David Etnier, managed to discover the habitat of a small fish called the snail darter. The passing of the Endangered Species Act a couple months after this discovery allowed for lawyers to utilize the act and create a new line of political-legal organization that would allow those in opposition to the Tellico Dam to employ the snail darter discovery as a means to
prevent the dam from being constructed in *TVA v. Hill* (Plater 2013; Sims 2001; Wheeler & McDonald 1986).

In order to use the Endangered Species Act to halt the construction of the dam, the snail darter had to first be listed on the endangered species list. The director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) submitted a proposal to list the snail darter as endangered on June 17, 1975 on the sole basis that the completion of the Tellico Dam would “result in total destruction of the snail darter’s habitat” (Murchison 2007:86). TVA objected to the USFWS’s proposal, but the Secretary of the Interior ruled on October 9, 1975 that the snail darter would be listed as endangered. The listing was based on agreement with the USFW’s statement on the destructive impact that the dam would have on the snail darter’s habitat (Murchison 2007). TVA, however, refused to alter their plans with the Tellico Dam despite the decision to designate the snail darter’s habitat as being critically endangered (Plater 2013). Instead, they attempted to “implement plans to relocate the snail darter in the Hiwasee River” which would allow them to continue with the construction of the dam (Murchison 2007:89).

Because the USFWS did nothing to enforce the ESA that TVA was violating, dam opponents utilized Section II of the Act which allowed any individual citizen the ability to file a civil action “to enjoin any person, including the United States…, who is alleged to be in violation of any provision of this Act” (Murchison 2007:89). Hank Hill and Zygmunt Plater immediately filed a lawsuit in the district court in 1975 to enforce TVA’s cooperation with the Endangered Species Act. District judge Robert Taylor refused to initiate an injunction despite the snail darter’s qualifications of protection under the ESA (Plater 2010). Plater, Hill, and the Association for the Preservation of the Little “T” then took the case to the United States appeals court in Cincinnati. The Sixth Circuit granted them an injunction in 1977 and the Supreme Court upheld that injunction.

After the Supreme Court’s ruling, Tennessee’s congressional delegation became determined to have the Tellico Dam project completed. Tennessee Senator Howard Baker made an amendment to the ESA that led to the creation of a committee that would have the powers to decide whether federally funded projects “could be exempted from the ESA if the benefits of completing the project outweighed the potential risk to endangered species” (Gilmer 2011:185). The goal of the Endangered Species Committee, commonly known as the “God Committee,” was to examine projects like the Tellico Project by investigating the economic costs and benefits of project (Jackson 2011). This committee, after examining the money invested into the Tellico Dam project and conducting a cost-benefit analysis, ruled against the TVA (Jackson 2011).

During their ruling, the committee claimed that, while the project was 95% complete, if one were to properly examine the costs of finishing the dam “against the [total project] benefits, it still doesn’t pay” (Plater 2013:5). Both TVA’s initial cost-benefit ratio of 1 to 1.3 and their later ratio of 1 to 1.7 claimed that over the life of the project it would produce benefits of $1.30 – 1.70 per every dollar spent on the dam (Murchison 2007). However, the “God Committee” objected to TVA’s cost-benefit analysis and stated that after adding together total benefits for flood control, barge navigation, and power, TVA would still lose forty to fifty cents for every dollar spent on the Tellico Dam (Murchison 2007). This analysis meant that the Tellico Dam would “destroy more public value than it could ever create” and that alternative development plans could better benefit the Little Tennessee River valley (Plater 2013:289). Thus, the committee unanimously ruled against the completion of the Tellico Dam.

Despite the Tellico Dam Project’s failure to make any economic sense, Republican Senators John Duncan and Howard Baker refused to lose the battle and give up hope. They quickly
and quietly found a way around the “God Committee’s” ruling by sneaking an amendment onto the Energy and Water Development Appropriation Bill of 1980 (Plater 2013). This amendment, which would allow for the Tellico Project to be exempted from the ESA. The introduction of this amendment was in violation of House rules because the amendment attached substantive legislation onto an appropriation bill without sufficient notice to all Congressmen (Plater 2013). In fact, Gilmer (2011:188) states that the amendment was:

…introduced at a time when there were approximately 15 members on the floor of the House. It was not printed in the Congressional [R]ecord. It was not read on the floor, nor described, in violation of the House rules. It was not debated. The amendment was passed by a voice vote. The whole process took 42 seconds.

The Senate initially rejected the amendment, but pressure from the House resulted in the Senate reversing their decision. Jimmy Carter then signed the appropriations bill in September 1979, which allowed TVA to move forward with the construction of the Tellico Dam (Gilmer 2011).

**Sequoyah v. Tennessee Valley Authority**

As a last-minute effort to halt the dam, Ammoneta Sequoyah, the EBCI, and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians filed a lawsuit against TVA in *Sequoyah v. Tennessee Valley Authority* the day before TVA was expected to close the gates of the dam. The two Cherokee nations stated that the Tellico Dam would result in the loss of land that was sacred and vital to Cherokee religious practices (Jackson 2011). The plaintiffs utilized the newly enacted American Indian Religious Freedom Act to claim that TVA and the Tellico Dam were violating the Cherokee peoples’ right to practice their religion or participate in religious pilgrimages along the river as their ancestors had. They claimed the dam would result in the complete inundation of “sacred sites, medicine gathering sites, holy places, and cemeteries” which would result in an “irreversible loss
of the culture and history” of the Cherokee peoples (Sequoyah et. al. v. Tennessee Valley Authority 1979:2). However, the federal judge presiding over the case ruled against the Cherokee stating that the “free exercise clause is not a license in itself to enter property, government-owned or otherwise, to which religious practitioners have no other legal right of access” (Sequoyah et. al. v. Tennessee Valley Authority 1979:4). The judge concluded that the land in question did not legally belong to the Cherokee, but to the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the “impoundment of the Tellico Reservoir” had “no coercive effect on the plaintiffs’ religious beliefs or practices” (Sequoyah et. al. v. Tennessee Valley Authority 1979:19). Thus, the last-minute lawsuit failed to prevent TVA from closing the gates on the Tellico Dam on November 29, 1979.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter provided a history of the Little Tennessee River Valley by illustrating the trends that are important in understanding the socio-environmental afterlives of the Tellico Dam. This land and the Little Tennessee River played an important role in the lives of humans for over 10,000 years before the Tennessee Valley Authority transformed the river and landscape with the creation of the Tellico Dam. Not only was the landscape at the center of Cherokee Creation, religion, and their Removal, but was also considered to be one of the most fertile farming lands in Tennessee. The history of the valley played a crucial role in how the different groups making up the Association for the Preservation of the Little Tennessee River reacted and contested the Tellico Dam Project. However, despite their efforts to stop the TVA and the dam, the gates were closed and the lives of the Cherokee and everyone living in the valley were forever changed.
CHAPTER IV THE MULTIVOCALITY OF TELLICO

Since the completion of the Tellico Dam, the new landscape has become dominated by a contested class politics of spatial use tied to the loss of farmland and waterfront gentrification. Displacement from the dam has resulted in the emergence of feelings of territoriality towards a place of memory that is based on individual histories of the landscape. These various histories, or narratives, associated with the landscape has made the new Tellico landscape into a contested place-in-the-making based on the different meanings and attachments ascribed to the land by both the displaced and the new residents of the lakefront communities. Both groups have emotional attachments to a singular geographical location with multiple dimensions in which the users of this landscape have ascribed different narratives, meanings, and emotions to it. This chapter focuses strictly on the displaced populations. It applies Margaret Rodman’s multivocal approach to understanding the multivocality of Tellico. I argue that the multivocality of the Tellico landscape involves a contested arena where feelings of territorialization, land entitlement, and a lack of belonging shape how displaced individuals choose to participate or not to participate in this new landscape.
4.1 Multivocality in Tellico

Margaret Rodman’s multivocal approach to the anthropological study of place explores how place “is a politicized and cultural construct” that is shaped by the multiple meanings attached to a place (Rodman 1992:640). The application of this approach is used to understand the various meanings and attachments that are ascribed by shared and competing narratives of places (Rodman 1992). These polyphonic meanings and narratives of landscape are both historically and geographically constituted in which a place cannot be understood without an understanding of the imperial historical context of a place (Said 1989). This allows for places to then be narrated by “multiple agents in varying contexts, or places” in order to represent the multiplicity of “complex connections within a system of places” (Marcus 1989:25).

Applying a multivocal approach to understand the new Tellico landscape allows individuals within this landscape to have agency in narrating their experiences with both the past and present contestation of the dam and transformation of the land. Those displaced by the dam have developed place-making practices based on the individual narratives, meanings, and attachments they ascribed to the previous landscape. Rodman argues that these multivocal dimensions of place allow for a single place to be understood and used differently by people from different socioeconomic, geographic, and historical backgrounds (Rodman 1992). Tellico can be understood differently based on the different narratives and meanings attached to the new landscape by those who were either physically, spiritually, or emotionally displaced by the dam.

Each form of displacement led individuals to mourn the loss of the land and river differently. These individuals share a collective history and attachment to the same land, but whether they were farmers, Cherokee, or fishermen has impacted how they have chosen to interact
with the land today. This chapter discusses the similarities and differences in how the displaced interact with the post-Tellico Dam landscape and collectively view Tellico Village and TVA.

### 4.2 Physical Displacement

On November 13, 1979, the TVA used eminent domain to evict the last two remaining farming families from their property in Loudon County, Tennessee (Wheeler & McDonald 1986). Altogether, the Tellico Dam led to the physical displacement of 300 farming families and the condemnation of 38,000 acres of land stretching across Loudon, Monroe, and Blount Counties in east Tennessee (Murchison 2007). Physical displacement as experienced by these families deprives and dislocates displacees from their “existing socio-cultural milieu” (World Commission on Dams 2000:102-104). People who are forced to moved away from their homes and resettle in other locations often endure emotional and mental struggles related to the loss of their homes (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014; Vanclay 2017). This is because land has a symbolic value that is embedded in the landowner’s way of life, and it constitutes a crucial element to their identities (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014).

Furthermore, land loss from involuntary land forfeiture through the use of eminent domain may also lead displaced individuals to lose a piece of their soul and identity (Ansoms & Hilhorst 2014). Individuals displaced by the Tellico Dam developed a sense of identity surrounding the Little Tennessee River and the agrarian landscape. The transformation of the Tellico landscape included the condemnation of both land and whole communities. Houses, churches, and schools were torn down or moved to other locations. Members of these communities were emotionally and symbolically attached to these places and lost a sense of their identity as farmers and as community members. This is because places like Tellico are “metonymically and metaphorically tied to
identities” in multiple ways due to the processes of creating places in which people “fashion
themselves” as they “fashion places” (Basso 1996:11).

This sense of place attachment has led to the emergence of a central theme of place-making
surrounding the Tellico Dam controversy. There is an ongoing and continuous struggle for the
displaced to re-emplace themselves in the new landscape. For example, the displaced farmers
continue to struggle with ways to cope with the transformation of the landscape because they have
lost their sense of place (Vanclay 2017). This struggle to cope with the new environment is evident
in interviews conducted with the displaced in which every respondent expressed their conflicted
feelings over whether to participate in the new landscape or not. For some, the painful memories
and the loss of their land prevents their return to the land and for others, the visible remnants of
the past landscape allows them to feel a connection to what used to be. This is evident in the various
responses I received from people when asked how seeing the old farm silos sticking out of Tellico Lake made them feel (Figure 4.1). The following statements are from two different individuals who explain the different feelings the silos and the new landscape invokes.

The silos, they break my heart. I know whose they were. I was there to help build them and fill them up each year. When I see them, it brings back memories of helping that family. It reminds me of the people who had dairy farms there. I don’t like to see them. The pain from them keeps me away from Tellico Lake. I don’t want anything to do with it.

-Interview with F.D., 2021

FD explains that seeing the silos “breaks his heart” because they are painful reminders of the past landscape. FD chooses not to participate in the new Tellico landscape because seeing the post-Tellico Dam landscape is a painful experience for him. The feelings FD has towards the transformation of the land are not uncommon for displaced people to endure. FD has ascribed symbolic value and meaning to the landscape that constitutes a part of his identity that he has lost due to the dam and land transformation. In a sense, he has lost his sense of place in which the stress an individual experiences from this loss can often lead to them choosing to avoid the unfamiliar (Scudder 1973).

For others, seeing the silos invokes happy memories of the past and allows them to feel a connection to the old land. One interviewee explained how the silos helps him feel closer to home.

I’m glad the silos are there, to be honest with you. I hate that they have to be there, but I’m so glad they’re there. In 100 years, those silos are probably still going to be there. It’s always going to be a remaining black eye on TVA for damming up what God created and for taking away and preventing God’s creation from running freely. To me, I like seeing them because they are a lasting reminder of what this land used to be and of what TVA did. It’s a permanent reminder that this place has a history, and this land was once something more than a TVA lake for rich people to move and retire to. Those silos sticking out of the water are a lasting reminder for us and for TVA. It will forever remind TVA that they did something wrong, and it will forever remind me of the home and land I lost. That’s why I like going to the lake sometimes, to just sit and remember what used to be. It makes me feel close to my home that I can no longer see or visit.

-Interview with J.R., 2021
JR explains that the silos help him feel a connection to the old landscape. He believes they are reminders of the history of the land that has all but been washed away from the transformation of the land. The silos help JR to cope with his loss and allows him to seek familiarity to keep a connection to the land. This search for familiarity is part of a process of cultural involution that some displaced peoples experience. In this instance, displacees attempt to “cling to the familiar” to cope with the stress of change (Scudder 1973:53).

While they each share the collective loss of their community, each individual physically displaced by the dam was attached to the land for different reasons. This is because every person has their own perceptions of place in which each person has their own emotional bond to the land and community based on individual family histories. Tellico, as a place, is experienced differently by farming families based on family history, gender, and age which has shaped and continues to shape how they interact with the new landscape. This is because people are anchored to places based on the social formations of a geographical location in which individual and local history, gender, and age all shape how they ascribe meanings to the land (Basso 1996).
Gender Dynamics of Physical Displacement

Gender plays a role in how people respond to displacement (Meertens 2006). The social and political responses of displacement by women and men physically displaced by the Tellico Dam not only shaped the roles each played during the contestation of the dam, but also shapes how each interacts with the landscape today. The processes of displacement and relocation from the dam was and continues to be a personal event that has impacted each displaced person differently. For instance, the unique attachments people have to the land based on their role as farmers or members of farming families shaped how interviewees responded to questions related to how they coped with their land loss. The men were more likely to have continued farming practices after
relocation to new land and they identified as being farmers in which they would state “we were/are farmers”; whereas the women state that “our dads’ were farmers” or “we come from farming families” (Gilmer 2011). They did not take on farming roles after their displacement but were instead encouraged to attend school and become local teachers, wives, or mothers.

Gender differences were also visible in how people responded to questions relating to how they use the lake or land around the lake today versus how they previously used the lake. The men were more likely to give a detailed description and comparison of the rich agrarian landscape compared to the landscape today. One man, whose family lost over 100 acres of farmland discussed how he loved farming, but he had to quit farming due to the “pitiful” soil on his new land.

I had a huge piece of land, about 600 acres, that was close to the river and it had the richest soil you’d ever seen. You could go out there and the soil was nothing but sand that could’ve been about ten feet deep. I would grow all sorts of crops like soybeans, wheat, and tobacco and it would provide a livable wage for my family. Every time the river would rise and go down, it would bring with it a whole lot of sand and nutrients. You could dig into that sand and just keep digging and digging and never reach the bottom. It was so beautiful, but now, my land is nothing but rocks. It’s pitiful compared to the land I and all the other farmers used to have. Our land was beautiful, and we could grow whatever we wanted because it was some of the richest farmland in Tennessee. My new land, though, is nothing but rocks. There’s no way to plant crops on it, so I, like many other farmers, had to switch from planting to raising cattle. However, that didn’t bring in enough money, so I had to quit farming. I quit a long time ago, but I think of that rich beautiful soil every day and I miss it.

-Interview with B.C., 2021

This quote reflects the importance the soil and land held for many of the men whose livelihood depended on farming. Interviews with these individuals were heavily focused on the different soil types of their old and new land. They all described the hardships they experienced from on their new farms because the soil was not as rich.
Figure 4.3 Ritchey Property before the Tellico Dam

(Photo by Ritchey Family)
The women respondents did not discuss the loss of the farmland as richly as the men. Instead, they would give detailed descriptions of how losing their houses, land, and community buildings were the most difficult experiences for them. Women were also more likely to have held on to memorabilia such as old newspaper clippings, pictures, court documents, etc. in which every female interviewee brought some form of keepsake from their home and the protest movement to their interview. One female respondent explained how she uses and copes with the post-Tellico Dam landscape by showing me what the new landscape looks like today compared to pictures from the past. See Figures 6 and 7 for a before and after picture of her family land.

I go back to my family land, and it hurts. I am taken to a land of memories where I can see and imagine my home. I can see, in my mind, the old fence line, my old tire swing hanging on the tree, and the rows of tabaco growing in the back. However, in reality, I see a lake and a bunch of mansions. It’s hard because I can point to the places where my school was or where my neighbors lived, but I can’t see them. All I see is water or houses. Even the land has changed from flat to hilly. It used to not look this way. This new land is my home, but it’s not at the same time. I come here sometimes to try and feel close to home and I can for a bit, but then reality sets in and I am reminded of the present. This new land prevents
me from ever going back to my family’s house or the church that I was baptized in. Instead, there’s a lake and new community standing in the places that used to make up my community. I can come back to the place that feels like home, but I am not at home. I feel both at home and homeless at the same time.

-Interview with C.D., 2021

This response shows the conflicting emotions in which the interviewee experiences as she tries to interact and feel a connection to her old landscape through interactions with the new landscape. Places can often embody thoughts and memories which can lead to conflicting feelings of both familiarity and strangeness, which emerge as a result of land transformations (Field & Basso 1996). These feelings are evident in all the interviews between those who were physically displaced by the dam.

4.3 Spiritual & Emotional Displacement

In addition to the physical displacement experienced by the local farming population, the Tellico Dam also led to the emotional and spiritual displacement of the avid fishermen of the Little Tennessee River and of the Cherokee peoples. While neither physically lived on the land, they were both deeply impacted by the loss of the land and river. Both groups were connected to the previous landscape in multiple ways based on the individual histories and meanings they ascribed to the land. Thus, this has led both groups to have different feelings and interactions that shapes how each group chooses to participate in the post-Tellico Dam landscape.

Cherokee Spiritual Displacement

While the Cherokee were forcefully displaced from their homeland in east Tennessee during the processes of Native American Removal, they continued to be spiritually connected to their ancestral lands in Tennessee (Gilmer 2011). The Tellico Dam led to the destruction and
desecration of multiple sites that were sacred to Cherokee culture. To traditional Cherokees, the loss of their homeland meant the death of the Cherokee peoples and their spirituality. A member of the EBCI explained the meaning of this loss to him and the Cherokee.

This place was once home to a great number of spots along the Little Tennessee River that were doorways to spirit worlds. There were several sites and there were several places where there were markings on the rocks that go back to the very beginning of our Creation. These doorways and the free-flowing water of the river allowed us to collect medicine and now that those doorways are lost and the river is dead, we cannot do that. We have lost our ability to practice spiritual rituals in a place that our ancestors did for centuries. In a way, we have lost a piece of ourselves as Cherokee peoples.

-Interview with C.R., 2021

This statement reflects the importance the river and land held for the Cherokee. The significance of free-flowing sources of water plays a crucial role in Cherokee religious and spiritual rituals. Historically, a Cherokee healer would lead people to the water to participate in a ceremony of communion that would allow for people to spiritually cleanse themselves (Mooney 1995). Water was and continues to be sacred to the Cherokee peoples in which flowing bodies of water are living entities with personalities that are unique to each body of water (Mooney 1995).

During the court case *Sequoyah et. al. v. TVA* in 1979, two descendants of Sequoyah, the creator of the Cherokee syllabary, explained the significance of what would happen to the Cherokee if TVA were to continue with the Tellico Dam.

If the water covers Chota and the other sacred places of the Cherokee along the River, I will lose my knowledge of medicine. If the lands are flooded, the medicine that comes from Chota will be ended because the strength and spiritual power of the Cherokee will be destroyed. If this land is flooded and these sacred places are destroyed, the knowledge and beliefs of my people will be destroyed.

-Ammoneta Sequoyah, from *Sequoyah et. al. v. TVA*

If these lands are flooded, it will destroy the spiritual strength of the Cherokee. If the homeland of our forefathers is covered with this water it will cover the medicine and the spiritual strength of our people because this is the place from which the Cherokee people
came. When this place is destroyed, the Cherokee people cease to exist as a people, then all of the peoples of the earth will cease to exist.

- Lloyd Sequoyah, from Sequoyah et. al. v. TVA

These statements explain the significance the Little Tennessee River and the land played in Cherokee tradition. Traditional Cherokees believe that the Tellico Dam killed the Little Tennessee River, which in return no longer enables them to access the spiritual worlds that the river once connected them to (Duncan 1993). They lost the ability to speak to the water, to collect medicines, and to partake in certain games that were historically played by free-flowing sources of water. This loss has led the Cherokee peoples to become spiritually displaced from the spirit of the river and land that plays a vital role in Cherokee tradition.

**Affective Displacement from the River**

The Little Tennessee River also played a vital role in the lives of a group of individuals called the “river rats” who experienced a deep emotional and spiritual loss when the river was dammed. This group consisted of people who spent their childhood on the river swimming, fishing, and boating on the waters. Their social life was shaped by the river as they utilized it for recreational, economic, emotional, and social opportunities. Fishing along the river not only provided a way to bond socially but it provided people the ability to connect with nature and earn extra income at the same time. The damming of the river impacted their ability to earn extra income from their catches, but many of the “river rats” continue to fish the lake for recreational purposes.

Methods of fishing changed after the river was dammed due to the river pollutants and the loss of river dependent fish like trout. The Little “T” was once considered to be one of the best places east of the Mississippi River to go trout fishing. However, from 1994-2017, the overall
ecological health of Tellico Lake from TVA’s bi-yearly ecological health evaluations has rated “poor” or at the low end of the “fair” range (Biologist 2017). The most recent evaluation in 2019 found elevated levels of PCBs, pesticides, and arsenic in sediments collected from the lake, which can be absorbed through the skin of bottom dwelling fish like catfish (Biologist 2017). This has led the fishermen who once called themselves “river rats” to change their fishing techniques to accommodate the new species of fish that inhabit the lake and to change their methods of subsistence fishing to catch and release fishing.

While the “river rats” participate in recreational fishing on Tellico Lake, they often find themselves mourning the loss of the Little “T” and the beautiful trout they used to fish. The river was more than a body of water. It provided them with the ability to form close bonds with one another, and, to some, the river was described as being similar to a family member. One person described her father’s connection to the river in which she stated:

My Daddy grew up on the river. Daddy was a very abused child and the river was a place and he knew there wouldn't be anything there that would hurt him. To him, the river was not just a river. The river had a spirit that nurtured him and his soul. The spirit of the river grew my dad. My dad’s relationship to the river was one of love. He loved the water, the rocks, and the fish that swam in it. He always wanted other people to experience it the way he did. He believed the river would speak to him. The spirit of the river was speaking, and he always wanted me to feel that same connection to the river in my heart that he felt in his. So, yeah, there was a spiritual connection there for sure, and when the river was killed, my Daddy lost a piece of his soul. He was never the same after that.

-Interview with C.J., 2021

This human relationship with the Little “T” was an intimate relationship that the interviewee later goes on to describe as being similar to the relationship between God and His children. For some, the emotional loss of the river was akin to losing their religion, their connection to nature, and a piece of their identity. CJ’s father felt like he lost a piece of his soul after the river was transformed into a lake. Feelings such as these challenge the idea that rivers are bounded entities that have
universal meanings and usage. Instead, rivers can be anchors for religion, identity, and belonging for some (Kahn 1996; Harvey 2006).

4.4 Displacement & Territoriality

Feelings of territoriality and land entitlement have emerged as a product of displacement from the Tellico Dam. Individuals displaced by the dam, either spiritually or physically, collectively expressed their opinion of land and water rights in relation to the Tellico landscape. Terms such as “stole” and “took” were used in every interview to explain how the TVA undertook to condemn land for the dam. These feelings have led displaced individuals to partake in secretive or clandestine practices of territorialization that involve stealing flowers from old properties, sneaking into the woods on private land, and trespassing into old farmhouses. This allows for displacees to attempt to lay claim to and feel an emotional and physical connection to land that they believe is rightfully theirs.

These feelings of territoriality shape how the displaced interact with people from the lakefront communities. When asked how they felt about Tellico Village and the residents, all fifteen interviewees responded in a similar fashion stating that they had no ill feelings towards the people from Tellico Village or any of the other lakefront communities. However, they all discussed how “snooty” and “rich” the “yankees” from Tellico Village can be. One interviewee discusses this matter in relation to Tellico Village and his feelings towards its residents.

I’m not going to say anything bad about Tellico Village residents. It’s not really their fault. TVA created this problem. They created these huge homes, and they invited the development companies to come in and create these fancy places and spaces for people to move here. I don’t have a problem with these people though. There’s some really great people in Tellico Village. I think the problem that I have with them, though, is that these people treat us as if this is not our place. I don’t have a problem with them being here, but they need to learn the history of where their property sits. They need to realize that they
aren’t or weren’t our saviors by coming down here. We weren’t the barefooted hillbillies TVA said we were. People from Tellico Village need to understand that and need to stop treating us that way.

-Interview with S.B., 2021

SB’s feelings towards the residents are similar to other responses I received from interviewees in which they all felt as though the members of the lakefront communities failed to learn and appreciate the history of the area. This sentiment is expressed by various displacees as an attempt to impose power over the land that was once theirs even though they no longer have any legal rights to it.

Feelings of loss, unbelonging, and anger further create issues between the displaced and their ability to interact with the Tellico landscape. The displaced continuously struggle with conflicted feelings of whether or not they should participate in the new landscape. Some of the displaced have not traveled to this area since the closure of the dam’s gates in 1979, and others choose to interact with the new landscape based on individual preferences. This ranges from merely utilizing the roads built by the community as shortcuts to nearby towns to actively participating in the Tellico Village community and economy through shopping, dining, and entertainment activities. However, despite an individual’s willingness to participate within the post-Tellico dam landscape, the displaced struggle with conflicting feelings that prevent them from fully immersing themselves into the new landscape. One person explains how she utilizes services from Tellico Village but driving through the community is emotionally stressful.

I go to Tellico Village to get my haircut and to eat sometimes. I will even drive to my family land and try to remember it as it was before the dam. However, this makes it difficult to move on. Simply driving through Tellico Village makes it hard. Moving on is difficult because there is something similar to a scab on my heart that seems to be healing, but every time I drive past the lake or see a sign for Tellico Village, that scab is ripped off. I begin to bleed again after that, and I have to start the healing process all over again and again.

-Interview with C.B., 2021
The conflicting feelings experienced by CB is shared between other displaced peoples who try to interact with the new landscape. CB discusses her internal battle to participate in this landscape and enjoy the amenities of the community in this quote which is the result of her attempt to re-emplace herself into a new space that is embedded with a history surrounded by loss and sadness for her and her family.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the post-Tellico Dam landscape has become a contested place-in-the-making where feelings of territoriality have emerged between the different actors associated with the land. The transformation of the Little Tennessee River into the Tellico Reservoir has led displacees to endure emotional stress over the loss of land that was symbolically and materially valuable to them. Those displaced by the dam all shared a collective attachment to the land and river, but each individual has developed methods of place-making based on the narratives, meanings, and attachments they ascribed to the previous landscape. Displacement impacted people differently based on their connection to the land as a farmer, Cherokee, or fisherman. The multivocal dimensions of Tellico highlight how the post-dam landscape has become a contested arena in which feelings of territorialization and belonging shape how displaced individuals choose to participate with the land and water today. The next chapter will examine how Tellico Village individual residents interact with the landscape and exclude lower-middle-class residents and non-residents from participating in their community.
CHAPTER V EXCLUSIVITY, POWER, AND BELONGING IN TELlico VILLAGE

This chapter examines the power relations implicit in the social construction of Tellico Village. Public displays of financial superiority and practices of exclusion have led Tellico Village to become a contested place-in-the-making wherein feelings of territorialization have emerged between residents and non-residents. Land ownership and usage rights are contested between older and newer residents, lakefront and inland property owners, and Village residents and local community members known as Valley residents. Leadership roles in the various organizations that govern Tellico Village have become another domain for the creation of hierarchy. This chapter explores how these individuals and organizations exert dominance over the use of the land and water surrounding the Tellico Reservoir through practices of class and spatial exclusion. I argue that Tellico Village has become an enclaved community whose regulatory policies and programs have led to spatial segregation and division of its upper-middle and middle-class residents in opposition to the local townspeople.

5.1 Class and Spatial Exclusion

The capitalist economy is continually reshaping and restructuring class-based hierarchies in the U.S. as people migrate from more expensive states to states with lower costs of living (Carbonella and Kasimir 2006). Class is a social construct that is influenced not only by economic systems of production, distribution, and consumption (Marx 1972) but also by gender, race, and
geography (Smith 2014). Class mobility may be achieved through transnational migration where people are moving from states with higher costs of living to states with lower costs of living. Class mobility in this chapter is understood as “the evolution in time of the volume and composition of various forms of capital according to their trajectory in social space” (Alloul 2021:181). Class may be conceptualized differently based on geographics. Following Bourdieu’s (1987:6) definition of social classes, class in this chapter is defined as:

“Sets of agents who, by virtue of the fact that they occupy similar positions in social space (that is, in the distribution of powers), are subject to similar conditions of existence and condition factors and, as a result, are endowed with similar dispositions which prompt them to develop similar practices.”

Social class in Tellico Village is thus determined by the role individuals play within the community. Middle-class residents are those who expressed concerns over inequities they faced as either working residents or residents who are attempting to live on an annual retirement income of less than $100,000 a year. This cut-off was determined based on interview data in which retired residents making greater than or equal to $100,000 annually did not express the same concerns over the prices of community membership as those who were making less did. Residents with higher incomes were able to participate in the community differently than those making less than $100,000 a year.

Furthermore, I draw upon Low (2003) and Hines (2009) to examine the politics of spatial exclusion and how the transformations of place, spatial values, and practices are tied to the middle-class migration of white people in the U.S. Communities like Tellico Village are vehicles for exclusion and segregation where middle-class and upper-middle-class Americans use community policing, deed restrictions, and community governing associations to keep others out (Low 2003). These communities are created to structure social relations by separating the urban poor from
wealthier white citizens and to reinforce the segregation of social classes (Davis 1990). The colonization of these landscapes to create a space for retired leisure-class people prioritizes the safety of their lifestyle and the capital that enables that lifestyle (Hines 2009).

5.2 The Creation of Tellico Village

In 1984, the TVA and the Tellico Reservoir Development Agency (TRDA) selected Cooper Communities, Inc. (CCI) to oversee the development of Tellico Village (Plater 2013). CCI was permitted to purchase 4,806 acres of land around the Tellico Reservoir to create their community under a purchase agreement with the TVA and TRDA (Wilkerson 1999). Under this agreement, CCI first had to assure the TVA that properties within Tellico Village would be built for TVA electrical use and there would be limits on propane use in households. They then had to agree to invest $10.5 million dollars into infrastructure and amenities for the new community and promise to complete three community amenities within 36 months (Wilkerson 1999). CCI upheld this agreement and finalized their construction on the Toqua Golf Course, the Tellico Village Visitor’s Center, and the Toqua and Chota neighborhoods in 1987.
CCI marketed the Tellico Village community to white middle- to upper-middle-class Midwesterners in the 1990s. During this time, Cooper Communities, Inc. (CCI) took advantage of the mass migration of white people from cities in the Midwest to the Sunbelt as a result of deindustrialization and retirement (Squires 1991). CCI strategically placed billboards along major highways and attended trade shows in Michigan to promote Tellico Village as an “ideal location for a second home” (Wilkerson 1999:2). However, as people began to migrate to the Village, residents established themselves as permanent residents within the community and they built larger homes than the summer cottages CCI had imagined (Bogardus 2019). Figure 5.1 shows present houses along the reservoir that are representative of the size of houses that one may find in Tellico Village today. After CCI noticed that residents were choosing Tellico Village as their permanent place of residence, they transitioned from advertising Tellico Village as “an ideal location for a
second home” (Wilkerson 1999:2) and began promoting the community as a retirement community where people would “want to spend the next stage of their life” (Bogardus 2019:3).

Today, Tellico Village is a retirement community with approximately 8,000 full-time residents that claim, “life is better at Tellico” (tellicovillage.org). Their community mission is to “enhance and preserve the Tellico Village quality of life and social fabric” (tellicovillage.org). The Tellico Village Property Owners’ Association (TVPOA) encourages residents to achieve this mission by following the guiding principles of Tellico Village. These principles are guidelines that motivate Village members to actively participate in volunteer work and clubs/organizations and to strive for the continuous improvement of the community (Bogardus 2019).

![Figure 5.2 Average Home Sales Prices in Tellico Village from 2004-2020](image)

(Data provided by Tellico Village)
Known as the “mecca for retirees and second-home owners”, Tellico Village contains a population of 5,791 people (tellicovillage.org). According the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, 99.4% of Village residents identify as being “white alone, not Hispanic or Latino” with only 0.6% identifying as being “being black or African American alone” and 0.5% identifying as being “Hispanic or Latino” (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The residents of Tellico Village have access to 40 miles of shoreline access, three golf courses, three marinas, a wellness center, recreation center, three golf course clubhouses and a Yacht Club. The community’s business model functions on a combination of monthly assessments and user fees. The monthly assessment for all Tellico Village property owners in 2021 was $146.52, regardless of whether an individual owned a home or a lot. These monthly assessments are capped by the Village’s Covenant Restriction to a maximum 5 per cent increase annually. Membership to the Tellico Village Wellness Center and the Chota Recreation Center are available to community members only and packages range from $385 for an individual to $584 for a family (tellicovillage.org). Housing in Tellico Village currently ranges from $290,000 to $1,595,000 on real estate websites such as Zillow and Realtor. Figure 5.2 shows the average prices of homes in the Village from 2004-2020.
Tellico Village is a middle- to upper-middle class community in a wider working class rural region. Income data cannot be determined for Village residents because there is a lack of Census information pertaining to Tellico Village. This is because the Village is an unincorporated community, so their Census information is mixed in with Loudon County’s Census. To gain a sense of income differentiation between Village residents and Valley residents, interviewees were asked to fill out a demographic sheet after their interviews. This information is reflected in Table 5.3. The data from the table reflects an income difference between the participants in which approximately 87% of the displacees reported an annual income of $70,000 or less, whereas approximately 76% of Village residents interviewed for this study reported an annual income of $80,001 or more.
5.3 Community Participation and Social Capital

The implicit power relations in the construction of upper-middle class communities like Tellico Village impact the social interactions residents of those communities have with one another. Wealth inequalities structure these interactions and impact how individual residents experience Tellico Village. Community engagement in organizations and clubs, recreational activities, and volunteerism are crucial to this experience. However, there are various degrees of community involvement into which an individual can immerse themselves based on socio-economic class and employment status. Upper-middle class residents making greater than $100,000 a year in retirement are able to commit more time and money into community participation than the middle class residents who are currently working. This allows them the ability to build social networks within the community and gain more social capital. Social capital in this instance is defined as capital obtained through the development of “strong social networks and tight communities” that are “bounded by shared norms, trust, and reciprocity” (Jones 2005:267; Bourdieu 1984).

The Significance of Social Capital in Old Age

Interacting with the Tellico landscape and community allows residents to build social capital through the establishment of meaningful societal relationships that are beneficial to a person. Residents engage in community building through their participation in community organizations and volunteer work. Interacting with and within the Tellico landscape and the community allows residents to ascribe meanings and value to the land while also improving cohesion and solidarity. Civic involvement from people within communities like Tellico Village
creates “an atmosphere of mutual co-operation” and “vital social networks” between residents (Siisiäinen 2000:2). One resident discussed the importance of being an active member in the community and the benefits it provides her.

I am involved in a lot of clubs, and I volunteer a lot in the community. I have made so many friends that I know I will have someone if I ever need somebody. That is why I moved here, you know, because there is such a huge sense of community and at my age, I need a village. Anything can happen and I know I will have my neighbor. I mean, we all help each other out when one of us falls sick or when our spouses pass away. That’s why I stay so involved and I try to participate in community events as much as possible. These people are like family and the relationships I make are important to helping me in my daily life as an elderly person. They provide me with the help that I wouldn’t get if I were living by myself in a normal neighborhood.

-Interview with J.S., 2021

Fourteen out of seventeen people interviewed for this study made similar remarks as JS. They each discussed the significance of community participation because it allows for them to emplace themselves into a community that will care for them in their old age. Moving to an old-age community like Tellico Village allows residents the ability to gain a sense of belonging through social engagement and community participation. Social isolation can be detrimental for elderly people who may suffer from a number of health issues. Social engagement and “feeling connected to one’s community can promote” positive health and reduce the risk of mortality (Kitchen et al. 2012:104; Holt-Lunstad et al. 2010).

The sense of “belonging” that Village residents feel in their old-age community showcases the vulnerability of many seniors across the nation as care norms in the U.S. are shifting and changing. Participation in community building activities helps residents develop social networks that can be utilized in times of need (Hayakawa 2008). This is particularly important for older individuals like JS who lives alone or away from family because having a large social network establishes a form of “social protection” through mutual aid, friendship, respect, and care (Catell
These unspoken affective arrangements between older social groups helps foster a sense of security for elder people in a world in which family-based security in old age is “diminishing due to migration” and urbanization (van der Geest 2018:119).

A neoliberal biopolitics of ageing has promoted the need for older people to join old-age communities. The organization and administration of care for the elderly has been affected by changing care norms due to global migration, changes to geriatric medicine, and “shifting responsibilities between states and markets” (Neilson 2012:45). There is a global ageing crisis due to the “rapid ageing of the world’s population in the past three decades” (Neilson 2003:162). This crisis has been exemplified as fertility rates have been plummeting and the wealthiest capitalist nation across the world undergo demographic transformations as the result of the steady increase of people reaching ages 65 and over (Neilson 2003). These changes threaten the “economic viability of the world’s wealthiest and most powerful nation-states” as the “ratio of working-age taxpayers to nonworking retirees” become unevenly distributed (Nielson 2003:163; Gregg 2000; Estes 2001). As a response, governments have begun shifting the responsibilities of caring for their old onto the individual. Growing older has become “more of an individual risk and less of a collective responsibility” which has led to an increase in responsibility for older people to care for themselves both economically and physically (Neilson 2012:45). Communities like Tellico Village are promoted and encouraged by governments and families because they create communities for older people to be able to take care of each other and shift the responsibility away from the government and individual family members.

Community Participation & Leadership

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Residents of Tellico Village who invest more time into their community are able to accumulate more social capital than others. This is because involvement in social activities aids residents in constructing formal and informal social networks that are crucial for increasing the quality and quantity of an individual’s social capital (Campbell 2020; Wilkerson 2000). Middle class residents who are still working are unable to participate in the community as frequently as retired residents. They are also less likely to hold leadership roles and have a voice in how Tellico Village is governed. One resident explained how working a full-time job does not allow her to participate in as many clubs as retired residents, which affects how she is viewed by other residents.

Being an involved resident is a big deal at Tellico Village. We have so many clubs, organizations, and ways to volunteer and be active members of society. Everyone I know is probably involved in multiple things. I am involved in at least two different clubs, but that isn’t half as many as other people I know. It’s because I work full-time and I have to drive to Lenoir City every day, so I don’t have as much time to participate in all the clubs and amenities that Tellico Village has to offer. And I am okay with that, but I also feel like some people look at me weirdly when I say that I am only involved in a few things. Honestly, I think it’s harder for those of us who aren’t retired because we aren’t able to establish the same connections. You won’t find a single person on the Board that is still working and that’s because our governing committees are made up of the people who were voted into their position because everyone knew them. They are the people who are involved the most and they have the most say. Those of us who work, we aren’t heard as much because we don’t contribute to the community in the same way.

-Interview with A.T., 2021

AT stated that she felt like her opinions surrounding community decisions were not as valid as those of more active members of Tellico Village. She claimed that the governing committees in Tellico Village solely consisted of retired residents because their involvement with the community has allowed them to gain popularity amongst others.

A common theme surrounding the accessibility of community engagement emerged from interviews between working-class and retired residents. Four out of the seventeen interviewees stated that they were not retired yet, despite being eligible for retirement. These residents who
were employed full or part-time made similar remarks as AT pertaining to the lack of inclusivity of non-retired community members. These residents complained that they were unable to participate in the community to the same extent and that Tellico Village purposely excluded them from being able to participate in community meetings by scheduling those meetings during regular working hours. However, retired residents failed to acknowledge the deficits in inclusivity. These residents all made similar comments stating that there are various opportunities to be involved within Tellico Village and that lack of involvement is individual fault.

The exclusion of middle-class residents from community leadership roles in Tellico Village reflects deficits in the inclusivity of the community. Upper-middle-class retired residents have more availability in their daily schedules to participate in communal fundraisers, volunteer work, and clubs. This enables them to accrue social capital through their various interactions with voting members of the community and to obtain leadership positions within the TVPOA. This allows for community-based decisions surrounding annual membership fee increases, construction, and facility access rights to be decided largely by the retired members of Tellico Village.

Lakefront vs. Inland Property Owners

There were also discourses of aesthetic difference that emerged between upper-middle and middle-class residents of Tellico Village related to architecture and the landscape. Middle-class residents interviewed for this research made comments expressing their distaste for the “fancy lakefront mansions” that were “ridiculously large”. One resident commented on how these tasteless McMansions blocked his views of the mountains and made Tellico Village look “snobbish” to local townspeople.
Do you see the mansions over there? They are ridiculous, aren’t they? I don’t understand why anybody, and by anybody, I mean two old people, need a house so extravagantly large. Those large houses are why there’s no more lakefront lots available and they’re why I lost my mountain view. I used to have a beautiful view of the mountains from my smaller house, but now I don’t. A bunch of rich people just came in and built these huge houses, which are beautiful, but pointless. They make it seem like we are all rich here, and I am not that rich, but the locals seem to think we are and it’s because of those mansions.

-Interview with J.E., 2021

JE explained in an angry tone that the lakefront property owners had built larger than needed houses that misrepresent Tellico Village as a largely wealthy community. He believed the houses were beautiful, but they block the mountain views from inland property owners. His feelings of anger and ridiculousness towards the houses were expressed by all 13 of 17 residents interviewed for this research.

The aesthetic “taste” of the architectural and landscape design for the community varies between social groups and break down between middle- to upper-middle-class residents. The residents who expressed negative feelings towards the mansion-style houses complained that the houses were “too big” for two people, they diminish the rustic landscape value, and they misrepresent the social composition of the community. Out of the 4 residents who did not seem to be bothered by the size of the lakefront houses, 3 of them owned a lakefront property and did not seem to think that the houses in the Village were too large. Interestingly, 2 of the 3 residents who owned lakefront lots in Tellico Village commented on the ridiculously large houses in Rarity Bay, one of the other lakefront communities on Tellico Reservoir. These residents, along with several other residents, made statements that described Tellico Village as being “more down to earth” than the gated community of Rarity Bay. Many residents felt like the gates at Rarity Bay made that community less welcoming than the community of Tellico Village, which “welcomes everyone”.

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5.4 Counter-urbanization in Tellico Village

<table>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Top 10 States New Villagers Migrated from in 2020
(Data provided by Tellico Village)

A common theme that emerged from interviews with Tellico Village residents centered around the burdens of living on retirement pensions in states experiencing rapid inflation. Table 5.1 shows the top ten states that “New Villagers” migrated from in 2020. Sixteen out of seventeen individuals interviewed for this research relocated to Tennessee from one of the ten states in Table 5.1. Each of these made comments relating to how their home states were becoming “overpopulated”, “too expensive”, and “unsafe”. Six of them explained how being middle class in
California or New York was different than being middle class in Tennessee. In Tennessee they enjoyed more financial flexibility with an annual retirement income of $75,000.

Figure 5.4 View of the Smokey Mountains from Tellico Village
(Photo by author)

_Lifestyle Migration_

Residents choose to move to Tellico Village for four reasons: its ideal location, outstanding amenities, exceptional lifestyle, and value proposition (Tellico Village Fact Sheet). The community is nestled within a valley that offers residents views of the Smokey Mountains (Figure 5.4). It has a four-season climate and is within a day’s drive of 60% of the U.S. (Bogardus 2019). However, fifteen of the seventeen residents interviewed for this study stated that the main reason they chose to move to Tellico Village was because of community amenities and low cost of living.
For instance, one resident explained that he chose Tellico Village because it had the same leisurely conveniences as retirement communities in Florida without having to pay "an arm and a leg".

I looked at several retirement communities in Florida and Tennessee, but I fell in love with Tellico Village. It had all the same amenities, but in a place that wasn’t as crowded. Florida has just become overpopulated, and it is expensive. I wasn’t looking to spend too much money because I am retired, and I have to make my money last. So, you know, I chose Tellico Village because they have cheaper community fees and it’s in Tennessee, which if you don’t know, has low taxes compared to other states. It’s the perfect place to enjoy my retirement without having to pay an arm and a leg. I can make my retirement money last.

-Interview with J.E., 2021

JE stressed that it was important to find a place that provided him with a variety of amenities at an affordable rate. He chose Tellico Village because of the facilities, the inexpensive community fees, and low taxes in Tennessee.

JE’s motivation to retire to Tennessee is part of a larger phenomenon of retirement migration in which middle-class retirees are relocating from urban areas to peri-urban/rural spaces in the United States. This type of migration offers middle-class in-migrants “affordable material access” to a “[b]ourgeois lifestyle” of luxury and leisure that may transform individual quality of life (Goodwin-Hawkins and Jones 2021:2). For instance, people like JE are more easily able to afford the luxuries of an affluent retirement lifestyle in Tennessee than in states that have higher costs of living.

Leisure practices of Tellico Village residents are varied based on individual interests. The Village has approximately 200 clubs that allow for residents to be able to participate in various activities like kayaking, hiking, boating, knitting, quilting, and so on with other people their age. This allows residents to establish friendships and build a large social network with people who share common interests. During interviews, I asked each resident to discuss their favorite qualities of Tellico Village. Every respondent stated that one of their favorite things about Tellico, aside
from its close proximity to the Smoky Mountains and the low taxes in Tennessee, was the many clubs that they had access to. Having access to these clubs and other community activities was an important decision factor for my interviewees when they were choosing to move to Tellico Village versus other retirement communities. Tellico offered them the same amenities as more expensive places, but at a more affordable budget. Residents expressed that affordability was crucial in order to make their “retirement dollars stretch”.

Overpopulation & Rising Crime Rates

Ten residents expressed concern that their previous state of residence was becoming overpopulated and overwhelmed with crime. Residents were asked why they chose to move to Tellico Village and one resident responded that she feared for her safety in her previous neighborhood in Albuquerque, NM.

There is a lot of crime. There is so many people that don’t know it and I tell people all the time. They’re always like: “Really?”. But the truth is, is that Albuquerque, at one point, it had the highest violent crime rate in the country per capita. It’s not a big place, but there’s a lot of crime, a lot of poverty, and just tons of crime. The judges there just slap their hands. For example, imagine that you worked hard to buy a car. You work hard for five years and then I decided one day to steal your car, but I get caught. You have proof that I did it because you have a camera and I go before a judge and they’re like: “Go back out. I’m going to put you in jail one day, even though you stole and trashed somebody’s hard earned car”. It’s very frustrating to me to live in a place where there’s no punishment for stealing or hurting people. You have to kill somebody to get punished for anything. I mean people all in my cul-de-sac had their cars getting broken into, they had screens removed from their houses, and everything. And you know, this was a nice neighborhood in a nice location, but this stuff was still happening. I reached a point where I was constantly wondering who was watching our house. So, we chose to move. We weren’t rich enough to live behind a gate, so we found Tellico Village and fell in love. It's in a rural area with not a lot of crime and it’s safe.

-Interview with L.R., 2021

LR decided to move to Tellico Village because she was scared to continue living in her previous neighborhood. She felt like law enforcement officials and county judges were not properly
punishing criminals, which contributed to the continuation of break-ins and auto theft in her cul-
de-sac. LR decided to relocate to Tellico Village because its rural location offered her a similar sense of safety as a gated community would, but at a more affordable rate.

LR’s fear of the escalating crime rates in Albuquerque is part of a culture of urban fear that originates from a history of anti-urbanism in America. This fear is promoted by media outlets that manipulate and overstate incidents of crime, which fosters false narratives of corruption and violence in urban areas (Low 2001). Individuals from wealthier backgrounds deal with this fear through practices of exclusion in which they separate themselves from the people and places they believe are associated with criminality. The construction of gated communities, enactment of zoning laws, and enforcement of neighborhood regulations help these middle- to upper-middle-class individuals segregate themselves from others and achieve feelings of safety (Merry 1993).

5.5 Creating an Enclaved Community

Upper-class communities like Tellico Village possess “symbolic qualities” that are utilized to “exert an influence on land use” (Firey 1947:48). Dominance over land and water usage within Tellico Village is exerted through policies of exclusion that separates the Village from surrounding communities. Public displays of financial superiority, neighborhood watch programs, and community guidelines aid in the regulation of spaces within Tellico Village (Merry 1993). These regulatory practices have led Tellico Village to become an enclaved community that prevents and deters minorities and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds from having access to community amenities. Residents partake in these acts of exclusion because they believe that the regulation of space helps to protect their neighborhoods from crime.
While Tellico Village is not a gated community, it reinforces notions of safety through exclusionary practices of residential governing and policing. Policies and programs that promote neighborhood safety in Tellico Village include noise ordinances, deed restrictions, and the Citizen’s Observer Patrol Program (COP). COPs consist of Village residents that volunteer to be “an extra set of eyes and ears” for the community by patrolling neighborhood streets, boat ramps, and construction sites in community patrol cars (Figure 5.5) (tellicovillage.org). One resident explained the COP program to me and how her volunteer work helps protect the community.

We look out for our neighborhood through our COP program. This stands for Citizen Observer Patrol, which I am a volunteer for, and it helps protect our community. See, we are an unincorporated community and while we pay taxes to the local counties, the counties do not help us. We pay for, maintain, and operate our own community volunteer fire department, patrol program, and boat safety patrol program. We do this all with volunteers, and I am a COP volunteer. This means that I help out once or twice a week by driving around the community in our car and I make sure that there’s not anybody walking around who doesn’t look like they don’t belong or like they are doing something suspicious in the neighborhoods or around some of the construction sites. We are trained to do this as well. Loudon County Police Department trains us on how to notice and report suspicious
activities to them. The program is really great. It helps make sure that our community is safe and it makes people feel safe.

-Interview with G.W., 2021

GW explained that she volunteers for the COP program by patrolling neighborhoods and construction sites once or twice a week. She stated that she was trained by one of the local police departments on how to notice and report suspicious activities that she might see on her patrols. GW felt that this program was a great program for the community because it helps make Tellico Village safer.

The feelings of safety and security that GW and other Village residents feel from neighborhood watch programs like the COP are facilitated through the regulation of space (Low 2001). Community surveillance creates an illusion of safety and security for residents while also enforcing financial superiority and hegemony over non-residents that attempt to utilize the amenities of Tellico Village. Residents intentionally exclude local towns people and minorities from their community as an attempt to “protect” their neighborhoods. For example, while conducting interviews for this research in June 2021, residents often spoke to me about an ongoing issue concerning access to the beach in Tellico Village. This beach was at the time a public beach that was funded and maintained by volunteers from the community. Villagers explained that the beach had recently been experiencing an increase in visitation from people that were not residents of Tellico Village. They commented that non-residents would destroy the aesthetic peacefulness of the beach by “littering”, “damaging beach property”, or being “too rambunctious”. One resident even stated that he failed to understand why the beach was open to the public when “there’s a perfectly good public beach on the other side of the lake for people to destroy”. To solve this issue, Tellico Village placed a security guard at the entrance of the beach to deter visitors from using the
beach if they were not affiliated with the community until members could vote on whether to make the beach private or not.

The concern over the destruction of Tellico Village’s beach by “others” reflects how this enclaved community fears the possibility of vandalism and crime entering their community spaces. Placing a security guard at the entrance of the beach, operating a resident run police program, and establishing ordinances aids communities like Tellico Village in controlling and protecting their environment (Blakely & Snyder 1997). Non-residents who venture into Tellico Village are only welcome if they are affiliated with a member of the community or if they work for one of the many landscaping or construction companies employed by residents. Minorities and individuals who appear “out of place” within the community are subjected to COP questioning and are made to feel unwelcomed.

However, all seventeen residents interviewed for this research stated that Tellico Village was a welcoming community, and they failed to understand why the local townspeople held feelings of disdain towards them. One resident expressed his frustration over how Villagers were treated by local townspeople even though Tellico Village “gives back so much” for their towns.

I was told when I moved to Tellico Village not to tell the locals that I was a Villager. People seem to think we are all rich and stuck up. They blame us for what happened with TVA and the dam, and they believe we basically came and stole their pawpaw’s land. It’s frustrating. We give back so much to their towns. Before TVA and the dam, this area was one of the poorest places in Tennessee. Some of the residents here in Tellico Village are some of the wealthiest people in the area and we provide a lot of money to the local economy that they wouldn’t have if TVA wouldn’t have changed things. They would probably still be living without electricity. We volunteer and raise money for their schools, and we supply a lot of them with jobs. Did you notice all the Mexicans we have working and doing our landscaping? If it weren’t from us, they wouldn’t have jobs. We help provide them with great paying jobs that they wouldn’t get anywhere else around here. We have helped improve the economy here and no one seems to appreciate it.

-Interview with J.S., 2021
JS explained that the Tellico Village community helps the local towns by stimulating their economy, providing the “Mexican” population with employment, and fundraising money for the local schools. Thirteen of seventeen residents also expressed that they felt as though the locals failed to acknowledge how much Tellico Village does for the local economy and towns. The Village residents believe that they bring valuable benefits to the local economies through the economic multiplier effects of their spending and the help they provide to foreign workers. JS takes a condescending and excluding tone that plays on the stereotypical idea that “everyone was poor” before TVA came in and saved the area. His comments, along with those of other Village interviewees, provide clear examples of the unequal power relations and class differences between the Villagers and Valley residents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated how economic wealth and the accumulation of social capital are key elements in structuring the various power dynamics within Tellico Village. Deindustrialization and counter-urbanization led to the creation of Tellico Village and have enabled the community to become a contested place-in-the-making. Retired residents help to enforce a class-based hierarchy within Tellico Village through the TVPOA where working middle class residents are unable to participate in community making decisions. This governing body regulates the community by enforcing and creating deed restrictions, noise ordinances, and neighborhood watch programs. The dominance exerted over the land within Tellico Village has led Tellico Village to become an enclaved community that actively excludes local townspeople from lower socio-economic and minority backgrounds. These exclusionary practices—through the
regulation of space—have thus led to a division between upper- and middle-class residents in relation to the local townspeople.
CHAPTER VI LAND GRABS AND ACCUMULATION BY DISPOSSESSION IN TELLICO

Drawing upon the notion of accumulation by dispossession (ABD), this chapter aims to describe and analyze how the history of displacement and migration in the Little Tennessee River Valley is associated with the creation and accumulation of different forms of capital. ABD is the process by which private or government entities ‘liberate’ spaces through the dispossession of people from their land. State entities transform these liberated spaces to facilitate new methods of accumulating capital. A detailed focus on the particularities of the processes of ABD in the Tellico landscape shows that this region has undergone numerous shifts in the control of the land and its resources throughout history. This chapter investigates the various processes of ABD the Tellico landscape has experienced in order to understand the current power dynamics between the TVA, Tellico Village, and the displaced. I argue that the past and contemporary processes of capitalist expansion in the Tellico Valley have caused the valley to become a palimpsest upon which different visions of capitalist progress have been layered.

6.1 Accumulation by Dispossession

This chapter uses David Harvey’s theory of ABD to examine the implanting and reconfiguring of capitalism in the Little Tennessee River Valley (LTRV) from colonialism to the present. ABD refers to the “processes by which the means of production for the purpose of capital accumulation are obtained via extra-economic coercion or non-market means” (Gellert 2015:67;
This framework is an adaptation of Marx’s concept of primitive accumulation in which landowners engaged in the forcible expropriation of the commons via processes referred to as enclosure (Araghi 2009; Marx 1976; Wolf 1982). The enclosure of the commons is a technique historically used to divorce peasant and indigenous producer populations from the means of production, reducing the resilience of subsistence economies and obtaining new territories and resources that could be integrated into systems of accumulation (Marx 1976; Perelman 2000). This process is an ongoing and continuous process that Harvey and others apply to understanding the contemporary methods that private actors and government entities have used around the world to accrue capital (Cáceres 2015; Harvey 2003). I apply this framework to understanding the various processes of capital accumulation that the LTRV has undergone since European colonization to the present.

A focus on the historical and ongoing processes of dispossession and the creation of capital is given in order to understand the current power dynamics between the displaced, Tellico Village, and the TVA. The first stage of ABD in the LTRV was through the violent dispossession of the land and removal of the Cherokee peoples from their homelands for white settlers (Woods 2000). Native American Removal and the ‘liberation’ of the land were crucial preconditions for the integration of these new territories in logics of agrarian capitalism tied to white settler colonialism (Magdoff 2013). Native American conceptions of land tenure and stewardship were vastly different than the capitalist conception of private property needed for agricultural development (Woods 2000).

The dispossession of Native Americans and the privatization of the land paved the way for the implantation of agricultural markets in Tellico Valley (Magdoff 2013). Robbie Ethridge’s (2009) theory of the shatter zone highlights the importance of markets in animal skins and slaves
and regionalized violence to the early encroachment of capitalism within the Native South. This process of inscribing capitalism into the landscape was further advanced through attempts to create settler populations devoted to farming and the sale of marketable crops. Capital was able to “come to life” through the privatization, dispossession, repossession, and commodification of land and all its resources (Araghi 2009:120). This process of enclosure has since been carried out by various capitalist forces throughout the LTRV’s history (Perelman 2000). For instance, the Tellico Dam project was merely a part of the ongoing processes of ABD in which the TVA dispossessed people to liberate space and gain access to new resources for state-led capitalist development. TVA attempted to develop a model community for urbanization to accumulate capital, but the funding for that project fell through. The second project then led to the creation of waterfront communities that have transformed the once dominantly agrarian landscape into a space that now facilitates capital through the in-migration of middle-class and upper-middle-class people into lakefront communities.

This chapter chronologically examines the processes of ABD in the LTRV. I begin by discussing the preliminary stages of dispossession and land transformation through the formation of the state of Tennessee, Native American Removal, and later, the creation of the TVA. Then I examine the ongoing stages of ABD in which capital is accumulated through the real estate market and enclosures are being enforced through policies of social segregation. Lastly, I begin to frame this conversation in relation to broader conversations on the impacts of dams and displacement in which I draw attention to the multi-vocality of places and how the processes of ABD develop alongside the multiple perspectives that define places throughout history. Thus, places like Tellico become “multidimensional battlegrounds” where social actors with different definitions of a
singular place are continuously in conflict with one another (Cáceres 2014:117; Montenegro Gómez 2008).

6.2 Early ABD in the LTRV

As white settlers sought to establish a new society in the “New” World, they utilized violent and coercive measures to force indigenous peoples from their lands. The commodification of the land and its natural resources was considered “crucial for the development of capitalism” (Magdoff 2013:1). Land appropriation through Native Removal allowed for the enclosure of the commons through the privatization of property for white colonists (Foster et. al. 2021). The United States government attempted to justify these actions by claiming that acts such as the Dawes Act of 1887 that forced the removal of thousands of Native Americans were for the “greater good” of the American people (Debo 1973; Gilmer 2011). Government officials claimed that the privatization of land would “help Indians adjust to U.S. society and economy”, viewing private property, labor, and agriculture as the fundamental principles of Anglo-American civilization. Removal, of course, actually benefited white Euro-Americans (Magdoff 2013:3).

In the LTRV, the processes of Cherokee dispossession from their lands in Tennessee were the first phases of ABD. Violent and coercive measures were utilized to displace indigenous peoples from the land to create boundaries or enclosures for the benefit of arriving capitalist farmers (Gilmer 2011). During this time, the economy of the U.S. Southeast relied heavily on agricultural production and slave labor, which required large tracts of land and human labor to facilitate the expansion of capital (Johnson 2013). The forcible expropriation of people and the land were considered to be integral in the creation of a capitalist system (Marx 1976; Wolf 1982). Land grabbing during this time enabled the state to reconfigure who had access to and claims over
certain resources (Peluso and Lund 2011). The resulting accumulation of wealth was uneven as some were the primary beneficiaries but others experienced exclusion throughout the South (Atasoy 2017).

6.3 The New Deal and Post-War ABD

The next phase of dispossession in the LTRV began in the 1930s as the U.S. economy was attempting to recover from the Great Depression (Lowitt 1983). During this time, the Tennessee Valley Region as a whole had become economically stagnant, and President Franklin Roosevelt believed that the creation of the TVA and the electrification of the Valley would help stimulate the economy (Aksamit 2009; Ekbladh 2002). The agency’s specific mission required them to develop regional rivers for physical, social, and economic improvements (Lowitt 1983). At the heart of this mission was the notion that “modernization” could only be achieved through a series of multi-purpose projects (Wheeler & McDonald 1983). These projects focused on the development of dams that could help “assist in navigation, flood control, the generation of hydroelectric power, land use, and recreation promotion” (Lowitt 1983:36).

Under the guise of electrification, the TVA sought to facilitate new forms of capitalist development through the dispossession and transformation of the land. From the inception of TVA as an agency to the construction of the Tellico Dam, TVA displaced 125,000 people and condemned 1.3 million acres of land (Wheeler and McDonald 1986). One of the steps to achieving economic stability for the region involved forcing its residents to move away from farming and take on more industrialized jobs (Droze 1979). The appropriation and privatization of the land and its resources enabled TVA to further the ongoing process of enclosures in the Tennessee Valley Region by severing access to the commons. In the instance of the Tellico Dam, the TVA was able
to “sever access to the means of subsistence” farming and fishing in order to force the people of the LTRV into the industrial workforce (Foster et. al. 2021:14). The TVA was then able to facilitate various forms of capital for the agency, the state of Tennessee, and the federal government.

The TVA proposed developing a model city to push their vision of capitalist urbanization and modernization in the LTRV. This city was named the “Timberlake New Town” after the British officer who had traveled to the LTRV in 1762 and mapped the river and Fort Loudoun (Plater 2013). The TVA partnered with the Boeing Corporation in hopes to use the excess condemned land from the Tellico Project to build the city. They proposed that the model industrial city would increase the population in the LTRV to 50,000 people and would “generate 25,000 jobs and large economic benefits” (Plater 2013:18). The plan for this city was scrapped after the Boeing Corporation pulled out of the project in 1975. The TVA failed to find any other development interest to move forward with the plan, so they transferred large sections of the condemned land to “development agencies” that were thought to be in alliance with local politicians (Plater 2013). Then in 1982 the TVA decided to use the land for a toxic waste disposal site, but that plan was quickly abandoned once information about the project was leaked to the local press. In the end, large portions of the condemned land were sold off to development agencies like CCI to enable the facilitation of capital through real estate development.

6.4 Contemporary Processes of ABD

After the gates closed on the Tellico Dam, the TVA and the TRDA sold 4,806 acres of the land condemned for the dam to CCI to construct Tellico Village (Wilkerson 1999). The establishment of Tellico Village and other lakefront communities have helped to further new forms of privatization and enclosure. The process of enclosure in the Village was advanced through the
transformation of the agrarian landscape into a commercial commodity in which capital is now facilitated through development companies and the real estate market.

The facilitation of capital through the real estate market is promoted through methods of advertising that help boost the value of homes as a financial asset. One individual from Tellico Village discussed and explained the importance of property ownership as a financial asset.

Whenever you get a chance, you should buy a house. There’s so many young people today that are not buying houses and are just wasting their money renting apartments. It’s like they don’t know the value of owning a home. My wife and I bought our home here about 20 years ago. We were one of the first ones to move to Tellico Village and over the years, as the Village has grown and the demand for housing has gone up, the value of our house has more than tripled. In recent years, we have really watched the value increase. That’s because so many people are moving here from California, and other states that have become too expensive to live, and there are no more houses to buy in the Village. All the houses here have been bought up. You basically have to buy a lot and build a house now, because there are very few houses that are already built that are on the market and when they go on the market, they sell within a day. The demand is really high.

-Interview with L.B., 2021

LB explained how the value of his home in Tellico Village has “more than tripled” as the demand for houses in Tellico Village has increased over the years. All seventeen of the Villagers interviewed for this research commented on the increased demand for housing in the community and commented on how they have witnessed the value of their own home go up over the years. The ownership of private property thus allows for Villagers to participate in capitalism through the accumulation of wealth in which their homes and land have become financial assets or capital.

Advertisement is an important tool for Tellico Village and other lakefront communities in the LTRV to help increase home values and interest in the local housing market. Communities like Tellico Village must constantly find ways to attract capital—advertisements are a crucial “aesthetic interface of postcolonial capitalism” (Mazzarella 2003:4). Images of the landscape are
utilized to promote an area where pristine golf courses, mountain backdrops, and a sparkling lake make Tellico Village an ideal place of luxury. Neoliberal methods of advertising create a phantasmagoria of luxurious middle-class communities that play on the desires of middle-class people. These utopian visions of leisure lifestyles in retirement communities are “designed, imagined, and circulated” through advertisement (Brosius 2009:176). The images of white middle-class people smiling as they enjoy their life of leisure and ease in retirement enable a vision of an idealized depiction of urban middle-class retirees whose years of hard work are finally rewarded. Thus, buying a home and retiring in Tellico Village symbolizes upward mobility and promotes feelings of achievement for middle-class people who have spent their entire lives attempting to achieve the American Dream.

![Figure 6.1 TRDA Homebuilding Permits from 2016-2020](image)

*Figure 6.1 TRDA Homebuilding Permits from 2016-2020*

*(TRDA Annual Report 2020)*
The lack of supply of already built houses in the community has led to an increased demand and a rise in the price of houses. The demand for homes has led the TRDA to experience an upward trend of home building that reached a five year high in 2020 (Figure 6.1) (TRDA Annual Report 2020). The issuance of building permits increased by 28 percent compared to the previous year in which 87 new homes were expected to be built across the lakefront communities surrounding the Tellico Reservoir. Those who choose to buy a lot and build their home are encouraged to hire a company that is part of the Tellico Village Home Builders Guild (TVHBG). The TVHBG is a group of home construction companies from the Greater Knoxville area that have been responsible for building homes for Tellico Village for “a number of years” (tellicovillagepoa.org).

Tellico Village offers favorable conditions that foster ABD through the creation of ‘neo-enclosures’. These enclosures are unlike previous enclosures because they do not establish new “social property relations” but they “deepen the already prevailing set of capitalist social property relations by diminishing the power” of others in “favor of dominant classes” (Akram-Lodhi 2007:1446). Policies of social segregation allow residents of Tellico Village to obtain houses and continue to construct neighborhoods and communities that are disconnected from the local communities. At the very basis of this is the division and segregation of social classes through the processes of community enclaving and rural gentrification. By having an enclaved community, Tellico Village is able to control their territory and protect their capital through asserting prerogative over the land. However, places are grounded in multidimensional historical perspectives (Haesbart 2004). Tellico Village is developing alongside all the historical perspectives of non-Villagers that define the Tellico landscape. This has placed Villagers in a
constant battle of socio-environmental conflict and tension between the dispossessed and excluded.

6.5 Contemporary Resistance to Processes of ABD

In response to dispossession, patterns of resistance and social struggle have emerged. The dispossessed have not only attempted to resist the initial act of being displaced but have also attempted to deploy new strategies aimed at “regaining access to resources” (Cáceres 2014:119). One person displaced by the Tellico Dam explained how she continues to protest the dam and the TVA.
We put an article in the newspaper a couple years ago as a reminder that we haven’t forgotten what has happened here. To me, that felt like a small victory. It’s like telling TVA to stick it and letting them know that they haven’t won. We still care and we still remember. I still go back to my land and tell everyone about it. The roads are still named after our families so I still drive them and I still go back and pick the flowers my grandmother planted on my land. I know some people might see that as stealing, but they are mine. It’s funny really, how something as small as picking flowers or posting an article in the paper can make you feel like you’ve won something. It’s just a small victory to remind them that this is still our land, even if they’ve let all these people move in.

-Interview with C.B., 2021

CB stated that she continues to participate in protesting the dam and TVA’s actions by telling people her story, publishing articles in the newspaper to remind people of what happened (Figure 6.2), and by going back to her old property and stealing flowers. These clandestine acts of territorialization allow for the dispossessed to assert symbolic control over the land and its resources. They dispute the current power dynamics and protest the systematic theft of land that they believe should belong to them.

The displacees practice techniques of resistance to Tellico Village and the TVA on a daily basis. Resistance, as the contestation of power or domination, allows for the displacees to feel some form of symbolic power over their situation. Individuals partake in everyday acts of resistance of the dam and the TVA in variety of ways that include trespassing, defacing TVA property by placing “Dam the TVA” stickers onto signs and billboards, flipping the dam off as they drive by, and so on. For some, resistance includes their refusal to participate in the post-Tellico Dam landscape. For others, resistance includes trying to tell their story to everyone that will listen (Scott 1985). By partaking in these acts of resistance, displacees are able to construct a highly diverse political counterfront keeping alive the issue of land ownership reclamation.

The resistance to the processes of ABD is not restricted to Tellico but is a diverse movement in which various groups of people locally and globally attempt to resist dispossession
and “commoditization” by “market-oriented institutions and legal regimes” (Cáceres 2014:119). Similar to the processes of ABD, these movements are ongoing and continuous. For example, Native American Removal began in 1830 and, 192 years later, indigenous peoples across the U.S. are continuing to protest and fight for rights to gain back their ancestral homeland (Gilmer 2011). Thus, the contestation of the Tellico Dam was merely a movement of movements to resist dispossession pertaining to histories of capitalist expansion and ongoing attempts to refashion space for new investment conditions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the LTRV has been subject to multiple waves of ABD. These include: [list the main ones in your argument.] The history of displacement and migration in the LTRV associated with the expansion of capitalism has created tensions between the dispossessed and the Tellico Villagers. The process of ABD has continued to develop alongside the multi-vocal perspectives that define Tellico as a place. Policies of social segregation in Tellico Village allow this enclaved community to assert privilege over their land and water to protect their interests. However, the dispossessed resist this by participating in clandestine acts of territorialization in order to gain back some control of the land and its resources. This has led the Tellico landscape to become a multidimensional battleground in which the dispossessed and the Villagers are in a continuous battle to define and assign meaning and ownership to the land.
CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis examined the socio-environmental afterlives of the Tellico Dam controversy in order to understand how both the dispossessed Valley residents and the lakefront community residents have been impacted by the dam. Employing the concept of accumulation by dispossession (ABD), I have argued that the Tellico Valley is a palimpsest of visions of capitalist progress. These processes of ABD have contributed to Tellico becoming a contested place-in-the-making. The multiplicity of Tellico as a place is shaped by the history of violent dispossession for the expansion of capitalism. From the forced removal of the Cherokee peoples to the involuntary expulsion of farmers in the LTRV, Tellico has undergone multiple shifts in land use and control of resources. Multiple narratives to describe Tellico as place have emerged as a result of the multidimensionality of these situated actors. Dispossession as a whole has resulted in the dispossessed, dispossessor, and the Village residents being in a constant battle to assign meaning to and assert symbolic and physical control over the land and its resources.

Feelings of territorialization have emerged between the different actors associated with the land. The land is symbolically and materially valuable to both the past and contemporary users of Tellico. The physical loss and transformation of the land and its resources has led the displacees to endure emotional and conflicting stress over whether to participate or not participate in the post-Tellico Dam landscape. Territorialization and belonging shape how the displaced choose to participate with the land and water today. For some, merely traveling near Tellico Village is too
traumatic of an experience so they have chosen to never return. For others, the longing to be close to the places they once called home appeals to them and they find themselves constantly going back to places within Tellico Village that remind them of the past.

Tellico Village has become an enclaved community in which policies of social segregation help to enforce a class-based hierarchy within Tellico Village. Deed restrictions, noise ordinances, and neighborhood watch programs all help to regulate the community to keep “others” out and strengthen the hierarchy within the community. Exclusionary practices through the regulation of space have led to a division between upper- and middle-class residents and local townspeople. Land ownership and usage rights are contested between older and newer residents, lakefront and inland property owners, and Village and Valley residents. Villagers with more social and economic capital exert dominance over the community and its resources, which furthers the divide between other residents and the dispossessed.

Altogether, the history of violent dispossession for the expansion of capitalism has contributed to and helped shape the multiple narratives and meanings assigned to define Tellico as a place. The historical progression from indigenous dispossession for white settler colonialism and agrarian capitalism set the stage for future processes of dispossession for the facilitation and accumulation of capital. The dispossession of the farming community for the Tellico Dam and the land transformation for community development was yet another stage of ABD. Each stage was met with resistance and continues to be met with resistance through small acts of territorialization that include stealing flowers and sneaking onto private property that individuals believe is rightfully theirs. The loss of land, home, and place for capitalist development has encouraged the dispossessed and the new in-migrants to be in a constant state of battle over the symbolic control
and dominance over the land. The impacts of ABD are evident in the interactions between the dispossessed and the Villagers.

Figure 7.1 Silos Peaking out of Tellico Lake
(Photo by author)

The past and contemporary processes of ABD have developed and continue to develop alongside the multi-vocal perspectives that define Tellico as a place. As a result, Tellico has become a multidimensional battleground in which the dispossessed and the Villagers are in a continuous battle to define and assign meaning and ownership to the land. Each individual user of the land has established their own sense of place with Tellico based on their historical background and experiences with this place. As the processes of ABD continue, more people become interconnected with the multiple webs of realities that define Tellico. Another layer of meaning is built upon the previous layers in which all the layers simultaneously coexist and compete with one another. Thus, Tellico is a palimpsest of visions of capitalist progress where layers are continuously being built one on top of the other, but no layer is ever truly covered up by the new
leading to the emergence of conflict and tension between the many actors that coexist in this place. Figure 7.1 provides a visible example of the past landscape coexisting with the current landscape.

This research contributes to the broader understanding of how accumulation by dispossession impacts not only the dispossessed but every person that interacts within a place. A central theme of place-making has emerged as a result of ABD in the LTRV. This theme involves issues of belonging, entitlement, land claims, and class politics. Each of these themes surrounding dispossession in the LTRV and the processes of ABD are important themes within environmental anthropology (Harper 2006; Kirsh 2008; Latour et. al. 2018; Stensrud and Erikson 2019). This study contributes to the existing scholarship on the anthropology of place and water, the political ecology of land grabs and dispossession, and the history of the Tennessee Valley. Because this research is the first anthropological study to examine the political ecology of the Tellico Dam and one of few studies to examine the impacts of a TVA project, future research is needed. This study was limited by time, but further time in Tellico could provide a clearer picture of the issues that have emerged between the dispossessed and the Villagers. As TVA continues to utilize the powers of eminent domain in 2022, further research could shed light on how dispossession today is perceived by the dispossessed, the public, and by TVA.
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