

**DISPLACEMENT, 'LAND SCARCITY', AND PROCESSES OF  
SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION**  
**SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND DYNAMICS OF 'LAND ACCESS' AROUND  
GHANA'S BUI DAM**

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## ABSTRACT

'Land scarcity' has been unquestionably a recurring problem around many large dams. Besides the perceptible land takes by inundation and other relevant facilities, studies show that the problem prevails around projects, such as Ghana's Bui Dam, which have even implemented resettlement strategies. Key among these strategies is the land-for-land strategy, which has been globally promoted as fundamental to restoring the resource base and livelihoods of the characteristically rural agrarian populace that frequently constitute the affected. Relevant literature show that rather than being the upshot, experiences of 'land scarcity' incite people to adopt strategic responses that may spur processes of societal transformation with further implications for 'land scarcity' and livelihoods. Considering this pervasiveness and the fundamental consequences, this research seeks to provide a causal explanation of the incidence of 'land scarcity' around the Bui Dam and its implications for societal transformation in six affected communities with diverse experiences of displacement and resettlement. These include, the Bui, Dokokyina, and Akanyakrom resettlement communities, the Bongase host community, and the Gbolekame North and Carpenter downstream communities.

Towards this objective, the research primarily capitalizes on emergent discourses on the social construction of land scarcity to explain that the phenomenon transcends a mere a physical unavailability and largely encompasses the failure to achieve conceived land values or expected benefits from land. In this regard, it infers from the relevant literature to proffer 'land access' as the antithesis of 'land scarcity', which denotes the achievement of targeted land values. Based on these, it employs Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* to problematize 'land scarcity' by deconstructing the concomitant factors of land values, power and power relations, land tenure, and mechanisms and strategies of land access that underlie its incidence in general situations and ultimately, around large dams. It further uses the theory to elucidate the strategic responses that may drive societal transformation in affected communities. The research develops these into the theoretical framework, which guides the analyses of data towards the achievement of the stated objective.

Of relevance to this, it adopts the paradigm of Critical Realism (CR) and its associated ontological realism and epistemological relativism to guide its methodological aspects. For its approach, it employs the newfound Situational Analysis (after the *Interpretive Turn*) to capsule its complex findings. Consistent with this approach, the research subsequently employs multiple qualitative instruments to collect and analyze the secondary and primary data that were foundational to its achievement of the objective. Particularly regarding its primary data, it employs resource and social mapping, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussion among others as its key instruments for data collection. By following a six-stage explanatory model based on CR, it further employs abduction and retroduction for analyzing the acquired data towards a causal explanation of the incidence of 'land scarcity' around the Bui Dam and its implications for societal transformation.

Accordingly, the research's findings show that like other large dams, the Bui Dam has engendered 'land scarcity' in the study communities. Key to its implications for the problem are the associated regulative

and administrative encumbrances, imposed spatial changes, and changes in the patterns of access to resources, which have affected the pre-existing qualities of land, land tenure system, the agents' land access mechanisms, and strategies. These have in turn, affected the agents' achievement of conceived land values, and hence, resulted in varied social constructions of 'land scarcity'. Of relevance too, the agents' strategies, including their strategic responses, have underlain the BPA's social construction of 'land scarcity', because they have obstructed its achievement of certain land values. Predictably, the strategic responses of the BPA and the other agents to their social constructions of 'land scarcity' have also engendered societal transformation by altering the pre-existing land values, mechanisms of access, power and power relations, and land tenure. These findings underscore the research's causal explanation of the incidence of 'land scarcity' around the Bui Dam and its implications for societal transformation. Ultimately, the research expects its findings to be the thrust for alterations to amorphous and ill-defined policies and practices of large dam construction globally, to the benefit of affected communities.