



## Justice et injustices spatiales, Nanterre 2008

*Belonging to be Free: resettlement, the state, and spatial justice in Canada*  
*L'appartenance pour être Libre : le repeuplement, l'état et la justice spatiale au Canada*

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This paper will be a synopsis of part of a larger research project which explores the meanings and impacts of the welfare

state in Canada by looking at the implementation of welfare policies that resulted in the forced relocation of peoples in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. It will address two of the conference themes from an historical perspective ; namely, « what is spatial justice ? » and « what is 'just' territorial policy ? »

The postwar welfare state sought to deliver social benefit to all Canadian citizens, but doing so was a challenge in a country like Canada, whose population was dispersed over a large geographic area. Centralization and rationalization were the mechanisms that made the universalism of the welfare state possible. So, for instance, in the Canadian arctic there were efforts to settle hunter-gatherers in villages, and in Newfoundland there was a « fisheries household resettlement program » aimed at concentrating rural fishing families in urban areas. In Canada's cities, state-sponsored slum clearance initiatives dispossessed thousands of poor people of their homes and destroyed their communities in the name of modernization and desegregation. This paper will frame these welfare programs as exercises in spatial justice ; ones that were motivated by socio-economic definitions of justice and which treated all spaces as the same.

In addition, it will explore the opposition to resettlement in both rural and urban Canada as a way of understanding different notions of spatial justice, ones based on concerns other than socio-economic ones, and ones that highlighted the importance of place. Spaces were not all the same, and notions of justice and freedom were firmly rooted in place.