

Resettling and reshaping social ecology: Social stratification and exploitation practices in Mahaweli resettlement area in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

The Sri Lankan government places a high priority on rural development, as a majority of the population living below the poverty line resides in rural areas. Progress is hindered by limited accessibility and resources. Resettlement was used as a strategy to improve the living conditions of the people. New resettlement practices have brought about significant changes in communities, shifting from traditional to modern social systems. This study investigates the emergence of social stratification and their role in facilitating exploitation practices in the Mahaweli resettlement scheme, utilizing sociological theory to understand stratification and inequalities. The study focuses on the social stratification and exploitation patterns in resettlement areas, using a literature review and qualitative data analysis to explore the mode of production, synthesis of social stratification, examination of exploitation among different social strata, and rationalization of exploitation within these areas. External interventions have led to the establishment of social stratification in the resettlement areas, but the strict state administrative framework has posed challenges in maintaining autonomy and establishing a self-reliant social and economic system. Consequently, poverty levels in these regions have increased due to the emergence of new social hierarchies and exploitation in various ways underscoring the need for more comprehensive and effective resettlement initiatives.

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Introduction

The Government of Sri Lanka has identified rural development as a key national priority. Around 52% of the population lives in rural areas, with a majority living below the poverty line (Aravinna et al. 2017). The World Bank reported (2015) that the poverty rate in Sri Lanka was 25.6%. However, according to the latest data from the World Bank in 2022, poverty rates in Sri Lanka have now reached their highest levels since 2009 (The World Bank, 2023). The majority of the population living below the poverty line is concentrated in rural areas of the country. One of the main challenges to rural development is the limited access to certain regions and the lack of resources needed to improve and diversify local livelihoods. In response to this issue, the government has focused on developing underutilized land areas in dry zones to promote rural development. The Mahaweli Development project, launched in 1977, is the largest development project undertaken in Sri Lanka to date (Köpke et al. 2019). The primary objective of the project was to support the development of the dry zone of the country by resettling individuals and helping them improve their quality of life through enhanced agricultural practices in the community (Silva & Vidanapathirana 1984).

The majority of individuals resettled in this area are those who do not own land or have lost land due to dam construction in the central region and development projects in the dry zone. (Jayewardene & Kilkelly, 1983). The local people in this area, who have been relocated, practice traditional Chena farming and subsistence agriculture in both the dry and wet zones (Silva & Vidanapathirana 1984). The Mahaweli Development Authority (MDA) in Sri Lanka facilitated the resettlement of individuals to the lowlands, involving a shift to an agricultural-based livelihood and compliance with national

policies. The establishment of new resettlement areas and the support provided by the MDA have helped residents quickly adjust to the unfamiliar conditions of their new surroundings, ensuring their survival (Agrarian Research and Training Institute, 1979). The majority of resettled individuals in newly established resettlement zones are wet zone farmers. These individuals face challenges in adapting to a new natural environment, as well as an unfamiliar economic and cultural setting in the lowlands (Maddumabandara, 2004)

The introduction of new resettlement and livelihood practices has brought about significant changes in their community, shifting from a traditional social system to a more modern one (Silva & Vidanapathirana 1984). The traditional relationships in these regions are typically based on family and marriage. However, after resettlement, their interpersonal connections are influenced by societal structures related to property, ownership, and labor (Razaak, Perera, & Kobbekaduwa 1995). Furthermore, their interactions are influenced by their involvement in the production, distribution, and consumption of various commodities, services, and information.

Social class is not solely based on economic factors but also on social and cultural capital, which includes education, occupation, and lifestyle choices. These factors contribute to the social stratification and the formation of distinct social classes within a society (Wong & Herath 2014). Social class can also be seen as a system of inequality that shapes individuals' access to resources, opportunities, and power within a society. Social class is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses economic, social, and cultural dimensions. It plays a significant role in shaping individuals' identities, experiences, and opportunities in society. Understanding social class is essential for analyzing and addressing issues

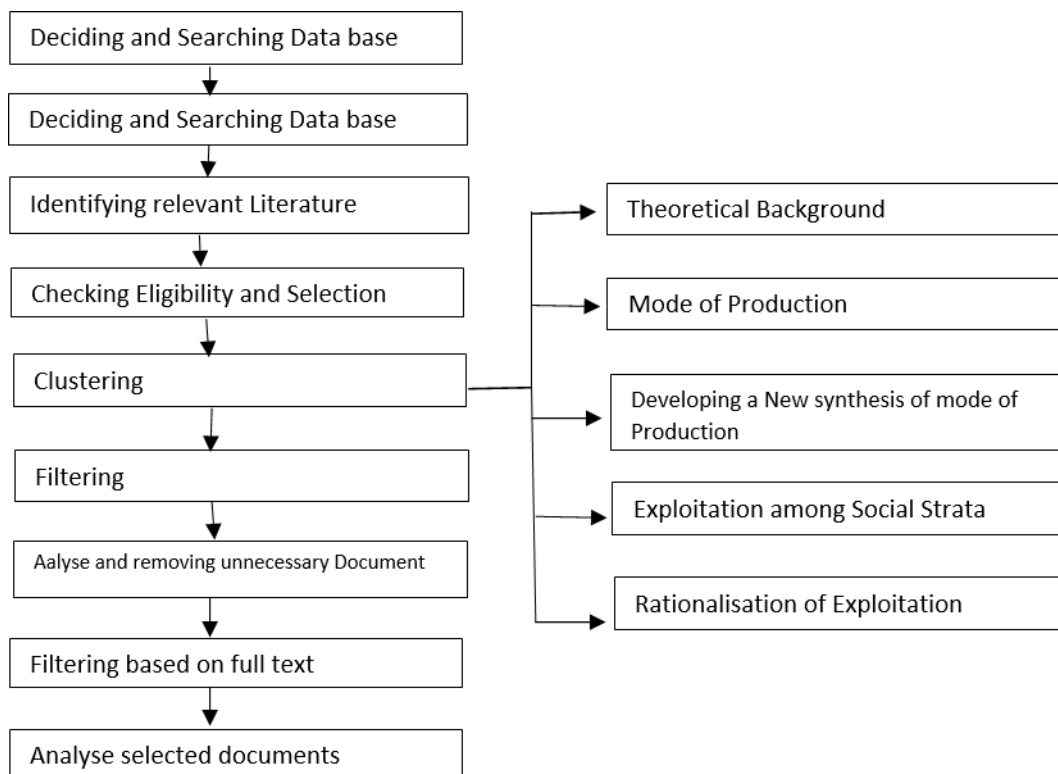
of inequality and social justice (Krieger et al., 2001).

The emergence of new social strata in this area can be attributed to changes in relationship patterns (Naydenov et al., 2023). Stratification refers to the unequal distribution of individuals across social categories that are defined by varying access to limited resources. These resources can be material, like income and wealth, symbolic, such as prestige and social status, or emotional, like love, affection, and intimacy (Wolpe, 1980). These categories can include factors such as age, gender, race, social class, and occupation. Social structures help to organize and regulate interactions between individuals and groups within a society, shaping social norms and expectations (Jessop, 1990). They also influence access to resources, opportunities, and power within a society. Social structures are dynamic and can change over time in response to social, political, and economic forces (Naydenov et

al., 2023). Understanding social structures is essential for analyzing and addressing issues of inequality, discrimination, and social change (Kolaja, 1980).

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the emerging and established social stratification within resettlement schemes in Sri Lanka and their role in facilitating the exploitation of communities. This study involves secondary data analysis and focuses on how communities rationalize exploitation as a means of survival in newly established resettlement areas. The objective is to understand the emergence of social stratification in resettled areas and its impact on the community. The paper aims to apply sociological theories, particularly social class theories, to uncover and explain the emergence of stratification and inequalities in a specific area. It also examines how the rationalization of exploitation in resettlement schemes is facilitated by community-developed ideologies.

Figure 1. *Process of literature selection and analysis*



Method

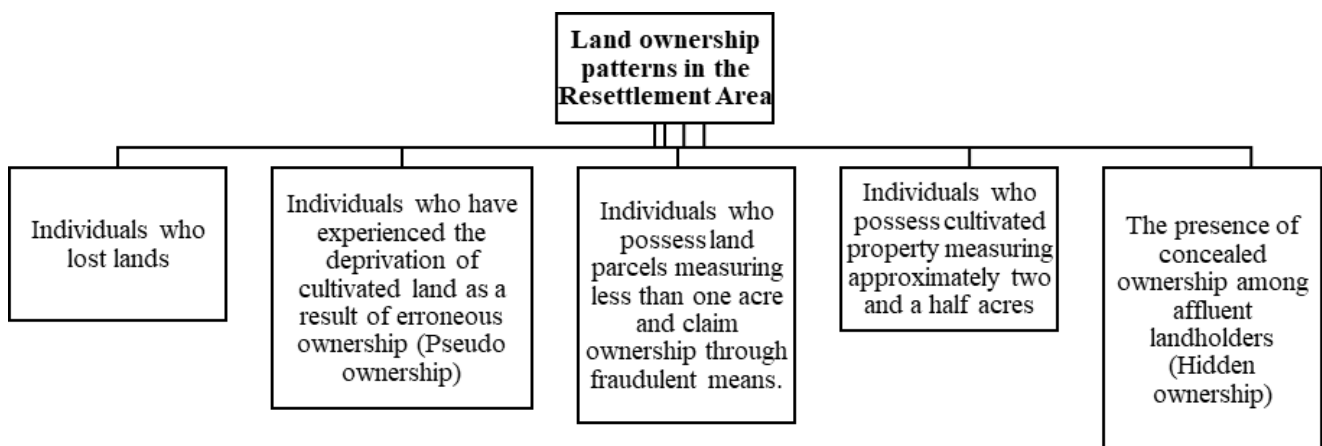
The study conducted a narrative literature review of selected publications from academic journals, periodicals, policy documents, and books related to the Mahaweli Development project. A total of 387 documents were identified, and 65 were selected for review. The papers were sourced from online databases such as Taylor and Francis, Springer, JSTOR, Google Scholar, Elsevier, and ResearchGate using various search terms like Mahaweli Development Project, Agriculture, Farming activity, Livelihood, and Peasant movement. The selected papers were clustered, and articles and reports were filtered based on keywords. The study relied on existing literature and employed qualitative research methods, specifically thematic analysis for data analysis. The main focus areas included the mode of production in the resettlement area, the synthesis of social stratification, the examination of exploitation among different social strata, and the rationalization of exploitation within the resettlement areas. Figure 01 illustrates the process of literature selection and analysis.

Results and Discussion

The of production and source of production in the in-resettlement area

The concept of production relations refers to the relationships and dynamics that exist within the process of production (Wolpe, 1980). These relations encompass the interactions between various segments of society in relation to Production (Jessop, 1990). Changes in ownership of the means of production in the Mahaweli Resettlement area depend on the production process dynamics. The Mahaweli plan shows a small difference in land ownership. About 5% of households in the area are undocumented residents with land holdings ranging from less than half an acre to one acre in size (Dissanayake et al., 2016). A portion of the pre generations in the area was given land, with many families owning around 5 acres of property. On average, individuals owned 2.5 acres of marshy land, and an extra half acre was obtained through participation in the Mahaweli project (Upali et al., 2016). Based on the sequence of events, the changes in land ownership can be observed as follows (Figure 02).

Figure 2. Land ownership patterns in the Resettlement Area



Source: designed and developed by the author based on Literature

The ownership of resources used for production in the Mahaweli Resettlement area depends on the dynamics of the existing production process (Moore, 1995). The mode of production mainly relies on the land provided by the MDA (*ibid*). Distinct land ownership patterns have been identified through five methods, and currently, the land is diminishing due to divisions among second and third generations of settlers. The loss of their means of production has led to various challenges in the area, including land disputes among family members and additional strain in generating revenue. The division of land has restricted surplus production. Alternatively, farmers may choose to limit their operations to land they can afford, as they may not have enough access to surplus production. Additionally, a significant number of individuals engaging in subsistence activities can be observed in these resettlement areas.

One factor contributing to the limited availability of these lands is the discrepancy between the planned allocation of land resources and the failure to expand in accordance with population growth. The expansion of land area is not a viable solution for accommodating the increasing production activities of the new generations within agricultural families (Köpke et al., 2021). When faced with challenges in integrating into other production activities, these individuals can be classified as a landless group within the production system. The land allocated to a particular family unit is indivisible. Despite legal constraints, individuals continue to reside as distinct familial entities, building dwellings on family property (Wong & Herath, 2014). Included in this group were households that did not experience division into distinct family groups but rather cohabitated as

extended families inside the same dwelling. Land fragmentation can occur when families have ownership stakes in farmed land (Moore, 1992).

The practice of retaining ownership of a part of one's land while leasing the rest to another person was common. In the Mahaweli resettlement project, a practice of maintaining fictitious ownership is employed to prevent potential legal issues. As a result, the ownership claim is false (Wong & Herath, 2014). The legitimate entitlement and privilege were held by individuals other than the subject. One significant factor that influenced this scenario was the challenge of bearing the expenses associated with participating in production endeavors (Tennakoon, 1988). Alternatively, due to limited access to surplus production, farmers may choose to limit their operations to land they can afford.

A significant number of individuals in resettlement areas are involved in crouching activities, which can be considered a form of land grabbing. This has led to a situation where people are compelled to participate in the labor market due to the lack of small-scale property ownership that can support a basic standard of living. Despite claims of land ownership, it is common to see cases where all or part of the cultivated land is leased out, often with rights to an acre or less. As a result, a unique ownership pattern has developed among the new residents of these Mahaweli settlements, who are primarily minor landowners (Paranage, 2018b).

Currently, only a minority of villagers have fully cultivated their land holdings. Additionally, authorities involved in the Mahaweli project have acquired land rights and are actively engaged in agriculture in the region. Some properties are hidden or not easily visible (Withanachchi et al., 2014).

Developing a new synthesis of social stratification in resettlement area

The disparities in the physical lifestyle of the resettled population may not be immediately obvious. However, upon closer inspection of their dwellings, it becomes clear that a variety of architectural styles were used. These include thatched houses, tin-plated houses, houses with clay walls, and even houses made from a combination of clay and dung (Paranage, 2018).

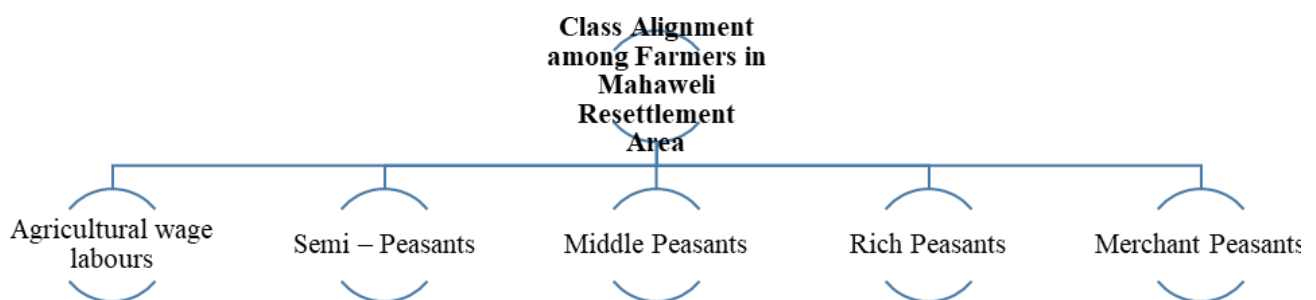
When examining employment patterns, it is evident that a significant proportion of families have only one employed individual. These families also tend to have a large number of members (Agrarian Research and Training Institute, 1979). Families with a large number of members and high dependency ratios may face a decrease in their quality of life. When assessing the living conditions of these resettled units in relation to their monthly income, a common trend is evident: a significant majority of residents maintain a modest standard of living (ibid).

When examining the class dynamics in these regions, three fundamental characteristics can be evaluated. The areas can be delineated into different classes based on factors such as land ownership, labor market dynamics, and surplus acquisition. The class structure in the Mahaweli Resettlement area can be illustrated as follows: (Figure 03).

The agricultural wage labors

The characteristics and classification of classes are examined, with a focus on Lenin's introduction of agricultural workers in the original treatises created for the Second International forum on the agricultural question. In his analysis, he characterizes this group as individuals who do not own land and instead rely on selling their labor to capitalist agricultural firms in exchange for wages, which are essential for their basic sustenance (Paranage, 2019). The land ownership in the resettlement areas can be categorized into two main forms of land loss. Two distinct groups are being considered: the first group includes individuals who do not have legal rights to the land, while the second group consists of rightful owners who have been deprived of their land due to fraudulent ownership claims (Gunatillake, 2000) A group of individuals has come together to work for monetary compensation in capitalist agricultural enterprises near the resettlement areas. (Gunda, Hornberger, and Gilligan, 2016) A significant number of individuals have been assigned to work as laborers in the large agricultural fields known as government farms, which are the main agricultural operations in the area (Silva & Vidanapathirana, 1984). A portion of individuals are presently occupied in this occupation on a temporary basis, while others are involved in the sale of their labor

Figure 3. *Class view of Mahaweli Resettlement Area*



Source: designed and developed by the author based on Literature

through the ownership and cultivation of a small portion of land (Gunatilake, 1998).

Semi-peasants

Semi-peasants are agricultural workers with small plots of land who engage in labor-intensive farming activities. They may also work on larger commercial farms or in construction projects to supplement their income, as the yields from their own land are not enough to meet their subsistence needs (Nanayakkara, 2000). Occasionally, he can be seen engaging in self-employment activities to earn income, while also leasing out rice fields to third parties (ibid).

Middle Peasants

Lenin classifies these rural segments as small-scale agricultural producers, who are typically peasants or small landowners (Lenin, 1970). Individuals ensure the fulfillment of their basic needs and maintain a satisfactory level of productivity to support reproduction (ibid). Typically, hired laborers are employed for agricultural activities. Small-scale farmers differ from traditional small farmers in that they are a collective of small landowners who are self-sufficient and rely on family labor for crop cultivation instead of hiring external labor. Additionally, they do not sell their labor to external parties (Nanayakkara, 2000).

In this context, Middle Peasants are individuals engaged in independent farming practices, cultivating their agricultural land without transferring ownership. These villagers have the resources and capabilities to sustain their production operations and maintain a subsistence level of living primarily through their cultivation efforts (Paranage, 2017). Within this collective, the trade mechanism does not involve any monetary compensation for the use

of property. Instead, a reciprocal transfer of labor value is observed (Nanayakkara, 2000). In the barter system, there is a reciprocal exchange of labor value without monetary compensation. It is important to note that villagers, while content with their agricultural plots, participate in both reciprocal labor and wage labor activities (ibid).

Merchant Class

In traditional societies, people conducted commercial transactions directly, keeping what they needed for personal use and selling any surplus at public markets. This direct exchange system did not involve intermediaries, making transactions simple and straightforward (Paranage, 2018a). The economy in the scheme shifted from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture due to resettlement. This transition led to the generation of surplus produce for profit. As a result, a new merchant class emerged within the community, who were interested in purchasing the excess production. This transformation established the region as a hub for trade and commerce (Paranage, 2019). The commercial elite is involved in exploiting labor, surplus production, and land in this region. This class is identified as the primary exploiting class in these relocated areas. Furthermore, they play a role in enabling secondary exploitation in this region (Nanayakkara, 2000).

By analyzing employment and land ownership patterns, it is clear that five distinct social stratifications have emerged among these peasants. The living arrangements in the settlement have been adjusted according to their stratification. The stratification in the settlement has intensified due to three main variables: land ownership as a production predictor, the labor market, and surplus

accumulation. Individuals in different social strata show unique characteristics in both their social and economic aspects of life.

The phenomenon of exploitation among social strata in resettlement areas

By understanding the systematic framework of exploitative relationships established within the context of production relations in resettled areas, one can observe the evolution of class relations patterns (Upali et al., 2016). In the context of resettled communities, it is crucial to analyze the dynamics of primary and secondary exploitation and how they interact. Primary exploitation refers to the exploitation carried out by individuals with financial resources, such as merchants, within the labor exploitation framework in the production process. This exploitation is closely associated with activities such as taxation, interest, and commerce.

Within these resettled areas, it is possible to examine the mechanisms of surplus exploitation through the use of wage labor, exchange labor, and family labor in the production process. The cultivator may have excess labor based on their land entitlements. In some cases, secondary exploitative connections may be used to extract surplus value from the producer, transferring the surplus to another entity. Class alignment can be determined by grouping agricultural laborers and individuals with fictitious ownership but no cultivable land, who rely on selling their labor for sustenance. These entities produce surpluses in external agricultural operations, which are absorbed by a separate production system. The working conditions and remuneration levels indicate relentless exploitation of these individuals. Semi-rural classes include individuals with limited land holdings that do not meet their consumption needs, leading them to engage in wage labor. Some

individuals have entitlements to insufficient land, forcing them to seek wage labor to make up for the shortfall.

The middle-class settlers engage in continuous production activities on their owned land, despite facing limitations in generating maximum surplus. To achieve a surplus, the family unit must consider factors such as grain consumption from their farm production, production costs (including debt servicing costs), and expenses related to acquiring additional means of production, water, equipment, labor, and farm maintenance. This calculation involves deducting all costs related to non-agricultural consumption and the monetary value of family labor, among other considerations (Takesada et al., 2008). It is important to determine the residual value. In the current production operations, inputs like agrochemicals and fertilizers result in significant expenses (Gunda et al., 2016). Furthermore, the use of equipment leads to increased rental expenses. It is important to note that the market prices of various non-grain consumer goods such as milk powder, pharmaceuticals, and clothing, as well as agricultural products, are considered unfavorable for rural residents (Gunatilake, 1998). Agricultural producers face challenges in generating a significant surplus due to unfavorable market prices and marketing partnerships. When the primary focus of production is secondary exploitation, they struggle to effectively offer their products (Gunda et al., 2016).

As a result, the ability to generate surplus through labor is primarily transferred to wealthy landowners (Takesada et al., 2008). In the context of this colonial production system, it is important to note that the individuals classified as landowners had a complex identity that went beyond just owning land (Dissanayake et al., 2016). They can be recognized as a collective entity that possesses the capacity for secondary

exploitation. Within the framework of production relations, such as land leasing and contemporary systems, there is a reversal in the dynamics of the connection between the landowner and the acquisition of surplus (Ranaweera & Ratnayake, 2020). The current land use system in these resettlement areas differs significantly from the traditional village economy. Wealthier community members who provide resources like seeds, rice, fertilizers, and other supplies are entitled to receive up to fifty percent of the agricultural yield from the farmers who own the land (Withanachchi et al., 2014). It should be noted that ownership of farms is not limited to affluent villagers. The individual referred to as the current farmer also holds the status of landowner (Upali et al., 2016). This phenomenon represents a shift from the traditional farm land leasing system in Sri Lanka. It involves farmers who, because of financial limitations, cannot afford the resources needed to cultivate their land (Wong & Herath, 2014). These farmers obtain the necessary resources by entering into agreements where they commit to allocating fifty percent of their harvest as payment. There are two distinct forms of transactions that can be identified within this arrangement: direct and indirect (Takesada et al., 2008).

1. A temporal gap exists in the transfer of value between the involved parties during the occurrence of a transaction.
2. Remuneration for the merchandise derived from the goods.

Due to this phenomenon, there is a clear correlation where wealthy villagers can achieve a higher return on investment in fertilizer chemicals used for agriculture (Silva & Hornberger, 2019). The value of the harvest stock exceeds the initial investment made by the affluent villager, highlighting the importance of this system. This approach is also quite

similar to the practice of charging interest (Cartney et al., 2019). A pattern of secondary exploitation can be observed within this system. Despite the traditional nomenclature of the farmland leasing system, it is important to note that this form of exploitation can manifest differently from the conventional farm land leasing system.

The traditional practice of land leasing involves wealthy landowners allocating land to individuals who do not own land or have limited land holdings. This practice aims to enable various beneficial activities (Aravinna et al., 2017). The land leasing process in this context differs significantly from the traditional framework. In this scenario, landowners involved in agriculture lease their land to wealthy villagers or individuals in positions of authority or business. This results in a change of ownership, with the lessee expected to generate more revenue from the land than the original owner (Nanayakkara, 2000). If this is not achieved, it becomes an unreasonable economic practice. In such cases, the valuation of the land should be higher than the amount paid to the minor landowner (Samarasinghe et al., 1984). Due to this situation, the land lessor experiences a greater loss in value compared to the tax revenue generated from land leasing. The lessee benefits from this surplus. As a result, the lessee takes on the role of resource appropriation, while the landowner becomes vulnerable to exploitation through the leasing agreement (Gunawardena, 2005).

The presence of debt among villagers is a common feature of rural economies (Sahn, 1987). Residents from Mahaweli resettlement areas are also required to participate in the financial management system to allocate the cash generated from agricultural production activities for daily necessities (Rathnayake, 1992). This system should replace the current practice of relying on daily output outcomes and instead consider the duration of the harvesting period. However, the utilization

of money in the village life among these new immigrants does not exhibit a high level of organization.

When surplus funds are allocated towards social gatherings and similar activities, it becomes financially unfeasible due to the production income being at a marginal subsistence level. The primary factor influencing individuals' motivation to take out loans is how they balance productivity with meeting necessities. In cases where allocating a portion of production towards re-producing operations is challenging, securing loans becomes necessary. The instability in cultivation is also a concern in this context. Consequently, villagers who tend to borrow often turn to non-institutional lenders instead of approaching institutional lending entities like banks (Nelson, 2002). The prevalence of non-institutional borrowing can be attributed to the unfamiliarity and complexity of the institutional lending process, as well as the challenges associated with obtaining loans due to factors such as loan defaults. In this scenario, borrowers often incur a substantial amount of interest when dealing with non-institutional loan sources (Gunatillake, 2000). Sometimes, people borrow goods from merchants for daily use, leading to financial losses due to high prices. Taking a loan against harvested grain is a common practice, where the borrower must set a price lower than the market rate. This allows wealthy locals to profit from lending. Additionally, renting equipment for production helps villagers increase their income (Nanayakkara, 2000).

Entrepreneurs in these regions can maintain a significant profit margin by sourcing agricultural goods from rural communities and selling them through established trade networks. Most wealthy villagers in these areas buy agricultural produce from local entrepreneurs, creating a steady demand for these goods (Mulleret & Hettige, 1995). Sellers have the ability to

set premium prices when selling various inputs such as everyday commodities, agrochemicals, fertilizers, and similar items to rural residents. This benefits wealthy villagers who enjoy favorable trading conditions in these transactions (Moore, et al., 1983). The trade relations pattern described above is evident both domestically and globally, enabling the export of surplus production from the economy. This results in a portion of the surplus staying within the control of local traders, while a significant amount is exported. Consequently, some of the surplus remains with the villagers, while a larger quantity is distributed externally due to this exploitation.

Based on the observed pattern of exploitative relationships, it can be argued that secondary exploitation has reduced the importance of primary exploitation relationships. The individuals subjected to exploitation in this context can be categorized as agricultural laborers, semi-villagers, and middle-level villagers (Nanayakkara, 2000). The capitalist villagers in this colony are exploited by an external entity.

The recent increase in social stratification has resulted in the exploitation of resources, production, and labor through various methods. The initial generation of settlers did not face these issues, but starting from the second generation, exploitation has become more common. The main beneficiaries in the region were transient individuals like traders and certain authorities. Both primary and secondary exploitations are visible in the settlement regions. Primary exploitation is common among settlers, while secondary exploitation occurs in the areas between settlements and beyond. There is a connection between local land renters and external traders in terms of secondary exploitation. The presence of exploitative commercial companies in the manufacturing process has disrupted the land ownership patterns in the Mahaweli area. This exploitation has led to

changes in traditional harvesting practices and land use, as well as posing challenges to conventional ownership. While the MDA has authority over all land in the area, they maintain a secretive stance due to their involvement in the hidden exploitation in the region.

Ideology construction and rationalization of exploitation in resettlement areas

The MDA has full ownership of all resources in the relocated settlements as part of the Mahaweli Development Project (Moor, 1992). The MDA has legal authority to regulate all physical assets, including land, terrain, water, and forests in the designated areas. It has comprehensive jurisdiction over various issues, ranging from resettling people in settlements established under the Mahaweli Development project to restoring their livelihoods and daily routines (Gunawardena, 2005). MDA was informed about the resettled people in these areas, even though their owners did earthworks on the land. The MDA should have authority in these areas, and ideologies should be created according to the vision of the Mahaweli Development project. However, the way in which ideologies have been created in this

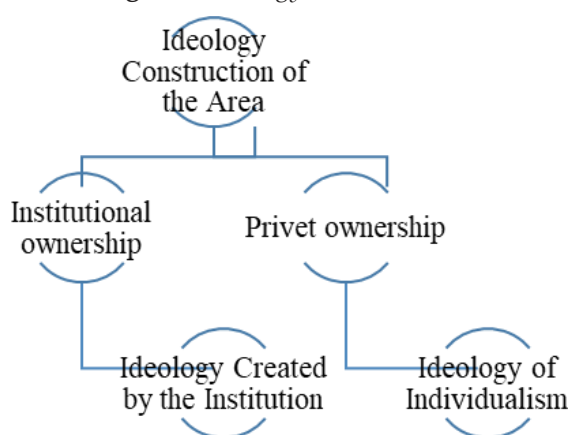
area can be identified from the diagram below (Figure 04).

According to Marxist theory, social classes and social stratification are formed based on the ownership of economic resources in the society and the form of controlling them (Duke & Edgell, 1987). According to the plan of the Mahaweli project, although the ownership and control power existed, today the nature of the ownership and control powers has changed (Nanayakkara, 2000). As a result of land leasing and utilization by land-owning peasants for different purposes, social stratification has emerged in these areas, primarily driven by land and land-based production. This stratification system gives rise to various forms of exploitation, depending on the activities within the system (Moore, 1992). Due to exploitation, a stratification system emerged and expanded in these areas, diverging from the traditional social structure. The social changes in the farming colonies where Mahaweli resettlement occurred can be outlined in the following steps (Figure 05).

While the phenomenon of product exploitation is prevalent in this area, it is often justified by companies based on the consumers' lack of awareness and everyday needs (Moore, 1985). The lack of conflict in these areas can be attributed to economic factors. Economic issues play a significant role in the formation and maintenance of class divisions, stratification, and exploitation. Similarly, economic factors also contribute to the absence of conflicts in these regions (Moore et al., 1978). It can be observed that the economic corporation serves a dual purpose by engaging with the local community in this area (Nanayakkara, 2000).

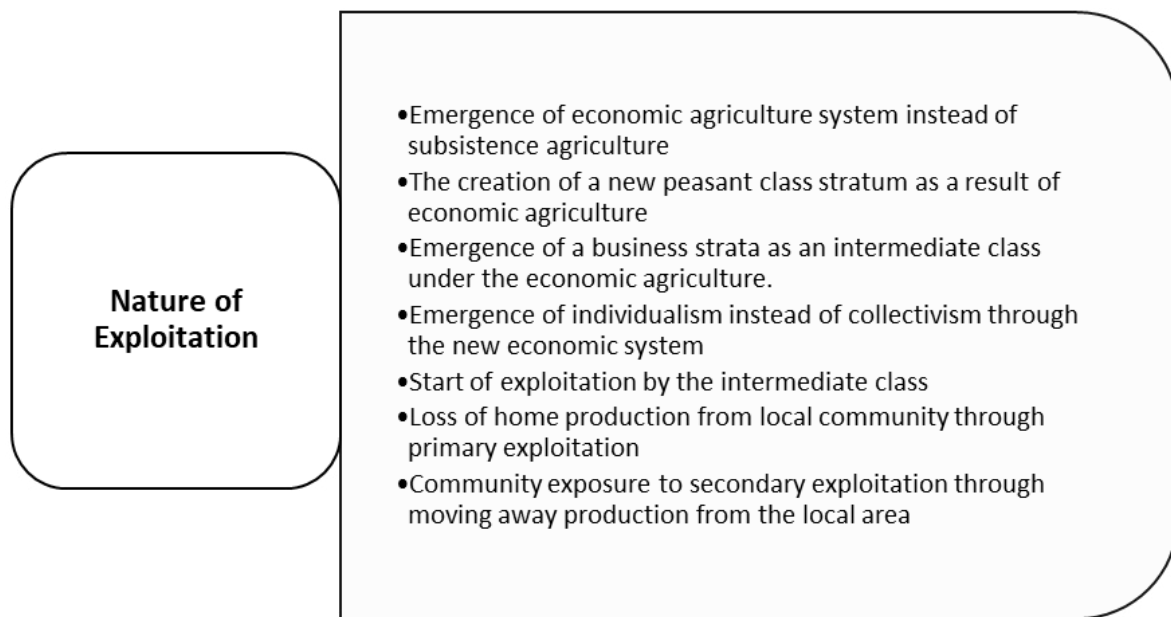
The nature of exploitation observed during the Mahaweli project deviates from traditional forms of exploitation and class relations due to the various constraints imposed (Rajapakse, et al.,

Figure 4. *Ideology construction*



Source: designed and developed by the author based on Literature

Figure 5. *Emergence and nature of exploitation in Resettlement Area*



Source: designed and developed by the author based on Literature

2016). The appropriation of surplus involves commercial transactions such as monetary interest, mortgages, and leasing of agricultural equipment. Despite these limitations, perceptions of exploitation and class relations in contemporary business interactions may vary. The main division in the population is between labor settlers who own property and affluent settlers who reside in these areas. Despite the constraints, exploitation and class relations in modern business interactions can be viewed from different perspectives. The primary social divide is between landowning labor settlers and affluent settlers residing in these regions. This division is primarily associated with land ownership and its economic activities.

Each social class and stratum have its own distinct desires and awareness. These communities simply aim to fulfill their lives based on these desires and awareness. Despite the presence of social strata and inequalities, and even if they acknowledge their exploitation, these desires and awareness act as a deterrent to engaging in conflicts. The settlement's philosophy

can be understood from two perspectives: institutional ideology formation and individual ideology formation. In the first generation of settlers, ideology was mainly shaped by institutions, but in subsequent generations, it began to be influenced on an individual level. Their ideology revolves around the means of production and survival. Despite the institution's neglect of exploitation and inequality, individuals have defended these beliefs to ensure their persistence and existence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the real-world circumstances in these settlements diverge significantly. Currently, the area is under the influence of a strict governmental framework, and the recent inhabitants are also affected by this institutional arrangement. A new class pattern has emerged within these regions, along with a noticeable class discrepancy. The Mahaweli resettled Colonies, located in a developing country, have faced challenges

in maintaining their newfound autonomy as a distinct social and economic entity. As a result, the primary objective of the project to establish a self-reliant social and economic system has not been achieved. Despite efforts to build an autonomous economic and social system in these regions, they have ultimately become dependent entities within the broader national economy and social structure. Consequently, poverty has increased in these regions due to the emergence of new social hierarchies. The settlers have experienced a significant rise in poverty as a result of the establishment of these new social hierarchies, which has hindered the achievement of the project's goals. Despite resettling with the aim of promoting equality and development, these settlers have not made significant progress even after 35 years since the project began.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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